



The President's Daily Brief

5 September 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LATE ITEM

Early this morning Arab guerrillas entered the quarters of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich, killed at least one occupant, and are holding as many as 20 Israeli athletes hostage within the building. Press reports indicate the guerrillas are demanding the release of Arab prisoners in Israeli jails in return for the lives of their hostages. Prime Minister Golda Meir is holding an emergency meeting of her cabinet to discuss Israel's response.

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In a speech on North Vietnam's National Day, Premier Pham Van Dong seemed to hint at possible shifts in the Communists' negotiating position. (Page 1)

The Communists' Central Office for South Vietnam has ordered an upsurge of military action and terrorism during October in order to influence the US elections. (Page 3)

The situation of General Vang Pao's task forces around the Plaine des Jarres in Laos is discussed on Page 5.

Now that National Assembly elections are over, Cambodia's chief, Lon Nol, is planning to make some changes in his cabinet. (Page 6)

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***NORTH VIETNAM**

A major speech by Premier Pham Van Dong on 2 September, North Vietnam's National Day, constitutes one of the most comprehensive statements of the Communists' negotiating position since the Paris talks resumed. The premier repeated his government's demands for complete US withdrawal from South Vietnam, an end to US support of the Saigon government, and a guarantee of US "respect for the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination," but his elaboration of these points was unusual.

On the first and second of these demands, Pham Van Dong was more specific than Communist negotiators have been in recent statements. He indicated that the US would have to end its air, naval, and other military activities in both the North and South, in addition to withdrawing all its ground forces from South Vietnam. He made no mention, however, of the US military presence elsewhere in Indochina. The premier also implied that Hanoi would not insist on an end to all US support for the Saigon regime, but only a halt to "all its military commitment."

In discussing the meaning of US respect for "self-determination," Dong omitted two subjects that are usually broached in this context. Nowhere did he mention the long-standing demand for President Thieu's resignation, nor did he refer to the call for elections which the Communists have always insisted should be held under a coalition "government of national concord." He repeated the demand for formation of such a coalition, but of its functions he said only that its members would "together share the enormous, imperative, and complex tasks to which the people of various strata are urging a solution." This vague treatment of a critical issue is another hint that the Communists might be flexible on the details of a coalition in Saigon, once the principle is agreed.

There is at least a hint in Dong's speech, as there has been in other recent North Vietnamese statements, that a preliminary settlement might be reached on the basis of US endorsement in principle of Hanoi's demands. In one passage (which Radio Hanoi's international service repeated for emphasis), Dong said that "a fundamental and stable solution

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of the Vietnam issue must affirm" the principles he enumerated. This phrasing might mean that the US could achieve a preliminary agreement with the Communists by signifying acceptance of Dong's broadened principles.

This analysis, based as it is on one public statement, must be considered tentative. It imputes a high degree of precision to a speech which clearly includes considerable holiday boilerplate. Moreover, there were many other themes in Dong's address, including strong doses of fighting rhetoric, that were anything but conciliatory.

In one respect Dong's speech is unambiguous. In the section dealing with the support Hanoi has received from the Communist world he went about as far as etiquette permits on such a formal occasion in signaling his dissatisfaction with Hanoi's Communist allies, particularly Moscow and Peking. In his rendering of Hanoi's customary statement of gratitude, he took a decidedly pro-forma line, lumping the Communist governments together with "all the world's people." Although he expressed "greetings" to the Soviet Union and China, he did not single them out for special thanks. Dong informed Hanoi's patrons that, given the contributions of the Vietnamese Communists to the proletarian revolution, Hanoi is "all the more entitled" to ask its allies to "fulfill their international duty."

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***SOUTH VIETNAM**

Recently, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) outlined to its subordinates Communist objectives in South Vietnam during September and October. [redacted] the COSVN instructions specify October as the decisive month of the 1972 offensive, during which the Communist main forces are to lead a surge of military activity. The attacks are intended to force the US and South Vietnamese governments to grant concessions at Paris prior to the US presidential elections, and to move the "revolution" in South Vietnam into a political phase by the end of the year.

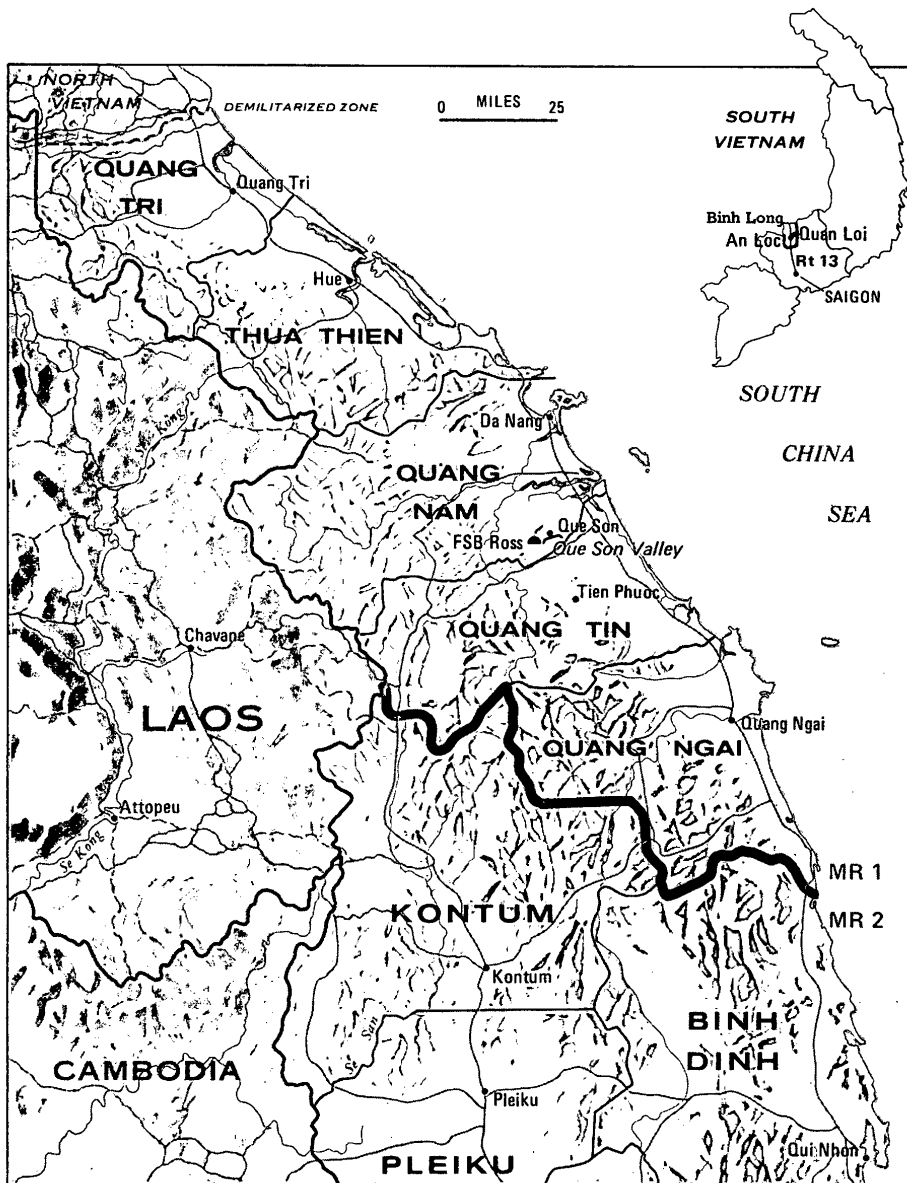
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The COSVN's main forces have been directed to use their artillery and sapper units to attack South Vietnamese defenses protecting Saigon as well as large US and government bases. The object of these attacks would be to tie down South Vietnamese forces and prevent them from launching counterattacks into "liberated" areas. Viet Cong local forces have been tasked with assassinating government officials in order to weaken South Vietnam's administration at the lowest levels. The instruction also directed Viet Cong cadre to recruit new members and to emplace themselves in positions from which they could manipulate the populace following a cease-fire.

The instructions emphasize that American prisoners are the most valuable commodity the Communists hold because through the prisoners, the US can eventually be forced to accept a political settlement of the war. In this regard, the COSVN specified that it is better to capture one American than to kill 30. Communist cadre and troops are cautioned to guard all US prisoners closely to prevent their escape or death.

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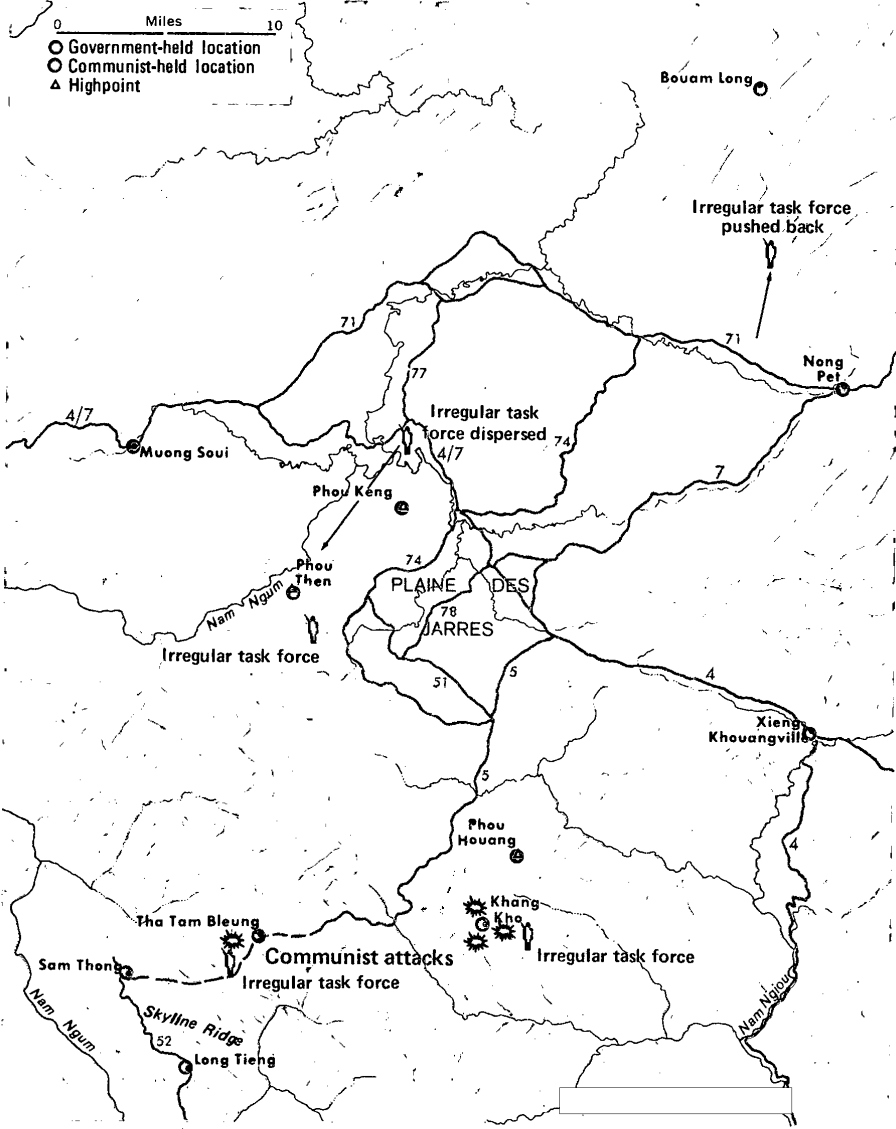
Government troops have made some small progress in their counteroffensives since yesterday. In the Que Son Valley, South Vietnamese troops have regained control of Que Son district town, but have not completed clearing several pockets of resistance from it. South Vietnamese forces also report that they have moved still closer to Fire Support Base Ross, but it remains in enemy hands. In a move apparently designed to affect the fighting in the Que Son area, Communist troops just to the south attacked Tien Phuoc district town and a number of government outposts in Quang Tin Province. The enemy was pushed back, but several battalions of government troops were pulled out of the Que Son area and sent into Quang Tin Province to reinforce South Vietnamese positions.

In Quang Tri Province, ground action has temporarily eased, but the Communists continued to pound South Vietnamese positions in and around Quang Tri City with heavy mortar and artillery fire.

In Binh Long Province, the government's drive north from An Loc is making little progress and there have been several sharp clashes near Quan Loi.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

Government irregulars from the task force north of the Plaine des Jarres that was dispersed by a series of strong North Vietnamese attacks late last week are continuing to filter back to friendly positions just west of the Plaine. Almost all of the stragglers apparently will require some medical treatment. There has been no change in the status of the other government task force in the north, whose movement from Bouam Long toward Nong Pet was halted by Communist resistance on 1 September.

South of the Plaine, the Communists are taking a stronger stand against the two irregular task forces in that area. Elements of the North Vietnamese 148th and 174th regiments have launched ground attacks and conducted sporadic shellings against the task force in the Tha Tam Bleung sector, but the irregulars have held their ground. Units assigned to the other southern task force, which is operating in the vicinity of Phou Houang, had several clashes with the Communists on Sunday. Two battalions were pushed out of their positions and withdrew a short distance to the south to regroup.

The weather continues to have a crucial effect on the course of Vang Pao's current offensive. Bad weather prevented any extensive air support for the ill-fated northern task force and has also hindered resupply missions. Weather conditions have gradually been improving, however, and 105 air strikes were carried out on Sunday in support of irregular units around the Plaine.

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CAMBODIA

The Lon Nol government apparently mustered a substantial military vote against token opposition in Sunday's election for the National Assembly. The civilian turnout was light despite the fact that harassment by the Communists was less than expected.

Lon Nol now plans to make some cabinet changes. Shortly before the election, he indicated that he plans to have Information Minister Long Boret take over the foreign ministry from Son Ngoc Thanh. Thanh's reputation as a rightist has complicated Phnom Penh's efforts to project a neutralist image. Boret is regarded as competent and has considerable experience in handling diplomatic assignments.

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Lon Nol is also still trying to persuade opposition leaders In Tam and Sirik Matak to accept key positions in his government in order to restore some semblance of political unity.

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