



The President's Daily Brief

15 January 1971

48



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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

15 January 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On Page 1

South Vietnam's

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The Pathet Lao

designed to revive the possibility of peace talks. (Page 2)

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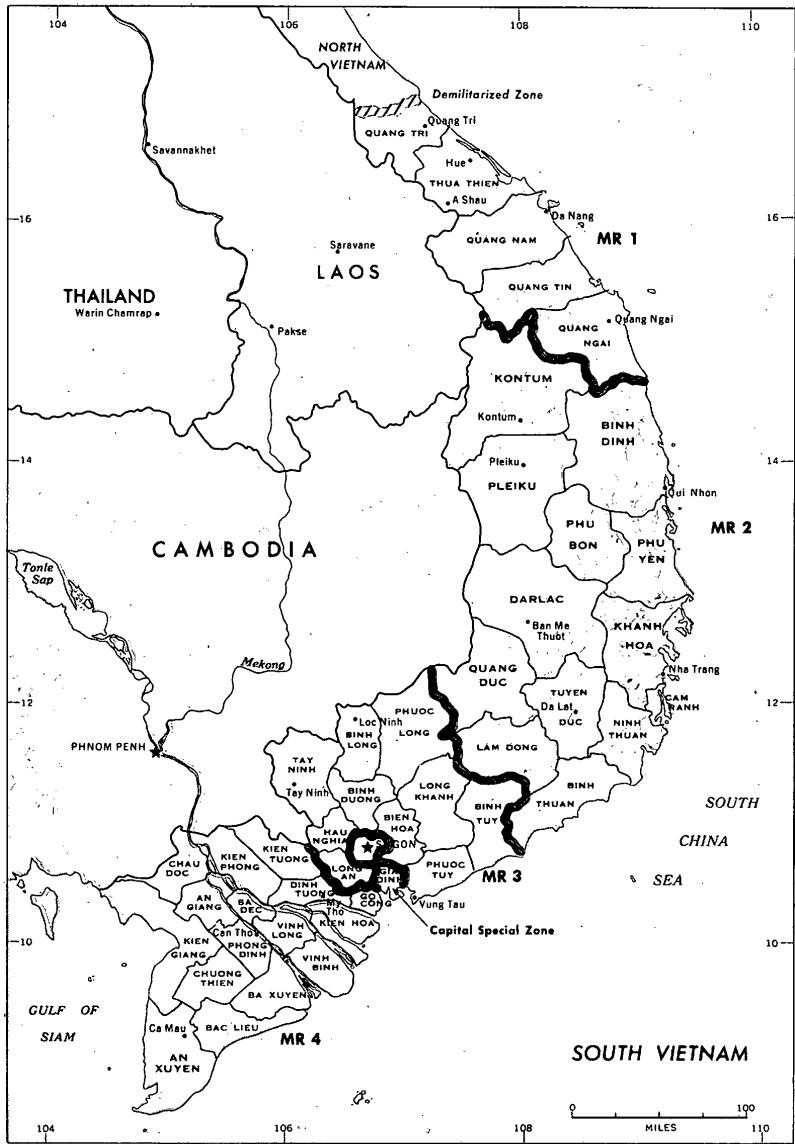
The Soviets have diluted a pre-Christmas offer on Berlin access. (Page 4)

In the Dominican Republic, a successful police raid has at least temporarily crippled the leadership of the organization primarily responsible for terrorism in recent years. (Page 6)

On Page 7 we appraise Jordanian reports of Iraqi troop withdrawals from Jordan.

Yesterday morning's cease-fire agreement in Jordan was effective during its first day. (Page 8)

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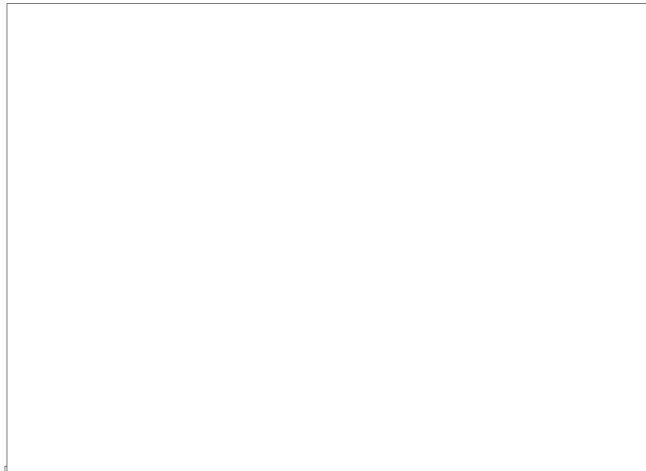
SOUTH VIETNAM



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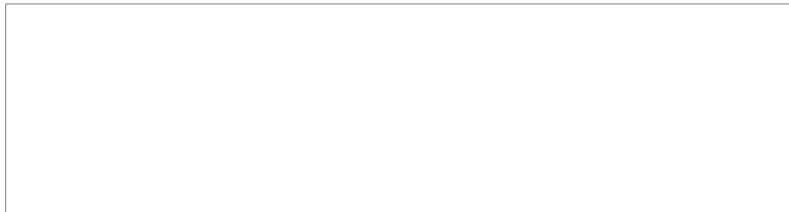
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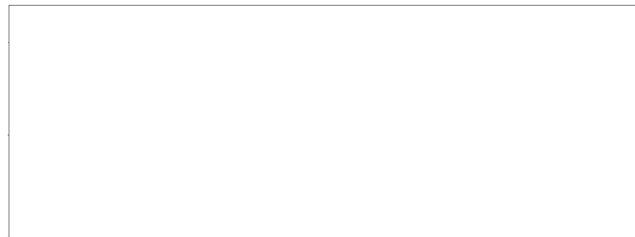
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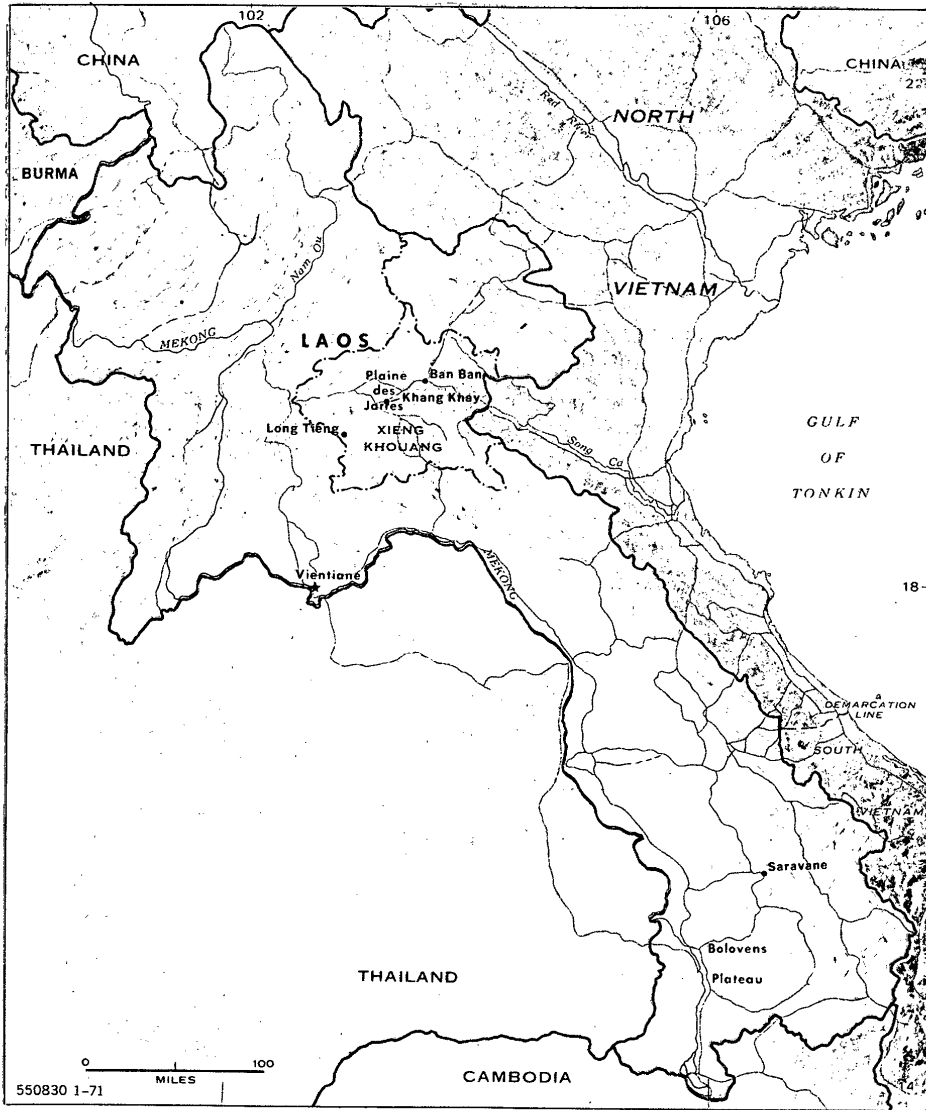
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LAOS

The Pathet Lao representative in Vientiane, Soth Phetrasy, recently commented [redacted] that the US would have to weigh in with Souvanna, who was taking an "intransigent stand," if there were to be any further progress toward Lao peace talks. According to Soth, the Pathet Lao understood the concern in both Vientiane and Washington that a bombing halt in Xieng Khouang Province, as proposed by the Communists as part of the security precautions for talks in Khang Khay, would jeopardize the headquarters of the irregulars at Long Tieng. He argued, however, that the bombing could be resumed any time Souvanna felt that the negotiations were getting nowhere.

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Soth's comment about Souvanna's intransigence is a reference to the last Pathet Lao meeting with the Prime Minister on 31 December. At that session the Communists dropped their insistence that the bombing halt also apply to Samneua Province, but failed to evoke any counteroffer from Souvanna.

[redacted] appear to be part of a fresh Communist effort to revive the possibility of talks at Khang Khay. Both Soth and the Pathet Lao special negotiator have recently been complaining of Souvanna's adamant stand to various Lao officials in Vientiane, possibly as much in the hope of convincing Souvanna's rightist critics that there is something to be gained by negotiations as in the hope of driving them further from Souvanna.

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It is possible that the Communists are now merely going through the motions of trying to get talks under way in order to justify a forthcoming campaign against Vang Pao's irregulars. A unilateral bombing halt in Xieng Khouang would, of course, be a boon to the Communists if their aim is to move additional forces--such as the North Vietnamese 312th Division--onto the Plaine des Jarres uncontested and to position supplies for a major drive against Long Tieng.

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It is doubtful that the Communists believe Souvanna would stop the bombing without some concessions on their part, such as agreeing not to introduce new troops into Xieng Khouang or accepting a local cease-fire. This would give Vang Pao's forces a respite during a time when the Communists are usually taking advantage of good weather for offensive operations. Whether the Communists are prepared to discuss such steps is not clear, however, in part because Souvanna has not yet explored the possibilities.

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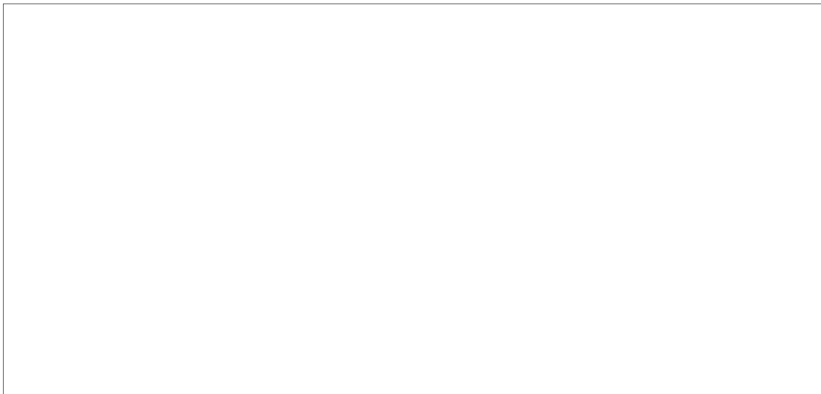
USSR - BERLIN - WEST GERMANY

At a four-power advisers' meeting on 13 January, the Soviets diluted an offer on access which they had advanced before the holidays. Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov had suggested on 19 December that East Germany might be willing to guarantee "sealed cargo transport" between West Germany and Berlin and to eliminate "certain freight documents." In the latest meeting, the Soviets insisted that East German officials would retain the right to inspect cargoes before sealing and that only insignificant changes in the handling of documents were possible.

The Soviets offered nothing to advance the pace of negotiations; their remarks suggest that they have little immediate interest in negotiating on access arrangements in a four-power context. Although they proposed that drafting begin on the language of a four-power statement on principles, they showed no inclination to offer any concessions on substance. They continued to rehash other standard positions such as the limitations to be placed on the West German presence in Berlin.

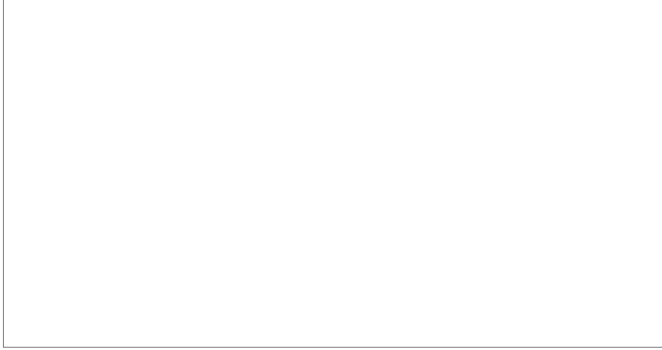
These tactics may reflect an assessment that Allied opposition to access talks between Bonn and Pankow can be overcome. The Soviets presumably would not wish to prejudice the East German negotiating position in advance, if there were a possibility that bilateral talks on access would get under way in the near future.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

On Wednesday Dominican police arrested six leaders of the extremist Dominican Revolutionary Movement (MPD). The US Embassy in Santo Domingo notes that the MPD national leadership has been at least temporarily crippled.

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IRAQ-JORDAN

Jordanian Prime Minister Tal told Ambassador Brown Wednesday that the Iraqis were steadily withdrawing their troops from Jordan, and that he believed they were heading for total evacuation. Tal said he expected to take over the Mafraq area in about a week.

Jordanian officials have been making similarly optimistic statements for some time. Although Iraqi troops have been reduced from about 25,000 last fall to somewhat less than 10,000 now--the lowest level since they arrived in June 1967--the force in Jordan is still substantial. The test of the Iraqis' intentions will be whether they in fact leave their main base at Mafraq.



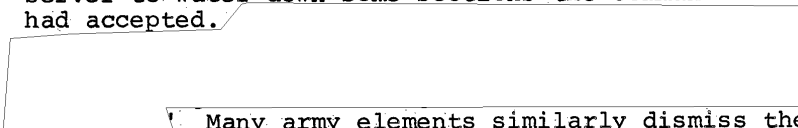
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A decision by Baghdad to withdraw most of its forces would be based on fear that the Jordanian Army might move against the troops, on concern over the soldiers' low morale, and on renewed apprehension over rising Kurdish dissident activity in northern Iraq. Even if Tal's optimism is generally warranted, Baghdad may leave at least a token force in Jordan if only to maintain its anti-Israeli credentials in Arab councils.

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NOTES

Jordan: The army and the fedayeen have started to carry out the provisions of the cease-fire agreement reached yesterday morning, and Amman began returning to normal during the day. Premier Tal is in an ebullient mood over achieving the agreement despite the efforts of the Egyptian cease-fire observer to water down some sections the commandos had accepted.



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Many army elements similarly dismiss the agreement as only a temporary "piece of paper."

Chile: The Bethlehem Steel Company has been given until 1 February to conclude a contract for sale of its iron mine and related assets in Chile on government terms. On that date the government steel company will begin direct supervision of all Bethlehem operations. Payment for the assets, whose value will be determined by the government, will be made in ore or money at Chile's option and will extend over 30 years at three percent interest. Bethlehem officials, who had hoped to operate normally under the Allende administration, have termed the Chilean plan "confiscatory."

USSR-Cuba:



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the Soviet N-class submarine previously thought to have operated in the Caribbean late last month (reported in The President's Daily Brief of 11 January) was southeast of Bermuda at that time and probably did not operate in the Caribbean.

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