



The President's Daily Brief

20 February 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in northern Laos is discussed on *Page 1*.

In Cambodia, the Communists are continuing to resist the South Vietnamese clearing operations near the Chup plantation. (*Page 2*)

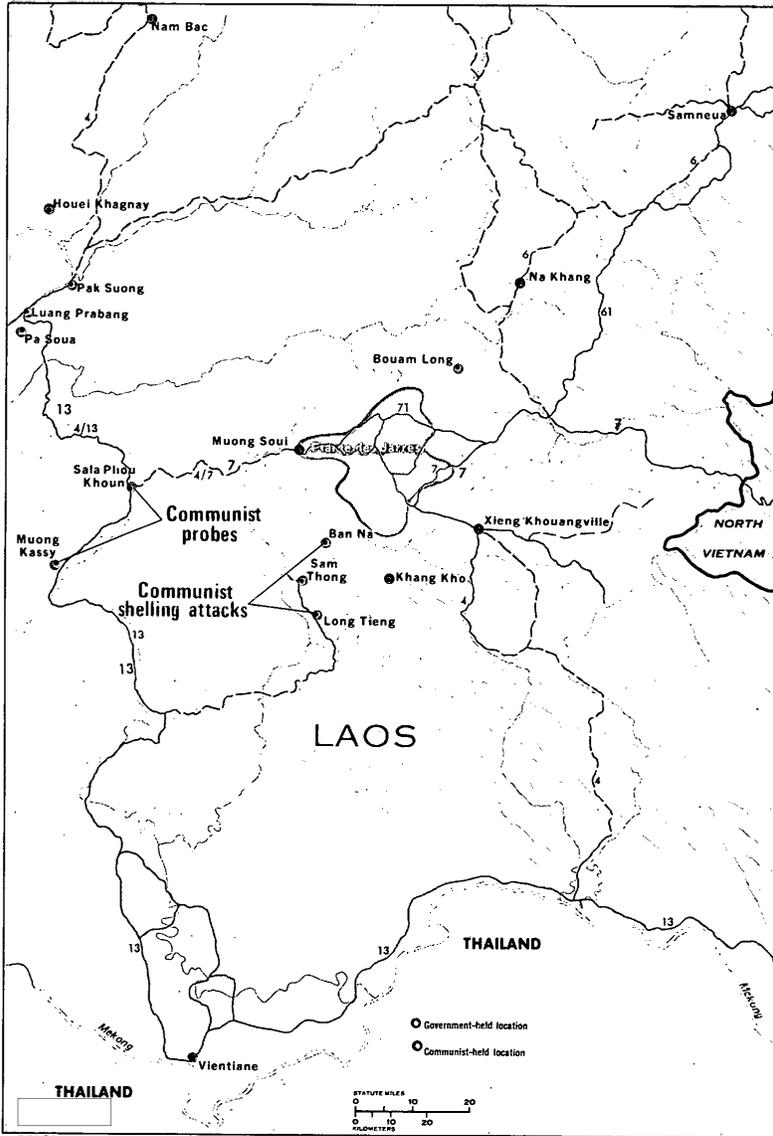
[REDACTED] a constitution along the lines proposed by East Pakistan's Awami League. (*Page 3*)

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A dispute between Colombia and Venezuela over delimitation of seabeds in the Gulf of Venezuela is alarming Colombian officials. (*Page 4*)

The new Polish regime has indirectly warned that further labor unrest could jeopardize the workers' gains. (*Page 5*)

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LAOS

At Ban Na, north of Long Tieng, Communist probes have continued to hamper government aerial resupply efforts. On 17 February sporadically heavy enemy fire forced the closing of the airstrip. Yesterday two rockets hit the Long Tieng base, but without damaging logistic or air facilities. The previous day, tactical air sorties in northeastern Laos produced 125 secondary explosions.

This is the highest number ever noted in the area, and underscores the extent of the North Vietnamese buildup.

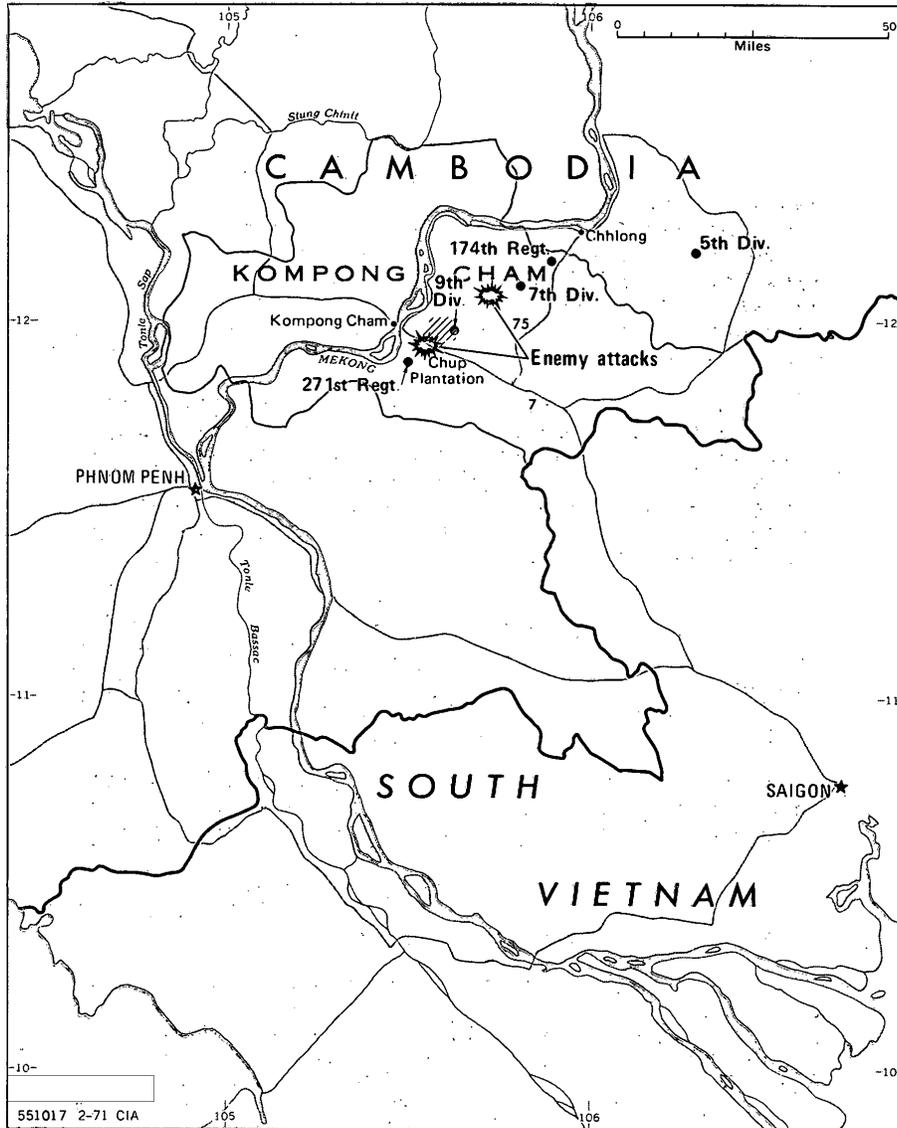
The government yesterday closed Route 13 between Vientiane and Luang Prabang following Communist probes at Sala Phou Khoun and Muong Kassy.

Although the only land link between the two capitals, Route 13 is used mainly for local traffic. Its closing may nevertheless upset the civilian population as a mark of the war's growing nearness to their homes.

On the political front, National Assembly President Phoui Sananikone and some other legislators are seeking ways to put the assembly on record as critical of Souvanna's handling of the war. At Phoui's request, Souvanna will send a Defense Ministry representative to brief the assembly's military affairs committee next week.

Although dissidents do not appear to have enough votes to censure the government, the current maneuverings reflect the assemblymen's longstanding factional jealousies over Souvanna's leadership, as well as a fear that he will prejudice government interests in any negotiations with the Communists.

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CAMBODIA-VIETNAM

The Communists are continuing to resist South Vietnamese clearing operations in Kompong Cham Province. South Vietnamese armor and ranger units have clashed sharply with enemy troops in and around the Chup rubber plantation. ARVN soldiers claim to have taken only light casualties, while the Communists suffered heavily.

[redacted] the enemy is still reinforcing and repositioning main force combat units near Chup. The 174th Regiment of the Communist 5th Division, east of the plantation near Route 75, now is coordinating its operations with the headquarters of the Communist 7th Division. The headquarters of the Communist 9th Division has moved deep into the plantation, placing it behind the South Vietnamese task forces that recently pushed through Chup. The division's 271st Regiment, which has been responsible for the probing attacks against South Vietnamese troops moving along Route 7, is now located south of Chup, just below Route 7.

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The Communists evidently want to keep the fighting focused in central Kompong Cham for as long as possible to prevent the South Vietnamese from moving toward Communist supply centers in Kratie Province to the north.

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PAKISTAN

[redacted] a constitution
along the lines proposed by East Pakistan's Awami
League. [redacted]

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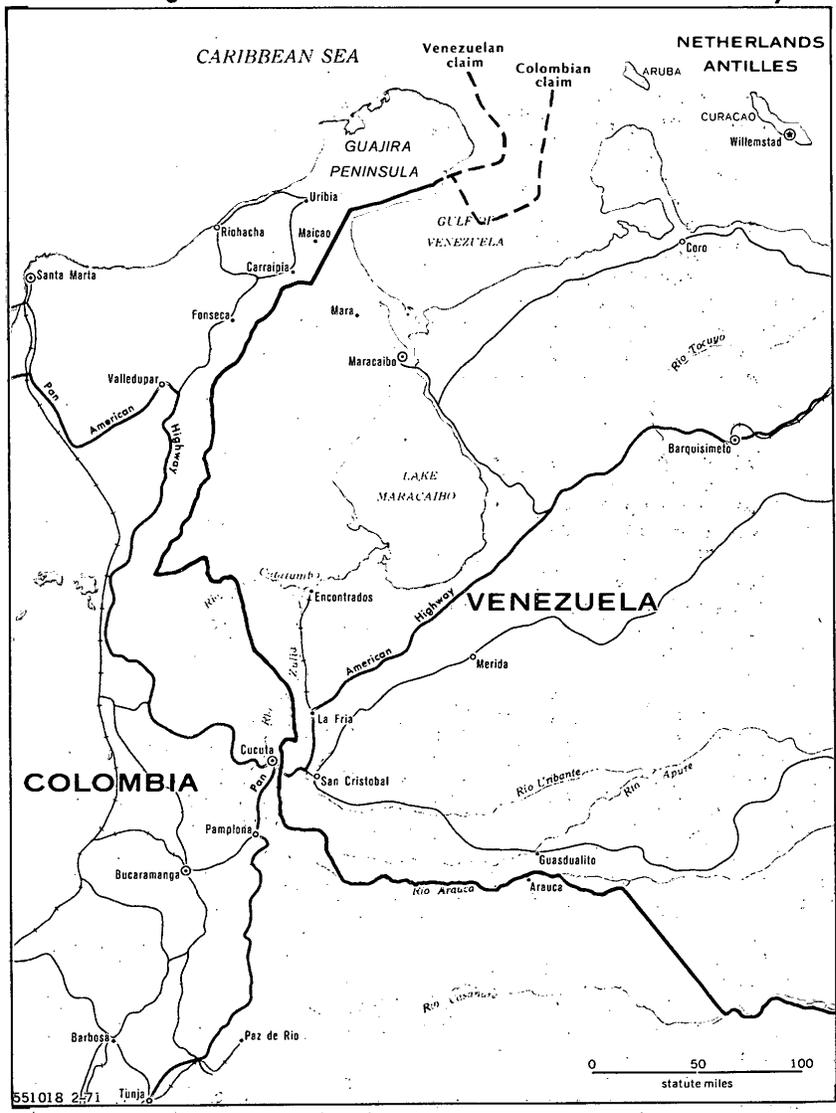
The League wants to limit central government responsibilities to defense and foreign affairs and to give provincial governments all taxing power. It has given every indication that it plans to use its majority to force through its program in the assembly.

Rejection of the League's constitution and the extension of military rule might well have the acquiescence of the largest West Pakistani party, but East Pakistanis would react strongly, possibly even to the point of proclaiming their independence.

Yahya must be aware of this risk and of the extreme difficulty of holding Pakistan together by force. He and the generals may be willing to let the East go, however, to avoid subjecting the entire nation to what they believe would be an unworkable governmental system which would threaten the position of the military.

The situation could still be saved by a compromise between East and West Pakistani politicians, but their public statements in the past week give little hope of this. Mujibur Rahman, spokesman of the East Wing and Awami League leader, has reiterated his unwillingness to compromise on provincial autonomy. Z.A. Bhutto, major political leader in West Pakistan, has emphasized that his decision to boycott the constituent assembly unless Mujib is willing to negotiate remains "unshakeable and irrevocable."

Northern Segment of the COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA Boundary



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COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA

On 18 February, Colombia's ambassador to Venezuela, Hector Charry, on his own initiative asked for US assistance in solving the Venezuelan-Colombian dispute over delineation of seabeds in the Gulf of Venezuela. He feared the dispute might lead to a clash or to the fall of both governments through military coups.

On the same day, former president Alberto Lleras Camargo told US officials in Bogota that an untoward incident could touch off an armed conflict. He asserted that Venezuela had hardened its stand on the boundary dispute and stated that the present position is completely unacceptable to Colombia. He expressed fear that political pressures in Venezuela on the issue could lead to a military coup.

Both countries believe that the disputed area is rich in oil. The two governments have been in frequent contact on the issue, and another round of talks is scheduled next month.

Jingoistic press treatment, especially in Venezuela, has stirred latent hostility between the peoples, and a military buildup by both countries along the border has increased the chances of an inadvertent clash. Although conditions do not seem ripe for a coup in either country, the views expressed by the Colombians underline the seriousness with which veteran political leaders and officials view the current trend.

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POLAND

An authoritative commentator in Warsaw's most popular daily wrote yesterday that a sharp struggle is being waged on many levels between entrenched party functionaries associated with the former Gomulka regime and advocates of Gierek's new style of rule. The writer warned that extremist worker demands are playing into the hands of the old party bureaucrats who oppose sharing power with anyone. He hinted that these elements, for their own political purposes, are encouraging excessive worker demands.

In effect, this article is a public warning that further labor unrest could jeopardize the gains workers have made and could undermine Gierek's efforts to mold a party apparatus more responsive to popular desires. In part, it could be an attempt to intimidate the workers into not making any further demands. This point has become critical because it has become abundantly clear that Gierek has nothing more to give.

The speedier-than-anticipated ouster of provincial and local party officials in recent days lends some credence to the possibility that there is considerable resistance to change among party functionaries fearful of their tenure. Gierek would like to gain the public's confidence in his policies by installing new faces among the bureaucrats who are in daily contact with the people. Unless Gierek's new style of rule effectively restores calm and a modicum of local party authority soon, he may come under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union and his own party to adopt a hard line.

(continued)

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[redacted] the Soviet credit recently granted to Poland amounts to \$1.2 billion. It is to be used for the purchase of grain, gas, and petroleum products. [redacted]

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This is the largest single Soviet credit to any Communist country. Whatever its precise terms, it is certain to increase Poland's political and economic dependence on the USSR during the next decade.

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