



The President's Daily Brief

24 February 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Vietnam's new ambassador in Moscow has had several meetings with Soviet officials, and differences apparently surfaced on one of these occasions. (Page 1)

Vietnam [redacted]
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An impressive coterie of advisers accompanied Soviet Defense Minister Grechko to Egypt last weekend. (Page 3)

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The Communists in Cambodia have carried out a number of shellings and ground attacks against an isolated provincial capital north of Phnom Penh. (Page 5)

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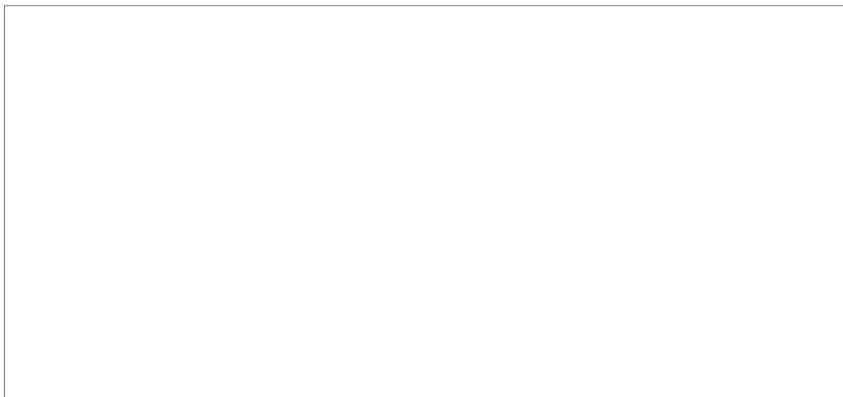
USSR - NORTH VIETNAM

Since his arrival in Moscow last month, the new North Vietnamese ambassador, Vo Thuc Dong, has been meeting with senior Soviet officials with above-average frequency. During February, for example, Dong met three times with Premier Kosygin, once with politburo member Kirilenko, and once with Central Committee Secretary Katushev (the CPSU official responsible for relations with ruling Communist parties). All of these meetings have been characterized by the Soviet press as having taken place in an atmosphere of "friendship and cordiality," except the meeting with Kosygin on 11 February. That session, which the North Vietnamese never reported, was characterized by Moscow as having been marked by an atmosphere of "friendship and comradely frankness," which in Communist jargon is an indication that there were problems.

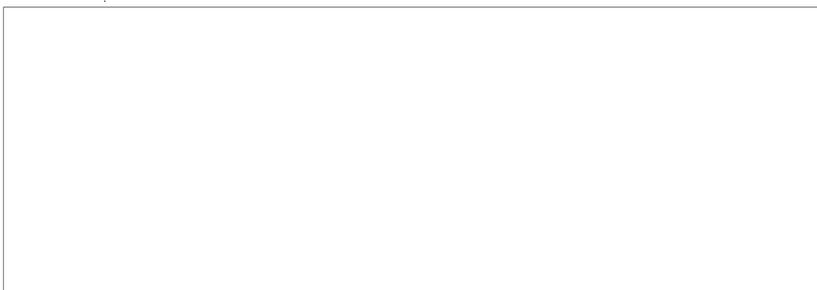
Moscow does not generally acknowledge differences with the North Vietnamese, but the admission of "frankness" may have been connected with the Soviet Government statement on the Vietnam war also issued on 11 February. From the Vietnamese point of view, the statement was somewhat late in coming and lukewarm in its endorsement of the latest Communist negotiating proposals. Hanoi would probably have preferred that Moscow had explicitly condemned the President and his "eight-point plan." The North Vietnamese probably also wanted more specific Soviet endorsement of the newest version of the proposals presented by the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

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VIETNAM



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USSR-EGYPT

Soviet Defense Minister Grechko was accompanied in Egypt last weekend by an impressively high-level coterie of advisers. The delegation included the top political commissar of the armed forces, the commander of the air force, the first deputy commanders of the navy and air defense forces, the first deputy chief of staff, the head of the general staff's military assistance directorate, and several communications specialists.



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Grechko, whose swing through the Middle East was interrupted due to his illness in Iraq last December, was at that time accompanied by a lower ranking group of advisers than he ultimately took to Egypt. Their presence at the Cairo talks suggests that Grechko's visit was the occasion of an on-the-spot restudy of Egypt's military needs, as well as those of the USSR's own forces operating in the Middle East.

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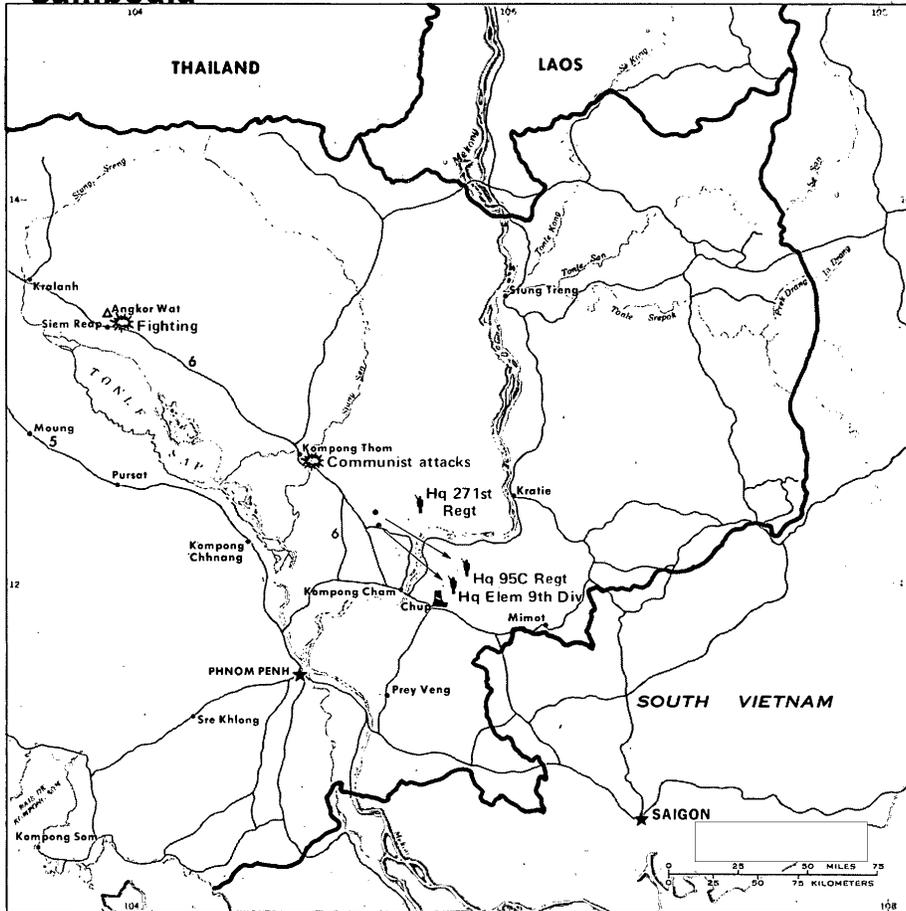
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Cambodia



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CAMBODIA

The Communists have carried out a series of ground, mortar, and rocket attacks against government defenders of the isolated provincial capital of Kompong Thom, 75 miles north of Phnom Penh. One ground attack south of the town resulted in unusually heavy casualties on both sides.

The Communist attacks may be intended to tie down government forces while major North Vietnamese units leave the area. A headquarters element from the 9th Division, which directed the counteroffensive against the Chenla II operation along Route 6, and the headquarters of the 95C Regiment recently moved east of the Mekong to the Chup plantation. This move apparently allowed the 7th Division, which had been responsible for base security in that area, to move closer to the South Vietnamese border. Only one 9th Division regiment is left west of the Mekong.

Farther west in the Siem Reap area, government forces have gained some ground against well-fortified Communist positions near the temple ruins of Angkor Wat.

Because of the temple ruins, Cambodian troops are unable to use artillery and mortar fire, but they appear determined to try to flush the Communists from the area.

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