



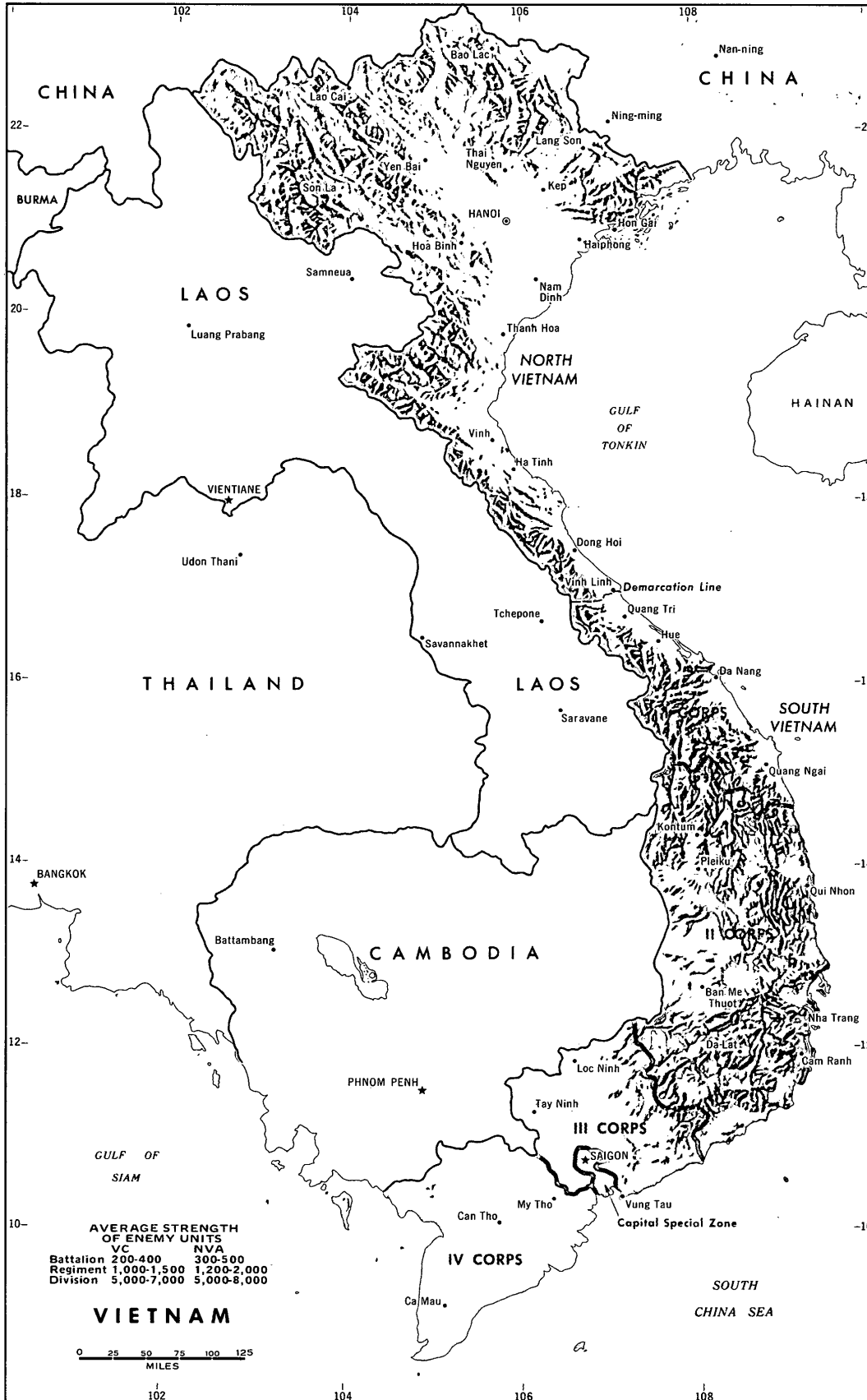
The President's Daily Brief

18 August 1969

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VIETNAM

Ground action has tapered off [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The most significant fighting over the weekend again centered in the provinces north of Saigon along the Cambodian border. The enemy probed allied positions in Tay Ninh and Binh Long provinces, losing 60 troops killed while inflicting only light losses on US and South Vietnamese forces.

There was new evidence over the weekend that the enemy is shifting sizable forces from the central highlands southward toward the III Corps area around Saigon. Two regiments of North Vietnamese--with supporting artillery--have been located near the boundary between II and III corps. They may stay there to attack allied outposts, or they might continue southward to participate in Communist operations closer in toward Saigon.

NORTH KOREA

The North Koreans still give no indication of the fate of the three crew members of the downed helicopter. Pyongyang radio so far has confined itself to brief statements confirming that the helicopter has been downed over North Korean territory. The first statement, broadcast yesterday at 10:39 a.m. EDT, was strikingly less martial than routine daily propaganda output. It almost certainly was intended to be a holding piece to give the regime more time to assess

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the incident and the US response. [REDACTED]

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The North Koreans have not yet answered our request for a meeting of the Military Armistice Commission on Wednesday. Pyongyang did not release two pilots captured in a similar incident in 1963 until a year later when the US submitted an official "apology."

LAOS

Souvanna Phouma seems about to begin the politically tricky business of reshuffling the military high command. He has indicated to his generals that he intends to "promote" the armed forces commander, General Ouan Rathikoun, to an important civilian position in the Ministry of Defense. He has also told Ambassador Godley that he plans other sweeping changes.

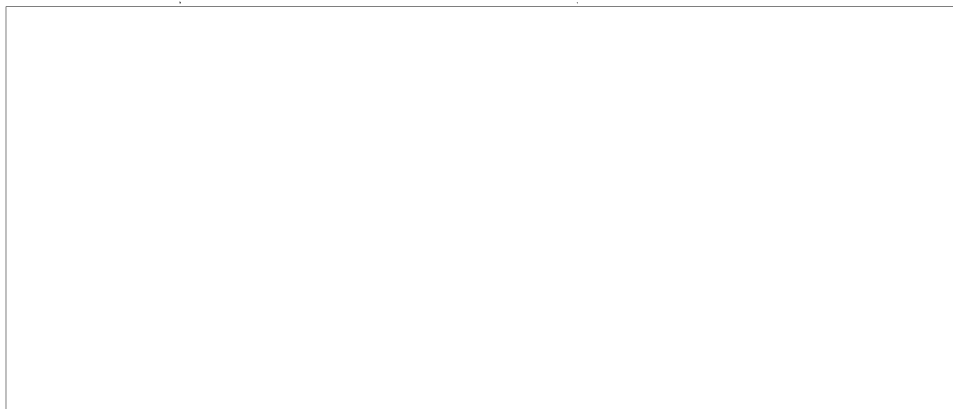
Souvanna will need some clever footwork. Long-entrenched senior officers are already maneuvering to hang on to their jobs, while their would-be successors jockey for favored position. The generals, whose political allegiance lies with the rightists, may also try to dilute Souvanna's efforts to strengthen the pro-Souvanna neutralist faction. Souvanna thinks this is necessary to counter the Communists' effort to portray their "patriotic neutralists" as the "true" neutralist representatives in the tripartite government.

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IRELAND

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