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The President's Daily Brief

April 8, 1974

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

April 8, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] A senior Israeli official believes it unlikely that Syria will enlarge the scope of hostilities, which may indicate that Tel Aviv is not considering a major pre-emptive strike at this time. (Page 1)

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Libya's President Qadhafi has transferred some functions to Prime Minister Jallud, perhaps in a move to force his colleagues in the leadership to rally around him. It may not work; Qadhafi is not dealing from a position of strength. (Page 2)

Jordan

Egypt

[REDACTED]

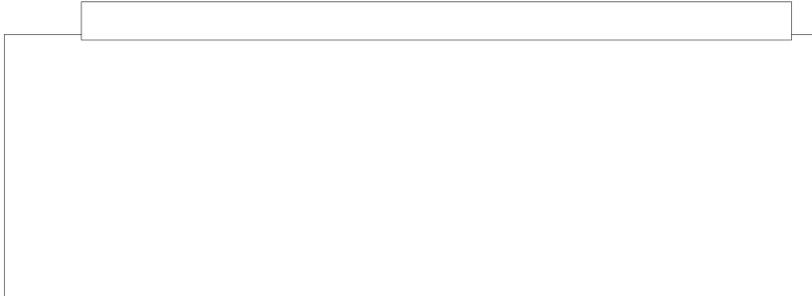
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(Page 3)

The Cambodian Government's situation at the besieged provincial capital of Kampot has improved, but the government's effort to retake Oudong is foundering. (Page 4)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL



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A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official told Ambassador Keating late last week it was unlikely that Syria would enlarge the scope of hostilities. The official did not believe Egypt would support Syria in a renewal of major fighting on the Golan front and thought Syria would not risk acting alone.

This Israeli official attributed the continued shelling by the Syrians to three considerations: an attempt to pressure Israel as Egypt had done during Egyptian-Israeli disengagement talks, an effort to satisfy those Syrians who oppose Asad's policy of seeking disengagement with Israel, and an attempt to impress upon the Soviets the seriousness of the situation prior to Asad's visit to Moscow on April 10. The Syrians may also be trying to make a similar impression on the US prior to the arrival in Washington this week of a Syrian envoy for disengagement talks.

If this statement is an accurate representation of Israeli Government views regarding Syrian intentions, a major pre-emptive strike by Tel Aviv seems unlikely at this time.

* * *

Israeli military forces maintained a high level of vigilance throughout the Passover holiday. Over 70 air sorties were flown over the Golan front and southern Lebanon on Saturday and another 55 on Sunday. Limited ground fighting between Israeli and Syrian forces occurred both days. For the first time since the cease-fire in October, Israel on Saturday called for air support to drive back a Syrian patrol that had penetrated the Israeli salient.

The Israelis have denied Syrian allegations that they carried out strafing again yesterday.

LIBYA

There is no evidence so far that President Qadhafi's authority was significantly diminished by the transfer of his administrative and ceremonial duties to Prime Minister Jallud or that his move was anything other than a voluntary step. According to the decision--released as a diplomatic note on April 6 but dated April 2--Qadhafi retains all important functions, including his position as commander in chief of the armed forces. The delay in issuing the decision and the absence of Jallud and two other members of the Revolutionary Command Council at the time of the announcement may indicate that Qadhafi's colleagues did not unanimously approve it.

For several weeks there have been rumors of grumbling within the council and the government over Qadhafi's high-handed behavior.

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In the past, when faced with discord, Qadhafi has often left the capital or threatened to resign in order to get his own way. This latest move--whether approved or not by the council--may be another attempt by the Libyan leader to upstage his colleagues. By removing himself from daily administration and seeking the high ground of supreme arbiter and ideologue, Qadhafi may believe he can strengthen his control at home and bolster his flagging image in the Arab world. He is not dealing from a position of strength this time, however, and his partial withdrawal may presage more difficulties.

JORDAN-EGYPT

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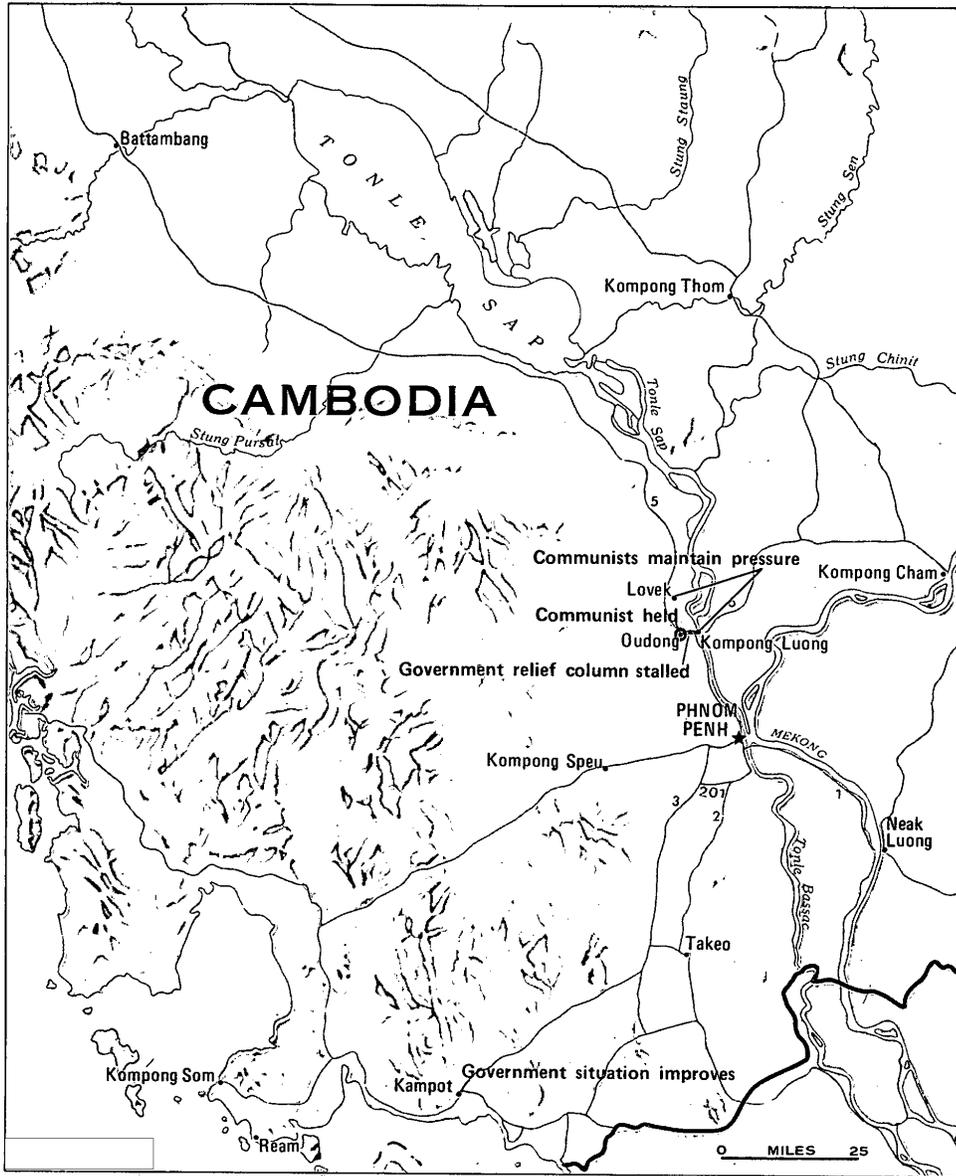
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CAMBODIA

The government's situation at the besieged provincial capital of Kampot has improved. Much of the credit goes to the Khmer air force, which provided timely and effective close air support. Fresh infantry reinforcements have enabled Kampot's defenders to re-establish their northern defensive perimeter and to begin operations to retake territory on their southeastern perimeter.

The Khmer Communists, however, are maintaining pressure on the city. Infantry and artillery attacks continued during the weekend, and a few rocket rounds fell in the city. Naval resupply craft approaching Kampot from the south have come under insurgent fire.

Intercepts indicate that the insurgents are determined to capture Kampot. On April 6 the Khmer Communist Central Party Committee urged the senior commander of the operation to "try hard to cut off the enemy immediately; use the forces and artillery at full strength; and do whatever is necessary to completely crush the enemy forces."

Meanwhile, the government's effort to retake Oudong is foundering. Cambodian forces advancing toward Oudong along Route 5 remain stalled a mile short of the town. The government's beachhead at Kompong Luong farther to the east has come under heavy Communist fire, and intercepts indicate that the insurgents hope to destroy the beachhead completely. Its loss would isolate the 2,500-man government relief force.

Northwest of Oudong, insurgent attacks have further reduced the southern and eastern defenses of the government base at Lovek. Some 2,000 Cambodian troops, along with more than 25,000 civilians, are surrounded there.

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