



The President's Daily Brief

17 November 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation northeast of Phnom Penh

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Damascus has made its first announcement reflecting changes in leadership. (Page 2)

Chile

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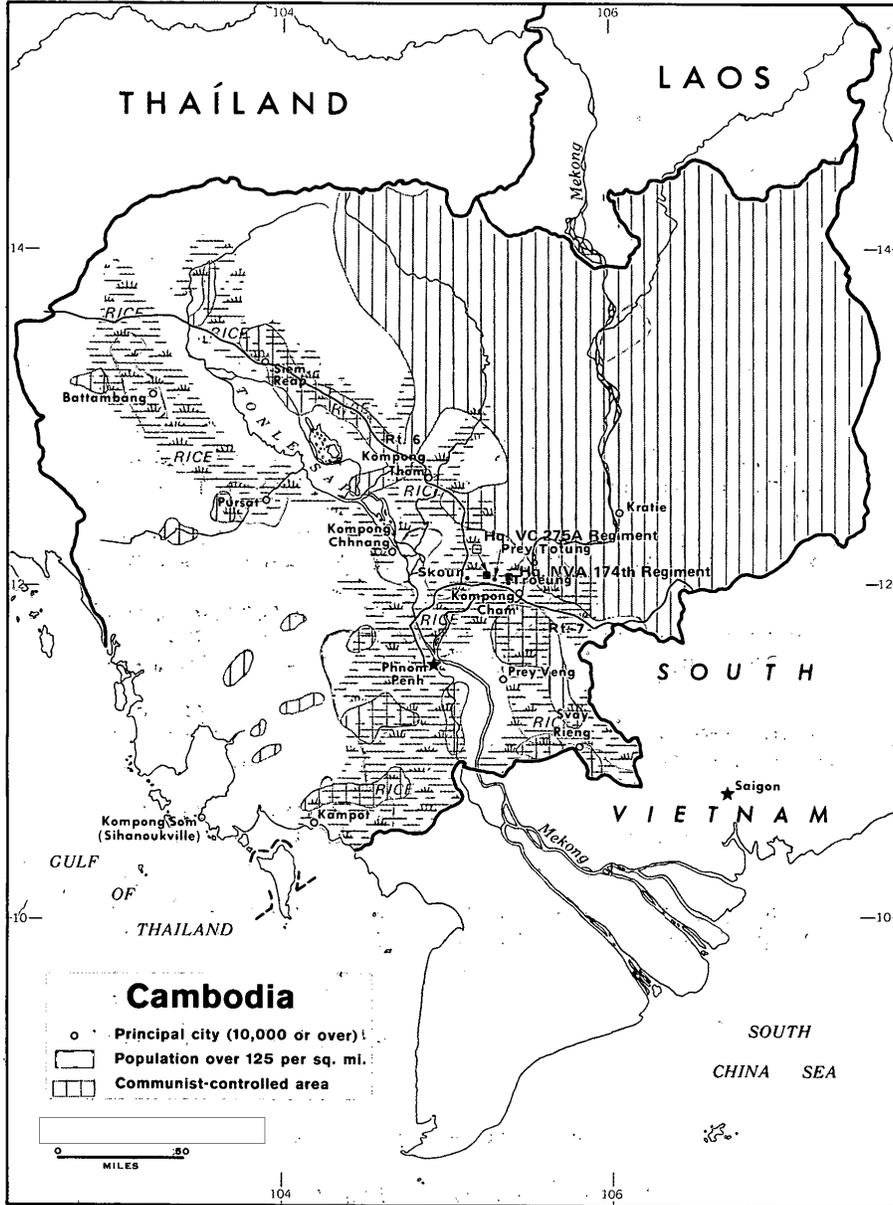
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"Big" Minh has now stated that he will be a candidate for the South Vietnamese presidency in next year's election. (Page 4)

Fedayeen organizations are planning to merge into a "Palestinian Liberation Front." (Page 5)

In Egypt, Prime Minister Fawzi is putting together a new cabinet to be announced soon. (Page-6)

Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

No significant new Communist military actions have been reported in Kompong Cham but government forces there are bracing for fresh enemy assaults. Civilian refugees have told the press that much of Route 7 between Skoun and Kompong Cham is still closed. Communications intelligence indicates the headquarters of the Viet Cong 275A Regiment has moved closer to Route 7 and now is located about five miles north of Prey Totung. In addition, the headquarters of the North Vietnamese 174th Regiment is just to the east, about five miles north of Troeung. A recent enemy message stated that elements of the 174th were preparing artillery positions so that when "orders are received from the regiment they can attack."

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SYRIA

Damascus has made its first announcement reflecting leadership changes. A newly formed "provisional regional command" of the Syrian Baath Party, still unidentified but presumably allied with Defense Minister Asad, has broadcast its intention to carry out a specific program of action for a "transition period" until a party congress can elect a new leadership. The program stresses increased cooperation with the "progressive" Arab states, particularly Egypt, and expresses hope for increased Arab unity and continued support for the Palestinian and all-Arab progressive movements. Internationally, close cooperation with the Socialist states, particularly the USSR, will be continued.

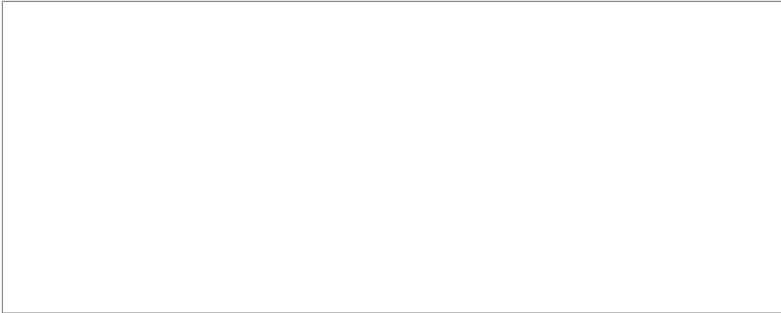
If the new leadership follows these general precepts, there will not be any dramatic differences in the basic direction of Syrian policy, but there could be some lessening in the political isolation that Syria has maintained even among its brother Arab states. Basic changes in attitude toward the West and Israel are not likely to occur.

Asad, according to most accounts, moved against the civilian leadership last Friday after the conclusion of a party congress. This congress was convened in late October, allegedly to resolve internal differences brought to a head by the abortive Syrian involvement in the recent Jordanian crisis.

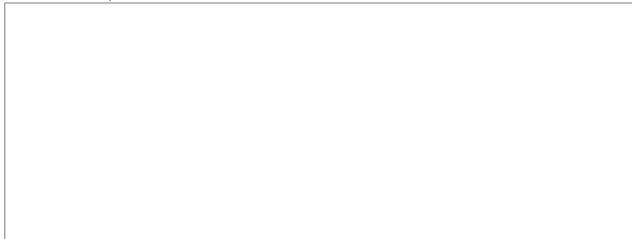
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SOUTH VIETNAM

Former chief of state "Big" Minh has declared that he will be a candidate for president in next fall's election. The US Embassy has reports that Minh has begun to assemble a campaign staff and to make plans for the campaign.

Minh's decision will have come as no surprise to President Thieu as he is a leading opposition figure and a strong potential vote-getter in a race against Thieu. Minh filed for the 1967 elections while in exile in Bangkok but was disqualified on grounds that his running mate had pro-Communist leanings. He is likely to take pains this time to avoid a pretext for disqualification.

While Minh has carefully avoided espousing any controversial policies, he has sought to portray himself as a leader who could put an end to the war. Since he is known to be a weak administrator, his candidacy could become the focus of groups such as the militant An Quang Buddhists who may believe he could be manipulated to support their interests.

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FEDAYEEN

The fedayeen central committee, which serves as a coordinating body among the various Palestinian commandos, has announced that commando groups plan to merge their military and political organizations. The committee will meet in Amman this Friday to discuss the terms for creating a single "Palestinian Liberation Front."

The move appears to be a victory for Fatah, which has been pressing since the debacle in Jordan for a united front to exercise greater control over individual guerrilla organizations. Most of the fedayeen groups will go along primarily for temporary tactical reasons, however, and the durability of any merger remains questionable.

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NOTE

Egypt: Prime Minister Fawzi, who, with his cabinet, resigned on 15 November, has been asked by President Sadat to form another government. The resignation of the cabinet, in the main a holdover from Nasir's day, apparently is a pro forma move designed to permit Sadat and Fawzi to put their own imprint on a new regime. The reorganization may also be occasioned in part by reported disagreements between Sadat and various ministers. The new cabinet is expected to be announced by Thursday.

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