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*The President's Daily Brief*

22 January 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

22 January 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On Page 1 we comment on the outlook for Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to Japan next week.

The battle for Skyline Ridge goes on, while to the west Communist forces appear to have overrun Lao Army positions on Route 13 between Vientiane and Luang Prabang. (Page 2)

President Bhutto is taking a whirlwind trip to Muslim countries in North Africa and the Near East next week, and will then hop to Peking. (Page 3)

Prime Minister Mintoff has coupled his acceptance of the UK-NATO offer of \$36 million annually with a request for a separate one-time payment of \$26 million by the end of January. (Page 4)

[Redacted] Jordan [Redacted]  
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[Redacted] Chi-  
nese Nationalists [Redacted]  
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USSR-JAPAN

Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to Japan next week is a major step in Moscow's campaign to improve ties with Tokyo.

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There have been few signs that Gromyko will make any dramatic offers. He will be anxious discreetly to discourage Japanese overtures toward Peking.

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Gromyko will seek further to stimulate Japanese interest in developing Siberian resources and closer economic cooperation in general.

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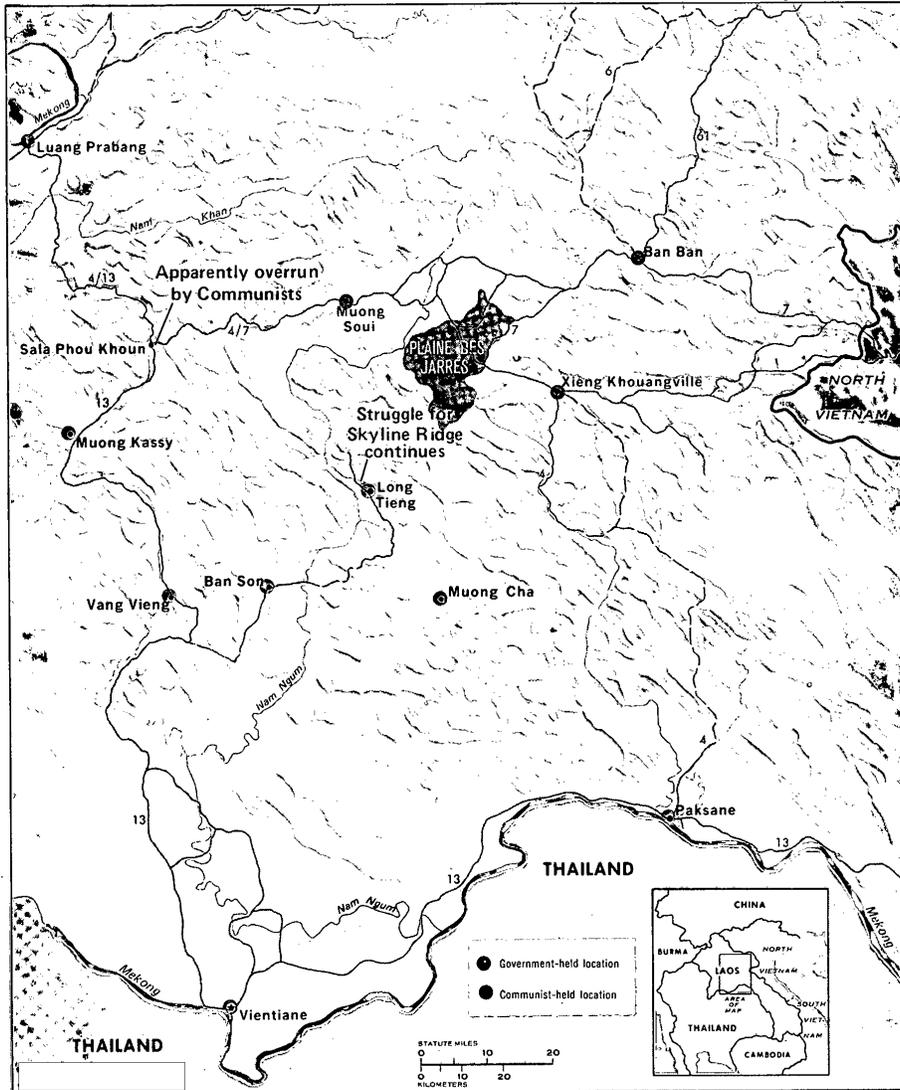
The Japanese will be keenly interested in whatever he has to say on the question of the Soviet-occupied "northern territories"--the primary obstacle to better relations, from their viewpoint. Gromyko might renew some hints of flexibility similar to those dropped last summer by other Soviet officials.

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Both Moscow and Tokyo, of course, have reason to demonstrate to the US, in advance of President Nixon's visit to Peking, that they have the option of developing better bilateral relations. The visit may lead to an exchange of higher level visits between Moscow and Tokyo.



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LAOS

Yesterday an irregular battalion that had earlier been pushed from a forward position on Skyline Ridge regained it after heavy fighting. The battalion, which a few days ago numbered about 300 men, could muster only 50 for the counterattack and now has been replaced. Some 2,000 government troops are dug in along the ridge. Intense fire from enemy units entrenched on the eastern end and northern slopes of the ridge is hampering aerial resupply.

One North Vietnamese battalion has been positively identified on the ridge, and other units are probably there as well. The North Vietnamese have a strong reserve force--the 312th Division and the 335th Regiment, most of whose units appear to have been largely uncommitted so far in the fighting around Long Tieng.

To the west, Communist forces apparently have overrun Lao Army positions and captured four 105-mm. howitzers at Sala Phou Khoun at the junction of Routes 7 and 13.

*There is no evidence to suggest that North Vietnamese units have moved into this area, and we believe the attack was mounted by Pathet Lao and dissident Neutralists, who also occupied this area in early 1970. The severing of Route 13--the only road between Vientiane and Luang Prabang--is more a psychological than a logistical blow, since the road is used mainly for local traffic.*

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PAKISTAN

President Bhutto plans to leave Pakistan early next week for a whirlwind trip to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and possibly Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq [redacted]

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[redacted] After a day back in Pakistan, he will then go to Peking, probably on 31 January. His stated purpose is to express his gratitude for these countries' support--virtually nonexistent in some cases--during the recent war with India.

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*It is more likely that in some places, particularly Libya and Saudi Arabia, Bhutto will be looking for money.* [redacted]

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[redacted]

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*We believe that Bhutto's trip to China mainly involves an attempt to demonstrate to the Pakistani people that he has Chinese support.* [redacted]

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[redacted]

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MALTA

At the talks in Rome this week Prime Minister Mintoff accepted the final UK-NATO offer of \$36 million annually, plus bilateral aid, but with the proviso that Valletta receive a separate one-time payment of \$26 million by the end of January to cover an anticipated budget deficit. The North Atlantic Council meets today to consider this request.

On the question of access to facilities on Malta, Mintoff agreed to exclude military visits by Warsaw Pact countries. He would not rule out visits by the Chinese, however. As for other countries, Mintoff suggested that the use of the UK facilities be subject to both Maltese and British approval. Mintoff said that, among NATO countries, at least Italy and West Germany would be permitted access, but the US would not. He would not agree to subject Libyan visits to prior UK approval.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

JORDAN-LEBANON

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COMMUNIST CHINA - NATIONALIST CHINA



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USSR-Cuba: A Kashin-class guided missile destroyer, an F-class submarine, an ocean-going rescue tug, and a tanker left Mariel late Thursday. They have passed through the Florida Strait and are maintaining a northeasterly course, apparently headed for home waters. The Soviets now have in Cuba only another rescue tug which arrived in Mariel earlier this week and two special support barges in Cienfuegos.

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