



The President's Daily Brief

22 December 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Laos, irregulars are continuing with defensive preparations west of the Plaine des Jarres. *(Page 1)*

In Cambodia, elements of a 12-battalion government force have successfully relieved the beleaguered Cambodian contingent at Prakham on Route 6. *(Page 2)*

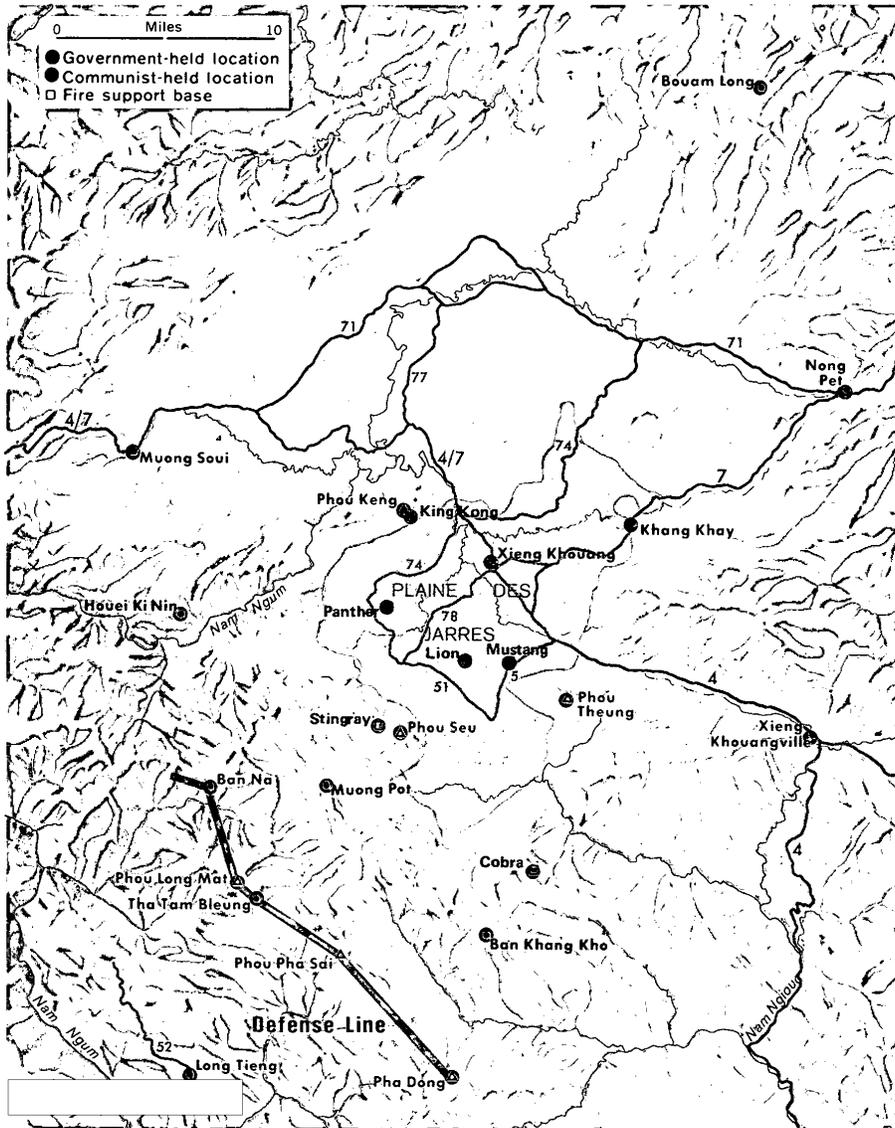
Indians and Bengali civil servants are making some progress toward restoring order in Bangla Desh. In Pakistan, President Bhutto has named a vice president but no cabinet ministers yet. *(Page 3)*

An estimated 38,000 Communist infiltrators have moved southward through southern North Vietnam and Laos since early October. *(Page 4)*

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko has proposed 24 January for his long-deferred visit to Japan. *(Page 5)*

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



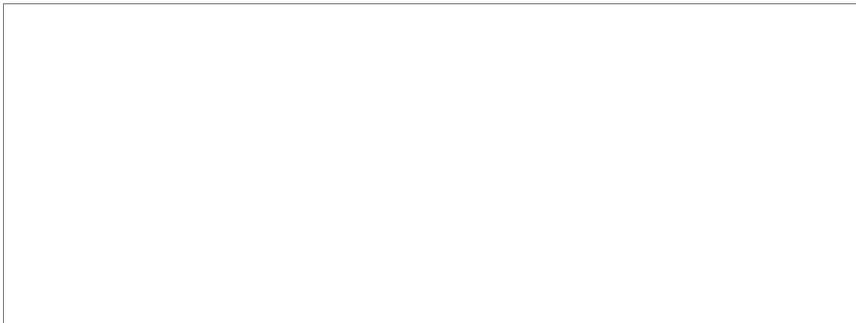
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LAOS

Defensive preparations have been continuing in the area west of the Plaine des Jarres during a slackening of enemy ground activity.



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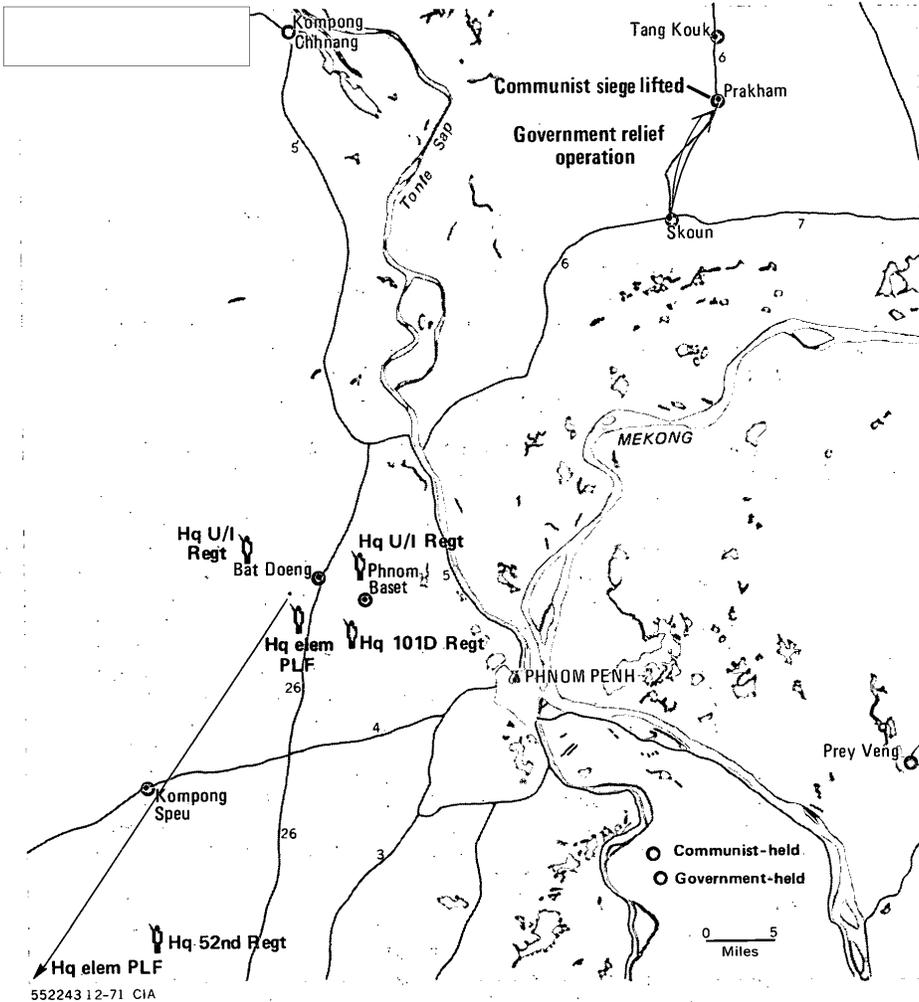
Vang Pao was in Vientiane on 21 December, and Ambassador Godley described him as "more demoralized than we have ever seen him." Defense Minister Sisouk reported Vang Pao to be nearly incoherent during an interview with Prime Minister Souvanna during which the Meo commander was given permission to start evacuating civilians from Long Tieng. He found upon his return there that the Meo had already begun to move south.



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CAMBODIA: Phnom Penh Area

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CAMBODIA

Elements of a 12-battalion Cambodian task force from Skoun, supported by heavy US air strikes, have cleared Route 6 to Prakham and relieved the besieged force there.

The Communists, however, are still exhorting their troops to achieve a total defeat of government forces on Route 6, and intercepts show that major enemy elements remain east of the highway in good position to continue their intermittent rocket attacks and ground probes in the Skoun - Tang Kouk sector.

Communist pressure in the Phnom Penh area has eased following the recent withdrawal of the Phuoc Long Front headquarters element and the North Vietnamese 52nd Regiment. Although the North Vietnamese 101D Regiment and two more regimental-sized units are still within striking distance of the city, the withdrawal of the headquarters element suggests that these units, which have been in action for seven weeks, may also be withdrawn soon.

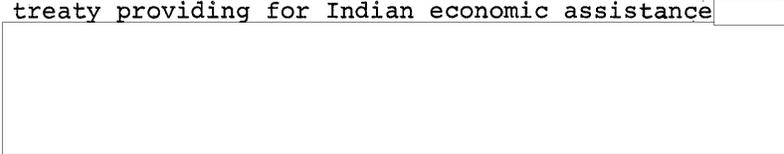
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INDIA-PAKISTAN

Shooting and mob action have lessened in Dacca, and the Indians are working with Bengali civil servants and making some progress toward restoring order in Bangla Desh. The rail transport system has been partly restored, and domestic civil air flights should begin soon. A start has been made on sizing up the food situation and on coming to grips with reconstruction and refugee problems.

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India and Bangla Desh have already signed a treaty providing for Indian economic assistance



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The Bangla Desh cabinet remains in Calcutta, but its members evidently are to leave for Dacca today. President Mujibur Rahman, who might give the government more vigorous direction, remains in Pakistan, where according to President Bhutto he is to be released from prison to house arrest.

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In Pakistan, President Bhutto has named no cabinet ministers yet but has indicated that he will be his own foreign and defense minister. He has named as his vice president Nurul Amin, an East Pakistani loyal to Islamabad, whose appointment probably was designed to please conservative West Pakistanis and help preserve the idea that East Pakistan is still part of the country. Amin is not expected to have much influence in the government, however.

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INDOCHINA

Since early October, 43 infiltration groups and 22 small special-purpose groups have been detected moving through southern North Vietnam and Laos. An additional 34 groups probably moved south undetected. We estimate their total number at about 38,000 men, a rate comparable to last year's.

Of the 38,000, almost half are destined for the central highlands of South Vietnam. This includes the 320th Division and perhaps three other units.

Reinforcement on this scale will enhance the enemy's ability to protect the infiltration corridor and base areas from attack by South Vietnamese forces. It will also enable the Communists to launch major attacks in the highlands or in southern Laos.

Another 10,000 men are heading for Cambodia or the southern half of South Vietnam. Nearly 4,000 are destined for the area immediately south of the Demilitarized Zone.

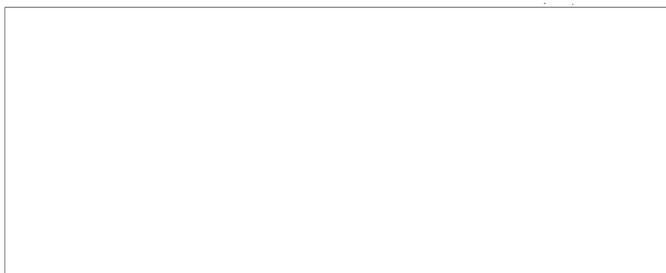
Finally, some 7,000 personnel are going to southern Laos or northeastern Cambodia, apparently to expand the supply network in southern Laos. A major new logistics headquarters, designated "Group 471," has recently appeared in this area. The new headquarters may have been created to replace the 470th Transportation Group, which recently moved into northeastern Cambodia. "Group 471" has been detected providing support to units near the Bolovens Plateau, and it may also serve forces in the South Vietnamese highlands.

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USSR-JAPAN

Gromyko has proposed that his long-deferred visit to Tokyo be scheduled for 24 January.

Gromyko apparently wishes to assess for himself Japanese intentions toward Communist China and may attempt to discourage Tokyo's overtures to Peking. For some time now, the Soviets have been seeking to divert Japanese interest in China by holding out prospects of "dramatic" economic concessions. Gromyko's proposal now moves the play back to the diplomatic field.



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NOTE

Peru-Cuba: Peru, faced with strong opposition by several other Latin American governments, has suspended its effort to get the OAS to consider lifting its diplomatic and economic sanctions against Cuba. Peru probably will try again early next year, however. At any rate, the Velasco government is likely to move on its own to restore diplomatic ties with Cuba next year.

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