



*The President's Daily Brief*

*9 March 1972*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

9 March 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

[Redacted] Laos. (Page 1)

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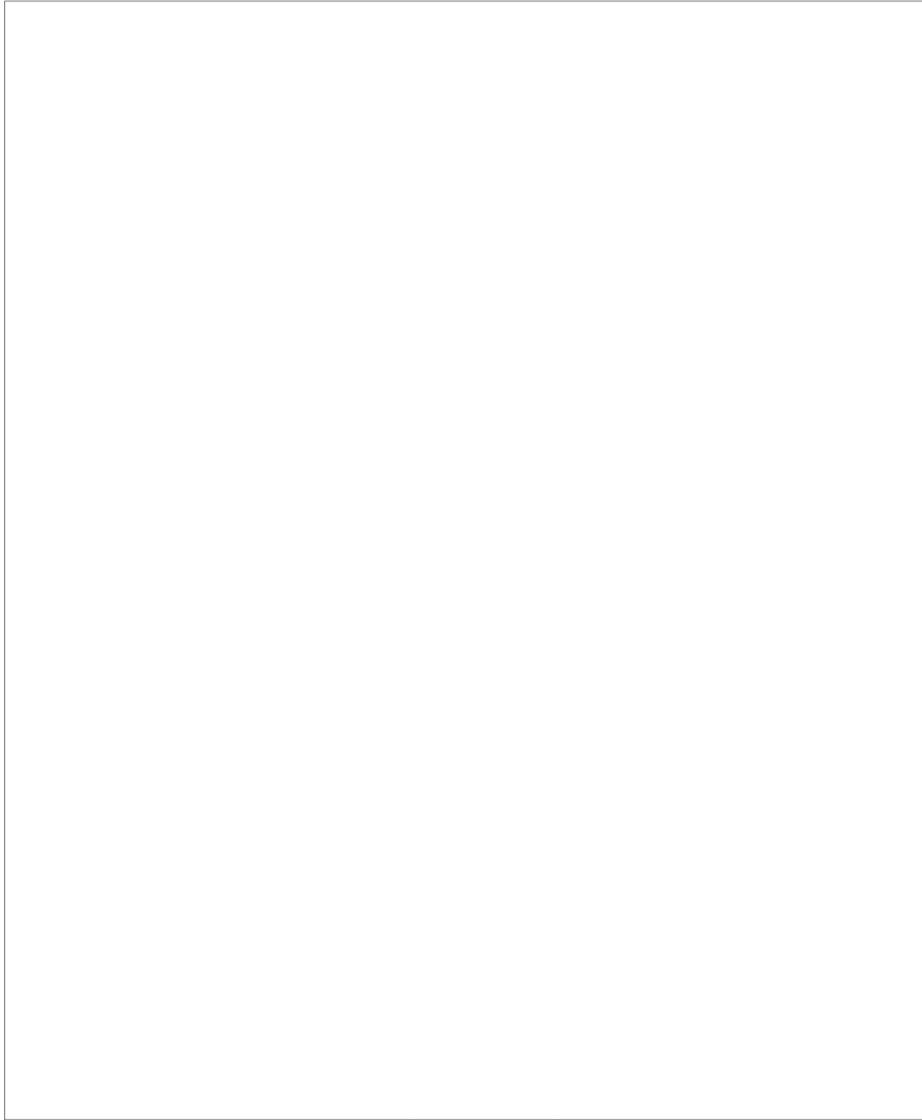
North Vietnam [Redacted]  
[Redacted] (Page 2)

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Libyan Deputy Premier Jallud's recent visit to the USSR is discussed on Page 3.

At Annex, we discuss the North Vietnamese military campaign in Laos during the current dry season.

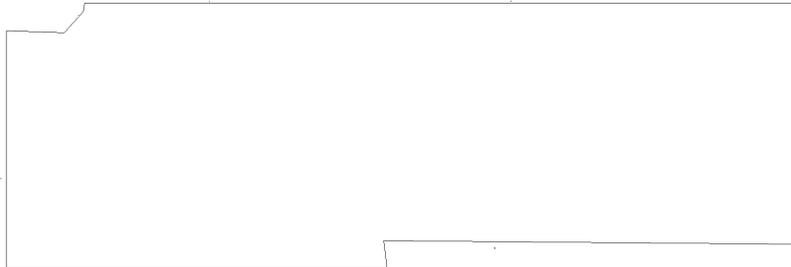
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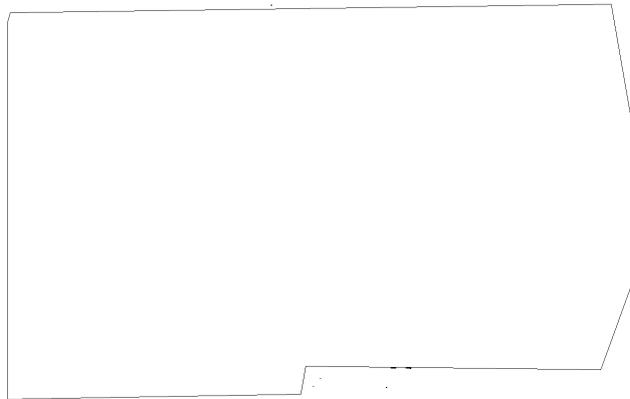
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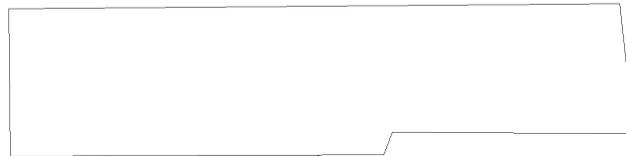
LAOS



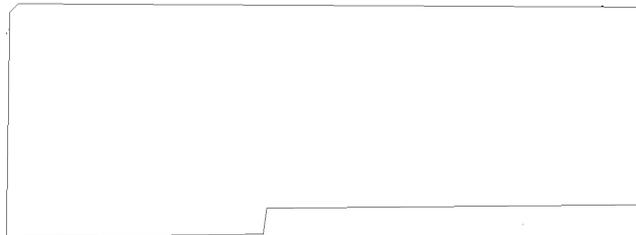
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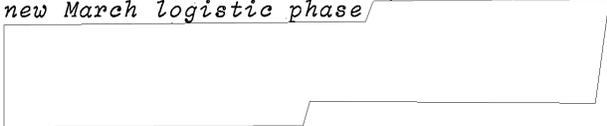
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INDOCHINA

The North Vietnamese recently transported an unusually large amount--some 2,800 tons--of military supplies to a logistic authority southeast of Ban Phone in the Laotian panhandle. According to an intercept of 5 March, the shipments included nearly 15,000 AK-47 rifles--enough to equip four infantry divisions--and ammunition for a wide variety of weapons from the AK-47s to 82-mm. mortars, 122-mm. field guns and howitzers, and 160-mm. mortars.

*The supplies probably are destined for combat units in South Vietnam's central highlands, where 160s were recently introduced as well as for the COSVN area farther south. The shipments occurred during February, before the start of the new March logistic phase*

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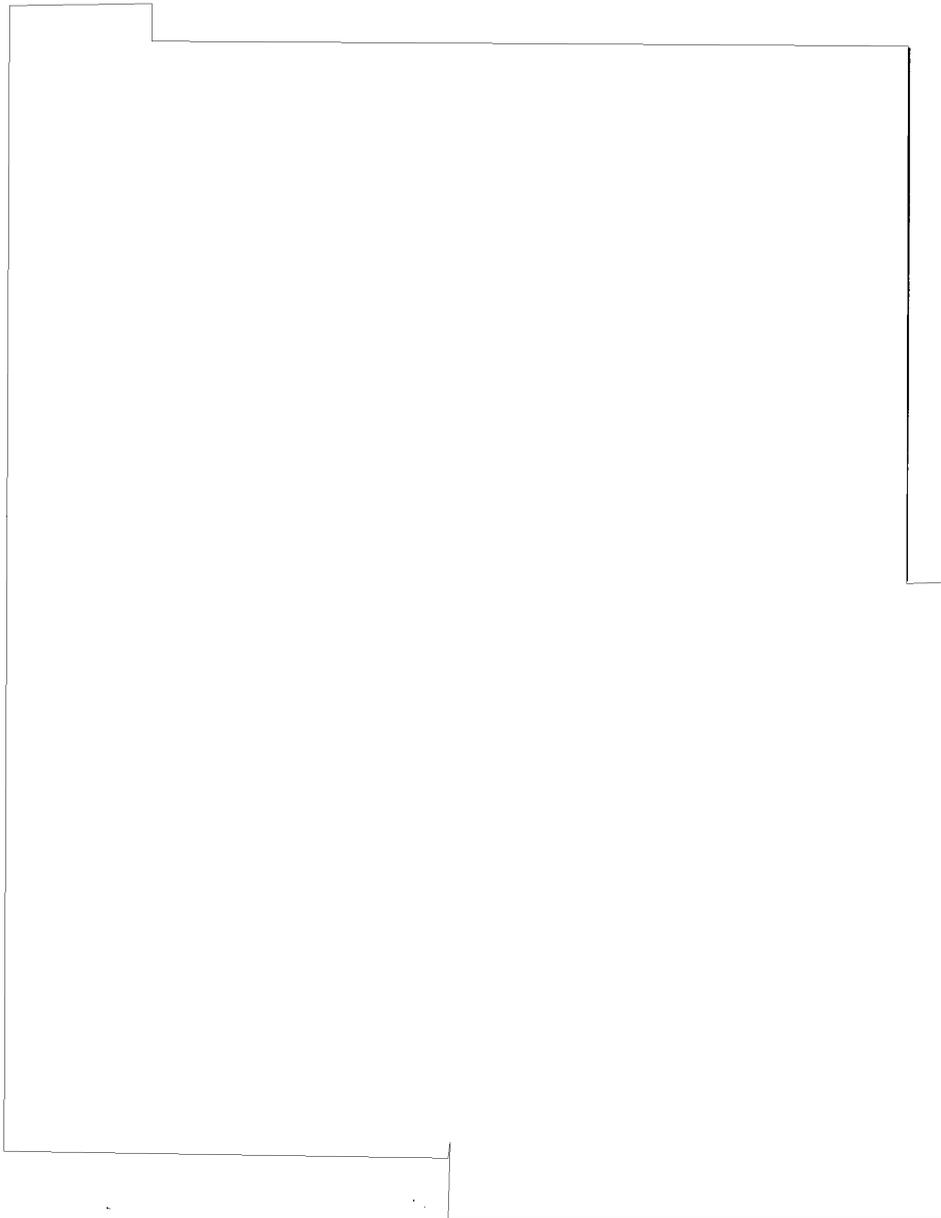
**FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY****USSR-LIBYA**

*All did not go well during Deputy Premier Jallud's recent visit to the USSR. Jallud left the Soviet Union on 4 March, but no communiqué was issued until the 7th. Separate Soviet and Libyan documents were then released, and they contained some notable differences: for instance, whereas the Libyan communiqué called for the closing down of all military bases in the Mediterranean, the Soviet statement referred only to "imperialist" bases. Neither communiqué mentioned military aid, which was one of Jallud's reasons for undertaking the trip.*

*Both sides have devoted little media coverage to the trip, and neither felt the need even to tone down criticism of the other. On the day of Jallud's departure for Moscow, for example, the Libyans criticized the idea of a Soviet-Iraqi friendship pact which Baghdad had earlier announced would be signed later this year. One day after Jallud left the USSR, the Soviets castigated the Libyan press for trying to drive a wedge between the USSR and the Arab states.*

*The only positive achievement of Jallud's visit was an agreement for Soviet aid in extracting and refining Libyan oil. A few Soviet experts have been in Libya since 1970, and this new agreement would seem to require an increase in personnel. Premier Qadhafi, however, remains extremely suspicious of the Soviets and is unlikely to allow a large influx of technicians.*

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## LAOS

*With more than half the dry season over, the North Vietnamese must view the results of their military campaign in Laos as mixed. They have been successful in the south, where they ousted dispirited government forces from the Bolovens Plateau in mid-December, recaptured the town of Dong Hene in January, and have kept government forces tied down well away from the infiltration corridors. Indeed, they have withdrawn one main-force regiment from the area, suggesting that they plan no major new offensive action.*

*In north Laos the Communists retook the Plaine des Jarres, but then lost momentum. Despite the unseemly alacrity with which they claimed victory in mid-January, the Communists have not taken the Long Tieng complex, nor have they destroyed the fighting spirit of Vang Pao's forces or of the Thai volunteers who have played a crucial role in Long Tieng's defense. Hanoi has nothing decisive to show for the additional men and firepower it committed to the battle in the north this year, and it has only about two months of good weather remaining to achieve its objectives.*

*The Struggle for Long Tieng*

*The campaign in north Laos began in October when Hanoi reinforced its troops there with the remaining part of the 312th Division, an independent regiment, 130-mm. field guns and anti-aircraft artillery units. In mid-December these forces swept across the Plaine, scattering Vang Pao's irregulars in only three days and dealing a stinging blow to their morale. By early January, the North Vietnamese had breached the government's hastily prepared defenses and on 12 January carried the fight into the Long Tieng Valley. A tenacious defense by the irregulars, particularly along Skyline Ridge overlooking the valley, combined with allied air power and Communist logistic problems, finally halted the North Vietnamese advance.*

*Having failed in their first attempt to overrun the stronghold, the Communists apparently spent the next several weeks stockpiling supplies in forward caches and filling out depleted units with replacements. They also began a new effort to overcome the logistic difficulties that have always plagued them southwest of the Plaine by building a road from the Plaine toward Long Tieng.*

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While the Communists prepared for the next round, Vang Pao rallied and strengthened his battered forces. In an audacious bid to regain the initiative he split his 11,000-man force in early February and launched more than 5,000 irregulars north from Pha Dong to threaten the enemy's supply lines south and east of the Plaine.

The irregulars never seriously interfered with Communist supply movements, but they helped relieve the pressure on Long Tieng. The Communists felt it necessary to pull back [redacted] from the Long Tieng area to protect logistic corridors near the Plaine. Last week, however, the Communists forced the irregulars back toward Pha Dong.

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What Now?

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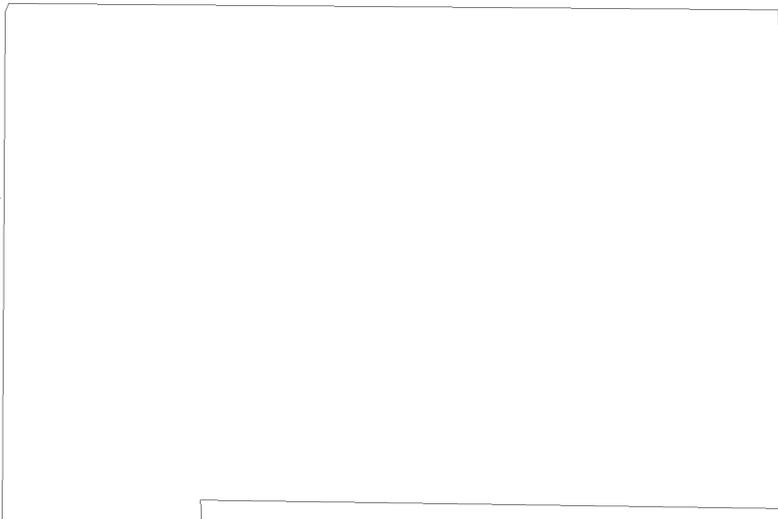
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 Intercepts indicate that at least 1,500 replacement troops have moved into or are en route to northern Laos. Other messages urge units to prepare for new offensive action.

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Whatever the immediate tactics chosen by both sides, the irregular offensive has bought the government some important time. If Long Tieng should fall, the North Vietnamese would have little time left to push beyond. The major Meo refugee settlements south and west of Long Tieng appear to be safely removed from any major offensive aimed at breaking the back of Meo resistance. If Long Tieng holds until the rainy season, then both the government and the Communists will be left once again in possession of territory they consider vital to their interests in the north, and the possibility will once again arise of a negotiated or de facto understanding providing for a de-escalation of the war there.

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