



The President's Daily Brief

29 February 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Israeli aim in attacking Lebanon was to end fedayeen terrorism for some time to come. (Page 1)

The weak enemy offensive in South Vietnam has so far failed to achieve the kind of military successes that pay political dividends. (Page 2)

[redacted]
[redacted] Soviets [redacted] Laotian [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 4)

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The West Germans wish to achieve more normal relations with Communist China. (Page 5)



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ISRAEL-LEBANON

[redacted] was undertaken with the intention of ending fedayeen terrorism for some time to come. The Israeli aim is now closer to realization, for as their troops withdrew across the border yesterday, the Lebanese Army had been issued orders to replace the fedayeen in the Arqoub area which abuts Lebanon's frontier with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

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The Israelis will not be able to relax their guard, however, because it is doubtful that the Lebanese are capable of interdicting all fedayeen activity in this mountainous region. The Lebanese Army has been relatively successful in controlling the fedayeen along the western part of the frontier with Israel, but for some time had abandoned the eastern portion to the guerrillas. The Israelis apparently expect some terrorists to remain active in the east, and during their foray into Lebanon built three roads along the slopes of Mount Hermon to facilitate future operations against the fedayeen.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The anticipated Communist offensive around Tet has so far been small and unimpressive. The evidence of enemy battle directives and major combat preparations was so extensive and convincing that it does not seem possible the allies were victims of a hoax. Many battle directives emphasized the need for a show of military muscle during President Nixon's trip to China. Moreover, Hanoi's propaganda tirade against the President's journey, plus its willingness to have the Communist walkout at the Paris talks interpreted as a slap against the President's visit, indicate that the enemy intended to hit as hard as it could.

Communist military action in and around populated areas following Tet did increase above levels of the preceding months. When all the statistics are recorded, the incident rate, if not the intensity of the action, will probably show a significant increase. The rise in enemy action, primarily involving raids by local forces and sappers, began on the eve of the President's departure and continued to sputter along with scattered strikes against pacification projects and military strongpoints. The Communists struck many targets which had not been hit for a long time, including a number which had been mentioned in enemy battle orders. It thus appears that the Communists did try to mount a substantial offensive near populated areas. Many of their plans for action by local forces flopped, however, and main force units apparently were not ready to kick off major attacks.

One problem was lack of surprise. The allies, [redacted] were ready with extensive counteraction. Enemy communications [redacted] make it clear that heavy allied counteroperations, both from the air and on the ground, significantly disrupted enemy plans.

Another problem was that, for all the exhortations to the Communist troops to go all out, the enemy still seemed bent on exercising economy of force. At no point did he commit the kind of forces that, regardless of superior allied combat support, might have turned the tide.

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The Populated Lowlands and Delta

In the coming weeks, we expect a few hard strikes here and there and a slight increase in the pace of operations at one point or another. So far, however, it does not appear that the Communists have the organization or strength near populated areas to take advantage of US withdrawals to pose a threat which remaining friendly forces cannot contain. There is considerable evidence, nevertheless, that the Communists are still working hard to improve their position near population centers.

The Highlands and Western Border Areas

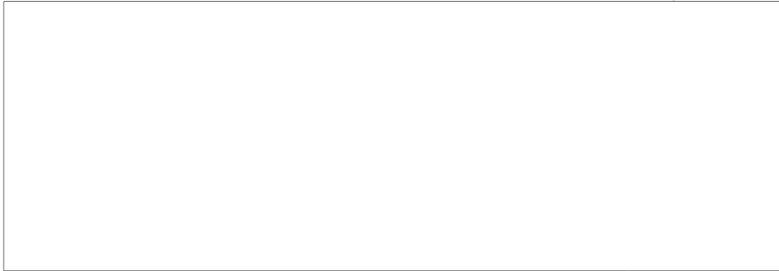
Throughout the past few months, the Communist buildup in the central highlands and in northwestern Military Region 1 has proceeded rapidly. The Communists gave every indication of wanting to launch significant attacks in this area during Tet to support intended operations elsewhere. The evidence, however, suggests that the Communists were unable to complete preparations for major operations in time. First-line main force units in these areas or en route to them have been hit hard by allied counteractions, particularly air attacks, and their plans have been thrown off schedule. It thus seems likely that the biggest share of the Communist campaign in the west and north is still to come. Climatic conditions will support a Communist ground campaign in these areas any time over the next several months. Furthermore, the recent movement of other main force units from positions in Cambodia to areas opposite the South Vietnamese border in Military Region 3 suggests that the enemy still hopes to increase the military pressure on the allies in this area as well.

In assessing the dry season campaign so far, Hanoi can hardly be happy with the results. The Communists have clearly failed to achieve the kind of military successes that pay immediate political dividends with the small-unit actions of the past couple of weeks. Although Communist operations have probably diverted a good many South Vietnamese troops from the pacification program, even this achievement is likely to be short-lived unless the enemy can achieve a bigger impact on the battlefield.

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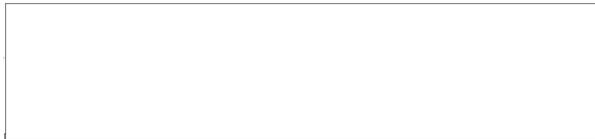
LAOS-USSR



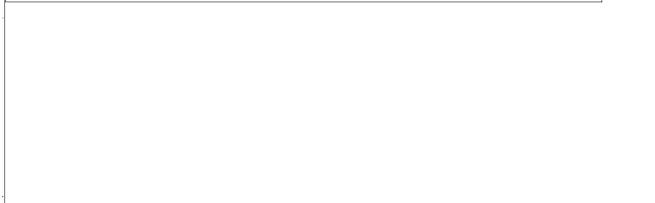
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WEST GERMANY - COMMUNIST CHINA

The President's visit has whetted West German interest in normalizing relations with Communist China. Reports from our embassy in Bonn [redacted]

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[redacted] indicate the Brandt government and the opposition parties agree on the desirability of establishing relations but differ on timing. The government would seek preliminary discussions in a third country capital, possibly Paris, but only after ratification of Bonn's treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland. The opposition, which opposes ratification of the treaties, has called for negotiations without delay.

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The Brandt government is concerned lest approaches to Peking jeopardize its rapprochement with the USSR. The opposition, on the other hand, sees relations with Peking as possibly providing Bonn with leverage in its relations with Moscow.

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NOTE

Cuba: We now estimate that the sugar harvest this year will be less than five million tons, mainly as a result of unseasonably heavy rains over the past few weeks which followed a severe drought. This compares with nearly six million tons last year and 8.5 million tons the year before. In order to help meet export commitments, the government has reduced individual monthly sugar rations from six pounds to four. Sugar normally accounts for about 80 percent of Cuba's exports, and it will be difficult this year to maintain imports of food-stuffs, raw materials, and capital goods at current levels.

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