



The President's Daily Brief

26 February 1973

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

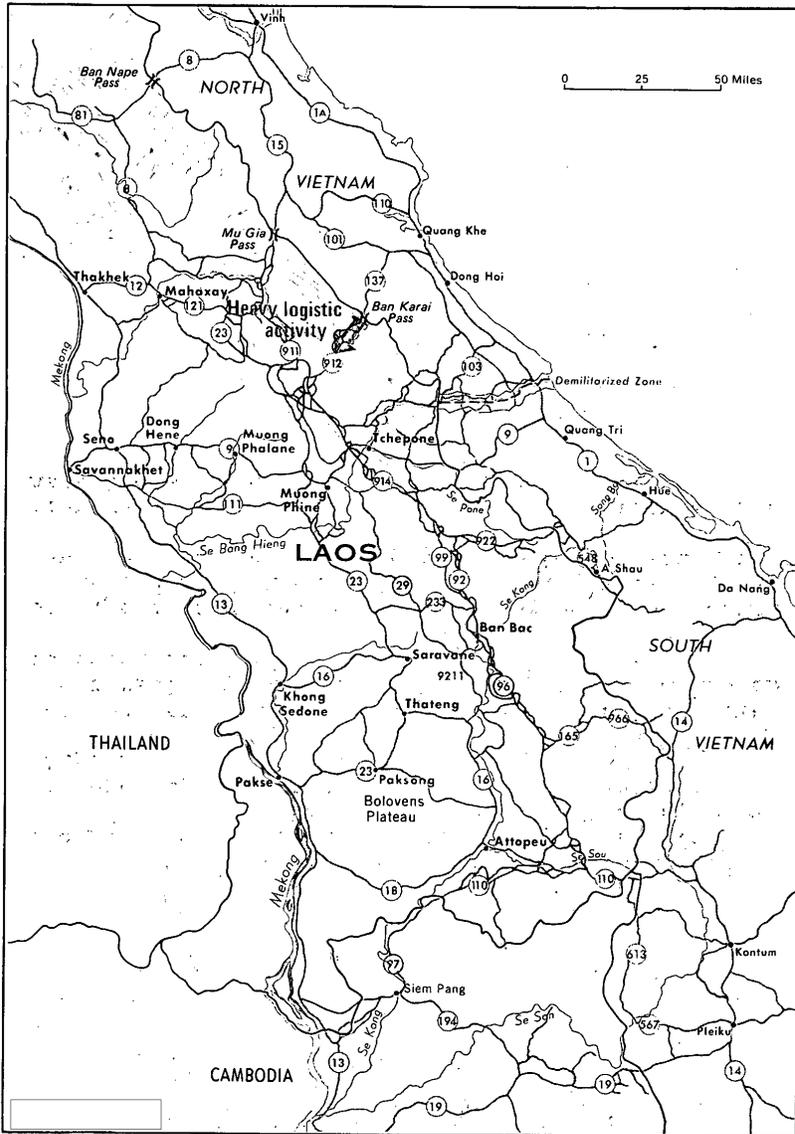
We now have evidence that some North Vietnamese troops entered the infiltration pipeline after the cease-fire on 28 January. Substantial quantities of supplies also continue to move southward.
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The Laotian Communists evidently are cutting down their military action to help get talks started on carrying out the cease-fire. (Page 2)

On Page 3 we discuss a somewhat fragmented account of an indirect contact between the Cambodian Government and Sihanouk's in-country "Interior Minister."

Iran reports a record seizure of opium from a truck near the Afghanistan border. (Page 4)

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VIETNAM

We now have evidence that some North Vietnamese troops entered the infiltration pipeline after the cease-fire on 28 January. North Vietnamese messages indicate that five infiltration groups--about 1,600 men in all--passed through a way station near the Ban Karai Pass between 10 and 14 February. It takes about ten days to travel from Vinh to this area.

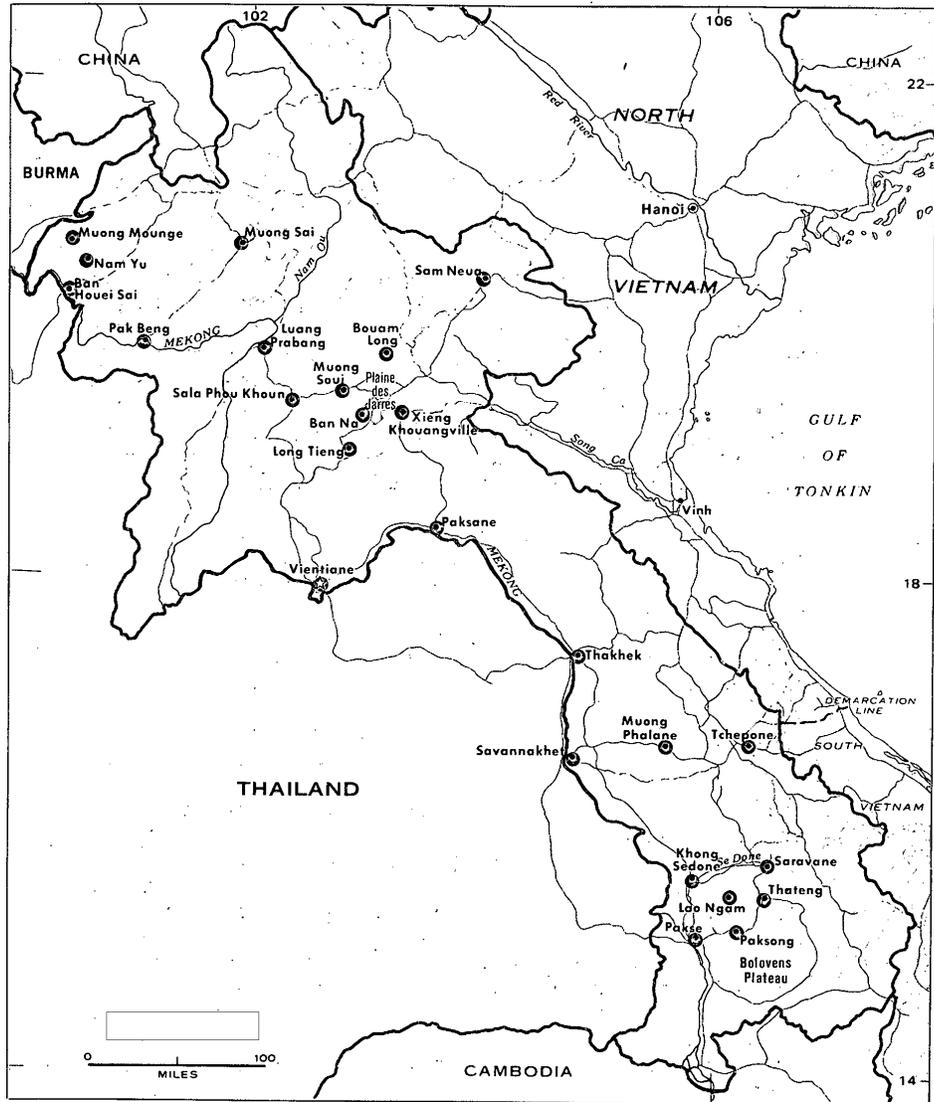
Including these five, a total of 16 new infiltration groups are moving southward in southern Laos. Nearly all are infantry troops. There are indications that five additional groups have passed through the system undetected.

We estimate that some 23,000 troops have left North Vietnam for infiltration into the South since 1 January. Of the total, approximately 13,000 are earmarked for the southern portion of South Vietnam, while 10,000 are headed for the central and northern parts of the country. The many groups which appear to be traveling by truck should reach their destinations in the next few weeks.

The Communists also are sending substantial quantities of supplies southward to facilities near the Ban Karai Pass, apparently for shipment into southern Laos. According to a field translation of a message of 23 February, some 1,100 trucks moved about 4,300 tons of food, ordnance, and other cargo through this area between 1 and 22 February. Later intercepts indicate that heavy logistic activity continued in this area on the 23rd and 24th.

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LAOS



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● Government controlled
 ○ Communist controlled

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LAOS

Recent messages indicate that the Communists want to get talks in Vientiane started on implementing the cease-fire. According to a message of 25 February, Hanoi has ordered its units in the Plaine des Jarres area to stop initiating attacks against government forces. Similar messages have been relayed to North Vietnamese units operating in the central panhandle.

Meanwhile, Communist negotiator Phoun Sipraseuth says that he expects the military subcommittee to produce a "protocol of implementation of the cease-fire" no later than 28 February. Pathet Lao spokesman Soth Phetrasy adds that at the first session, scheduled for today, the Communists will table four items: application of the cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign forces, POWs, and supervision and control of the cease-fire. The government, for its part, has drawn up a list of proposed cease-fire violation checkpoints. The bulk of them are in the north and several are along the Chinese-constructed road network. According to a Canadian ICC official, even if the Communist timetable of 28 February is met, ICC teams could not move into the field until 8 March at the earliest.

The level of military activity began to taper off during the weekend, but both sides continued to maneuver to expand their holdings. On the Bolovens Plateau, the Communists rebuffed an initial government effort to push back into the Paksong area. Farther north, government forces moving along Route 13 north of Thakhek were dispersed following a sharp ground attack and are now retreating toward the town. Government forces near the Plaine des Jarres were pushed back from several high-ground positions they have been trying to establish overlooking Xieng Khouangville and also lost several small outposts near Bouam Long.

In a radio broadcast yesterday, the Pathet Lao outlined the territory they consider to have controlled at the time of the cease-fire. The Communists laid claim to the entire "Bolovens Region," specifically including government-occupied Thateng as well as Saravane, Paksong, and Lao Ngam. In the central panhandle Muong Phalane was the only place of significance mentioned. In the north, the broadcast noted that prior to the cessation of hostilities Pathet Lao forces controlled the "Plaine des Jarres - Xieng Khouang Region," Muong Soui, and the far north-western post of Nam Yu, but also claimed the Sala Phou Koun crossroads and Muong Mounge near the Burmese border--both still in government hands.

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CAMBODIA

The Cambodian Government [redacted] 25X1
made contact with Hou Youn, Sihanouk's in-country
"Minister of Interior." [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] a go-between for First 25X1
Minister Hang Thun Hak, says he has met Hou Youn
twice.

[redacted] 25X1
Hou Youn maintained he is opposed to a Communist
system for Cambodia and anxious to stop the fighting
provided the government demonstrates its sincerity
by naming trustworthy negotiators. Hou Youn left
the impression, however, that pro-Hanoi and other
pro-Sihanouk elements of the insurgency do not
share his interest in negotiations and support a
prolonged conflict.

[redacted] Hou Youn indicated 25X1
he is more favorably disposed toward the US and the
Soviet Union than toward China. He said any nego-
tiations would have to be arranged under the auspices
of Washington, Peking, and Moscow and be held in a
neutral country.

*The account underscores the insurgents'
factionalism, which is certain to impede
any quick settlement of the Cambodian
problem.*

*If President Lon Nol allows Hak to keep
this channel open, subsequent contacts
may shed more light on who really leads
the insurgency and where the loyalties
of these leaders lie.*

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NOTES

Iran: Earlier this month Iranian authorities confiscated some 12.7 tons of opium, the largest single haul taken anywhere in the world. [redacted]

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[redacted] In vigorously moving to halt the illicit opium traffic the Shah has provided his anti-narcotic forces with such tools as troop-carrying helicopter gunships, off-road motorcycles, and night vision equipment. Substantial cash awards provide further incentive for tight enforcement.

Israel - Arab States: The current inclination of Arab governments in the aftermath of Wednesday's downing of a Libyan airliner appears to be primarily toward political action. Despite continued Arab talk of retaliation, no serious anti-Israeli actions have been launched, and there is no evidence to support press reports that Libyan fighters have been ordered to search for and destroy Israeli airliners over the Mediterranean. The general furor over the shootdown remains high, however, and isolated anti-Israeli incidents could occur.

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