



The President's Daily Brief

27 January 1973



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

A sharp upsurge in pre-cease-fire Communist attacks is under way throughout South Vietnam. (Page 1)

During the past week, North Vietnamese resupply activity reached peak levels in all of Indochina. (Page 2)

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will meet next month to discuss ramifications of the Vietnam accord. (Page 3)

Australia [redacted] New Zealand [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] (Page 4) 25X1

A Soviet delegation now in the US may be investigating the possibilities for grain purchases for fiscal year 1974. (Page 5) 25X1

[redacted] Syria [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] fedayeen [redacted] (Page 6) 25X1

Laotian Government forces have retaken an important road junction in the north, but in the south they are under heavy Communist pressure east of Muong Phalane. (Page 7)

France's Pompidou and West Germany's Brandt have discussed the possibility that President Nixon may visit Europe this year. (Page 7)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Last night, the Communists began a widespread series of attacks in South Vietnam. As of this morning, the most serious is an assault on Tay Ninh City, located northwest of Saigon. Field reports indicate that several hamlets on the city's southeastern outskirts are in enemy hands. The main road to Saigon has been cut, and the walls of the Cao Dai religious sect's headquarters are said to have been breached. Aerial observers have reported seeing large enemy forces northeast and northwest of the city, and Communist attacks may come from those directions as well.

In Chuong Thien Province in the Mekong Delta, a district capital has been overrun and a neighboring one is under heavy attack. The efforts of government troops to slow enemy infiltration from Cambodia into the delta apparently have provoked a number of battles.

In the central highlands, the enemy has renewed efforts to cut the road between Kontum and Pleiku cities. On the coast, heavy ground and artillery attacks were reported in the northern three districts of Binh Dinh Province.

Communist gunners are continuing heavy shellings in Quang Tri Province, just below the Demilitarized Zone. Yesterday, for example, they fired more than 4,200 rounds into government positions, the heaviest shelling since the spring offensive. Early this morning, Da Nang was rocketed twice, resulting in damage to the air base and the city's power system. It was the third such attack against Da Nang in two days.

Some South Vietnamese officials anticipate fighting may continue after the deadline for a cease-fire. Two province chiefs in Military Region 2 have told US observers that they will fight as long as necessary after the cease-fire to push out any Communist units that may have occupied new territory in last-minute actions.

Intercepted messages indicate that some Communist units have been ordered to observe the cease-fire. Elements of an artillery battalion responsible for the rocketing of Da Nang have been told to conduct no attacks later than 0800 hours (local time) on 28 January. A similar message was passed to an unidentified unit in Binh Dinh Province.

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INDOCHINA

During the past week, North Vietnamese resupply activity throughout Indochina reached peak levels. In southern North Vietnam, for example, intercepts indicate that between 19 and 24 January over 800 vehicles moved south through Vinh. At Dong Hoi, large formations of vehicles, plus 12 tanks, were noted moving south. In addition, over 500 tons of supplies were delivered to the front just south of the Demilitarized Zone during the first 21 days of January.

The sharpest increase has been in the Laos panhandle and northeastern Cambodia. Intercepts indicate that recently nearly 100 vehicles a day have been carrying supplies through these areas bound for South Vietnam's central highlands and for the COSVN region.

These efforts apparently represent an attempt by the North Vietnamese to move as many supplies as possible into South Vietnam before the restrictions imposed by the cease-fire agreement go into force.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

Plans for high-level consultations on the area's future in the aftermath of the Vietnam cease-fire are moving ahead rapidly. On Thursday it was announced that the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)--Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand--will meet in Kuala Lumpur on 15 February to discuss ramifications of the settlement. Bangkok stated that it would propose convening a summit meeting of ten nations--the ASEAN countries plus Burma and the four Indochina states.

Malaysia originally suggested a regional conference to promote its idea of declaring Southeast Asia a "neutral zone." Although early soundings in Hanoi and Rangoon were received coolly, the ASEAN members are increasingly interested in examining whether some kind of neutralization could exclude the region from future great power competition.

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NEW ZEALAND - AUSTRALIA



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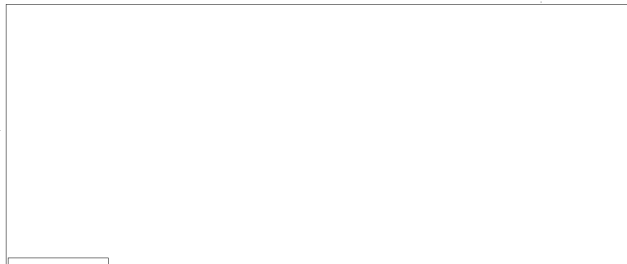
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USSR-US

A Soviet delegation is in the US touring ports and meeting with major grain traders to speed up shipments of grain purchased last year. The Soviets are upset over the prospect that deliveries may have to be extended beyond June.

Only about six million of approximately 20 million tons of grain and soybeans bought in the US for delivery by mid-1973 have been shipped. The delay is largely due to the late resolution of shipping terms--not concluded until last November--resulting in a massive pileup at US grain elevators and ports. Soviet ports and rail systems have handled the incoming grain shipments with little unanticipated difficulty.

We suspect that the delegation may be investigating the possibility of new purchases for fiscal year 1974 and at the same time trying to find out whether shipping problems will continue. Moscow's winter grain prospects do not look good. The USSR's minister of agriculture has said he is doing everything possible to reduce foreign grain purchases, but he admitted that imports of corn and soybeans for the livestock feeding program would be necessary for a long time. Even if the Soviet Union has a good harvest, Moscow will have to buy some wheat, oats, and barley.

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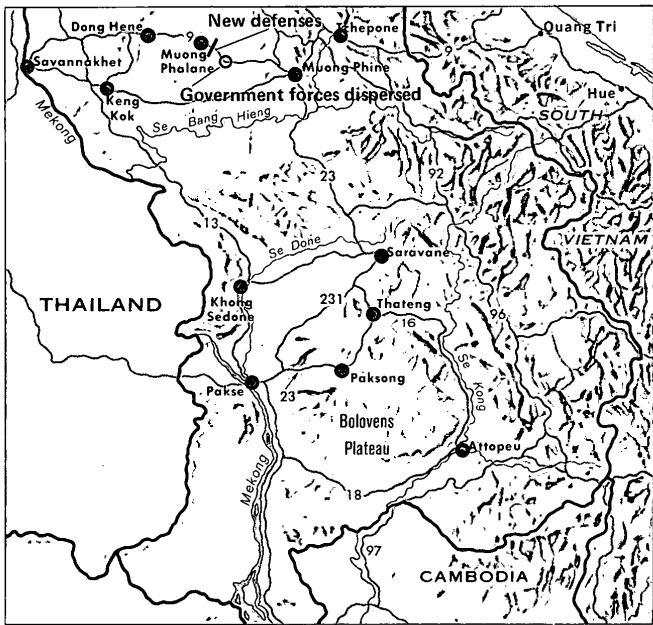
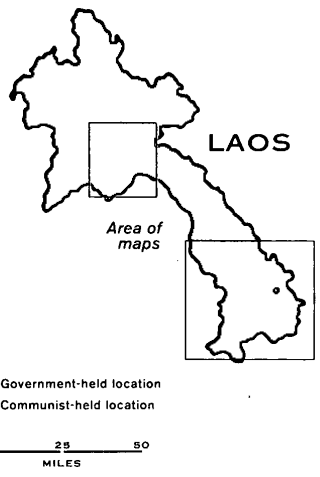
SYRIA-FEDAYEEN



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We know the Syrians have been severely stung by retaliatory Israeli air raids against military and civilian targets and believe that this may be dictating the new caution in Damascus. Nevertheless, we do not believe the Syrians will completely suppress incidents along the cease-fire line.

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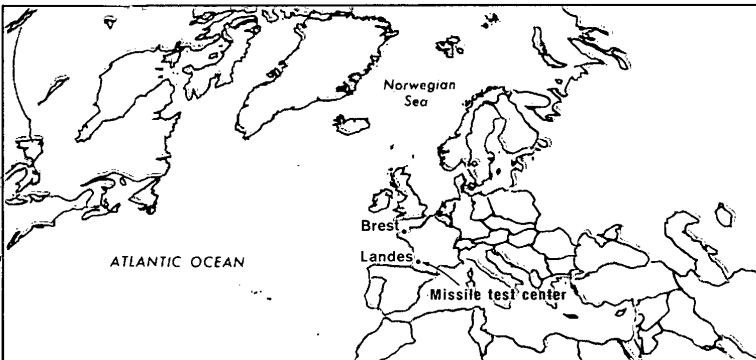
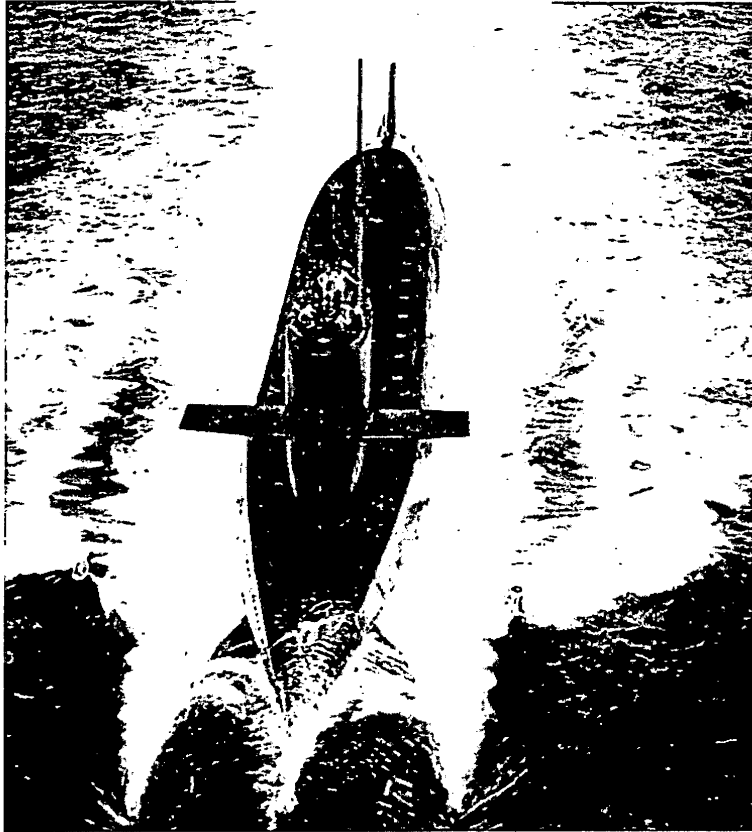
Laos: Government irregulars retook the Sala Phou Khoun road junction south of Luang Prabang on 25 January but are now under heavy fire. Ultimately Pathet Lao and dissident neutralist units strung out along Route 13 may be forced to pull back. Lao Army commanders hope that their troops will then be able to reopen other stretches of Route 13. Elsewhere, heavy Communist attacks along Route 9 in the central panhandle have forced government troops to fall back and form a new defensive line a few miles east of Muong Phalane. Messages between North Vietnamese units in the area indicate they are determined to keep pressure on the government force defending that town.

France - West Germany: President Pompidou and Chancellor Brandt used their meeting early this week largely to celebrate achievements during the decade since the signing of the Franco - West German treaty of cooperation. They agreed that if President Nixon visits Western Europe this year he should meet with European Community leaders, but the two pointedly disagreed as to which leaders or which bodies should be included. The two also approved holding a "constructive dialogue" between the US and the Community--without defining its details--but the French continue to reject the notion that any dialogue should be institutionalized.

Malta-UK: Prime Minister Mintoff has backed away from his earlier suggestion that he would accept the NATO offer of partial compensation for Malta's losses caused by the sterling float. He is again threatening to abrogate the base agreement unless the British abandon their adamant refusal to discuss the compensation issue. Mintoff's latest "suggestion" is that a NATO member acceptable to both sides be named to mediate the dispute. The NATO ambassadors in Malta think this may be a ploy by Mintoff to promote a personal meeting with Prime Minister Heath.

(continued)

French Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine



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India: The two western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat are experiencing severe food and water shortages because of drought. Relief projects are aiding about three million people, but many millions more in need are receiving rations below the subsistence level. New Delhi has failed to meet its quotas on shipments of grain to the deficit states for the past two months, and even when scheduled grain imports begin arriving early in February supplies are likely to be inadequate. Power cuts resulting from the water shortage are also causing heavy losses in Bombay's industrial production.

France: Le Terrible, France's second nuclear-powered missile submarine, departed Brest on its first operational patrol on 18 January. A third such submarine soon will be ready for sea trials, a fourth appears likely to be launched later this year, and construction of a fifth is scheduled to begin soon afterwards.

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