

The President's Daily Brief

25 April 1972

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Communist drive in the central highlands of South Vietnam is reported on *Page 1*.

Student unrest has flared up in Cambodia where a draft constitution will be put to a referendum next Sunday. (*Page 2*)

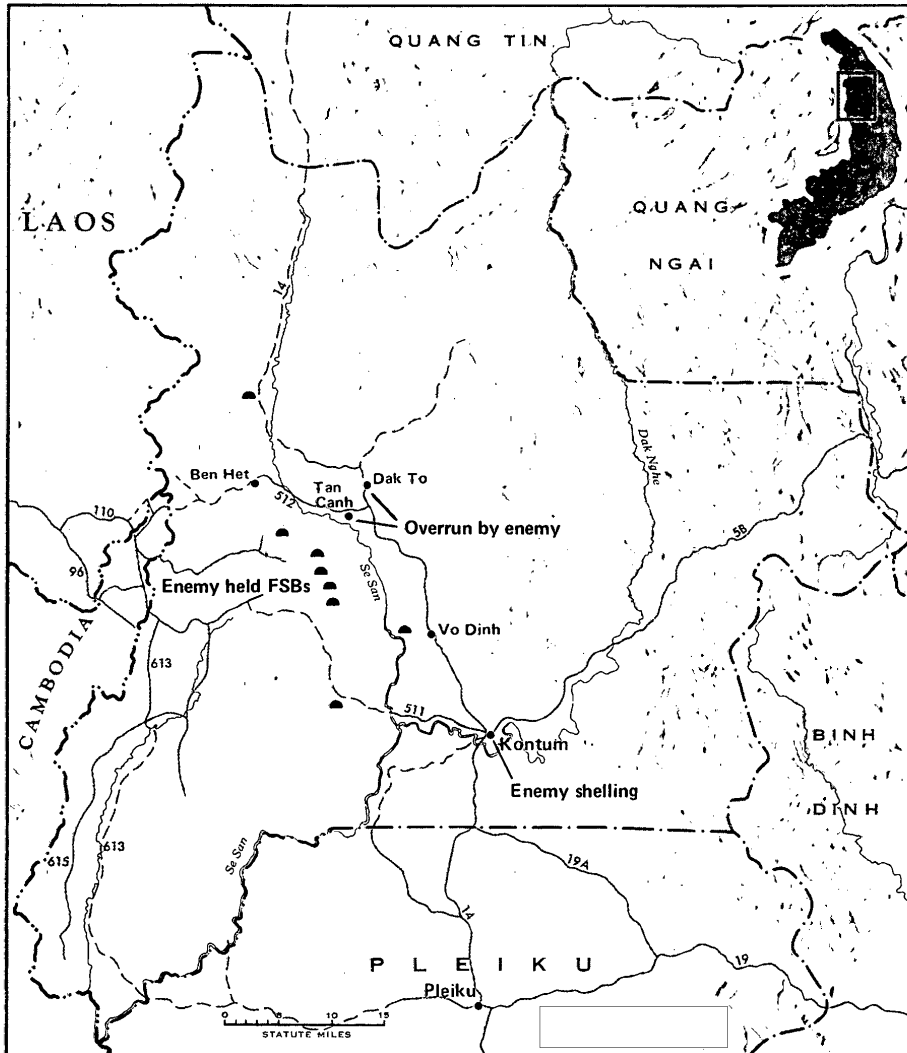
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KONTUM PROVINCE



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SOUTH VIETNAM

The Communists are maintaining heavy pressure on government forces in Kontum Province. Infantry and tank units yesterday overran government positions at Dak To as well as the command post of the South Vietnamese 22nd Division at Tan Canh. At last report these enemy forces were moving south along Route 14. The attacks scattered most of the division and breached the government's lines north of Kontum city. Enemy gunners shelled the city yesterday.

The South Vietnamese 23rd Division, which normally operates farther south in MR-2, has assumed control of government operations in Kontum Province. Several Ranger and airborne battalions are manning fallback positions south of Dak To. All remaining artillery support bases on Rocket Ridge have been abandoned and are now held by the North Vietnamese.

According to delayed reports, the Communists ambushed a large South Vietnamese convoy on Route 21 in the southern part of MR-2. This is the alternate route that has been used to resupply the highland provinces of Kontum and Pleiku since Route 19, the primary supply line, was blocked two weeks ago. Closure of Route 21 would effectively halt the overland movement of men and materiel to the highlands.

Meanwhile, the military situation in the provinces near the Demilitarized Zone and in the An Loc region north of Saigon remains relatively unchanged. No enemy ground attacks took place against An Loc yesterday, and clearing weather there late in the day permitted the allies to increase air strikes in support of a new effort by the South Vietnamese 21st Division to move north toward An Loc along Route 13.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CAMBODIA

Student unrest has flared up in Phnom Penh following an attempt by the government to muzzle criticism of the draft constitution that will be put to a referendum next Sunday. A small number of armed students have occupied part of the law school at Phnom Penh and refused to allow military police in to arrest an activist leader.

Student criticism will have very little effect on the vote on the constitution, which is likely to be endorsed by a majority. The recrudescence of student opposition, however, is politically embarrassing to President Lon Nol, whose decisions to produce a new constitution and to schedule presidential and legislative elections were substantially influenced by a desire to keep the students neutralized. Lon Nol does not seem inclined to get tough with the students in the present standoff. Should he cancel the arrest order, the students will have won another victory, and they will probably be more assertive in the future.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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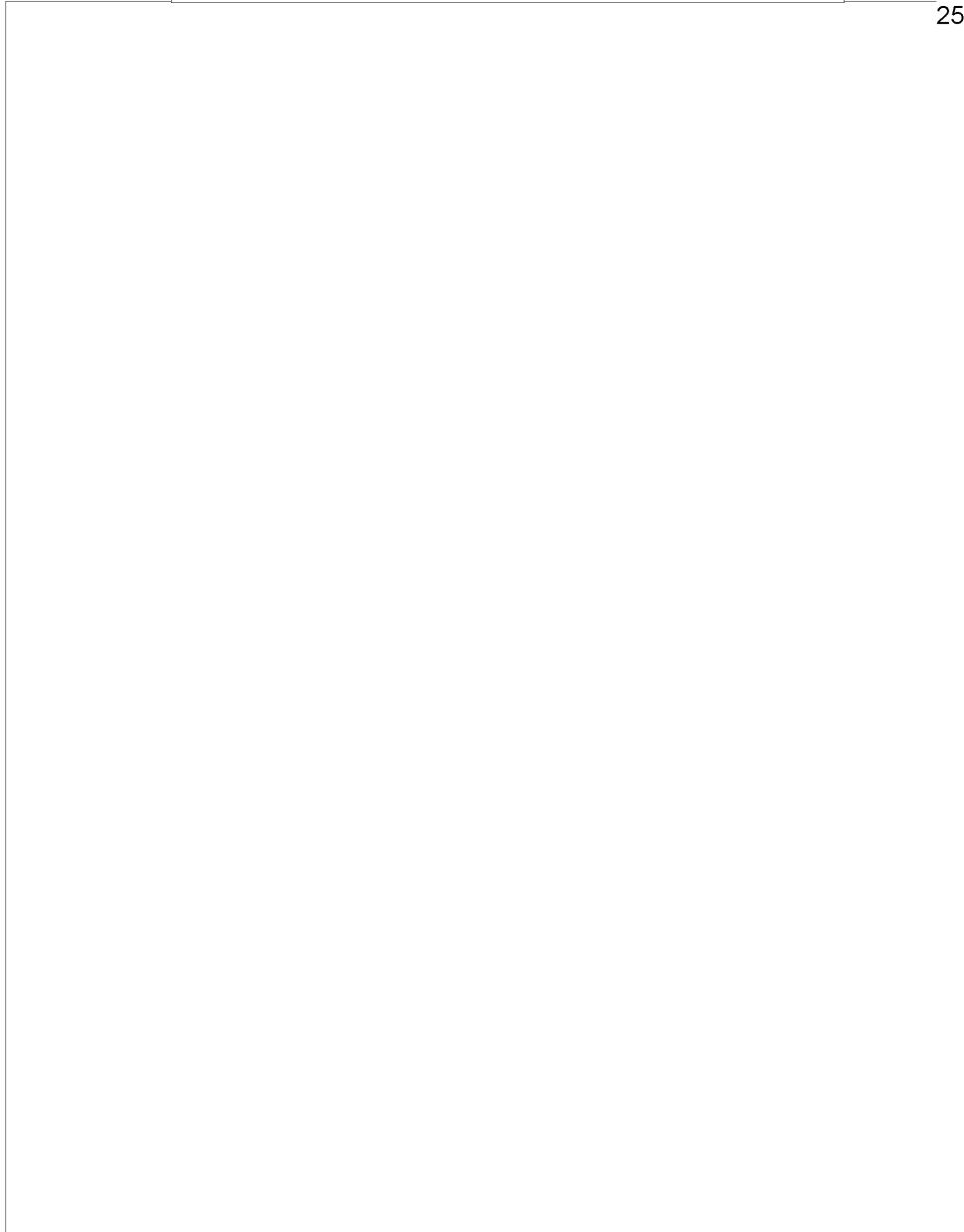
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