



The President's Daily Brief

5 May 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

5 May 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The situation has been fairly quiet on all major South Vietnamese battlefronts, including the tense Hue area, as both sides prepare for new military action. (Page 1)

There is further evidence that some North Vietnamese forces that have been operating in Laos southwest of the Plaine des Jarres are withdrawing. (Page 2)

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Italy's Christian Democrats are optimistic that they will be able to form either a center-right or center-left government following parliamentary elections next week. (Page 6)

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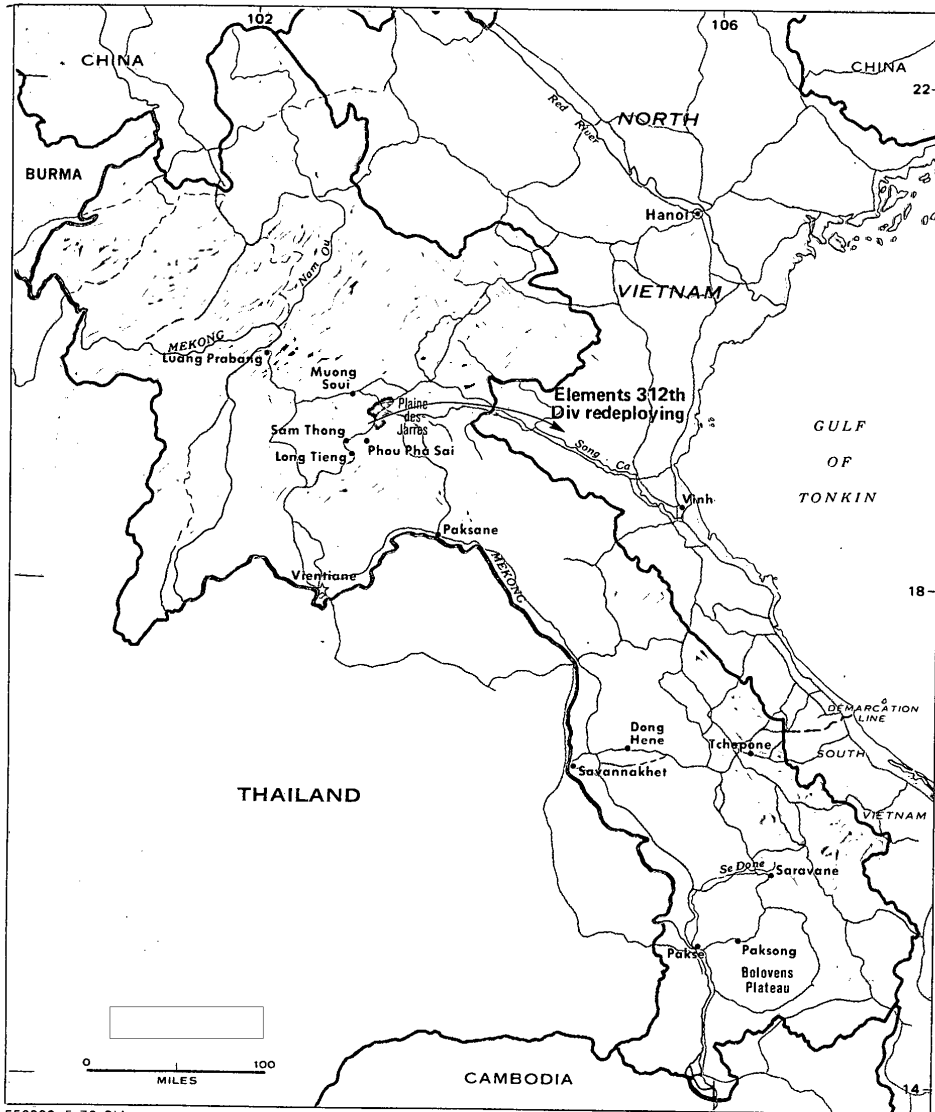
SOUTH VIETNAM

The three major battlefronts are fairly quiet as both sides prepare for further action. Hue was somewhat calmer yesterday following some 36 hours in which public order had largely collapsed in the downtown area of the city. The new commander in the northern provinces, General Truong, has told South Vietnamese soldiers to return to their units or be shot, and there are reports that he has sent armored personnel carriers and military police into the streets. President Thieu, after issuing a strong statement in which he called for harsh local action to deal with disorders in the cities, personally visited Hue to confer with military commanders and to help bolster morale.

US officials in Hue say that some press accounts of the looting in the city were exaggerated. These officials estimate that in recent days up to two thirds of the city's population left for the south. Vietnamese remaining in Hue are said to be extremely apprehensive about the situation there.

There are now some 250,000 refugees at Da Nang, and the number could soon reach a half million. Route 1 between Hue and Da Nang remains open and supports moderately heavy traffic.

LAOS



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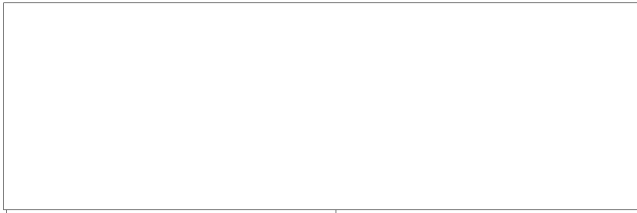
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LAOS

Radio direction-finding shows that the headquarters of the 312th Division, which entered Laos last November to participate in the offensive to recapture the Plaine, has returned to North Vietnam. It appears to be located between the Lao border and Vinh. There is some evidence that one of the division's regiments recently moved eastward from the Plaine. Another is still north of Sam Thong, and the third has not been located since it withdrew in March from Skyline Ridge.

Last year only one regiment of the 312th remained in Laos throughout the rainy season.



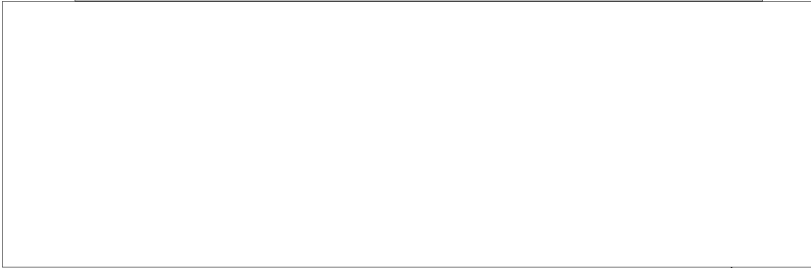
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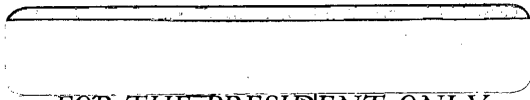
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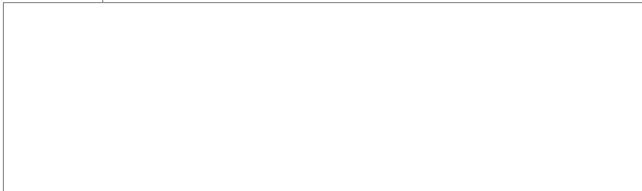
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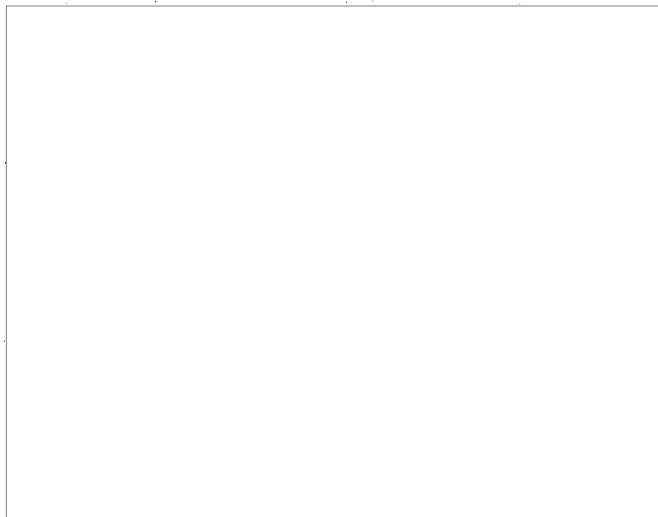
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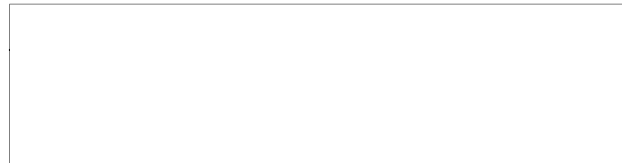
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ITALY

The latest polls indicate that the Christian Democrats and the small center-right Liberal Party they have been cultivating will lose some seats-- although fewer than they had feared--to the far right in the parliamentary elections on 7 and 8 May. The center-left parties previously allied with the Christian Democrats seem likely to hold their own, as do the Communists. A large percentage of the electorate is still undecided, however.

The Christian Democrats consider that they will be able to form and dominate the next government only by combining on the right with the Liberals or on the left with the Italian Socialist Party. At present they are optimistic that they will emerge with both options intact. Their proposed grouping with the Liberals and two smaller allies would have had only a paper majority in the just dissolved parliament, however, and any significant loss of seats to the far right would jeopardize one option. While the four parties of the previous center-left government probably will retain the combined strength to form a majority, the problems that have beset their alliance will not be overcome by the new election.

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NOTES

Jordan-USSR: The Soviets have agreed to receive King Husayn in Moscow but have requested that he delay his trip for several months, according to a source of the US Embassy in Amman. Husayn had earlier hoped to obtain Soviet backing for his proposal to federate the Israeli-held West Bank with Jordan, and he probably hopes that a visit to Moscow will give him some protection from the recurrent attacks of other Arab states. The Soviets are clearly concerned that the Egyptians and the fedayeen would react badly to such a visit. [redacted]

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[redacted] the USSR was concerned at the hasty and vitriolic Arab rejection of the King's West Bank proposal, and that this adverse reaction made it difficult for the USSR to support the plan.

Chile: President Allende's decision to submit to congress today his bill to expropriate ITT interests will have numerous political ramifications. By leaving it up to the legislature to determine how much, if any, compensation ITT should receive, Allende will be able to avoid taking direct responsibility himself. At the same time, he will put the Christian Democrats--who are the largest opposition bloc and are committed to expropriation--on the spot in view of allegations that ITT contacted members of their outgoing Frei administration and US officials in an effort to keep Allende from assuming the presidency. Extremists in the present government will undoubtedly seize on the bill to focus new attention on these allegations, which they believe Allende has so far treated too cautiously.

Turkey: Leftist terrorists are increasing their attacks in a last-ditch effort to gain the release of three of their leaders scheduled to be executed soon. Recent incidents include the hijacking of a Turkish airliner, an abortive attempt to kidnap the gendarmerie commander, and the bombing of the Turkish Airways office in Stockholm. Turkish troops have been put on alert and all military leaves have been canceled. Such distractions may further delay Prime Minister-designate Urguplu's efforts to form a government.

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Ceylon: The military alert that began in mid-March when the government feared a massive outbreak of insurgency may be lifted early next week, [redacted]

[redacted] No uprising appears likely in the near future, but the possibility of eventual strife cannot be ruled out. Ceylon's economic situation is difficult, and the government is unpopular. The authorities are freeing some 5,000 detainees thought to have been only marginally involved in last year's insurrection, and some will probably join the several hundred rebels currently at large.

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