



The President's Daily Brief

29 December 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

29 December 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Peking staged a rally today in support of the Vietnamese Communists directed primarily at building the prestige of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. (Page 1)

Aerial photography over North Vietnam shows an undamaged Komar guided missile boat at the Ile de la Surprise, south of Hon Gai. The evacuation of Hanoi continues. (Page 2)

The Communist attack against Bouam Long, the only remaining Lao Government base north of the Plaine des Jarres, has begun. (Page 3)

London has publicly announced its unwillingness to meet Maltese Prime Minister Mintoff's demands that he be compensated for losses caused by the floating of the pound. (Page 4)

In Egypt, President Sadat has renewed his appeals for a firm domestic front to support the task of liberating the occupied territories. (Page 5)

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CHINA-VIETNAM

Peking staged a rally today in support of the Vietnamese Communists directed primarily at building the prestige of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. Madame Binh, the PRG foreign minister, is now in Peking for a short visit.

Until now, Chinese reaction to Vietnamese developments has been measured and low-keyed. Apart from the New China News Agency statement on bomb damage to a Chinese ship in Haiphong harbor last week, Peking has not directly linked the Vietnamese issue to Sino-American relations, and the ship has not been mentioned again.

The only previous hint of stronger backing for Hanoi in the wake of the impasse at Paris and renewed US bombing was included in the joint communiqué which ended the Chinese foreign minister's visit to North Korea this week.

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NORTH VIETNAM

[redacted] analysis of aerial photography taken on [redacted] shows an undamaged Komar guided missile boat at the Ile de la Surprise, south of Hon Gai.

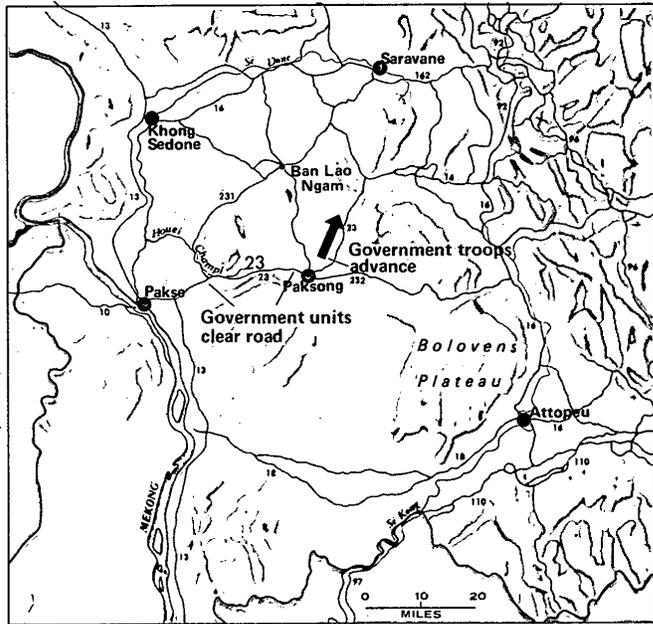
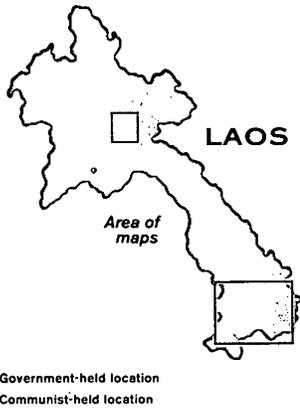
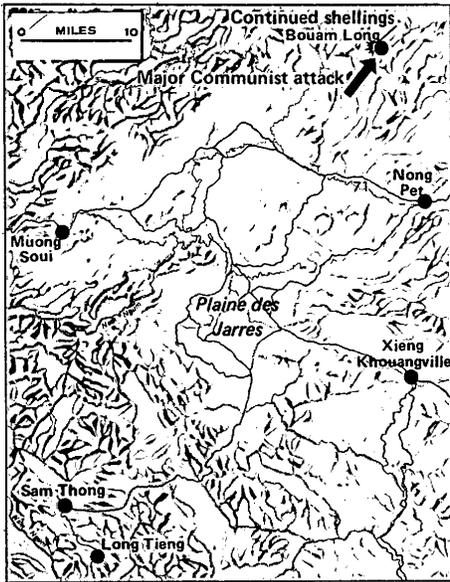
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This sighting accounts for the fourth of the four Komar boats which arrived at Fort Bayard (Chan-chiang) from the USSR earlier this month, along with their Styx missiles (25-nm. range). The boats apparently crossed the Gulf of Tonkin to North Vietnam on 16 December and US Navy aircraft sank one and damaged two near Hon Gai three days later.

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LAOS

The Communist attack against Bouam Long, the only remaining government base north of the Plaine des Jarres, has begun.

Ground and artillery attacks on 27 and 28 December forced irregulars to abandon several positions--an artillery post six miles south of the base and other outposts closer to Bouam Long itself. Artillery bombardment has forced the closing of the base airstrip except to helicopters. Government defenders, however, have so far suffered few casualties.

In the south, government troops have cleared the last Communist units from Route 23 between Pakse and Paksong on the central Bolovens Plateau. The road is being repaired and should soon be opened to traffic for the first time in over a year. Other government troops continue to push north from Paksong against only light resistance.

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UK-MALTA

London announced yesterday its unwillingness to meet Prime Minister Mintoff's demands that he be compensated for losses caused by the floating of the pound. The UK's public position, which also makes clear London's interest in continuing the base agreement with Malta, will be confirmed in a note to Mintoff [redacted]

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The British announcement was made in large part to make London's position known to the Maltese public. Mintoff, after weeks of secrecy, made a speech to the Maltese parliament on 27 December in which he placed the onus on the UK for the possible abrogation of the March agreement.

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The UK asked its NATO allies yesterday to try to convince Mintoff that abrogation of the agreement would create economic problems for Malta.

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EGYPT

In his first speech to the nation since mid-October, President Sadat called for a firm domestic front to support the task of liberating the occupied territories. Sadat warned against the stimulation of sectarian strife, vowed not to permit a polarization of youth, and generally tried to attribute internal restiveness to the machinations of Egypt's external enemies.

Responding to criticism that the nation is not ready for war, Sadat said he had ordered the cabinet to prepare for the "outbreak of fighting" and promised to set up committees on "war affairs" at the national level and in every province. He pledged further efforts to enlist the assistance of Syria, Libya, and the other Arab states in the military effort. As a final measure he promised an "international move," presumably a new diplomatic effort, that would remind the world of the responsibilities it bears for Egypt's current situation.

Sadat referred only briefly to the value of Arab-Soviet friendship and reminded his listeners that they had to "appreciate the circumstances and limits of every friend." He included only standard criticism of the US for its support of Israel.

Sadat's appeals for unity and for determination in facing the "coming conflict" are not new. He has offered nothing tangible to resolve the nation's difficulties, and the malaise in Egypt can only continue and may well increase.

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