

*The President's Daily Brief*

23 March 1970

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

23 March 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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(Page 3)

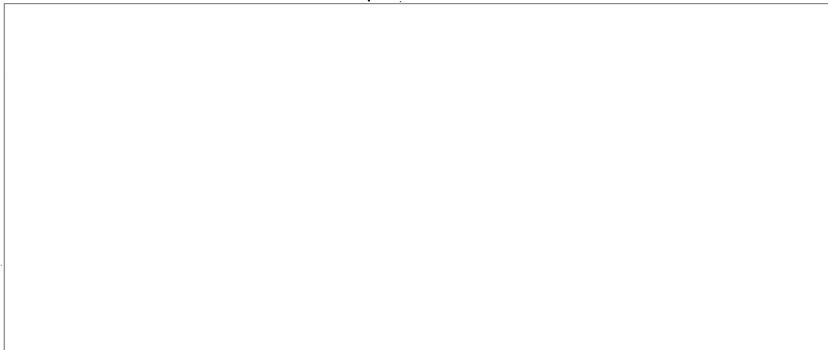
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In Laos, the security of the government's base at Long Tieng continues to deteriorate. (Page 4)

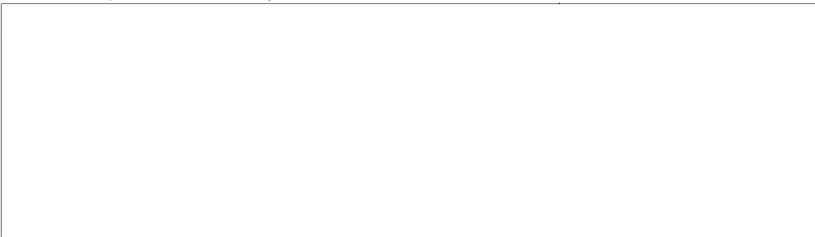
North Vietnam and China continue to support Sihanouk. (Page 5)

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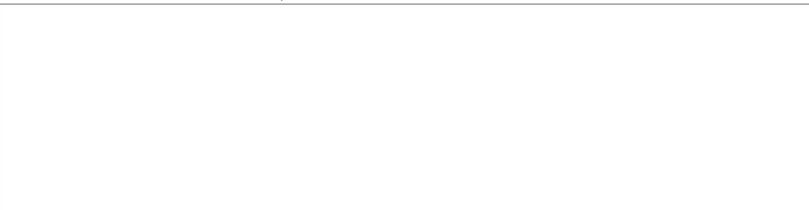
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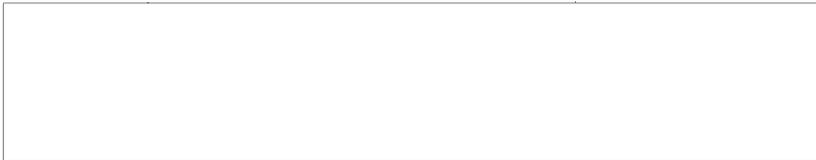
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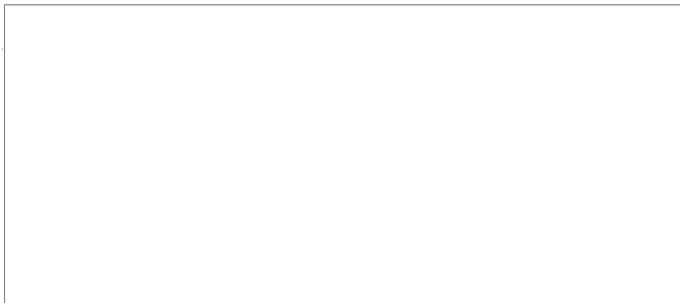
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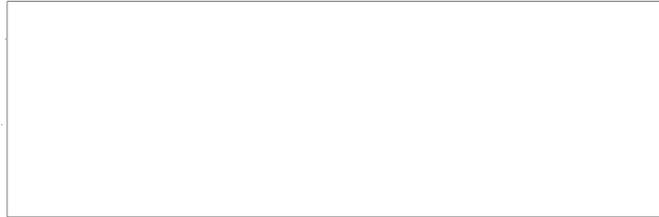


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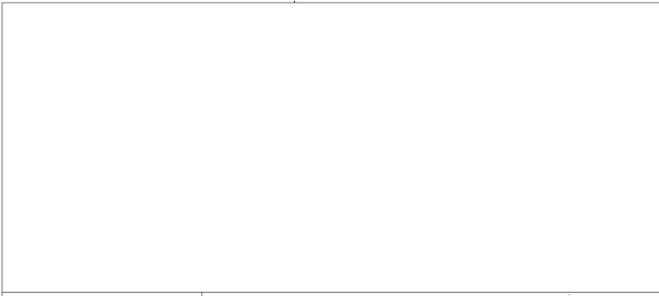


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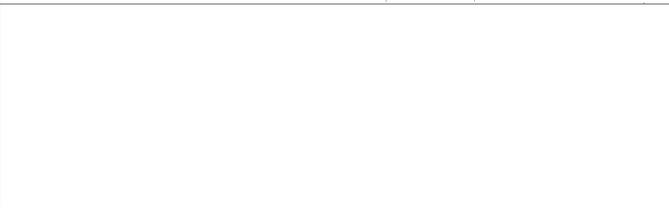
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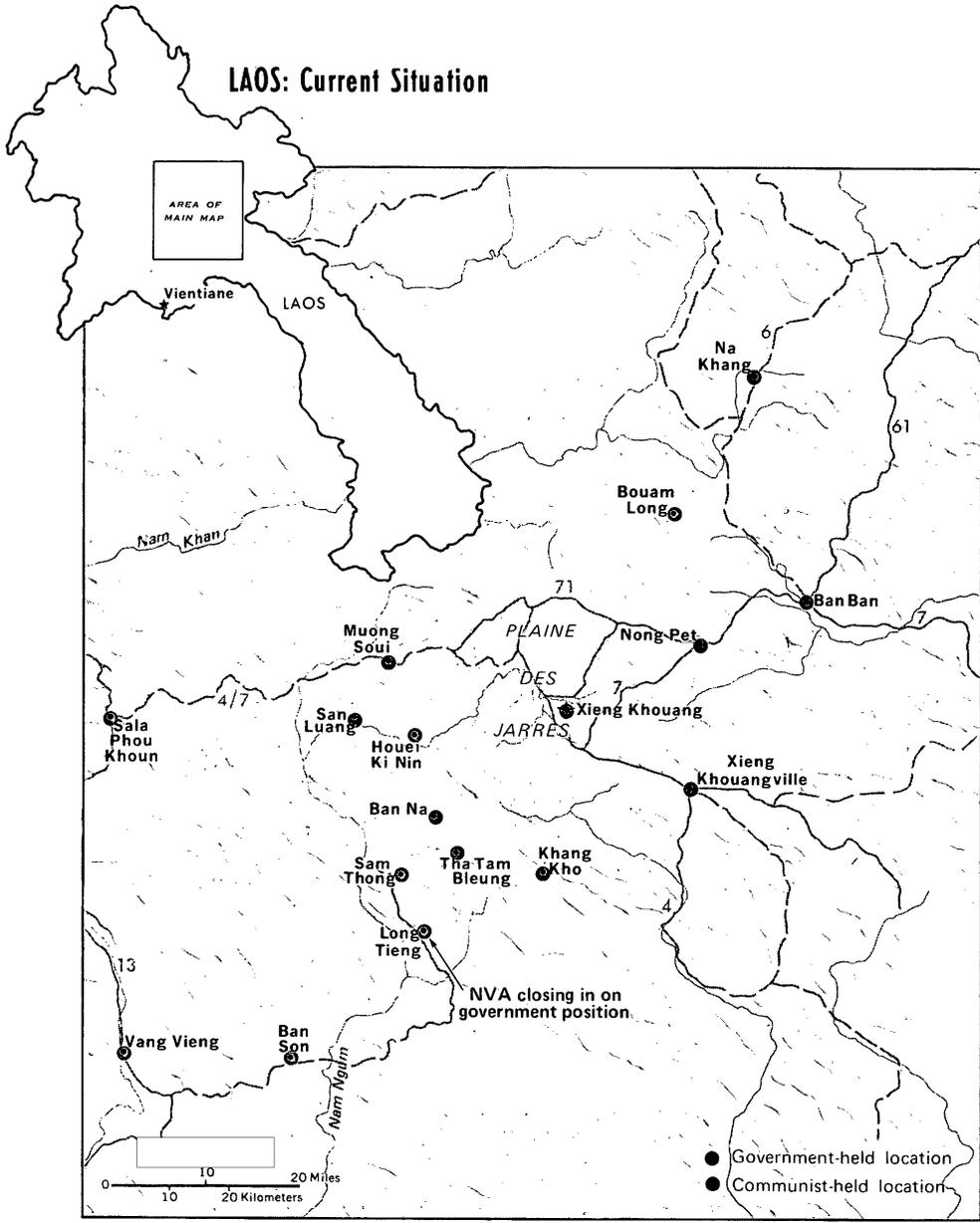
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LAOS

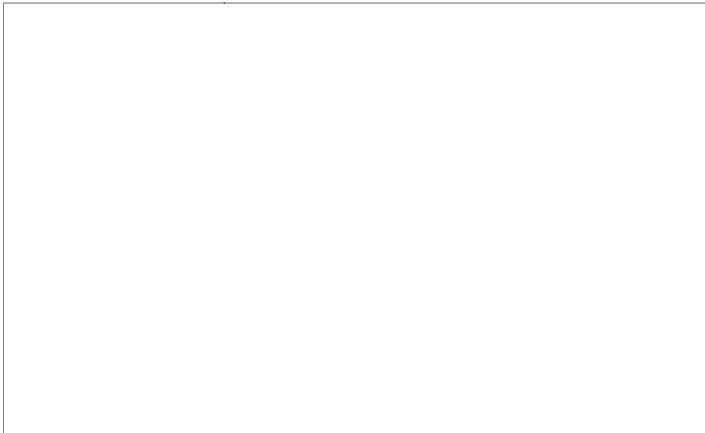
Communist forces are operating in strength just outside General Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. In recent days the enemy has launched an increasing number of rocket attacks against the base and the government's ability to defend the area is being put to a severe test.

 there now may be as many as six enemy battalions threatening Long Tieng. We are able to place elements of the North Vietnamese 6th Battalion approximately one mile east of the airstrip from intercepted enemy communications which also disclose this battalion's plans to direct heavy weapons fire at the base. Although the government defense force now numbers over 2,000 troops, it will be difficult for them to prevent small enemy teams from penetrating the defense perimeter.

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In Bangkok, two Thai generals talked to a US Embassy official Saturday about the possibility of pulling two Thai battalions out of Vietnam to reinforce Long Tieng. The generals stressed that this would require a formal request from Vientiane and a favorable decision from the highest levels within the Thai Government. Souvanna was scheduled to pursue this matter yesterday with King Savang, who has long been opposed to the presence of Thai forces in Laos.

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CAMBODIA

After avoiding direct comment on events in Cambodia for three days, North Vietnam yesterday labeled Cambodia's new leaders as a "pro-American ultra-rightist group" in an authoritative Nhan Dan statement. Arguing that Sihanouk's ouster had been engineered by the US, Nhan Dan stated that "our people fully support" the struggle of the Cambodian people against the US and the new leadership.

*This statement and a reference to "stepping up the fight" against the US "lackeys" may be meant as a warning to the Lon Nol - Sirik Matak government that the Communists are prepared to fight unless the new leaders are accommodating.*

The Chinese Communists, for their part, continue to refer to Sihanouk as chief of state and they have broadcast his lengthy apologia and attack on the new regime.

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*Sihanouk's weekend statements in Peking suggest that, in his present state of mind, he is susceptible to whatever plans the Communists may have to overthrow the new Phnom Penh leadership. Although counting himself out as a prominent figure in Cambodia's future, Sihanouk stated that his "duty" was to aid the "struggle...from the inside and from the outside to erase this coup." He also announced that he would spend his exile alternately in Peking and Moscow. Sihanouk is not likely to play the role of a Communist stooge, however, and his statements may be partially designed to bluff jittery opponents in the Cambodian capital.*

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The government, meanwhile, has called on the Geneva co-chairmen to "reconstitute" the International Control Commission to meet the threat of foreign troops on Cambodian soil. It has also called for "official negotiations" with the Vietnamese Communists on the withdrawal of their troops. In addition to these diplomatic moves, Cambodian units on the border are maintaining contact with the Communists, although only a few light skirmishes have been reported. The Communists have given ground in some areas



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