

*The President's Daily Brief*

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

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SYRIA

Damascus has said it intends to hold "for the time being" the six Israeli nationals aboard the hijacked TWA plane but plans to release other passengers shortly. The Palestinian fedayeen group that asserts it was responsible for seizing the aircraft claims it will try one of the Israelis for crimes against "many Palestinians." We have no evidence that the Syrian Government is a party to this plan.

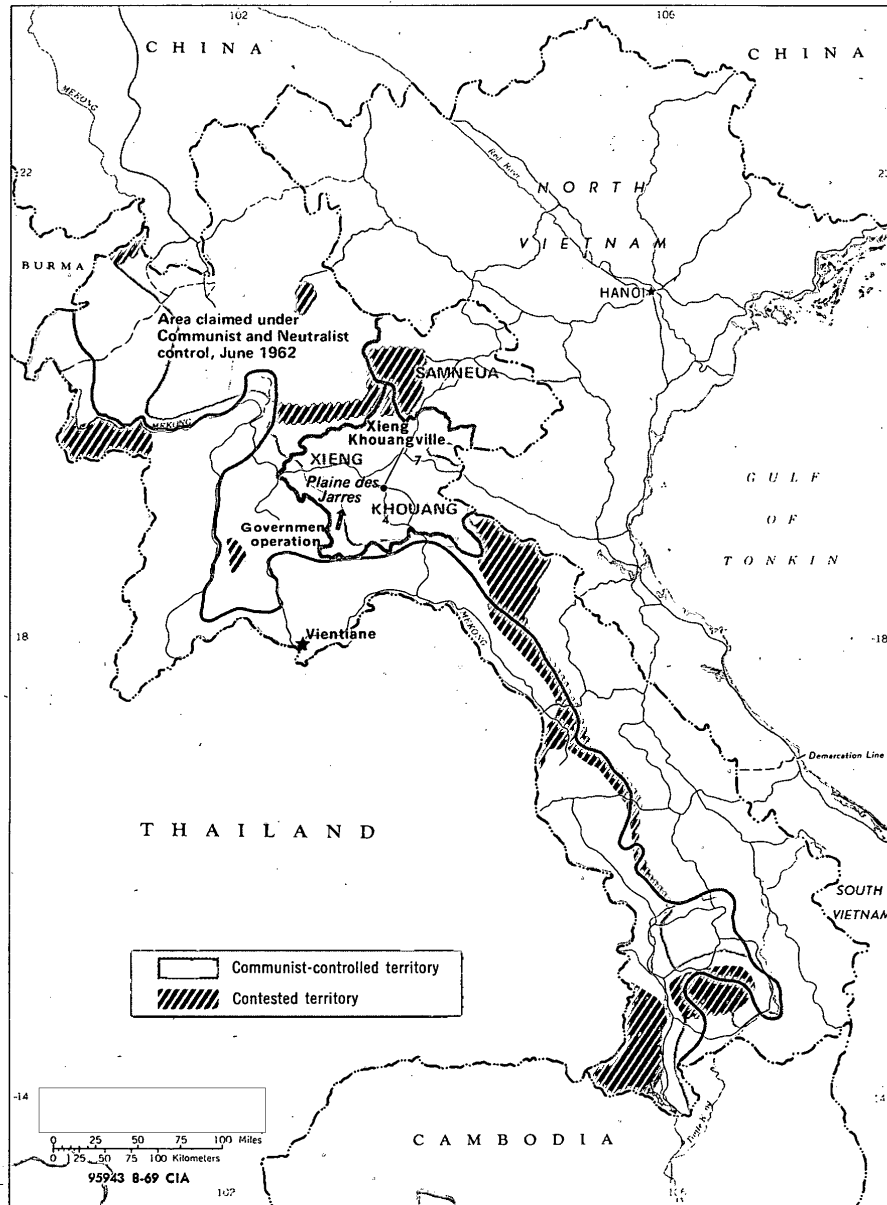
Israel is unlikely to take any retaliatory action so long as the fate of its nationals is in doubt, but we would expect some punitive measures eventually.

EL SALVADOR - HONDURAS

The feeling is growing in both countries that a resumption of hostilities is inevitable. Honduras has been following Salvadoran arms purchases with alarm, and border incidents such as yesterday's shallow incursion by about 90 Salvadoran troops are likely to feed its concern. El Salvador is skeptical

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# LAOS: Current Situation



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of the OAS's ability to protect Salvadorans residing in Honduras or to moderate the climate of anti-Salvadoran feeling. Moreover, continued press coverage of Honduran mistreatment of Salvadorans may lead to strong pressure on the government to seek by force what it apparently is unable to gain by negotiation.

Although President Sanchez and most military leaders do not favor aggressive action at this time, the chief of staff has openly advocated another attack. Military successes in July left many Salvadorans with the feeling that Honduras would be an easy nut to crack.

Salvador's aggressiveness may also be encouraged by its superiority in military equipment. It has recently acquired more aircraft

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LAOS

Meo leader Vang Pao's guerrilla forces have pushed deep into the Plaine des Jarres and have taken some positions in Communist hands since 1962. The government advances came with unexpected ease, suggesting that the offensive may have taken the enemy by surprise. North Vietnamese forces in the area may have been thinned out in recent weeks, as villagers in the area have reported.

Vang Pao has long talked about retaking the entire Plaine. The momentum of the Plaine des Jarres operation, which was originally intended as a diversion, may lead him to expand his

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objectives. A similar situation developed in late April when Vang Pao, after initial successes against the Route 4 area, pressed on to capture the enemy stronghold of Xieng Khouangville. That offensive precipitated a sharp enemy rebuff and led to the loss of a number of government holdings near the Plaine.

Vang Pao's current efforts are not directed toward regaining his bases in Samneua and northern Xieng Khouang Provinces, from which the guerrillas were driven during the past dry season. Vang Pao has successfully retaken these bases every year during the rainy season, and unless he does so again fairly soon, the Communists will be in a stronger position in the north than they have been since 1962. The rainy season will end in early October.

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