



*The President's Daily Brief*

26 February 1971

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

26 February 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In northern South Vietnam, fresh Communist forces are approaching rear bases supporting the South Vietnamese campaign in Laos. (*Page 1*)

Recent remarks by Thai Foreign Minister Thanat to Ambassador Unger are reported on *Page 3*.

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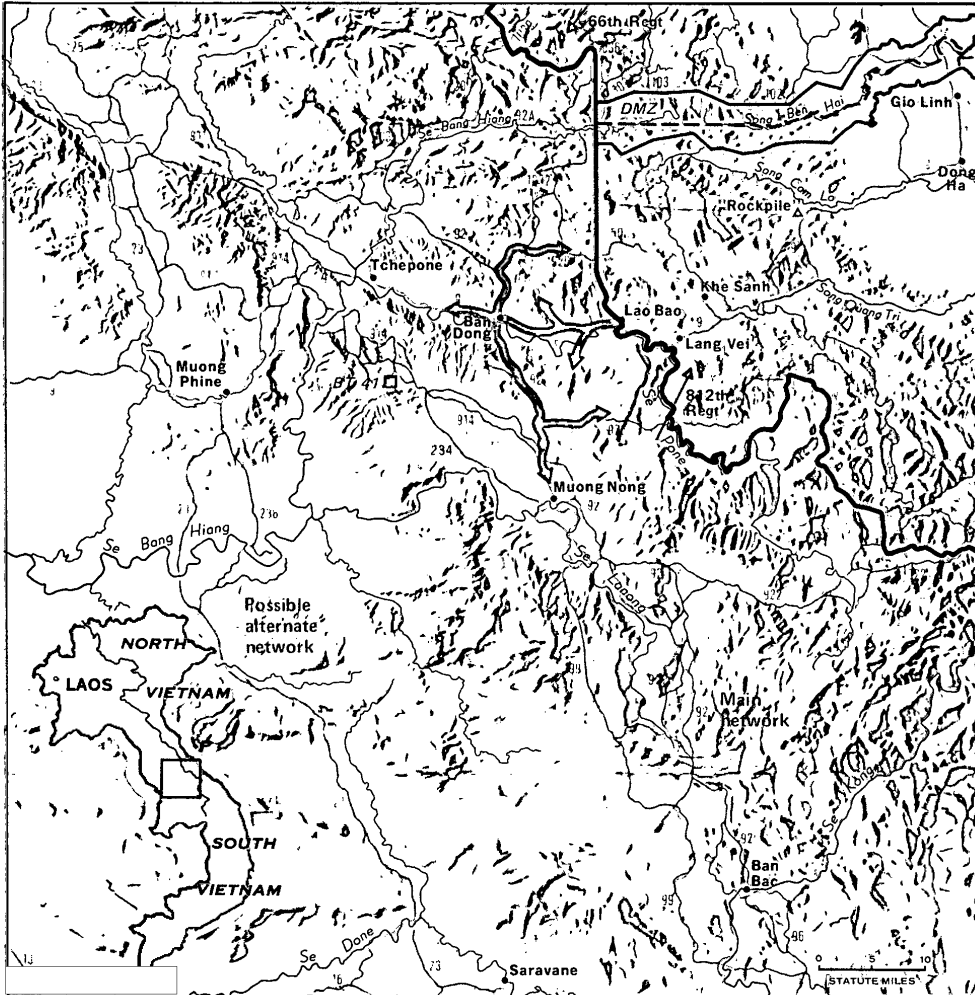
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Operation LAM SON 719 Situation Map

← General location of ARVN forces



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### VIETNAM-LAOS

*In northern South Vietnam, fresh Communist forces are approaching rear bases supporting the South Vietnamese (ARVN) campaign in eastern Laos.*

The 812th North Vietnamese Regiment moved north to within two miles of Lang Vei on 24 February. Intercepts indicate that Communist artillery units may be continuing to relocate from the DMZ area toward allied positions along Route 9. Unidentified elements from the 84th North Vietnamese Artillery Regiment have been noted operating within range of Khe Sanh, and a few miles north of the Rockpile. The 66th North Vietnamese Regiment appeared to be about ten miles from the western corner of the DMZ on 23 February. A week before, the 66th had been along the coast in southern North Vietnam.

On the supply front, the focus of the Communist effort seems to be shifting to the region well south of Tchepone. On 21 February a way station some 40 miles down the trail from Tchepone radioed that a "crash" transportation drive was beginning in its sector.

*A similar "crash" program started in the immediate vicinity of Tchepone on 7 February. This is in keeping with the enemy's normal dry season supply movement pattern: "crash" efforts progress southward as do peak levels of cargo shipments. Thus, the highest levels of Communist logistics activity should soon be taking place south of Muong Nong, and in subsequent weeks even farther south.*

*The beginning of an accelerated supply program south of Muong Nong is consistent with earlier evidence that large quantities of cargo have been moved through the Tchepone area during the past few weeks. If the Communists are able to keep enough roads open, a substantial level of supply activity is likely to continue through the Tchepone area from the north. A recent message from a supply station in the Mu Gia Pass area, for example, suggests that heavy supply shipments from North Vietnam into the Laotian panhandle are continuing.*

(continued)

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A supply station not far south of Tchepone, Binh Tram 41, has been running into supply problems, however, because of its recent relocation to the west and because of South Vietnamese operations. On 23 February elements from this unit radioed that they were short of medical supplies; they also noted that movement in the Muong Nong area was restricted by South Vietnamese forces blocking part of the road network. One message indicated that the South Vietnamese had ambushed a Communist convoy in this area on 22 February and on the same day another transportation unit subordinate to Binh Tram 41 reported suffering heavy losses.

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THAILAND

Foreign Minister Thanat told Ambassador Unger recently that "nothing worthwhile" has accrued from Thai talks with the North Vietnamese delegation that has been in Bangkok for several months negotiating the repatriation of refugees. Thanat said he had tried to use the talks to start a dialogue on broader Southeast Asian issues, but he said the members of Hanoi's delegation were like computerized "talking machines" and "listening devices," powerless to act on their own and always referring everything back to Hanoi.

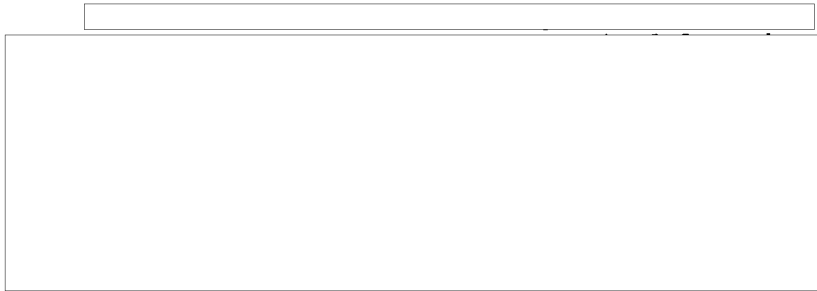
Thanat seemed similarly disenchanted with the results of Thai overtures to Peking. He said he was aware of "rumors" that the Chinese were interested in normalizing relations, but he talked "half jokingly" about the alleged Chinese terms, a highly attractive trade agreement in return for treatment in Thailand "on an equal basis with the US." Thanat also said the Thai Government had no doubts whatsoever about President Nixon's policies and future intentions in Indochina, although he personally feared that in a crisis the President might be "gravely hampered" by US domestic political pressures.

*Thanat seems to be trying to move his relations with the US back to an even keel. The operations into the Laotian panhandle may have shored up his confidence in the US commitment to Southeast Asia, and Thanat may also be reacting to Washington's recent effort to engage in closer consultations with him on PL-480 rice sales and the Chinese UN representation question.*

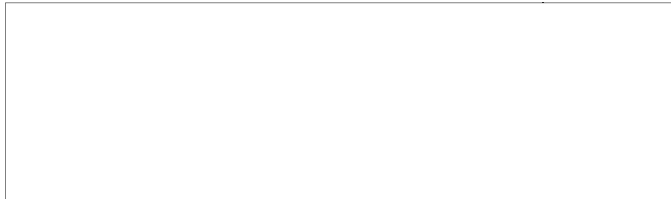
*At the same time, Thanat appears to recognize that Hanoi and Peking are showing little interest in his overtures. His failure to attract significant support from Bangkok's military leadership is leaving Thanat increasingly isolated from the mainstream of Thai policy makers and may make him believe he has no choice at this point but to moderate his attitude toward Washington.*

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USSR



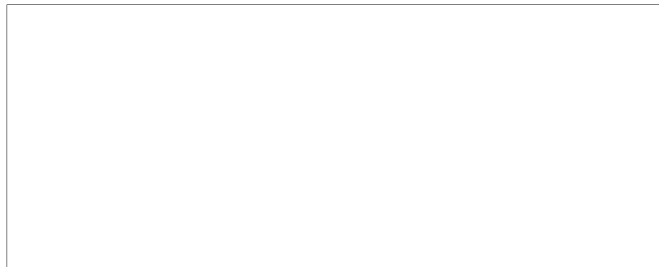
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