



The President's Daily Brief

28 April 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

28 April 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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In the Vietnam fighting, North Vietnamese infantry units have forced government defenders to withdraw from Dong Ha and the Cua Viet River defense line. (Page 2)

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The North Vietnamese are disappointed with the results of their recent trade mission to Japan, in particular their failure to secure credits. (Page 5)

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Despite West German Chancellor Brandt's success in defeating an opposition no-confidence motion, the outcome of next week's Bundestag vote on the Eastern treaties remains in doubt. (Page 7)

Student unrest in Cambodia has led to bloodshed and may force the government to accept demands for direct talks. (Page 8)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Early today tank-led North Vietnamese units forced government defenders to withdraw from Dong Ha and the Cua Viet River defense line. ARVN forces are now attempting to establish a new defense line several kilometers southeast of Dong Ha.

North Vietnamese infantry, supported by tanks and artillery, are continuing to attack the outer defenses of Quang Tri City. Enemy ground attacks were preceded during the night of 26-27 April by extensive shellings by 130-mm. guns and 122-mm. rockets. By midnight on the 27th, North Vietnamese forces were pressing hard against positions of the South Vietnamese 3rd Division southwest of the city. Intense artillery fire was being directed against the La Vang combat bases to the south. Government defenders had been pushed back to within two miles of the city. The extensive Communist build-up before the new assaults and the strong artillery support being given to North Vietnamese infantry units suggest that the fighting may be heavy and sustained.

Flying weather, which has been poor in the Quang Tri area, is now improving. Virtually all of the enemy's major drives during the current offensive have been timed to coincide with poor local weather conditions. This was true of the original thrust across the DMZ, the drive down toward An Loc, and the most recent assault in Kontum Province. It appears that the enemy may be deliberately holding up attacks, even after forces are in place and the battlefield is prepared, in order to wait for bad weather and the protection it affords from allied air attacks.

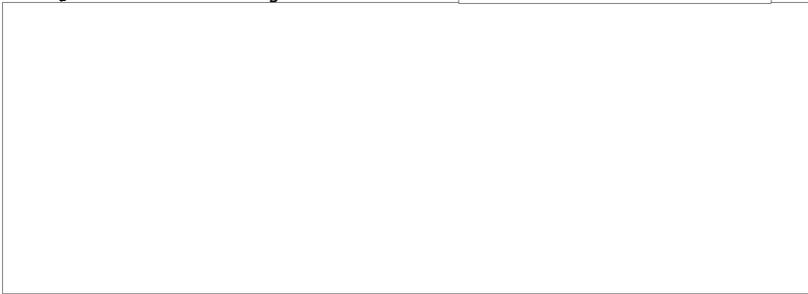
In the highlands, enemy progress down Route 14 toward Kontum City remains slowed by the destruction of a key bridge, and the government's newly organized defenses at Vo Dinh have not yet been tested. The badly mauled 42nd ARVN Regiment is being refitted in Kontum City, and the 47th has been flown to Pleiku Province where it will regroup. Yesterday, the first supply convoy moved through the reopened An Khe Pass on Route 19 toward the highlands. If the pass can be kept open for a few days, it may be possible to relieve some of the shortages that have been developing in Kontum as a result of the enemy's systematic interdiction of the main roads leading into that province.

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North of Saigon, there are some signs that the Communists may be shifting some forces from Binh Long to Phuoc Long Province. 



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USSR-CHINA

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JAPAN - NORTH VIETNAM

The Vietnamese are disappointed with the results of their recent trade mission to Japan, in particular their failure to secure credits. As a result of talks with Japanese Foreign Ministry officials who visited Hanoi in February, the Vietnamese apparently came to Tokyo with the mistaken belief that Japan was prepared to grant a \$20-million low-interest, long-term loan. [redacted]

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[redacted] Hanoi also was prepared to post trade officers in Tokyo as a step toward the exchange of permanent trade missions. No loan was forthcoming, however, and the delegation left for home ten days early.

The coincidence of the visit and the North Vietnamese offensive probably caused the Japanese to be more cautious at this time and they are likely to maintain a conservative position on official aid to Hanoi until the end of the war is in sight.

Despite the mission's meager results, Hanoi remains anxious to upgrade its economic and diplomatic contacts with non-Communist countries and may give further consideration to establishing an informal trade office in Tokyo. The Vietnamese did agree to consider a Japanese proposal for regularized official contacts in Paris or Vientiane.

Tokyo too is interested in building a base for improved relations and is attempting to secure a major role in Vietnam's postwar reconstruction. The government has relaxed its entry restrictions for North Vietnamese in recent months and is reported to have agreed tentatively to the exchange of journalists and political leaders.



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ISRAEL-LEBANON

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WEST GERMANY

Despite the government's success in defeating opposition leader Barzel's no-confidence motion, the outcome of next week's Bundestag vote on the Eastern treaties remains in doubt. Apparently half of the 26 coalition Free Democratic deputies chose to vote instead of abstaining along with their Social Democratic partners. Barzel obtained 247 votes--two short of the needed absolute majority--in his bid to oust Chancellor Brandt. An analysis of the voting suggests that at least one of the opposition deputies supported Brandt on this occasion. Ten ballots in all were cast against Barzel and three were blank.

This voting pattern will not necessarily be repeated in the Bundestag vote on the treaties. Nevertheless, Barzel's ability to muster 247 votes serves notice on Brandt that the government will have to marshal its forces carefully. Brandt will need only a simple majority on the first Bundestag vote on 4 or 5 May--248 deputies if Barzel can repeat his tally--but an absolute majority, or 249 votes, will be necessary later in a second vote if Brandt is to override the almost certain rejection of the treaties by the upper house Bundesrat in mid-month.

Brandt's cause was most likely aided significantly by the announcement on the eve of the vote that West German and East German negotiators had reached agreement on a general traffic treaty and that East Germany had agreed to permit East Germans to visit West Germany on "urgent family matters" without age limitation.

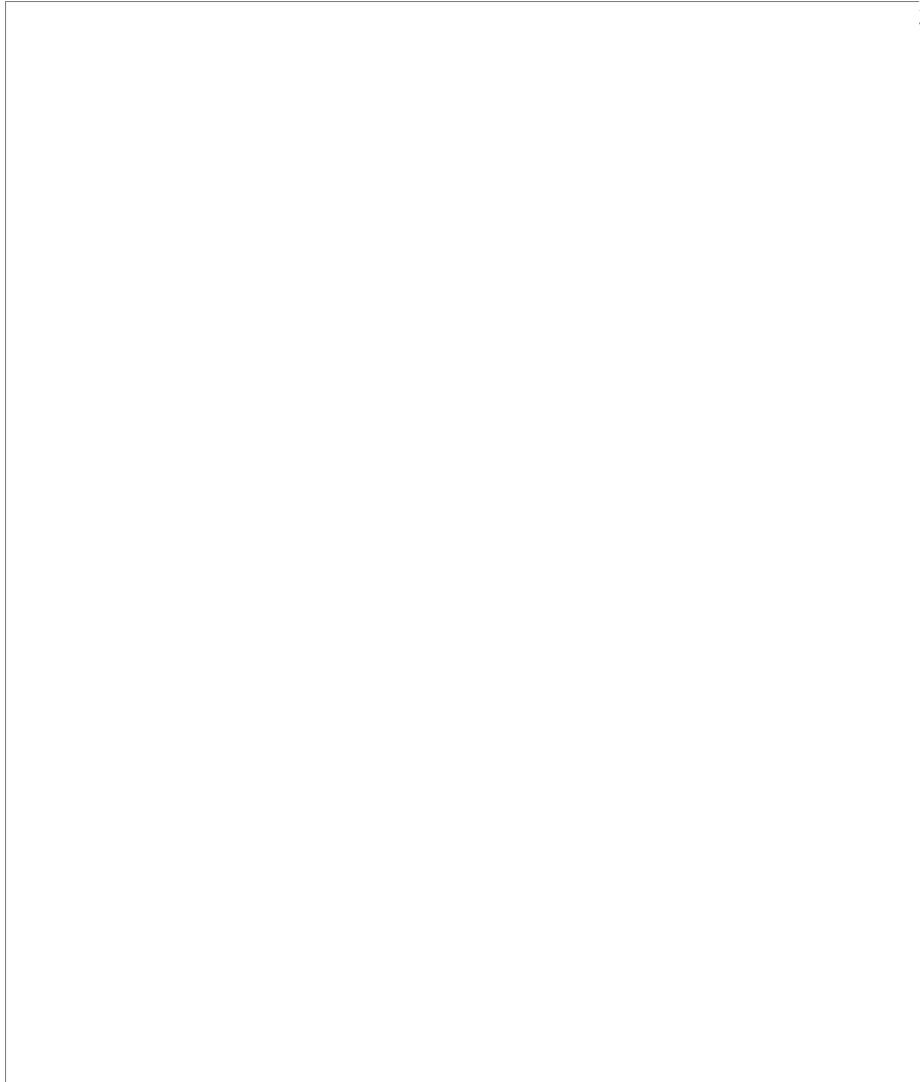
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CAMBODIA

Military police fired on students at Phnom Penh's law school yesterday, killing one and wounding 20, thus marking the first time blood has been shed in the current controversy between the students and the government. As a result of the shooting, large numbers of students have congregated at Phnom Penh's Independence Monument and are demanding that government officials open direct talks with the students. The government has made no effort to disperse the students, and the military police appear to be under orders to avoid further use of force.

Lon Nol evidently is still trying to cope with the disturbances with a minimum of force. With the referendum on the new constitution coming up on Sunday, he may find it expedient to open talks with the students, or even to postpone the referendum until a compromise is worked out.

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NOTES

USSR - North Vietnam:

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North Vietnam: Vietnamese Communist spokesmen in Paris have announced that Le Duc Tho of the Hanoi politburo will be returning to Paris soon. The French have issued Tho a visa, and, according to a New China News Agency report, he arrived in Peking yesterday, presumably for consultation with Chinese leaders before continuing on to Paris. He may stop over in Moscow as well.

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