



The President's Daily Brief

1 July 1972



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

1 July 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

South Vietnamese Marines and paratroopers are within striking distance of Quang Tri City, but there are signs that the Communists may soon react more vigorously to the government offensive. In Saigon, several nationalist parties are making some progress in setting up an alliance that would be independent of the Thieu government. (Page 1)

In southern Laos, irregulars have driven the Communists from most of their positions west of Khong Sedone; government forces still are faring less well in the Bolovens Plateau area. (Page 3)

Thailand's General Praphat is now opposed to early contacts between Bangkok and Peking, although he remains committed eventually to explore the possibility of some ties with the Chinese. (Page 4)

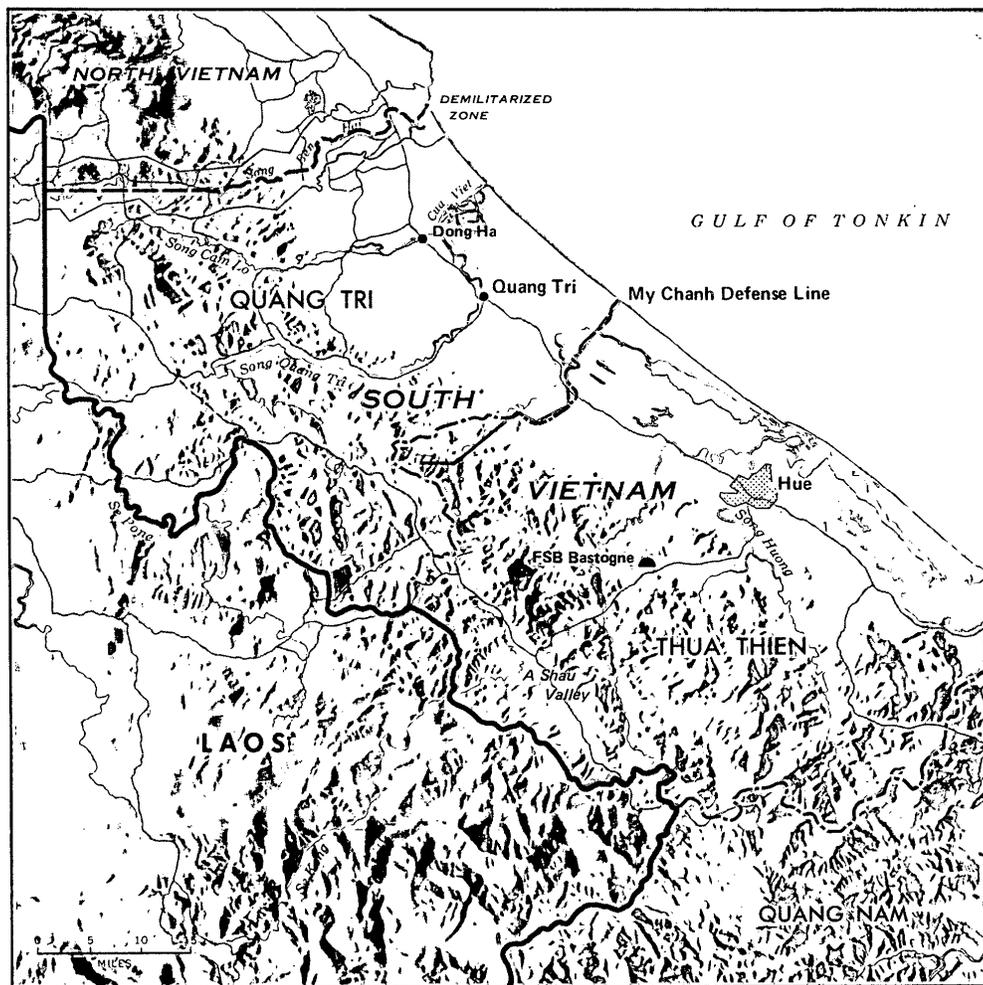
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VIETNAM

South Vietnamese forces moving toward the enemy-held capital of Quang Tri Province still are meeting only moderate resistance. South Vietnamese paratroopers airlifted yesterday into positions south of Quang Tri City are nearing the city. South Vietnamese Marines attacking from the east also have moved within striking distance of the city.

The Communists evidently have not established strong defensive positions because of heavy, sustained allied air, artillery, and naval bombardment. Intercepted enemy communications indicate that the North Vietnamese are also having difficulty moving equipment and troops to safer areas. One artillery unit, for example, was directed to destroy its weapons if it could not pull them back. At least two North Vietnamese artillery regiments have been detected pulling out of firing range of the My Chanh defense line.

There are signs, however, that the Communists may soon react more vigorously. An anti-aircraft unit has been ordered to establish emplacements within Quang Tri City, along with elements from a regular enemy artillery unit, and a recently captured prisoner claims that his infantry regiment was brought up to strength by two replacement companies in late May. The Communists yesterday overran a weak government position overlooking Fire Support Base Bastogne west of Hue.

Farther south, a government convoy succeeded in moving through the pass from Pleiku to Kontum City in the first successful ground resupply effort there in more than two months.

* * *

Several of South Vietnam's largest nationalist parties appear to be making some headway in setting up a political alliance that would be independent of the Thieu government.

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four parties have agreed on the structure of the new organization, and they are negotiating with other groups in an attempt to broaden the alliance.

The leaders of all of these parties have cooperated with President Thieu in the past, but they have been soured by his refusal to give them much power in his government. They believe that there may be an early agreement to end the fighting and that, in such a situation, a broad-based political grouping not identified with Thieu would have an important role.

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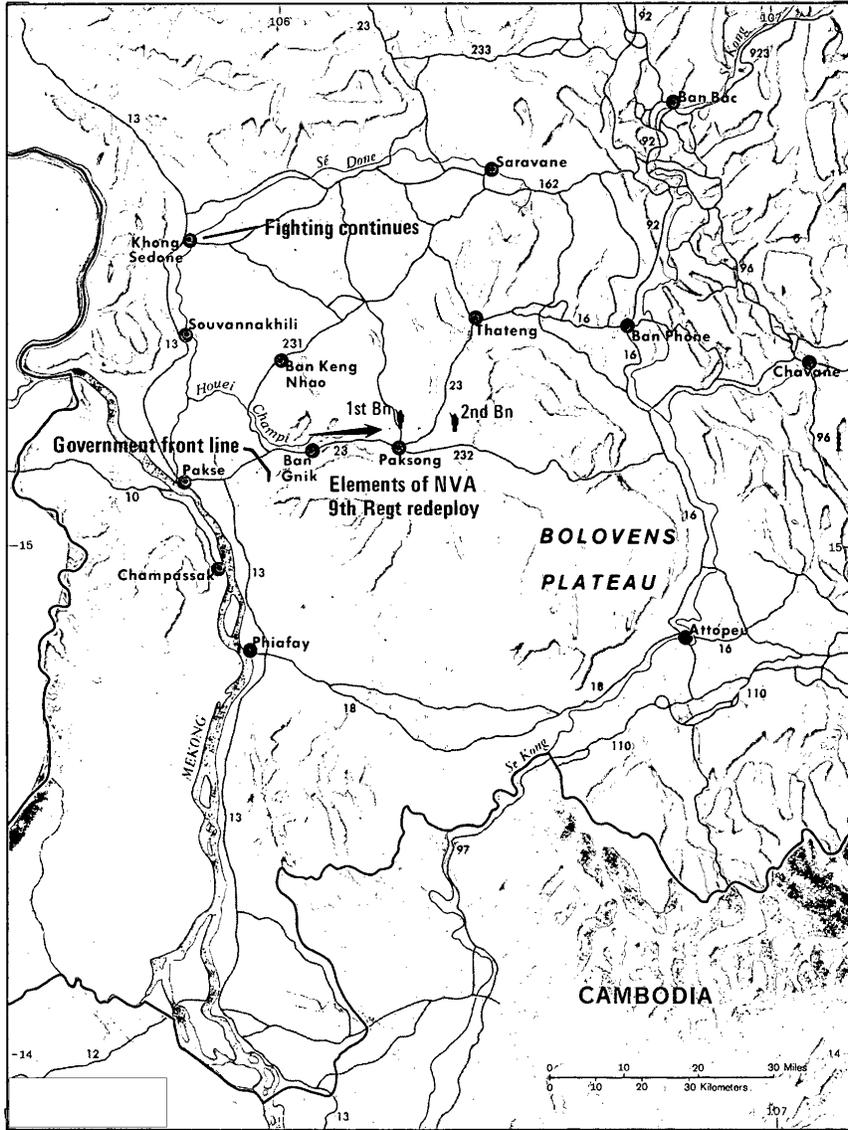
Collectively, the parties that are discussing unity would represent a significant political grouping. In the past, however, South Vietnamese political combinations of this sort have invariably broken down because the leaders refuse to subordinate their personal and party interests to a common policy. This alliance's effectiveness will also be hampered by a requirement that the leaders of the participating parties agree on all decisions.

* * *

North Vietnam's initial comments on President Nixon's announcement of the resumption of the Paris peace talks provide no hint of a change in its negotiating line. The North Vietnamese delegation in Paris yesterday claimed that US and world opinion had forced the US to return to the talks. The Viet Cong delegation in Paris repeated the main elements of the North Vietnamese pronouncement and added that the US was trying "to force the South Vietnamese people to accept the dictatorial and corrupt regime" of President Thieu.

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LAOS: Bolovens Plateau Area



- Government-held location
- Communist-held location

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LAOS

After more than two weeks of hard fighting in the Khong Sedone area, irregular troops have managed to drive the Communists from most of their positions west of the town. The North Vietnamese, however, are strongly resisting government efforts to move to the north and are continuing to shell government units in the town itself.

The government continues to fare less well at the edge of the Bolovens Plateau, where three irregular battalions were dispersed last week. On Thursday a North Vietnamese attack forced a Lao Army battalion from its position at the Route 23/231 junction.

The junction has been the front line on the Bolovens since early in the dry season, but the latest evidence suggests that the Communists may not intend to hold it through the current rainy season. At least two of the three battalions of the 9th Regiment, which have been on the western Bolovens since early this year, recently moved some 20 miles eastward to the Paksong area.

In northern Laos, irregulars are still trying to push Communist forces from the hills southwest of the Plaine des Jarres. Sporadic Communist shellings and probes, as well as bad weather, which is limiting air support, have prevented the irregulars from securing the high ground at Phou Pha Sai and Tha Tam Bleung.

The Communists have reduced their forces in northern Laos to the same five-regiment level that existed prior to the buildup for the dry season offensive late last year. All regiments of the 312th Division have been withdrawn to the Vinh area of North Vietnam.

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THAILAND-CHINA

General Praphat, the de facto policy maker of the ruling military body, said recently that he was opposed to any contacts between Thailand and China at the present time. Praphat stated that there would be no change in Thailand's cordial relations with Nationalist China and that he had issued orders prohibiting Thai sports teams from visiting China.

The latter decision reverses Bangkok's public statement two months ago that it would accept an invitation to send a Thai badminton team to Peking.

Although Praphat has long been wary of China, he is committed to explore the possibility of some ties with Peking eventually. His reasons for going slow at the present juncture may be related to domestic politics. Improved relations with the Chinese would tend to undermine Praphat's argument that the security threat to Thailand necessitates the continuation of rule by the military without a new constitution or a parliament. This tougher line also reflects the absence from high-level government councils of former foreign minister Thanat, whose persistent advocacy of discussions with the Chinese had prodded the military authorities to accept a more open-minded view.

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NOTES

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China-Ceylon: Peking has underscored its desire for close ties with Ceylon by giving visiting Prime Minister Bandaranaike red carpet treatment this week. A mammoth public turnout greeted her on her arrival Sunday, and Mao Tse-tung met with her-- his first visit with any foreigner since his talk with President Nixon in February. The Chinese also provided a new \$52-million loan in an effort to keep Mrs. Bandaranaike's government afloat as a counter to Soviet and Indian influence in southern Asia.

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