



*The President's Daily Brief*

12 February 1970

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

12 February 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Communists appear to have launched their long awaited counteroffensive against the Plaine des Jarres in Laos. (Page 1)

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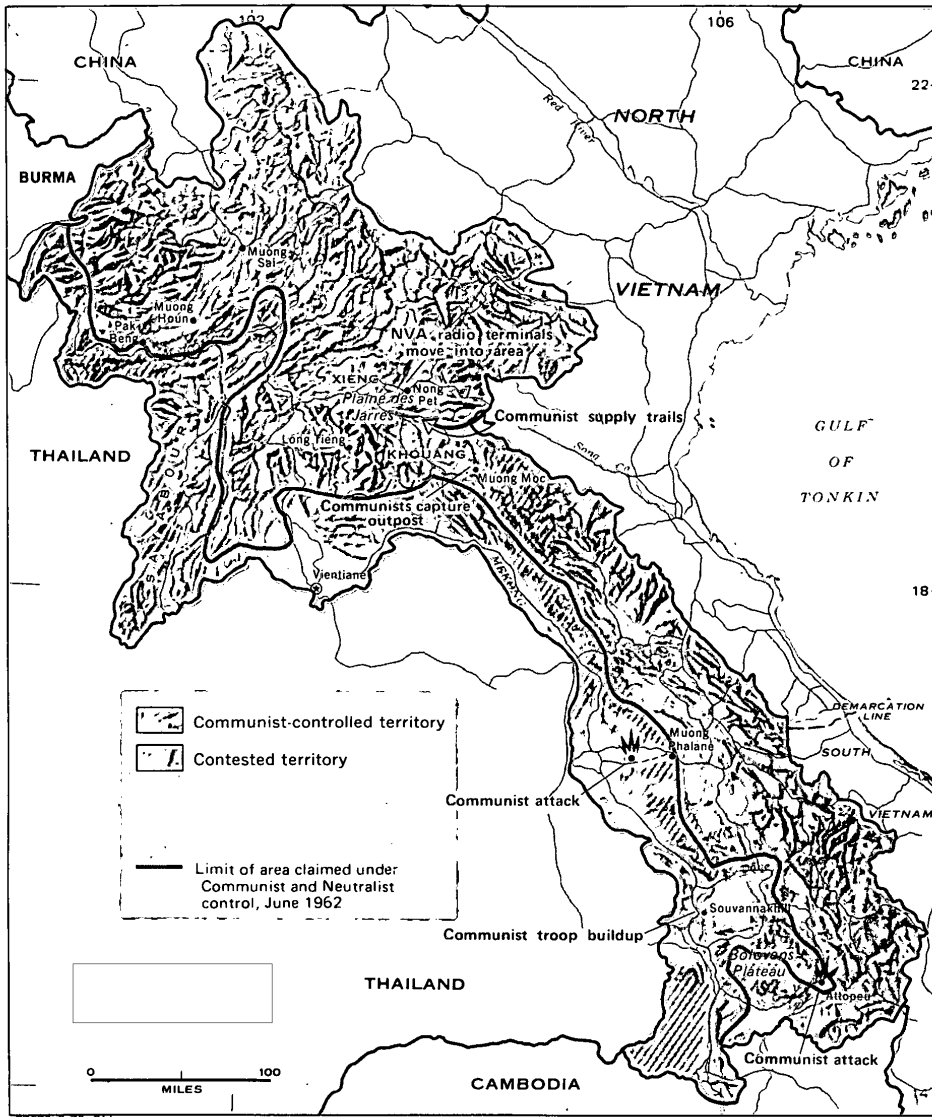
Soviet scientific articles indicate that the Soviets are aware of the theoretical principle and method of operation of high powered gas dynamic lasers. (Page 4)

[Redacted]

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At Annex we examine the over-all military situation in the Plaine des Jarres area.

### LAOS: Current Situation



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LAOS

A large Communist force, supported by tanks and armored cars, began pushing into the Nong Pet area yesterday. The enemy thrust is targeted against the several groups of government guerrillas who since last August have been blocking Route 7, northeastern gateway to the Plaine des Jarres. [redacted]

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On the Plaine, preliminary reports indicate that General Vang Pao's forward headquarters at Xieng Khouang airfield, southwest of Nong Pet, has been heavily attacked. First reports disclose that the enemy has suffered heavy casualties but that government forces are holding. Vang Pao is on the scene and the situation appears to be under control. The airfield was the scene of a costly Communist commando raid in mid-December.

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[redacted] At Annex we examine the over-all military situation.

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In the south, Communist forces have launched small-scale attacks against government positions in the central panhandle and near the provincial capital of Attapeu. [redacted]

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[redacted] an enemy buildup off the western edge of the Bolovens Plateau poses a threat to the Mekong village of Souvannakhili. These moves fit the enemy's strategy of tying down government troops and do not appear to forecast larger attacks.

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MIDDLE EAST

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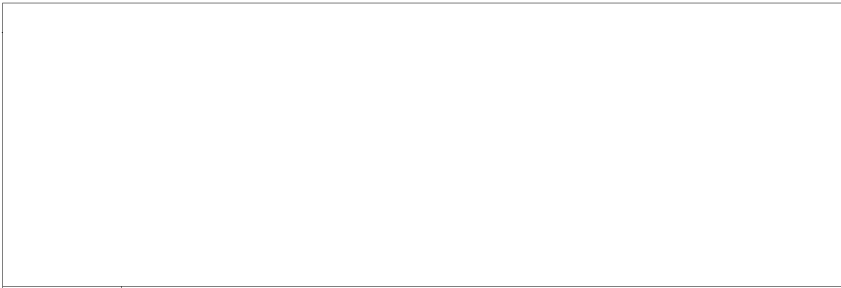
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USSR

Soviet scientific articles indicate that the Soviets are aware of the theoretical principle and method of operation of high powered gas dynamic lasers. Such devices represent a significant advance in laser technology. The publications suggest that in 1967 Soviet understanding of the gas dynamic laser principle was close to that of the US at the time.

*A gas dynamic laser derives its power from a flow of hot gases, similar to the exhaust from a jet or rocket engine. Such lasers can produce a sharply focused beam of infrared radiation with power sufficient to inflict damage at considerable distances.*



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*Soviet scientists have the theoretical knowledge and experimental capability to carry on a program to develop a gas dynamic laser*



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*If Soviet development has stayed on a par with the US, considerable work remains and we do not expect them to have these systems operational before 1975.*

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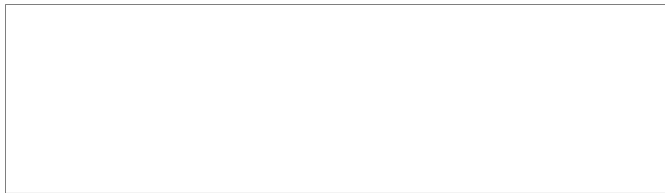
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USSR



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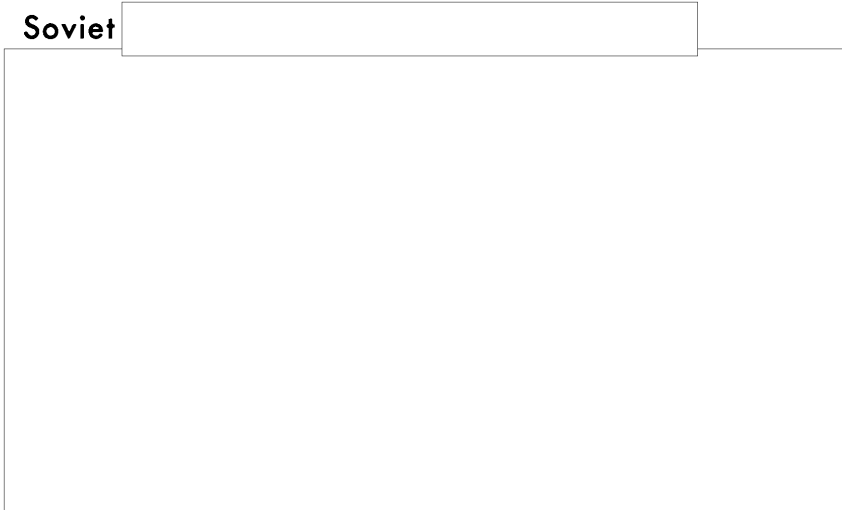
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**Soviet**



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NOTES

USSR - Middle East:

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France-Libya:

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LAOS

The enemy has mustered more force for the attack on the Plaine des Jarres than he has ever done before in the rhythmic war over the northern plains. General Vang Pao, the political and military leader of the Meo tribesmen, is awaiting the attackers

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Despite the enemy's strength, his task is not as easy as it would seem. Although the Communists enjoy an overwhelming numerical superiority over the government--some 6,000 government guerrillas are up against a combined Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese force of approximately 17,000 combat and support troops--the enemy is having to fight the Meo on their own terms and terrain and under an intensive rain of bombs. The government has the ability to muster close air support on a moment's notice. This is the only area where the "establishment Lao"--as opposed to the tribal northerners--have made a significant contribution to their government's war effort. It has given the Meo an effectiveness which belies their limited number and has more often than not meant the difference between holding or losing any given piece of terrain. On the ground, however, there are only Meos; it has become Vang Pao's war..

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

Conventional wisdom holds that once the monsoons begin in May, the North Vietnamese, dependent on roads to move troops and supplies, will move to a defensive footing. The Communist capture of Muong Soui in late June of last year demonstrated, however, that if the enemy is willing to expend the effort, weather conditions are not an important factor in deterring the timing of Communist military operations.

[REDACTED]

Meo morale is still high and that their will to fight has not been seriously eroded by the relatively high casualties and long campaign. We would only add that, although Vang Pao has been able to fill his depleted ranks with refugees, he has lost some of his best field commanders. At best, the Meo leader is walking a thin line. A serious military defeat could lead to a rapid collapse of Meo fighting spirit--a development which may lead an already nervous Lao Government to the brink of panic.

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In view of the large North Vietnamese buildup this dry season, government leaders, including Vang Pao, believe that once the Communists capture the Plaine, they will then push south into the Long Tieng area, Vang Pao's headquarters and home for some 40,000 Meo refugees. Should a serious threat develop to this area, it is likely the Meo community will bring pressure on Vang Pao to begin efforts aimed at resettling them in Sayaboury Province. Such a movement would undercut Vang Pao's effort to continue harassment operations in the northeast.

In sum, we see the Communists capturing the Plaine des Jarres and probably also mounting a determined effort to eliminate Vang Pao's forces, who have become the major obstacle to Communist advances in the northeast. The Communists have made it clear that they will continue to mount military operations in Laos until such time that they have regained all the territory claimed to have been under their control in 1962. The problem is to try and keep the delicate military and political fabric intact--a task which has become more difficult with the passage of time.

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