



The President's Daily Brief

29 August 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

29 August 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The South Vietnamese advance in Quang Nam Province appears to have slowed as Communist resistance has stiffened. (Page 1)

In Laos, the five irregular task forces near the Plaine des Jarres are still meeting opposition, but two of them are advancing toward their objectives. (Page 2)

Japan [redacted]
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[redacted] (Page 3)

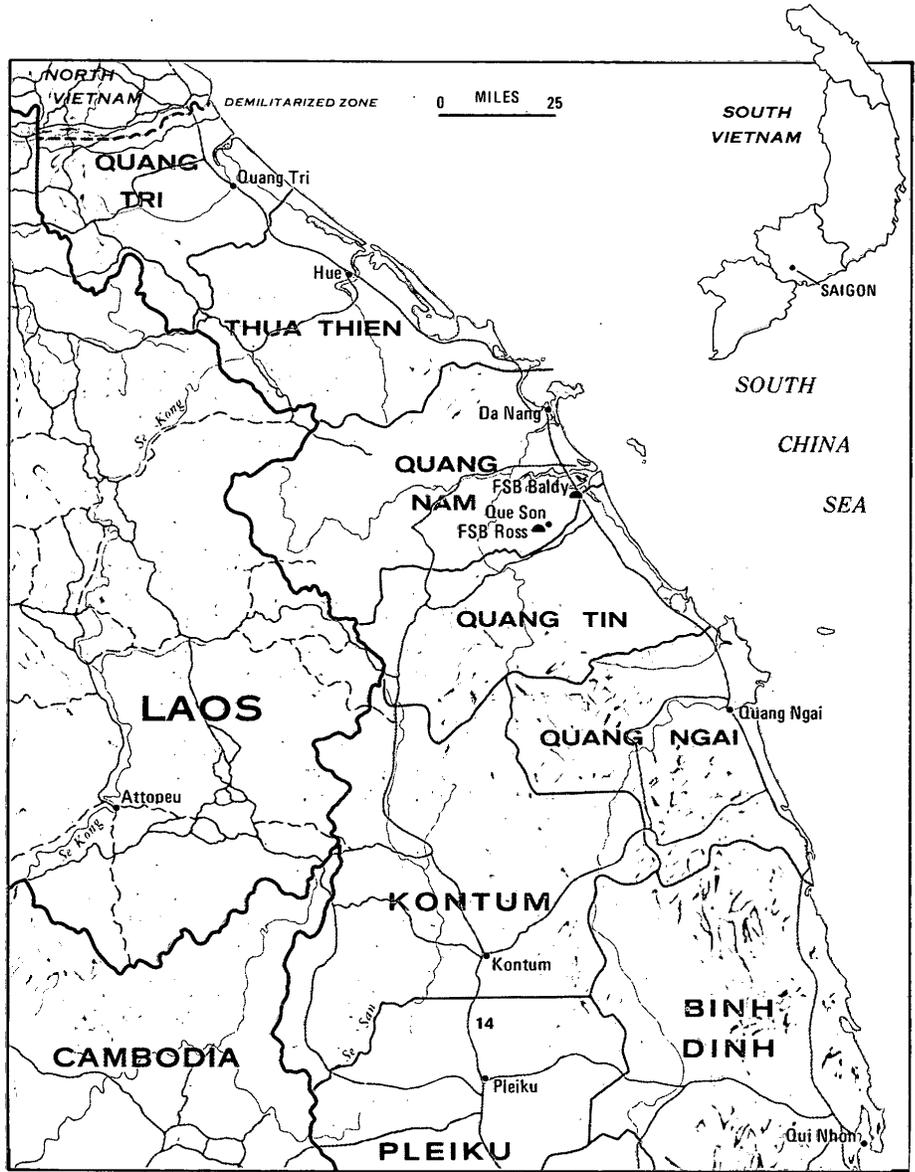
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China's veto of UN membership for Bangladesh has further damaged the already shaky Simla Agreement between Pakistan and India. (Page 5)

The Soviet withdrawal from Egypt continues, but Moscow is still delivering military equipment to Egypt. (Page 6)

Soviet party chief Brezhnev is touring key grain-growing areas to put his personal authority behind current efforts to bring in a maximum harvest. (Page 7)



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VIETNAM

The government advance in Quang Nam Province appears to have slowed as Communist resistance has stiffened. Although South Vietnamese forces now control most of Que Son district town, they have not been able to push the Communists out of the military compound near the center of the town, which the enemy seized over the weekend. Intense ground-fire near the town is also making it difficult for government helicopters to bring in reinforcements. West of the town, government forces moving toward Fire Support Base Ross have inflicted fairly heavy casualties in skirmishes with the enemy. A Communist ground attack against Fire Support Base Baldy--the base supporting the government operation in Quang Nam Province--caused little damage.

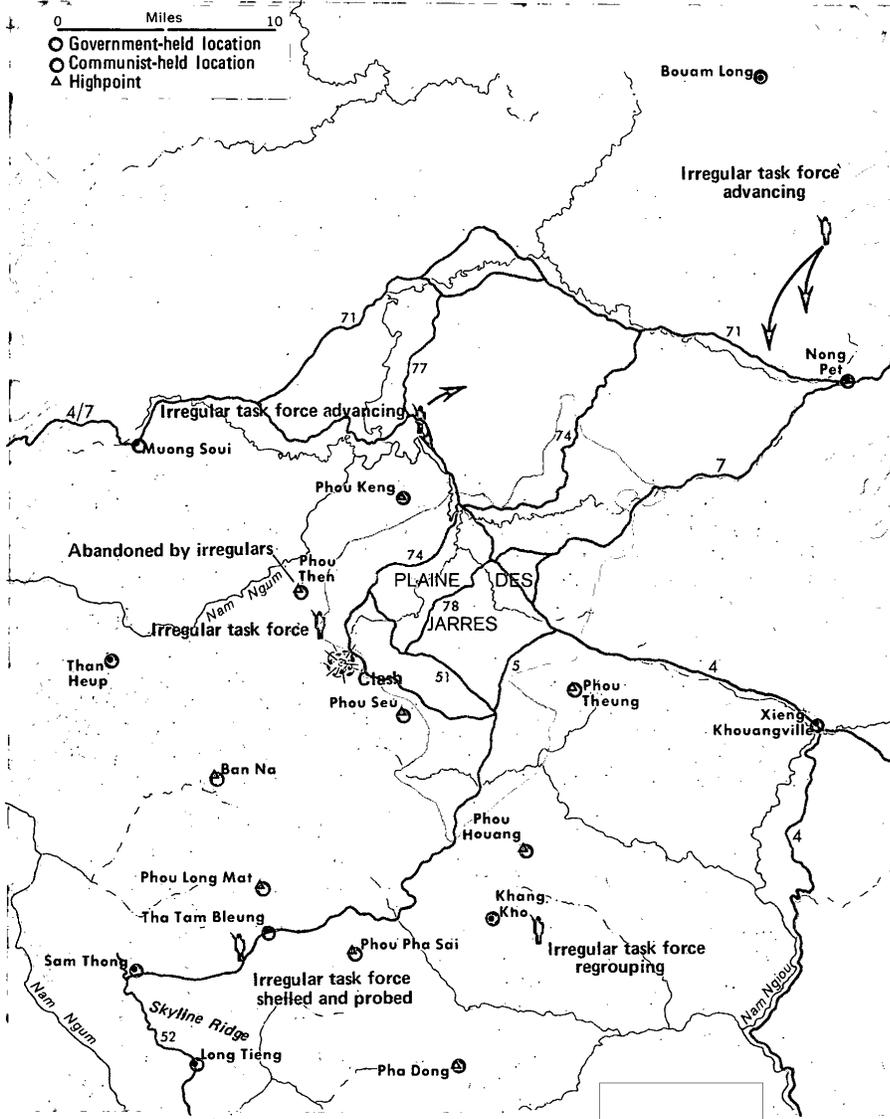
Farther north, government forces in and near Quang Tri City are still encountering stiff resistance. The heaviest fighting involved the South Vietnamese Marines, who were involved in a number of clashes in the northeastern and southern sectors of the city.

Communist forces that recently shifted from Kontum to Pleiku Province may be preparing to increase the fighting there. Over the past few days, there has been a sharp increase in harassing attacks against government positions near Pleiku City, and on the night of 26-27 August, the Communists barricaded Highway 14 south of the city.

* * *

The Red River Delta may receive its first tropical storm of the season. "Cora" is forecast to hit the Vietnamese coast today some 20 miles south of Haiphong with 45-50 knot winds and torrential rains. Although the wind velocity of the storm is not extreme, its inland course and good size could cause extensive flood-producing rains and may test the improvements recently made to the dikes.

LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

The five irregular task forces operating near the Plaine des Jarres are still meeting opposition, but two of them are advancing toward their objectives. In the foothills west of the Plaine, heavy shellings on Sunday forced irregulars to abandon positions on Phou Then, which they had occupied the previous day. Other elements of this task force were able to beat back an attack, however.

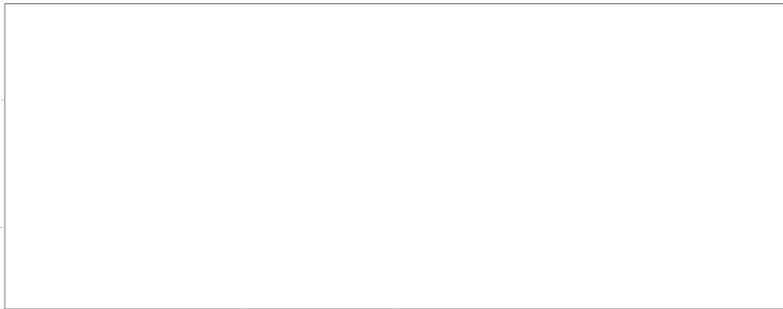
South of the Plaine, irregulars near Tha Tam Bleung were shelled and probed several times on 27 August by elements of the 174th North Vietnamese Regiment. Elements of another task force that were forced to abandon two positions near Phou Houang last weekend have regrouped about two miles to the south. One unit from the task force is still missing, however.

Near Phou Keng, on the Plaine's northern edge, another task force clashed several times with Communist troops on 27 August. Vang Pao has assumed personal direction of these irregulars who had been suffering from low morale and a lack of effective direction; they are now moving toward the high ground overlooking the Plaine.

Northeast of the Plaine, a task force that had been moving south from Bouam Long against almost no opposition also had several contacts on Sunday with North Vietnamese forces near Nong Pet. These irregulars are to harass Communist supply lines in this sector.

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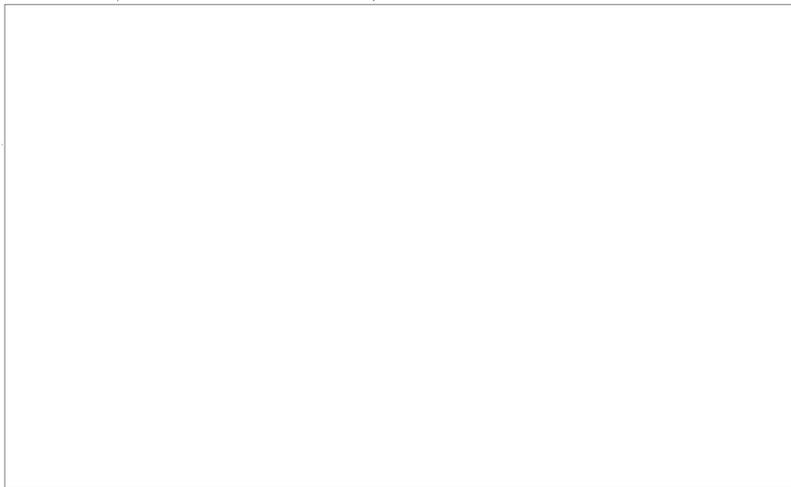
JAPAN



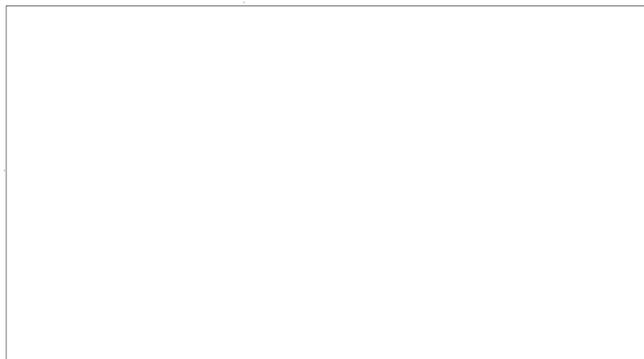
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SOUTH ASIA

The primary casualty of China's veto of UN membership for Bangladesh appears to be the already shaky Simla Agreement between Pakistan and India. Prime Minister Gandhi believes that President Bhutto committed himself to early recognition of Bangladesh during their meetings at Simla last month. This was to have been an indication of Pakistan's sincerity in future dealing on bilateral problems. She views both his failure to follow through and the Chinese veto--for which she believes he shares responsibility--as violations of the "spirit of Simla."

[redacted] President Bhutto, because of growing domestic political opposition, has had second thoughts about the advisability of recognizing Bangladesh now, and may well have asked the Chinese to buy him some time with a veto in the UN. As it became clear that Peking actually would cast a veto, Mrs. Gandhi's approach to Bhutto became harder. In asking for the working-level talks that began last Friday with the Pakistanis, she appeared to want to prevent further erosion of the Simla Agreement while still bargaining for recognition. Failing to get a positive response from Bhutto, however, she has decided to contravene the agreement herself by delaying withdrawal of Indian troops from Pakistani territory in hopes of achieving recognition. These withdrawals would have given up a bargaining card without achieving tangible concessions in return.

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Although the working-level talks are continuing, they appear to be deadlocked. There are renewed signs that India will revert to using the return of the Pakistani prisoners of war it has in its hands as a major bargaining chip to achieve recognition for Bangladesh. Bhutto has not directly responded to such pressures in the past, and he is not likely to do so now.

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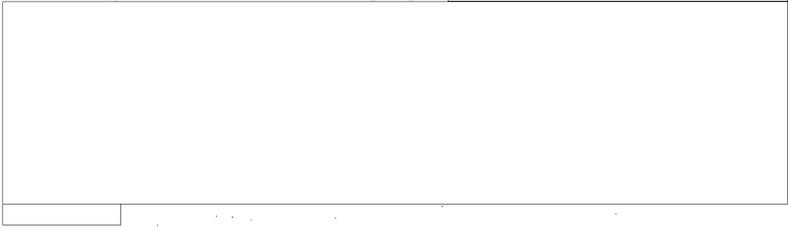
EGYPT-USSR

The Soviet withdrawal from Egypt continues. Four Soviet transport aircraft were involved in flights between Cairo and the USSR over the weekend, bringing to 90 the total of such flights since the airlift of equipment and personnel began in mid-July. We estimate that some 5,500 Soviet personnel departed via these transports. As many as 2,200 more could have left on other Soviet aircraft, as well as another 1,200 aboard Soviet passenger ships. This brings the total of Soviet departees--military personnel and dependents--to about 9,000.

We believe that a few thousand Russians are still in Egypt. Some presumably are instructors, technicians and key advisers while others may be awaiting transportation home.

Meanwhile, we have evidence from satellite photography that, despite Sadat's ouster of the Soviets, Moscow is continuing to provide military equipment to the Egyptian armed forces. Photography of the Alexandria port [redacted] shows 15 MIG-21 fuselage crates on the quay. [redacted]

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Brezhnev Visits Virgin Lands



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USSR

Party chief Brezhnev is touring key grain-growing areas of the Virgin Lands for on-the-spot conferences with local farm officials. Brezhnev arrived in northern Kazakh Republic on Thursday to address a meeting of local agricultural authorities. He then traveled to Barnaul for a similar meeting, and arrived in Krasnoyarsk yesterday. His speeches have not been published.

Brezhnev is undoubtedly seeking to put his personal authority behind current efforts to bring in a maximum harvest. Much is riding on the Virgin Lands--semi-arid areas first opened to cultivation by Khrushchev. Bad weather has damaged the crops in the other major grain areas of the Soviet Union, but the Virgin Lands have produced an above average stand of wheat this year. The situation there is precarious, however, since the crop is over a week late in ripening and is in serious danger of being damaged by early frosts. In addition, harvest efforts are being hampered by prolonged cool and rainy weather.

The Soviets have also launched a nationwide press campaign urging consumers to economize on the use of bread. This drive--reminiscent of the one conducted in 1963 when the country suffered from a dismal grain crop failure--began earlier this month in the Ukraine, one of the areas most severely affected by this year's poor harvest.

Although large purchases of foreign grain this year will partially offset domestic losses, some of the measures taken in 1963, such as removing flour from the market and lowering the quality of bread, may have to be employed again.

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