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The President's Daily Brief

18 December 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

18 December 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In West Pakistan, President Yahya is coming under criticism in the wake of defeat in the East and his acceptance of a cease-fire with India on the West. (Page 1)

A sampling of recent statements by Soviet officials indicates that they hold high hopes regarding President Nixon's forthcoming visit to Moscow, but are concerned lest they appear to be on the defensive in relation to Peking. (Page 3)

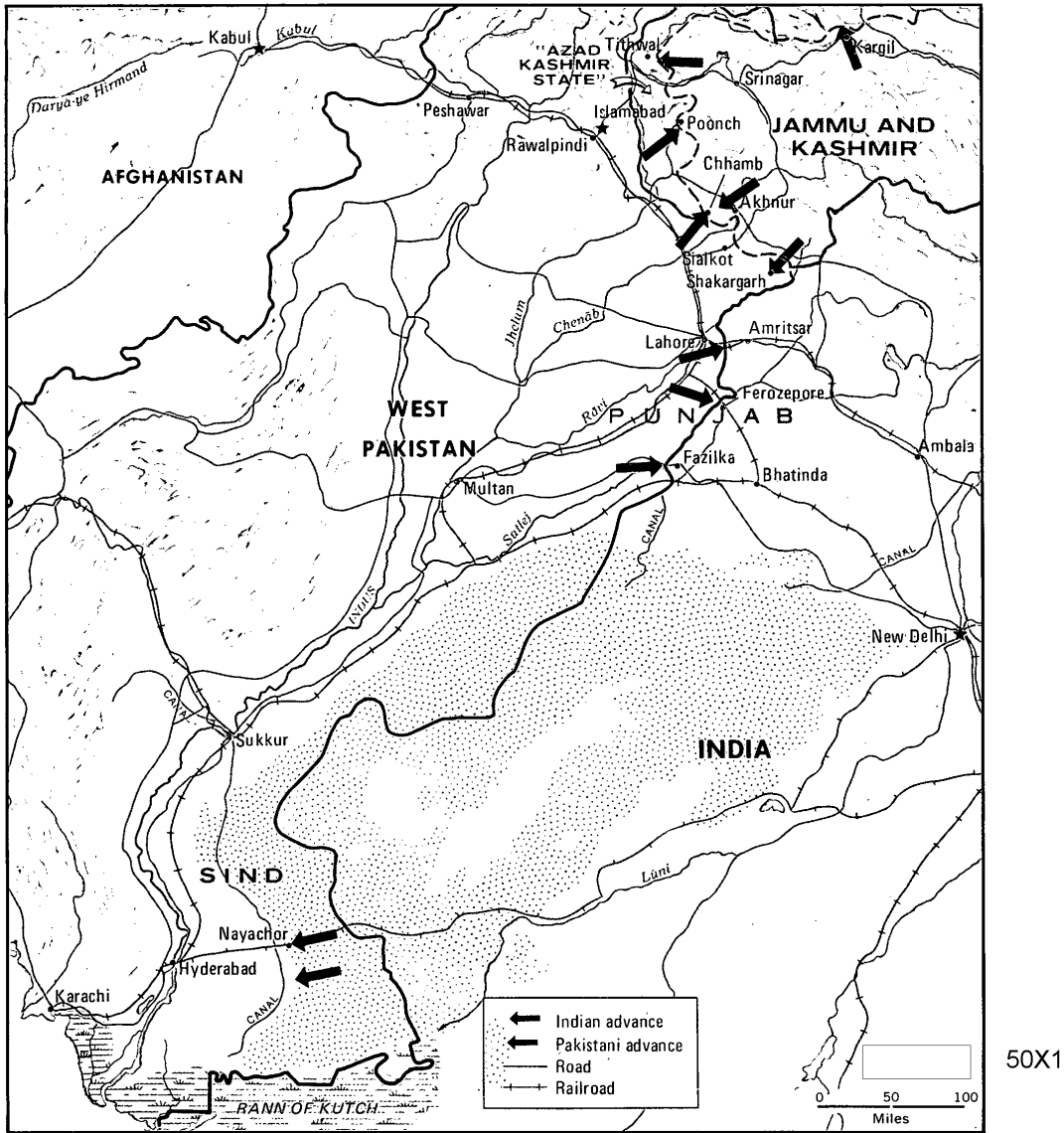
Cambodian Government positions on Route 6 are again under heavy Communist attack. (Page 4)

In Laos, the Communists have dealt a setback to government forces in the south and have moved ahead with offensive preparations in the Plaine des Jarres area in the north. (Page 5)

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[Redacted] (Page 6)

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INDIA-PAKISTAN

President Yahya is coming under criticism in West Pakistan for the loss of the East and his acceptance of a cease-fire on the West. Shortly before Yahya issued his cease-fire order yesterday, a senior Pakistani Army officer told US officials that most of his colleagues preferred to fight on rather than accept India's ultimatum. Another senior officer stated later in the day that most of the officer corps would no longer back Yahya and that he was now "finished." [redacted]

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[redacted] considerable civilian discontent with Yahya is being voiced in the Rawalpindi-Islamabad area. There was a small anti-government demonstration yesterday in Peshawar, instigated by the strongest party in the West, the Pakistan People's Party.

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People's Party leader Z. A. Bhutto has told a member of the US delegation at the UN that he is no longer willing to accept Nurul Amin, a political rival from Bengal, as prime minister of a new civilian government planned for later this month. Local leaders in Bhutto's party say that Bhutto, who had agreed to be deputy prime minister and foreign minister in the new government, may return from the US soon and may no longer want a government post as long as Yahya remains president. Yahya has canceled a broadcast scheduled for this evening concerning the new constitution and government. The press in Rawalpindi is speculating that Yahya is about to be removed and, [redacted]

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[redacted] rumors circulated in Islamabad yesterday that he was under house arrest.

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No US official has reported seeing Yahya for several days, and his radiobroadcast to the nation on 16 December was pre-recorded. So far, however, there has been no hard evidence of any specific attempts or plans to replace Yahya as president. It is likely that he is deeply depressed by recent events and he may be feeling reluctant to pick up the pieces and carry on.

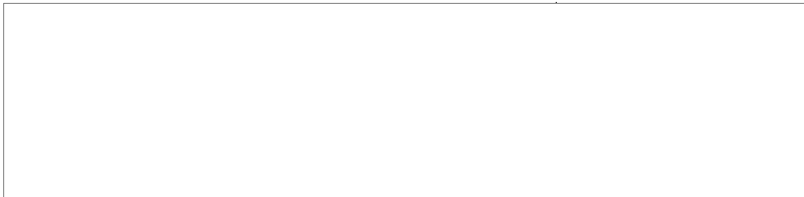
Information remains scattered concerning the effectiveness of the mutual cease-fire that went into effect on the western front yesterday at 9:30 A.M. EST. In Lahore the US Consulate reports that heavy artillery fire could still be heard early this morning. In the East, scattered street fighting continued in the city yesterday, but diminished as the

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day wore on. In at least some outlying areas elsewhere in the East, Pakistani troops apparently had not received word of the surrender and were still resisting.

In the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, both sides committed a number of serious violations of the cease-fire after it went into effect. These gradually subsided over a period of a few weeks. Almost until the last minute yesterday, fighting was continuing on the western front as each side tried to make last-minute gains. The Indian press claims India now holds about 1,400 square miles of West Pakistani territory and that Pakistan holds 60 miles of Indian ground.

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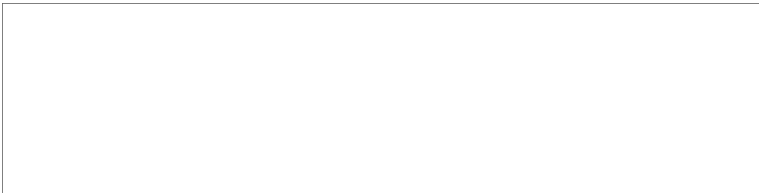
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USSR

A sampling of recent statements by Soviet officials on the President's trip to Moscow next spring reveals high Soviet hopes, mainly in the field of increased economic cooperation. At the same time, there is concern lest the visit be interpreted in the USSR as a defensive response by Moscow to the improvement in US relations with China.

A party lecturer in Leningrad recently said that many Soviets were questioning the invitation, given the continuation of the Vietnam war and US anti-Soviet policies elsewhere. Despite this, the propagandist said that the Soviets are committed to improving relations, particularly in the field of trade, and that there was reason to believe that the US is so committed too.

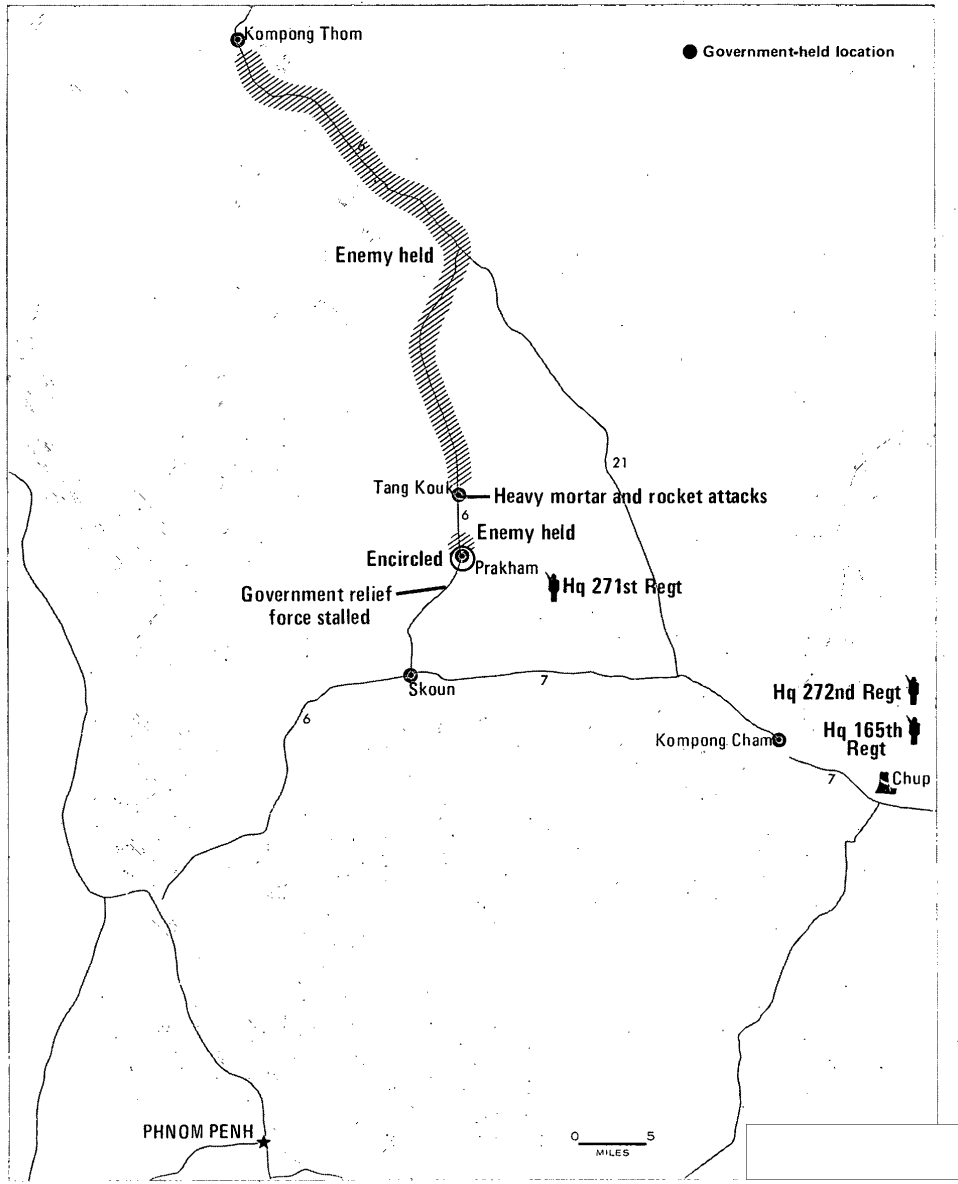
Another propagandist in Leningrad has said that the summit will "crown" recent Soviet diplomatic gains in Europe and help frustrate Peking's aspirations to engage in "plots" with the US. On the latter score, he said that Moscow's relations with China are "bad," and that to prevent Soviet isolation from the other Pacific powers, the USSR must work to improve relations with Japan and the US.



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Soviet official propaganda on the President's trip has been relatively sparse, positive in tone, and generally devoid of anything that could affect the trip.

CAMBODIA: Route 6 Area



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CAMBODIA

Two government battalions at Prakham on Route 6 have come under heavy Communist attack. They are now encircled and unable even to evacuate their wounded. A four-battalion relief column is on its way from Skoun to try to help effect a withdrawal of the Prakham forces. This column is having trouble advancing along damaged portions of Route 6 and has itself come under Communist rocket fire.

The Communists are also continuing to shell and carry out ground probes against government positions in and around Tang Kouk. Although there has been no major change in the situation, Cambodian commanders in the village say they can no longer maneuver effectively and are adopting a static defense posture.



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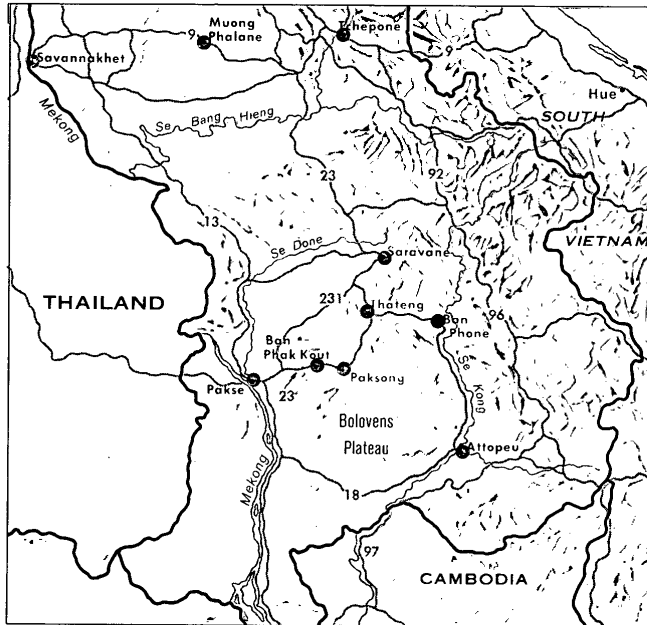
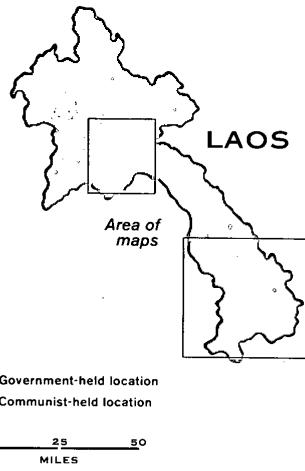
The increasing enemy pressure along Route 6 apparently comes from elements of the 271st Regiment of the Vietnamese Communist 9th Division. Although the 271st headquarters had been moving eastward, it has remained within striking distance of Route 6, and division reconnaissance units have continued to monitor government troop dispositions and defenses around Tang Kouk and Skoun. It is now likely that the forces the Communists still have at their disposal west of the Mekong River can push the demoralized Cambodians all the way back to Skoun, if they choose to do so.

The sudden but orderly withdrawal yesterday of the South Vietnamese from the Chup rubber plantation has undoubtedly dashed Cambodian hopes that South Vietnam operations to the east would force the Communists to withdraw more troops from the Route 6 area.

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LAOS

The Communists have inflicted a setback to government forces a few miles north of Paksong, and two government task forces have ended sweep operations around Thateng. The North Vietnamese now will have an easier time in moving men and supplies onto the Bolovens Plateau. The Communists presumably will next move on Paksong town, which is presently defended by seven government battalions.

In north Laos, the North Vietnamese 312th Division is still resupplying its units south and southeast of the Plaine des Jarres--particularly the newly arrived 141st Regiment--in advance of offensive operations. To the north and northeast of the Plaine, the 316th Division now appears much closer to being ready for an offensive. In addition, at least some of the 16 130-mm. field guns noted being moved toward this area last month are being positioned in the 316th Division's area.

These guns significantly increase North Vietnamese firepower, outranging the biggest government guns by eight miles. They also pose a threat to irregular units manning an important fire support base and supply center in the Phou Keng area.

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USSR-Cuba: The Kashin-class destroyer and the F-class diesel attack submarine that were left behind by a Soviet naval group visiting Cuba last month are still in Mariel. During their stay there, the two ships have been conducting frequent training operations with Cuban naval units.

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