



The President's Daily Brief

24 April 1972

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In South Vietnam, the Communists have eased their pressure against An Loc, but appear to have begun a major drive in the central highlands. (Page 1)

Political developments in West Germany over the weekend have done little to resolve the uncertainty surrounding prospects for ratification of the Eastern treaties. (Page 2)

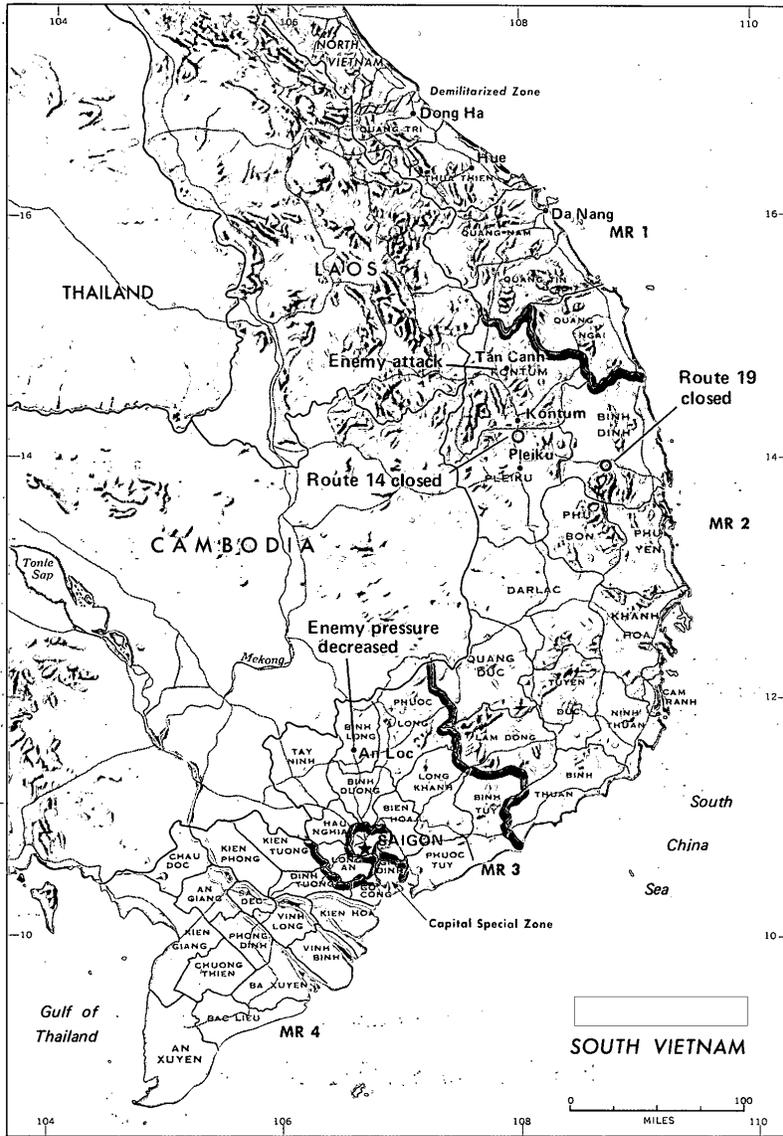
Bonn has agreed to defer the conclusion of a general traffic agreement with Pankow until after ratification of the Eastern treaties. (Page 3)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The situation around An Loc north of Saigon eased somewhat over the weekend despite another round of Communist shellings and ground assaults around the town early on Sunday. Government units recaptured parts of the northern section of the town from the Communists. South Vietnamese helicopters were also able to fly supplies into An Loc on 22 and 23 April and to begin evacuating wounded. Government sweep operations south and east of the Binh Long provincial capital yesterday produced few contacts, strengthening indications that some of the Communist units involved in the recent fighting have pulled back to regroup or have begun shifting into adjacent provinces.

In the central highlands, Communist activity is increasing. On Saturday the Communists in Kontum Province began hitting the forward command post of the South Vietnamese 22nd Division at Tan Canh with heavy artillery and mortar fire. They followed up on Sunday with tank and infantry assaults, and they are now reported to have overrun the position. The Communists also succeeded in cutting Route 14 between Pleiku and Kontum cities, preventing further movement of a South Vietnamese resupply convoy toward Kontum.

Route 19, the primary artery into the highlands from the central coast, has been closed for two weeks, forcing South Vietnamese reinforcements and supplies to travel a long way around, using Route 14. With both roads out, and with a limited South Vietnamese resupply capability by air, the two principal provincial capitals in the highlands may soon start to run short of food and other provisions.

In the far north, the Communists shelled South Vietnamese artillery bases in both Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces yesterday, following up in some instances with ground probes. They also attempted another armor-led thrust into the Dong Ha area. In southern Military Region 1, a Communist rocket attack against Da Nang air base this morning injured at least eight American personnel. Elsewhere along the central coast and in the delta provinces south of Saigon, Communist activity during the weekend consisted mainly of local force attacks on government outposts, refugee centers, and land routes.

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WEST GERMANY

Political developments during the weekend leave the prospects for ratification of the Eastern treaties precarious. In yesterday's state election in Baden-Wuerttemberg, all three major parties equaled or surpassed their goals and no other party won legislative representation. As expected, the opposition Christian Democrats won an absolute majority--53 percent and 65 of the 120 seats. The Social Democrats won 37.5 percent and 45 seats, an improvement on their showing in the 1969 federal election and in the last two state elections. Their coalition partners, the Free Democrats, who would have been satisfied with seven percent, won 8.9 percent and 10 seats.

In the Bundestag, a deputy unexpectedly resigned last night from the Free Democratic Party, leaving Chancellor Brandt's coalition with a bare majority of 249 of the 496 seats.

The deputy presumably will still support the Eastern treaties as an independent, and unless his move triggers a chain reaction, the good Free Democratic showing in the election should guarantee the coalition's slight edge on the treaties.



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NOTES

West Germany - East Germany: West German negotiator Egon Bahr has told Allied representatives that Bonn has agreed with Pankow not to try to conclude a general traffic agreement until after ratification of the Eastern treaties. According to Bahr, Bonn feels that in the negotiations so far it has achieved its two major political objectives: Pankow has agreed in principle to discuss relations between the two Germanies and to improve inter-German travel. Bahr said that during his talks with East German negotiator Kohl on 19 and 20 April the two remained far apart on the key issue of Berlin travel, but that neither side was prepared to let this issue stand in the way of a treaty. Bahr and Kohl have two days of talks scheduled this week and then will break off until the second week of May.



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