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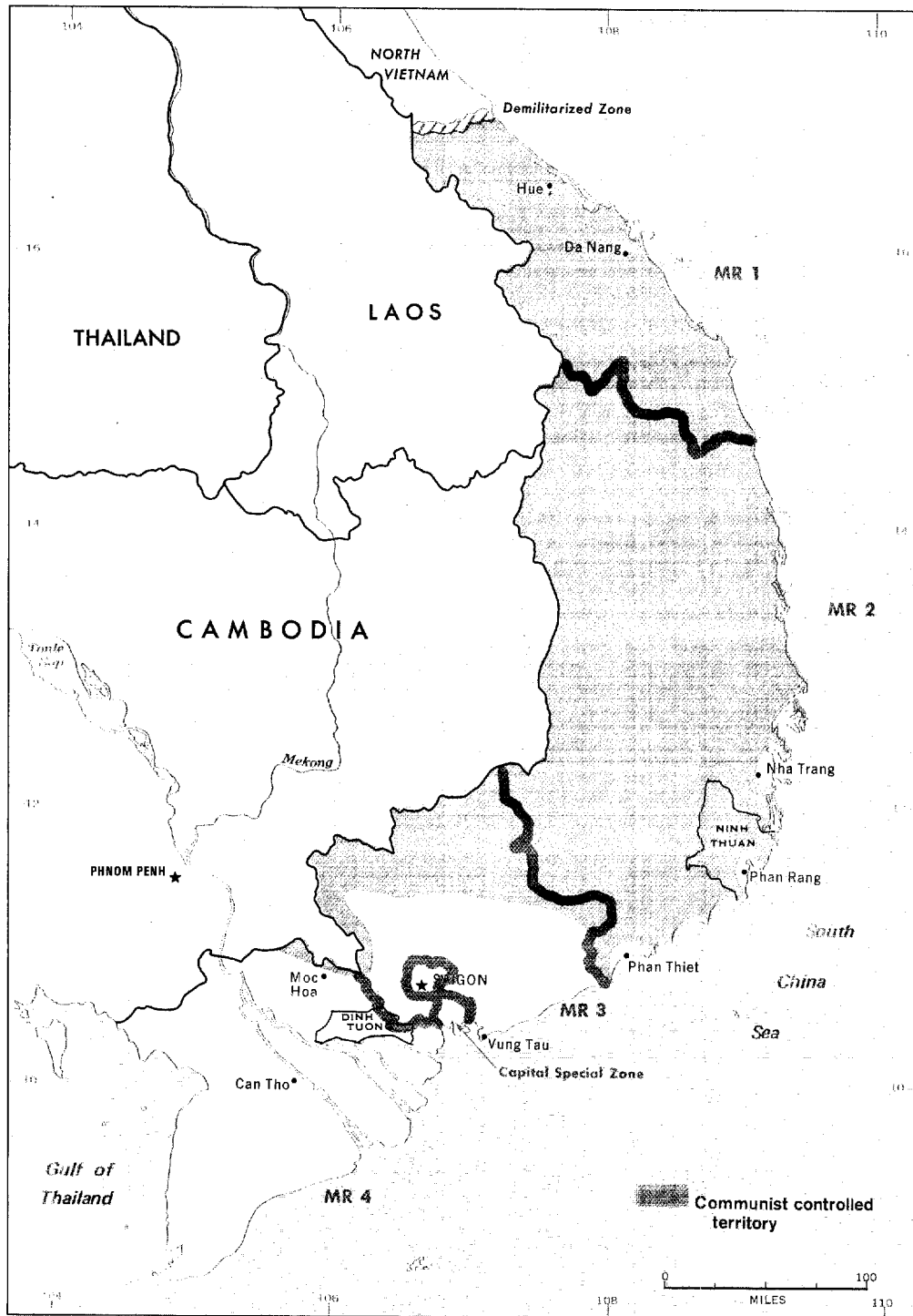
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SOUTH VIETNAM

Accounts so far indicate that the bombing of the Presidential Palace in Saigon this morning was not part of a larger conspiracy against President Thieu. Even so, the incident will generate tensions among South Vietnamese military leaders and could cause President Thieu to move against air force officers, including the current commander and Thieu's long-standing political rival, former commander Nguyen Cao Ky.

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The bombing occurred at about 8:30 a.m. Saigon time, shortly after two South Vietnamese air force F-5s took off from Bien Hoa air base north of Saigon for a bombing run near Phan Thiet. One of the aircraft veered over Saigon and dropped two bombs, the closest of which landed about 30 yards from the palace. Flying glass caused several injuries but no fatalities were reported. The aircraft has not been located and may have left the country. Although no appreciable public disorder ensued after the bombing, Saigon was placed under curfew and Tan Son Nhut airport is also closed for the time being.

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Most of the military action remains in the delta. The communists began their assault on the Moc Hoa front early yesterday with a mixed barrage of some 1,000 rocket, artillery, and mortar rounds against a government position less than eight miles northeast of that provincial capital. The communists also are becoming more active in other parts of the delta, particularly in Dinh Tuong Province. The North Vietnamese 4th Division is probing Can Tho City defenses, but has made no appreciable gains. The communists have also stepped up sabotage operations against the major delta highways, thus far without much success.

General Toan, commander of the provinces around Saigon, and now responsible for the few remaining government enclaves in the central coastal provinces, made an inspection tour to these areas last weekend and has taken steps to improve the government's position there. He has established a forward command headquarters at Phan Rang, in Ninh Thuan Province, which will command the airborne battalion sent there last weekend and a regrouped regiment from the 2nd Division which will arrive shortly. Toan found that most of the government's territorial forces were still in place around the Phan Rang area.

General Toan also located the Ninh Thuan Province chief who had fled earlier, and ordered him back to the province until he can find someone stronger to replace him. Toan is checking the situation north of Phan Rang and may consider moving forces there if he can reorganize his troops rapidly enough--and if the communists do not move first. Some government naval units have moved into the Nha Trang area and are reported to be holding positions at the port and at the airfield.

General Toan claims he is satisfied that all returning government units and stragglers at several locations east of Saigon are under control and that progress is being made reorganizing them into usable military units. In addition to the marines and 2nd Division troops that are regrouping, over 7,000 officers and men of the South Vietnamese 22nd Division--perhaps a half of that unit's former strength--reached the Vung Tau area.

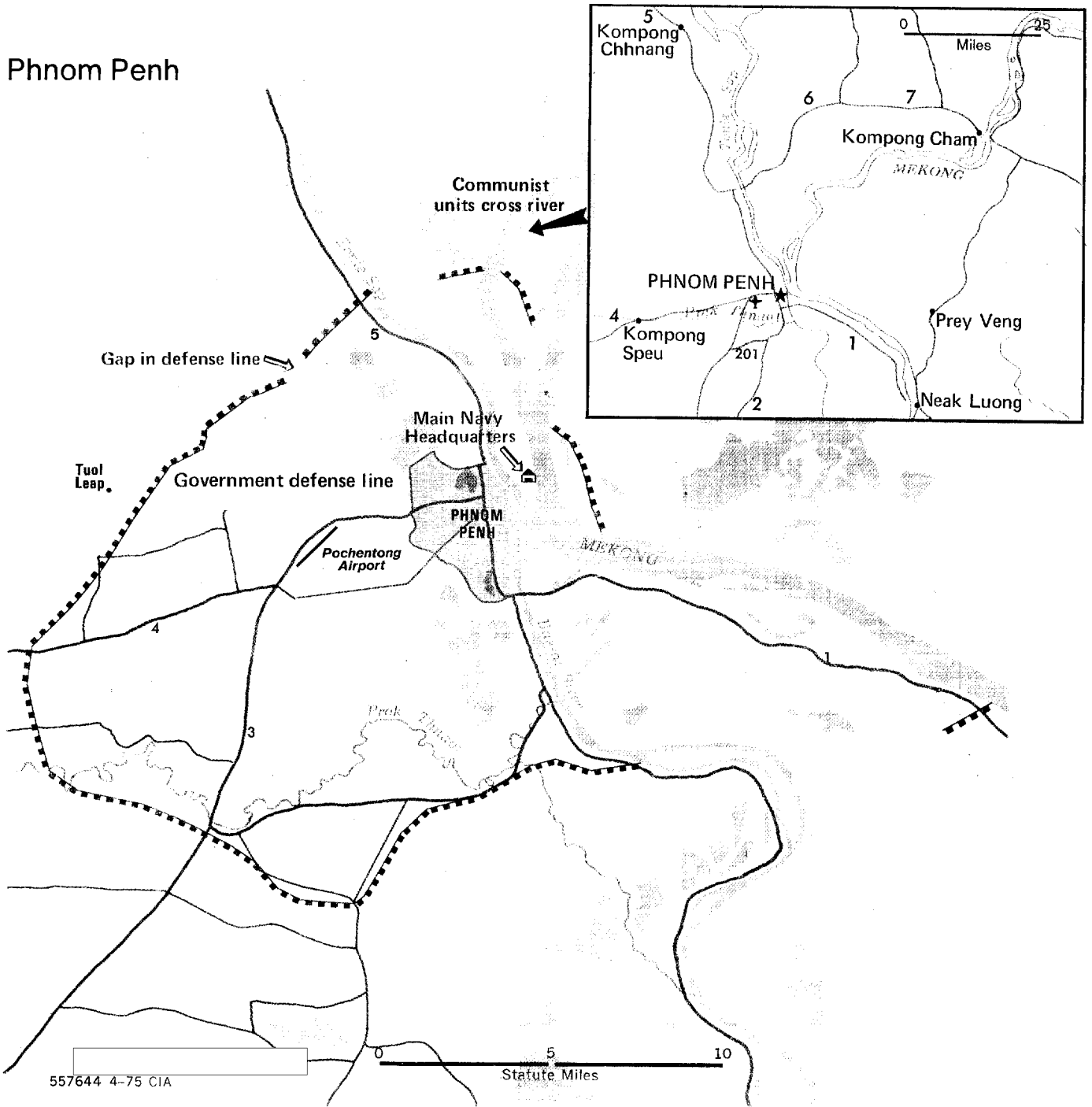
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It is expected that these troops will be the basis for a reorganized 22nd Division. Following initial difficulties in regrouping the South Vietnamese 2nd Division, considerable progress is now being made. One regiment, in fact, has been totally refitted and is to be sent to Phan Rang today.

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Phnom Penh



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CAMBODIA

Khmer communist ground attacks have forced further government withdrawals in the area north of Pochentong airport. So far the communists have not moved in force to exploit the new gap in government defenses, but US defense attachés who visited the area yesterday reported that government units are doing very little to improve the situation and that some Cambodian officers have expressed the belief that "the end is near." Communist rocket and artillery attacks against Pochentong airport yesterday set a small ammunition dump on fire.

Government troops on the Mekong River northeast of the capital claim that insurgent forces are crossing the river presumably to participate in a push south toward the main navy headquarters. Elsewhere, government reinforcements are moving into blocking positions on Route 1 southeast of the capital in anticipation of increased attacks in this sector.

In the countryside, the southwestern provincial capital of Kompong Speu is seriously threatened. The army high command stripped Kompong Speu of its best units several weeks ago to reinforce Phnom Penh's defense, and the communists have been making steady gains against the territorial units left to defend the town. Insurgent units briefly penetrated the town's market on Sunday before being pushed back. At the southeastern provincial capital of Prey Veng, communist attacks have forced government troops to abandon positions north of the town and some fighting has occurred along the city's outskirts.

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Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai's claim yesterday that Cambodian "negotiations" might soon be held in Bangkok is probably overstated. Prince Sihanouk's son,

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Prince Yuvaneath, was scheduled to arrive in Bangkok yesterday at Thai government invitation. Chatchai may have arranged a meeting between Yuvaneath and Cambodian Prime Minister Long Boret, who also arrived in Bangkok yesterday on his way back to Phnom Penh.

Even if Chatchai managed to bring the two Cambodians together, it is doubtful that any substantive discussions took place. Prince Yuvaneath--who has a reputation as a playboy and who has been staying in Macao--would be unlikely to have any real authority to speak for his father, let alone the Khmer communists. In discussions with the US chargé last week, Chatchai himself admitted that the chances for any breakthrough were "slight." At best, Yuvaneath might be expected to relay some message from Boret to his father. Under present conditions, however, Boret would appear to have little to offer the other side except surrender.

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USSR

Approximately 875 Jews emigrated from the Soviet Union in March. This is the lowest monthly total in more than three years. The first-quarter total for 1975--just over 3,000--is nearly 50 percent below the comparable figure for 1974.

The Soviets apparently are reducing the flow by discouraging applications, rather than by outright refusals. They have mounted a psychological campaign emphasizing the problems emigrants will face in Israel and the West, while making it clear that would-be emigrants will have a tough row to hoe before they can leave the USSR. Applicants for emigration remain subject to loss of employment and other forms of harassment, as well as to the considerable expense of obtaining exit permits.

At the same time they are discouraging overall Jewish emigration, the Soviets are applying a carrot-and-stick approach to Jewish activists. Recently, several have been allowed to emigrate, for example, but two others have been sent to Siberia because of their participation in a brief Moscow street demonstration. Moscow's policy may be to get rid of the most articulate Jewish activists, particularly those who are well known in the West, and to intimidate the others.

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CSCE

Another troublesome issue at the European Security Conference in Geneva may soon be resolved. The Western allies and neutral delegates are ready to accept in principle a Soviet proposal that would end the deadlock concerning one of the major military-related "confidence-building measures."

In mid-March Soviet representatives hinted that Moscow could accept the Western idea of providing advance notice about national and multinational maneuvers to all conference participants, if the notification is given on a voluntary basis. They also suggested that Moscow would make some concessions concerning categories of maneuvers that would fall under the prior notification provision of any agreement reached in Geneva.

On April 2 most of the NATO allies agreed that they should hint to the Soviet delegates that the West would accept the idea of voluntary notification if the Soviets are forthcoming concerning what maneuvers would come under the agreement. The Dutch representative was the sole holdout, but his country is likely eventually to accept the views of the other NATO allies. The representatives from the neutral states, initially very critical of the Soviet approach, agreed on April 3 that the delegates should make a "gentleman's agreement" to accept the Soviet terms as a working hypothesis.

Resolving all the issues related to this measure will require some hard bargaining. In addition, the Soviet, Western, and neutral delegations will have to convince the recalcitrant Romanians to accept any agreement they work out.

Both sides, however, are anxious to conclude the Geneva conference. The Soviets have recently given some indications that they are anxious to finish this stage of the conference in time for a final summit-level meeting on June 30 and have shown some signs of flexibility concerning other outstanding issues. The Western delegations, which have been growing increasingly weary, are now discussing the possibility of completing this stage by the end of May or mid-June.

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ARGENTINA

Recent political initiatives by President Peron have bought some time, but she still must face up to a number of demands from labor and political leaders.

In a speech to representatives of the massive Peronist trade union confederation, Mrs. Peron made a strong plea for worker support and suggested that many of Argentina's problems were being caused by enemies seeking to discredit and undermine her government from within. In the emotional address, Mrs. Peron frequently invoked her dead husband's name, but offered little more than a promise to fulfill his programs and to consult with labor more frequently. She did not respond specifically to the grievances outlined by union leaders in a document released last week spelling out complaints against official policies.

The President also met with political leaders allied with the Peronists. She promised to hold regular monthly sessions with the group and listened to criticism of her economic policies and her "deteriorating image"--an allusion to Lopez Rega. She responded to the latter by insisting that no one told her what to do.

In congress, meanwhile, Peronist legislators delivered a strongly worded secret document to party vice president Raul Lastiri putting them on record as opposed to the government's lack of coherent direction and the dominant role played by certain key officials. They also demanded that the party be thoroughly reorganized.

The expulsion of 13 prominent left-wing Peronists from party ranks last Friday was undoubtedly intended to appease some of the President's critics on the right. It is unlikely, however, that she can win back their much-needed support unless she deals with the Lopez Rega problem and makes some major concessions on labor's demands for a larger voice in government.

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SYRIA

The Syrian Baath Party congress, is expected to elect a new party executive group that will be more responsive to President Asad's dictates than was the previous group, which included some influential leaders more radical than Asad. The congress, which opened last Saturday, will also debate and probably endorse whatever approach Asad now decides to take on Middle East peace negotiations.

The President and his supporters have taken a number of precautionary measures over the past few weeks to ensure that the congress is stacked in their favor. The US embassy in Damascus has heard, for example, that there have been widespread detentions of Syrian Baathists, including some prominent members from Aleppo and Damascus itself, who are known to be ideologically aligned with the Iraqi Baath Party.

It now seems increasingly likely that the charges of conspiring with Baghdad lodged against some 250-300 party members reportedly rounded up by Syrian authorities in mid-March were, at least in some cases, trumped up by Asad's supporters. The purpose was to overturn the election of local Baath members known to be pro-Iraqi or otherwise opposed to Asad's leadership and policies.

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USSR

Cosmos 724, launched on April 7 from Tyuratam, is the second radar ocean-reconnaissance satellite orbited in five days and the 14th launched since the program began in 1967. Cosmos 723 was orbited on April 2.

Each satellite's radar system has a swath width of about 245 nautical miles and can detect destroyer-size ships when weather and sea conditions are favorable. In poor weather, they are believed to be capable of detecting an aircraft carrier. The concurrent operation of two such satellites was first tested last spring. The launching of Cosmos 723 and 724 may indicate that the Soviets have completed the development phase and are now using a two-satellite system operationally.

In addition to normal worldwide activities 723 and 724 will probably monitor Soviet activities in the Indian Ocean during a routine rotation of ships later this month.

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