

The President's Daily Brief

28 January 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Soviet leaders reappear after their long absence.
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[Redacted]

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The Soviets [Redacted] Berlin.
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The Chinese road in Laos is getting longer. *(Page 5)*

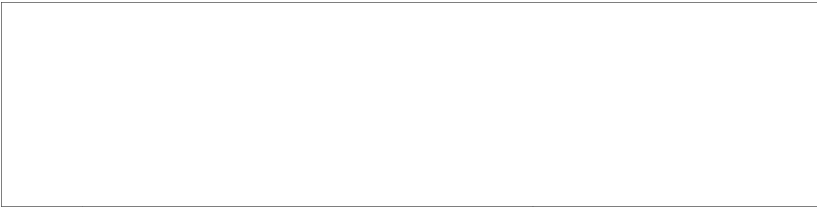
The southward movement of North Vietnamese is the heaviest in nearly a year. *(Page 6)*

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USSR

Brezhnev and Podgorny reappeared in public yesterday, putting to rest rumors generated by their prolonged absence. Both Soviet leaders had been out of sight since 19 December.

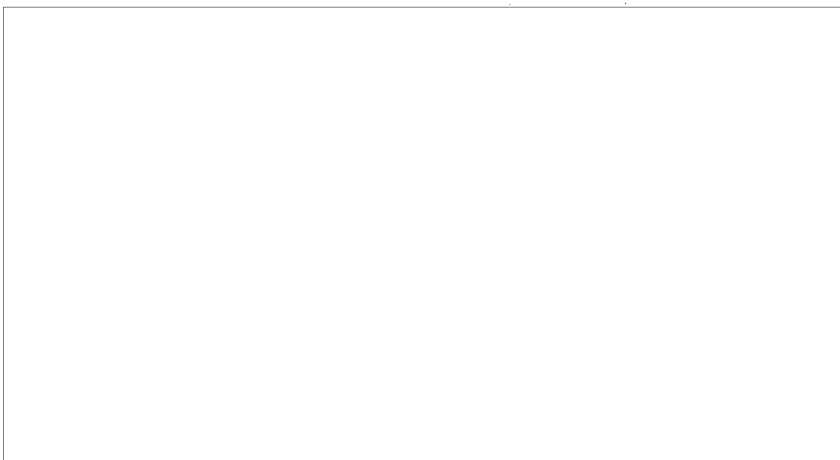


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In the past, the senior members of the Politburo have frequently taken vacations in January; they apparently spent some time at Barvikha at this time last year. It is possible, however, that they deliberately cut themselves off from all official functions in order to grapple with some urgent problem. Current economic difficulties, for example, are pressing and have wide ramifications for both foreign and domestic affairs.

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USSR - ARAB STATES



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Yasir Arafat, leader of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization, will visit Moscow some time this week.

Arafat no doubt has more Soviet military and economic assistance on his mind, and he would be unlikely to put his prestige on the line without some assurance that he will not return empty-handed.

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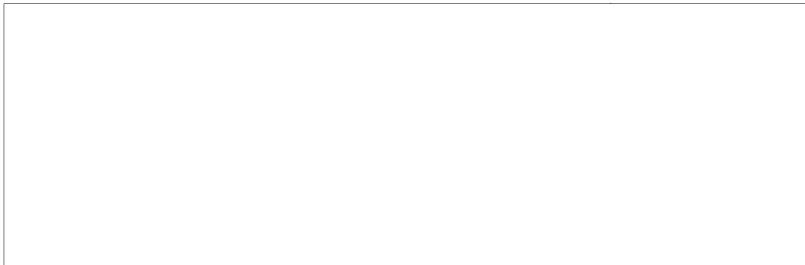


Military aid, however, probably will still be limited to light arms, channeled through Arab governments.

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USSR-BERLIN



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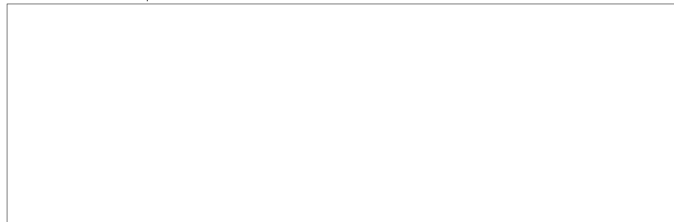
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WEST GERMANY - USSR - EASTERN EUROPE

Chancellor Brandt is sending Egon Bahr, his closest foreign policy adviser, to confer with Foreign Minister Gromyko in Moscow. Bahr will take over the negotiations that began in early December on an agreement renouncing the use of force. The new talks are to begin on Friday.

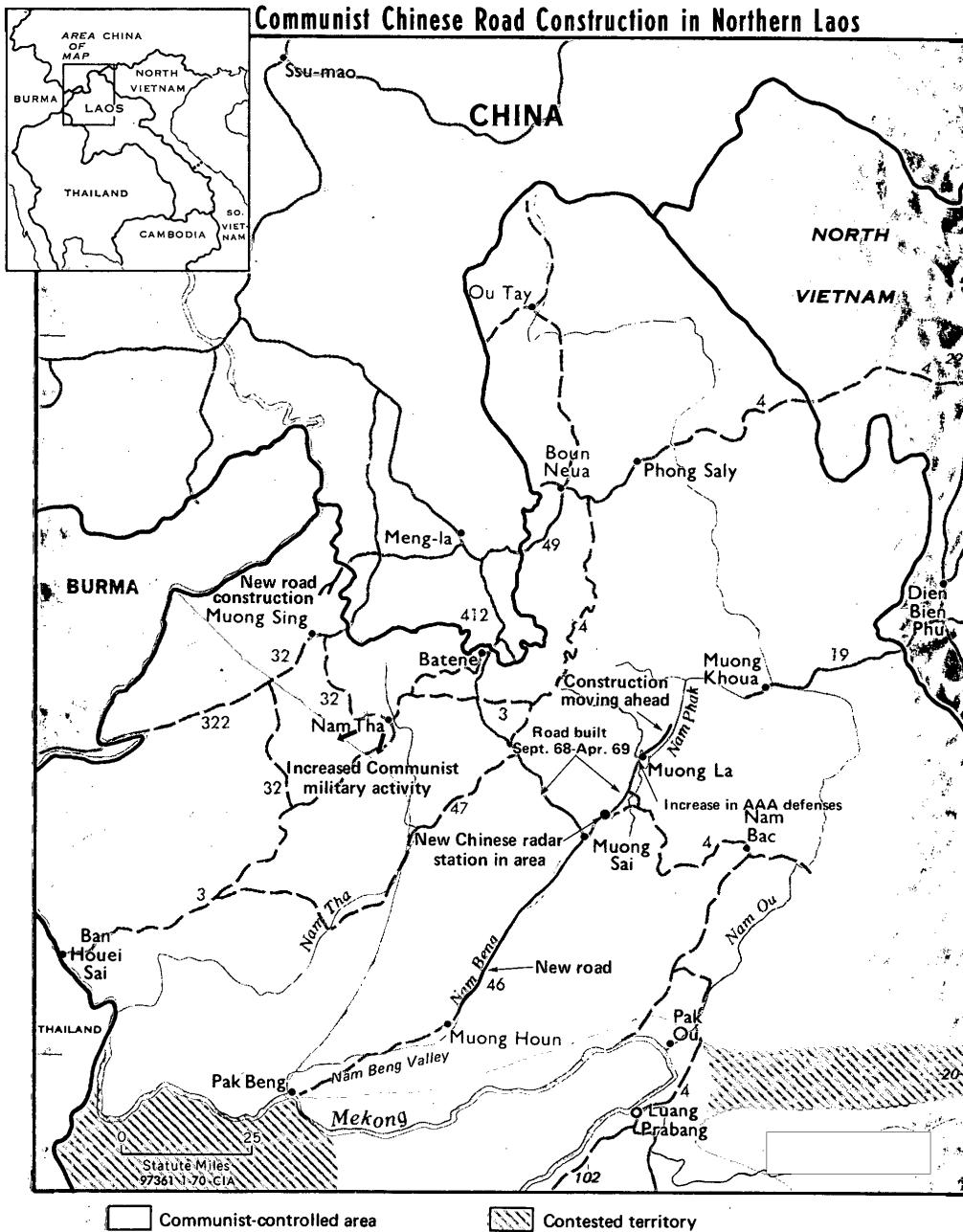
Brandt believes that his Eastern policies have reached a critical point because Pankow is bending every effort to discourage other Warsaw Pact states from negotiating with Bonn. Bahr is to investigate whether there is a real prospect of long-range success for these policies. Beyond this, his instructions have not yet been disclosed to Bonn's allies.

Bahr's mission apparently is intended to undercut Pankow's efforts by reaching an authoritative agreement with the Soviets themselves. Moscow can be expected to hold out for a West German acceptance of the East European status quo. Bonn doubtless hopes, however, that the Soviets will not demand full de jure recognition of East Germany, and Brandt almost certainly would not agree to such a demand.

Bonn is also pursuing its Eastern policies on other fronts. Negotiations with Pankow on postal matters, recessed since November, will be resumed on 30 January. The Poles and West Germans are currently engaged in economic talks in Bonn.

Political talks with Poland are scheduled to open in Warsaw on 5 February. West German recognition of Poland's Oder-Neisse border will be on the agenda as will a renunciation-of-force agreement.

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LAOS - COMMUNIST CHINA

The road that presumably will link Muong Sai with Route 19 has been extended some seven miles to the northeast since the first of the year. The rate of progress on this stretch of the road network still remains well below the mile-a-day rate achieved on the southwestern leg to Muong Houn, however. We have nothing new on the southwestern leg at this time.

A recent increase in anti-aircraft defenses near Muong La, including a new Chinese radar tracking station, suggests that the Chinese may be pressing harder to complete the Muong La segment before the monsoon in May. The present rate of construction is adequate for such a timetable.


in the extreme northwest corner of Laos, the Chinese have constructed a limited-weather road across the Laotian border. The new road appears to be designed to support Pathet Lao efforts to consolidate control in this area, where the people are generally hostile to them.

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The Pathet Lao's dry season activities in the northwest, however, appear to be focused south and west of Nam Tha, where a number of government outposts have been under increased enemy pressure since late December. For the moment, government troops in this area, backed by Lao aircraft, seem capable of meeting this threat.

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NORTH VIETNAM

New battalion-size groups have been entering the infiltration system at the rate of at least one a day during the past week. So far this month 23 infiltration groups, representing about 10,600 troops, have been detected on the move in communications intelligence.

Analysis of infiltration designators suggests that nine additional groups entered the pipeline for a probable total of 32. This would bring the number of men sent south thus far in January to approximately 14,000.

The activity of the past three weeks is the heaviest in nearly a year, and month-end totals could approach those of January 1969, when over 19,000 men started South.

For the first time in several months, replacements are headed for the western highlands, while others are going to the Communist military areas in lower I Corps and coastal II Corps. More than 31,000 troops are believed to have started south since late October, and most of them have been destined for the southern part of the country, including the Mekong Delta.

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