



The President's Daily Brief

3 January 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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The Chinese road building project in northwestern Laos has been bombed by Lao Government aircraft for the first time. (Page 1)

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[redacted] Nationalist Chinese [redacted]
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[redacted] (Page 2)

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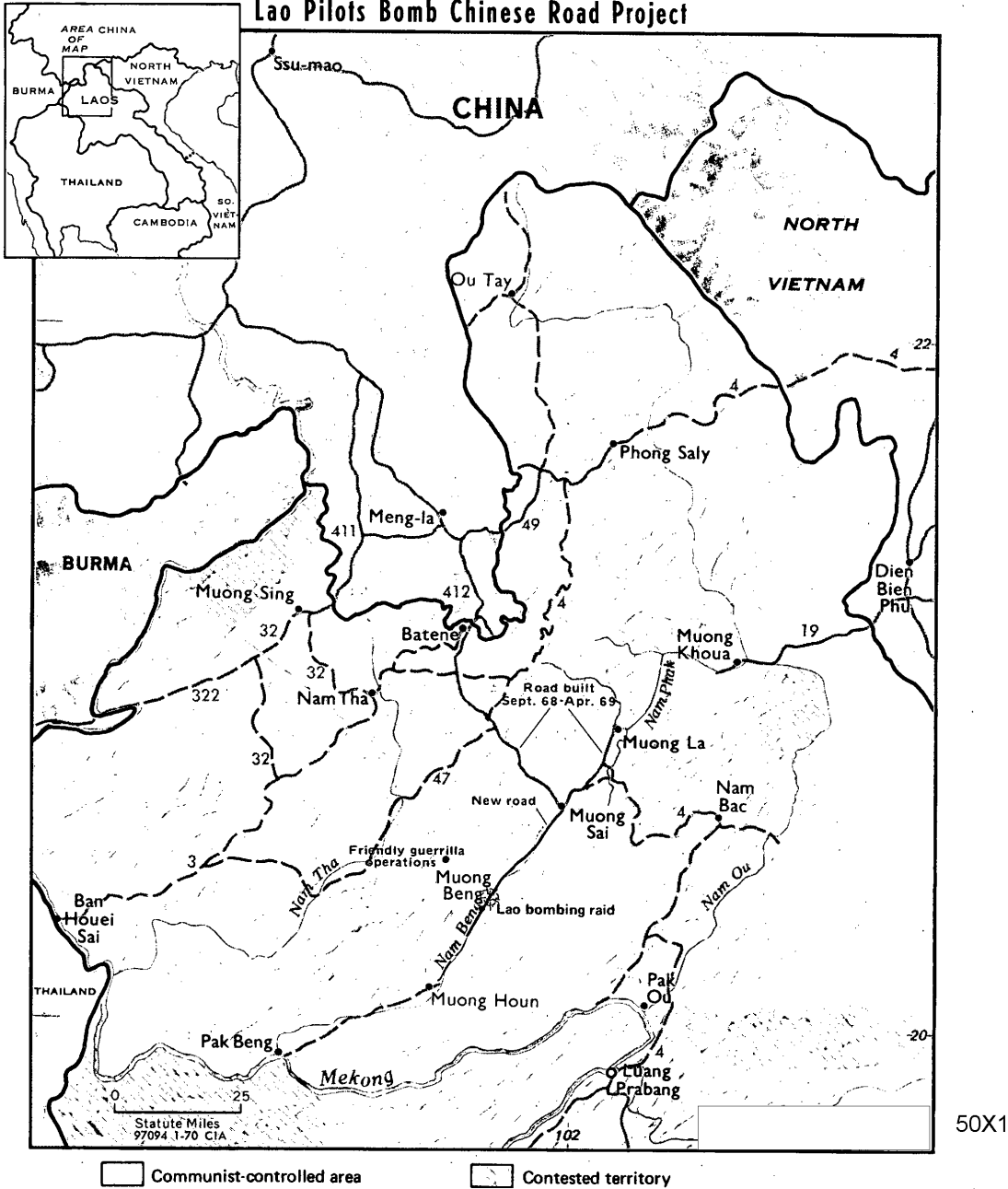
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Thai Foreign Minister Thanat is voicing Bangkok's apprehensions over the future US role in Southeast Asia and questioning the future value of SEATO. (Page 3)

Israel's raid into Lebanon last night will put strong pressure on the Lebanese cabinet to remove what restraints remain on fedayeen activity in the country. (Page 4)

Some thoughts on a recent theoretical Soviet policy document released on the occasion of Lenin's 100th birthday. (Page 5)

Lao Pilots Bomb Chinese Road Project



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LAOS

The Chinese road building project in northwestern Laos has been bombed for the first time. Ambassador Godley reports that two Laotian fighters bombed a group of trucks yesterday while providing close air support for Lao Government guerrillas operating near the construction activity. The Lao pilots claim they attacked in retaliation after coming under heavy anti-aircraft fire. They reported leaving ten trucks burning.

Prime Minister Souvanna is well aware of the US opposition to any military operation against the road building project at this time; his government and the King have endorsed the US position, but some Lao military leaders have been unhappy over this hands-off policy and may have been responsible for the attack. Up to now Chinese diplomats have consistently denied any Chinese involvement in the current road construction--a position which will make a public protest by Peking difficult.

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NATIONALIST CHINA

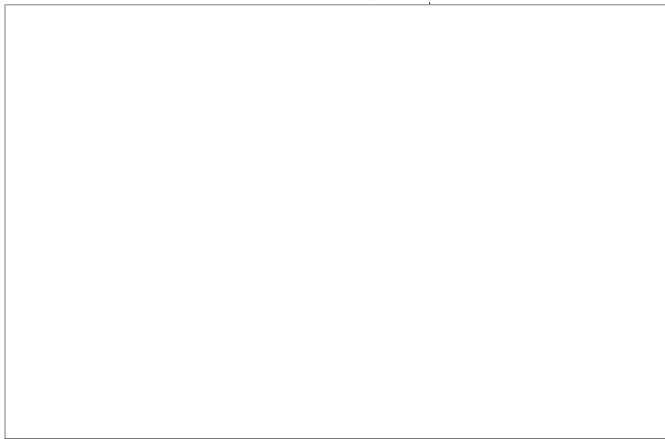


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THAILAND

Foreign Minister Thanat has implied to a number of Asian and US diplomats that he interprets the recent passage of the Church Amendment to the Defense Appropriation Bill as virtually the final blow to Thailand's reliance on SEATO.

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Although some other leaders share Thanat's pessimism, there apparently is little serious consideration given to reducing Bangkok's participation in SEATO.

Whatever doubts Thai leaders may have over the dependability of Washington's reassurances on mutual defense matters, SEATO provides the only legal basis for the US-Thai military relationship in Southeast Asia that Bangkok wants to preserve.

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ISRAEL-LEBANON

Israel's raid into Lebanon last night and the taking of 21 Lebanese Army and civilian prisoners came in the wake of stern new Israeli warnings of retaliation against Beirut for Lebanon-based fedayeen activity. The number of incidents along the border has been increasing despite the Lebanese Government's efforts to restrain the fedayeen, and Tel Aviv was particularly incensed by the kidnaping of an Israeli civilian on 31 December.

Israel's taking of Lebanese rather than fedayeen prisoners is in line with Tel Aviv's long-standing policy of holding the host government responsible for acts occurring on its territory, a policy that may have legal merit but which has proved ineffective in curbing fedayeen activity. The public outcry in Lebanon resulting from Israel's action will put strong pressure on the Lebanese cabinet to remove what restraints remain on fedayeen activity. Moreover, the Lebanese Army, the main instrument for keeping the fedayeen in check, may now find it has a common cause with them.

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USSR

Next April marks the 100th birthday of Lenin and Soviet party theorists are busy preparing the groundwork for a major celebration. The Centennial was officially launched on 23 December with the publication of Soviet party theses that reaffirmed all Soviet policies since 1917 and reasserted Moscow's claim to leadership of the world Communist movement. The document condemned "liberalized socialism" and nationalism and warned that these deviations from Communist orthodoxy threaten the basic principles of Communism. The theses repeated the now standard formulation that Soviet economic achievements would have been even greater but for the need "to allocate great resources for defense." Other domestic concerns were referred to in vaguely optimistic tones but with little sense of future direction.

Except for brief jabs at "US imperialism" and "West German revanchism," the theses did not criticize any country by name. Implicitly, however, they attacked various trends in other Communist countries, including Yugoslavia's more liberal form of socialism and China's Maoist policies. On the other hand, benefits to be derived from increasing "political and economic cohesion" of Communist countries are heavily emphasized.

The authors of the theses are anonymous, but it is obviously an ex cathedra performance. The document offers the orthodoxy of the past as a guideline to the future and is intended to provide the ideological setting for the Centennial.

The implicit criticism of other Communist parties should not in itself trigger new polemic exchanges. Moscow's insistence that all must follow the Soviet pattern, however, will cause uneasiness in Eastern Europe and among some of the Western European Communist parties.

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