



# The President's Daily Brief

*April 7, 1975*

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1



Exempt from general  
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652  
exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)  
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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

*President Thieu's obvious intention to stay in power has produced mounting dissatisfaction in both military and civilian circles, but as yet there is no firm evidence of a serious move to force him out.*

After taking a limited opinion poll, the embassy in Saigon reports that most Vietnamese are taking a wait-and-see attitude. They welcome the departure of Prime Minister Khiem, but doubt that lower house speaker Can is capable of forming a new cabinet. Although Can is a respected and intelligent politician, he is a close associate of Thieu and has few contacts among the military. As a national leader, most [redacted] question whether he can persuade an impressive group to join the government.

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The reactions [redacted] may best reflect the general political situation in the country. [redacted] efforts to persuade Thieu to step aside in favor of an "executive council" headed by General Ky had failed. Moreover, [redacted] despite [redacted] universal dissatisfaction with Thieu, the President still had the trump cards and "he is playing them coolly."

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Military men are reluctant to move against Thieu, because failure would bring disgrace to them and reprisals against their families. Religious groups, especially the Catholics, do not want to take any action that would help the communists. Thus, [redacted] so long as Thieu retains the loyalty of a few high-level military officers and the police, his removal will not be easy.

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The attitudes of South Vietnam's military leaders will of course be crucial in determining the government's and Thieu's durability. Former prime minister Khiem's actions will also be important. Although there are no reliable indications that senior military commanders or Khiem--a former military commander and by rank South Vietnam's senior general--are ready to move against Thieu, the feeling seems to be growing that some way must be found either to force Thieu from office or to persuade him to step aside.

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We have comments from three separate sources, all made to US officials with the knowledge that their remarks would be passed to Washington, suggesting that moves against Thieu could develop quickly. South Vietnam's press director, Nguyen Ngoc Bich, told a US official on Saturday that reaction to President Thieu's speech the day before among "many air force officers" was one of extreme anger and that there was talk of a "bloody solution." Bich interpreted these comments to mean that a bombing of the palace or an assassination attempt might be made shortly. He claimed that "all armed forces" are now beginning to rally around former vice president Ky, but that Ky himself is not among those plotting violence.

Bich also stated that Military Region 3 commander General Toan had tried unsuccessfully all day Saturday to get an appointment with Thieu. Toan reportedly wanted to assure the President of his personal loyalty, but intended nevertheless to ask him to step down for the good of the country.

There are also indications that General Nam, Military Region 4 commander, may be ready to end his support for Thieu. According to Nam's chief of staff, General Quay, Nam would support Joint General Staff chief Vien in a power struggle against Thieu. Quay emphasized, however, that Nam would not take the initiative in such a move, but that his support could prove decisive in any confrontation between Thieu and the generals.

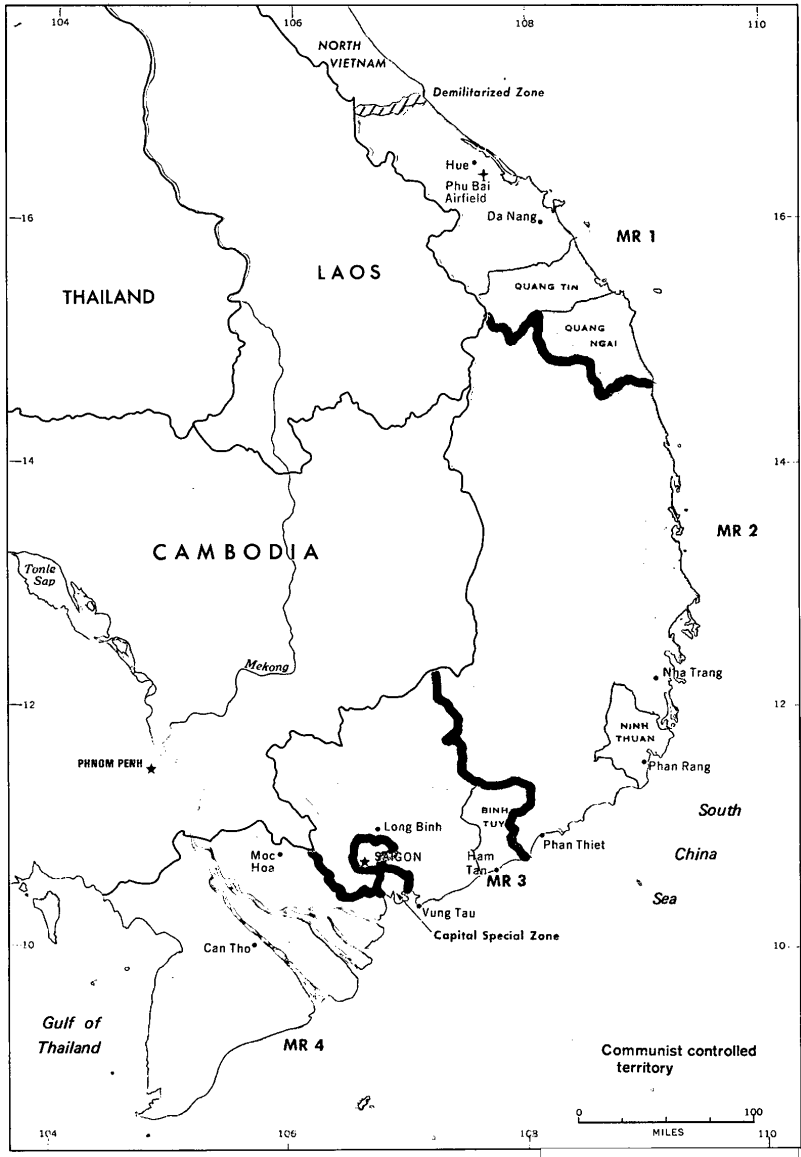
An initial survey of reactions to Thieu's speech by the embassy reflects widespread agreement with Thieu's charges of US abandonment. On Thursday, moreover, a special assistant in the ministry of national defense, Major General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, warned that some attempts would be made to prevent Americans from leaving South Vietnam.

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*There was practically no fighting in the provinces near Saigon over the weekend, but the level of communist-initiated military action increased somewhat in the delta. Officials in the delta are pleased with their newly adopted blocking tactics, however, and with the increased and more effective air support. Some officials feel that if the communists do not take Can Tho in the next few days, they will have to fall back.*

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The South Vietnamese have reinforced their forces defending Moc Hoa, a tiny provincial capital just south of the Cambodian border in the northern delta. Here too, the communists have been slow in getting under way and their forces are being struck hard by government air and artillery. The balance of forces there now favors the government, and some officials feel this battlefront could be the first big test of the resolve of Saigon's forces in the remaining third of the country.

The commander of the South Vietnamese marine division, which was recently evacuated from Da Nang, is now regrouping his units at Vung Tau along the coast. One of the three brigades being reassembled and rearmed will soon move closer to Saigon to bolster the confidence of the population in the capital.

Parts of the airborne brigade that were brought out of the northern provinces have been resting and refitting at Long Binh. One battalion was sent on April 4 to reinforce government units at Phan Rang in Ninh Thuan Province. The government is still holding small enclaves at Phan Rang and Phan Thiet, largely because the North Vietnamese have been slow to occupy these weakly defended areas of southern Military Region 2. There have also been reports that the communists have not yet moved into Nha Trang in force, but Saigon's military presence there is weak.

Much of the South Vietnamese 2nd Division, which fled from Quang Ngai and Quang Tin provinces in Military Region 1, is now in Binh Tuy Province. The commander is encountering difficulties in reorganizing the division's 4,000 or so troops because they have been reluctant to turn in their weapons. Some troops have been stealing and looting in the provincial capital of Ham Tan, a seacoast city deluged with military personnel and civilians arriving by boat from the northern provinces.

Hanoi, meanwhile, has begun flying transport aircraft into the recently captured Phu Bai airfield between Hue and Da Nang. The North Vietnamese have been flying helicopters into northern South Vietnam for several weeks, but this is the first time transports have flown into this area. Hanoi is probably trying to move in additional administrative and technical personnel to stabilize the civil situation in the northern provinces.

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CAMBODIA

*Acting president Saukham Koy met with US Congressional staff members yesterday and made an impassioned plea for supplemental aid. Khmer communist forces are now reported to be about three miles from Pochentong Airport.*

President Koy said that a favorable vote on the aid question would buy him time to arrange an orderly surrender. He said that under the present circumstances the "best feasible solution" would be for the government to give in to Sihanouk's demands and invite the Prince back to Phnom Penh. He envisioned tying the "invitation" to an agreement prohibiting communist forces from entering the city and allowing the continued delivery of relief supplies.

Koy warned that the government would have no choice except to surrender unconditionally if the supplemental aid is not provided. Undoubtedly trying to shock his guests, Koy spoke of the possibility of a "bloodbath" if the insurgents are allowed to enter Phnom Penh. His comments indicated, however, that government officials now realize the severity of the situation and that any hope of a compromise solution has vanished.

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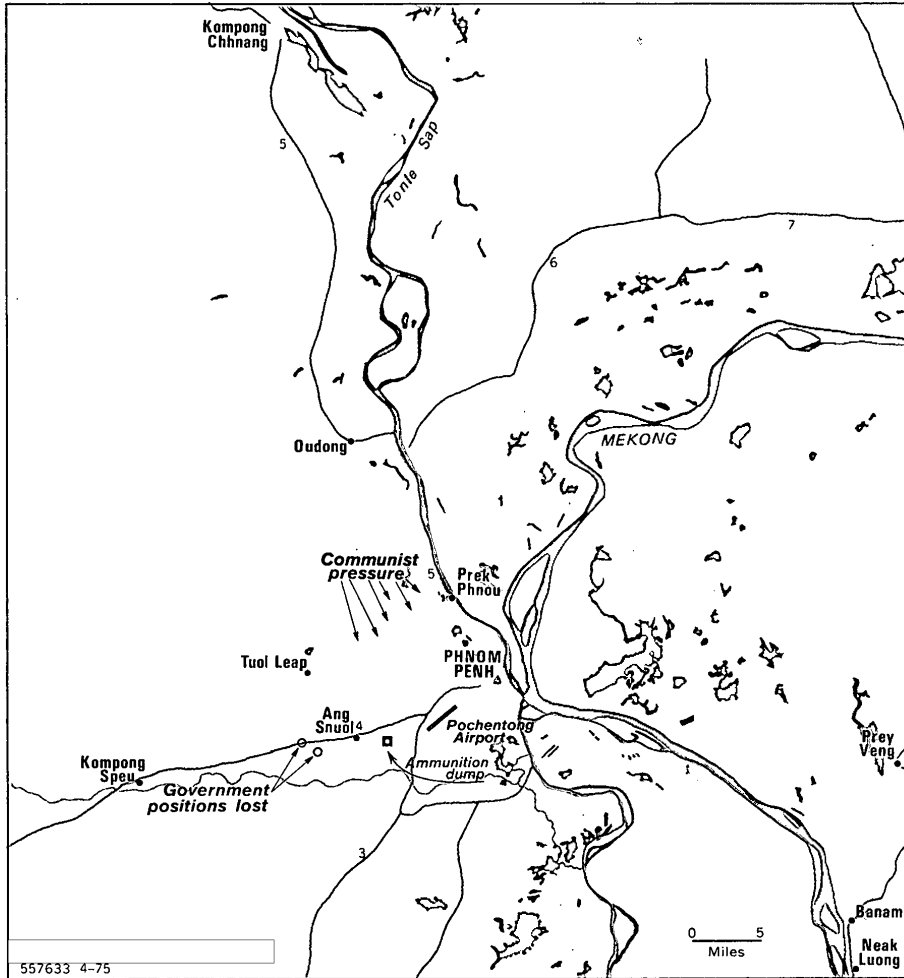
Ambassador Dean reduced the US mission staff in Phnom Penh to 58 persons over the weekend. Another 102 private US citizens remain in the city, and the embassy has advised them to leave. So far, none of the over 600 Cambodians on the embassy's evacuation list has left. Ambassador Dean believes that the departure of significant numbers of government officials and Cambodian employees of the US mission would be read as a sign of defeat and make it difficult to complete evacuation plans. The ambassador is also deeply concerned over the possibility of major insurgent artillery attacks against the capital in the near future and warns that the "final extraction" may have to be carried out under "hostile fire."

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### CAMBODIA: Phnom Penh Area



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The Khmer communists kept steady pressure on Phnom Penh's outer defenses over the weekend. West of the capital, insurgent ground attacks forced government troops to withdraw from two positions on Route 4. Much military equipment was lost in the withdrawals and 200 government troops are missing. The front lines in the sector are now only six miles from the army's main ammunition dump.

Fighting also increased on the Route-5 front north of Phnom Penh. Government troops have given up some ground, and US defense attachés report that defenses along the highway and on the peninsula just across the Tonle Sap River are very porous. The communists also launched new ground attacks against army units directly north of Pochentong Airport where they gained ground.

The US airlift operations continued uninterrupted over the weekend, although communist rocket and artillery attacks damaged four Khmer air force aircraft and wounded a number of pilots. Intercepted messages continue to reflect communist preparations for increased artillery attacks against the airfield or Phnom Penh itself.

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### NATIONALIST CHINA

*President Chiang Kai-shek's death on Saturday will not result in any immediate or dramatic policy changes by the Taipei government.*

Vice President Yen Chia-kan was sworn in as president yesterday, but he will be largely a figurehead. Real power will rest with the late president's eldest son, Premier Chiang Ching-kuo, who gradually assumed leadership after his father became seriously ill in 1972.

The main points of Premier Chiang's domestic and foreign policies have closely paralleled those of his father and there is little reason to expect dramatic changes now. Since the younger Chiang assumed effective control of the government, there has been no weakening of the Nationalists' staunch anti-communist stand or their claim to represent all of China. Chiang has shown no sign of willingness to reach an accommodation with Peking, and there is little likelihood that his attitude will change in the near future.

Premier Chiang, however, has placed less emphasis in recent years on the "return-to-the-mainland" theme with which his father was so closely identified. He also has attempted to obtain greater participation in the government by native Taiwanese.

Taipei's ties with the US are still a key concern to the Nationalists. Premier Chiang can be expected to try to gain reassurance of US commitments to Taiwan, especially in the light of recent developments in Indochina. Foreign Minister Shen Chang-huan, in fact, approached the US ambassador in Taipei on Sunday with a "private" request for "some reassuring gesture" from you regarding US "solidarity" with the Taipei government.

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NOTES

A Soviet attempt early Saturday morning to orbit a Soyuz spacecraft with two cosmonauts aboard ended in failure.

The mission was aborted when a problem developed with the booster shortly after the third stage was ignited. A Tass announcement yesterday confirmed the failure and said that the cosmonauts were recovered in good health. [REDACTED]

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The spacecraft was expected to rendezvous and dock with the Salyut 4 space station, after which the crew would have boarded the space station for an extended stay in orbit.

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The meeting in Paris of oil producing and consuming states that begins today seems likely to be a fairly successful affair.

Representatives of industrialized states, developing countries, and major oil producers attending the week-long session will probably make some progress on both the agenda and the list of participants in a major conference later this year. A successful meeting in Paris, in fact, could be a watershed in relations between the oil producers and consumers and open the way to broader international recognition of the economic interdependence of oil importers and exporters.

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