

The President's Daily Brief

10 November 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In South Vietnam, Communist forces appear to be having some morale problems, partly because of uncertainty about a cease-fire date. Both they and the South Vietnamese are cutting down on military action. (Page 1)

Bangkok is moving ahead toward improved relations with China despite deep skepticism regarding Peking's intentions. (Page 2)

We have indications that the fedayeen may take some anti-Israeli action on Cyprus. (Page 3)

Cambodian government forces have ousted the Communists who have been blocking Route 5 since last August. (Page 4)

Some of Chilean President Allende's political allies appear to be challenging Interior Minister Prats over handling the recent strikers. (Page 4)

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VIETNAM

Reports of declining enemy morale are cropping up with increasing frequency. Many captured enemy soldiers appear disillusioned and confused, complaining of food and supply shortages and hardships caused by allied air and artillery power. The slip-page in the expected cease-fire deadline has contributed to the demoralization. The Communist hierarchy is trying to counter this problem by portraying the agreement worked out with the US as a "fundamental victory" for the Communists. A recently captured COSVN document providing guidance to cadres and soldiers claimed that the cease-fire should be understood as a "transitional period" that will lead to "greater victories."

Uncertainty about a cease-fire date has prompted some military commands in the northern provinces to withdraw troops from the battlefield and send them to rear areas for political indoctrination.

The recent trend away from frequent use of artillery to less expensive mortars may also reflect indecision on the part of some local commanders. These commanders had received orders to stage large-scale attacks immediately preceding and just following the announcement of a cease-fire, but the unexpected delays in the cease-fire timetable may have forced them to alter their tactics and to conserve ammunition.

The South Vietnamese are also letting up. Although some commanders are claiming victories in keeping the enemy away from Saigon's doorstep, much of the territory that has fallen to the Communists since last spring has not been retaken. A South Vietnamese Marine operation launched last week against enemy defenses west of Quang Tri City was beaten back, and units in other areas have had difficulty in keeping the major roads open.

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THAILAND-CHINA

Thai envoy Prasit Kanchanawat, who headed the Thai delegation to the Canton Trade Fair last month following an earlier visit to Peking, told Ambassador Unger early this week that Thailand would begin trading with China as soon as arrangements for a formal mechanism are worked out. Prasit indicated that Bangkok prefers to set up a state trading organization, a process he believed would take at least two months.

In discussing general relations with Peking, Prasit tried to sound out the US reaction to any loosening of Thailand's ties with Taiwan along the lines of the recent Japanese move in that direction.

Despite deep skepticism regarding Chinese intentions, Bangkok appears to be moving steadily ahead in improving relations. When and if the Thai decide to establish diplomatic links, we do not see them letting the Taiwan issue stand in the way.

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FEDAYEEN-CYPRUS

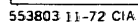
The Israeli ambassador in Nicosia has told Ambassador Popper he has fragmentary information that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine will soon attack the Israeli Embassy. His concern is heightened by what he considers to be an unsatisfactory response from the Cypriot police to his requests for stronger protection for official Israeli installations.

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So far the fedayeen have refrained from direct action on Cyprus so that the island would not be denied to them as a transit stop and contact point for operations elsewhere. They may now believe, however, that a spectacular action against the Israelis in Cyprus would outweigh the risks to their local assets.

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NOTES

Cambodia: Government forces have dislodged the Communists from the section of Route 5 south of Kompong Chhnang City they had occupied for nearly three months. The highway must undergo repairs, however, before it can be reopened to regular commercial traffic from Battambang in the northwest. Other forces trying to clear Route 4 continue to meet heavy resistance. In the south, the government is preparing to launch a new operation to reopen Route 2 to Takeo, which is under increasing Communist pressure.

Chile: Socialist Party leader Altamirano is demanding severe punishment for those who took part in the long protest movement that ended on Monday. Moreover, some of the merchants who took part in the strike are now unable to secure goods from the government-dominated distribution system. General Prats, when he became interior minister last week, guaranteed that there would be no reprisals against the strikers. He thus seems to be facing a direct challenge by some of President Allende's political allies.

Guatemala:

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East Germany - West Germany: The increased flight of East German refugees to West Germany could create difficulties in improving East-West German relations. The number of refugees has tripled since the implementation last June of the Four Power and inter-German transit agreements on Berlin. More than 200 refugees have registered with West Berlin authorities since June. One of Pankow's principal concerns regarding the Berlin accords was that they would result in a sharp increase in illegal departures. The East Germans have not yet raised the issue with Bonn, perhaps because they want to avoid adding to Brandt's re-election problems.

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Israel-Syria: An Israeli military spokesman has announced that the Israeli air attack yesterday on two Syrian Army posts near the Golan Heights was in retaliation for an attempted guerrilla ambush yesterday and a mining incident the previous day in which an Israeli civilian was wounded. The attack drew a Syrian artillery response and this in turn led to further heavy Israeli air strikes against Syrian artillery positions. The Syrians admit to the loss of two MIG-21s. Despite Syrian claims, no Israeli aircraft appear to have been lost.

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