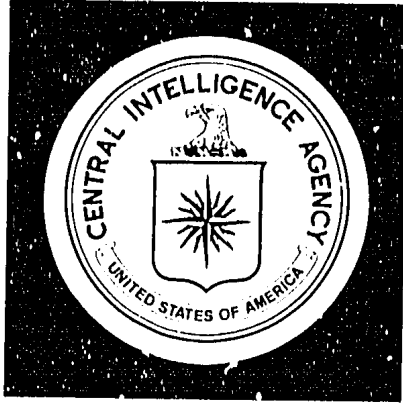


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

*Developments in Indochina*

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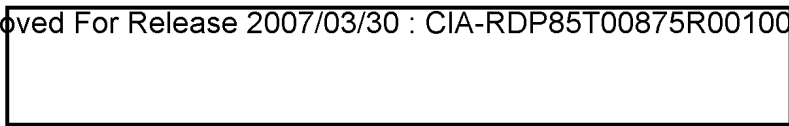


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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

*(Information as of 1500)*

SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu has publicized another decree issued under his emergency powers--this one deals with military service. Saigon's Information Ministry has been placed directly under the President.

NORTH VIETNAM

Truong Chinh tours bomb-damaged areas. The North Vietnamese are making contingency plans for a resumption of US bombing north of the 20th parallel.

LAOS

Government units near Saravane are still under Communist attack. Communist units in the central panhandle are beginning to stir.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

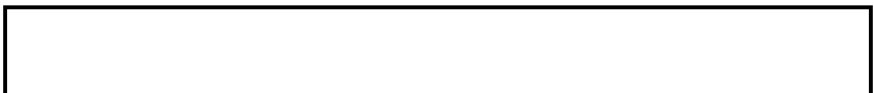


The Mekong Coordinating Committee has prepared a new \$3.2-billion aid package.

CAMBODIA

Government reinforcements have arrived at Tram Khnar.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu has made public another of the 30-odd decrees he promulgated at the end of December shortly before his authority under the Emergency Powers Law expired. The decree, revealed in the Saigon press over the past weekend, deals with military service. It appears to codify and expand three basic areas of military obligation set forth in previous directives and decrees. These areas are: exemptions and deferrals, mobilization (including the "regularization" of a civilian defense force both as a reserve force for home defense and a source of manpower for the regular army), and penal sanctions. The most sweeping change brought about by the new decree will be a significant expansion of the civil self-defense force, apparently to permit the government to maintain a sizable reserve military force in the event a peace settlement restricts or calls for scaling down the size of the regular army.

The new decree also specifies various degrees of mobilization, varying from "normal circumstances" to "general mobilization." Under a state of general mobilization, all male citizens from 16 to 50 years of age can be called into active military duty. Except in this extreme emergency, however, males between 18 and 38 will continue to serve as the basic age group for the draft, with younger candidates selected for service ahead of older persons. The age gap can be broadened to include males between 17 and 43 if draft calls out of the previous group are not sufficient. The new decree also stipulates that draftees will serve a two-year tour of active duty, whereas previously they could be forced to serve almost indefinitely. Upon completion of their two-year tour, draftees are placed in active reserve; during a state of general mobilization, they can be recalled to duty until age 50.

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[REDACTED]

Exemptions for military service can be granted only to those individuals considered physically unable to perform any useful combat or support role. Deferments can be granted to "outstanding" college and high school students, male heads of family, and individuals who are temporarily in poor health. A special deferment can be arranged for persons engaged in certain kinds of religious activities. In each of these instances, however, an individual must serve a minimum of two years active military duty in either the regular army or the active reserve once the reason for his deferment no longer applies. In addition, except in special cases approved by the Prime Minister, no male citizen can travel abroad, be elected to public office, or be appointed to a civilian governmental position until he has fulfilled his minimal military duty. This appears to be aimed primarily at reducing the number of draft age students who go abroad to study in foreign universities and return home only after they are fairly certain they will not be drafted.

The penal section toughens penalties imposed on draft dodgers and on other individuals who assist them in falsifying draft eligibility documents, such as birth certificates and medical examinations. Penalties in the new decree have been expanded to include those for persons who willfully employ anyone trying to avoid the draft. Some sentences have been stiffened, and all offenses can now be tried in military courts. Civilians aiding and abetting draft dodgers usually would be brought before a civilian tribunal, although this provision is waived in some states of emergency. [REDACTED]

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Change in Information Ministry

South Vietnam's Information Ministry is being reorganized and placed directly under the presidency, according to press reports. The government announced on 10 January that the ministry has been renamed the

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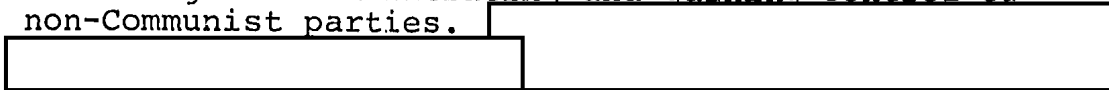
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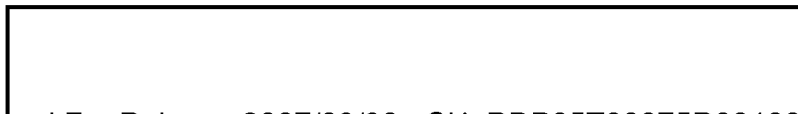


National Commission for Information and that key presidential aide Hoang Duc Nha has been placed in charge. Nha is Thieu's nephew, and the President clearly regards him as a man he can trust. Nha had indicated privately as early as last summer that such a change was in the wind and that it might be part of a broader reorganization of the government. There is no indication as to whether Thieu is planning any other changes at this time.

The change in the Information Ministry appears to be a follow-up to the press decree that tightened government control over opposition papers last summer, and may also be part of Thieu's effort to consolidate his powers prior to a cease-fire. Senior government officials have recently indicated in private that they believe the press decree, as well as the recent decree on political parties, have significantly enhanced their ability to control the population after the fighting stops. The press decree, they feel, already is preventing opposition journals from undermining confidence in the government, while the decree on parties will block the Viet Cong from infiltrating and gaining control of non-Communist parties.



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NORTH VIETNAM

National Assembly President Truong Chinh visited various bomb-damaged localities on 5 January, accompanied by much adulation in the North Vietnamese media. Hanoi's domestic service seemed to go out of its way to excuse Chinh's absence in the Soviet Union during the bombing and noted that he had been named by the "party, national assembly, and government" to head a ceremonial delegation, as an individual "constantly and closely associated with the people," to view the bomb damage as soon as possible after his return. The radio made much of the empathy between Chinh and the bombing victims he talked with and noted that his listeners were "boundlessly moved" by his remarks.

All the other top leaders in Hanoi have made bomb-damage tours, and a similar visit from Chinh was to be expected. The level of adulation he received, compared with the treatment accorded his colleagues, suggests he is as firmly ensconced as ever in the number two position in the hierarchy. [REDACTED]

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Hanoi Expects More Bombing

Hanoi apparently is making contingency plans for the resumption of US bombing above the 20th parallel. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Air defense preparations-- including the formation of even more home guard anti-aircraft units--are proceeding apace, according to Radio Hanoi. Moreover, a French press dispatch from Hanoi reports that a local newspaper of 9 January warned the populace to expect an "extremely violent resumption" of the bombings. These warnings seem to be based on the assumption that another impasse in Paris is a real possibility.

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LAOS

Preliminary reports indicate that on 10 January North Vietnamese infantry and artillery units in south Laos continued to attack government units near Saravane, forcing the irregulars to pull back farther south and west. Heavy air strikes are still being directed against enemy troop concentrations around the town, despite increasingly intense anti-aircraft fire. 


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Communist Stirrings in the Panhandle


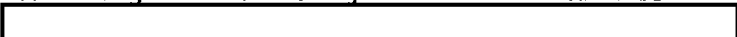
Communist units in the central panhandle that have been kept on the defensive since mid-October by air strikes and government sweep operations are showing some signs of trying to regain the initiative. Late last week, North Vietnamese units routed a small Lao Army unit from Ban Tangvai, some 20 miles south of Muong Phalane, while other enemy elements fired several rockets into the town of Thakhek.

More ambitious Communist operations may be in the offing in this region. In the past few days, US pilots have reported signs of enemy armor and a troop concentration in the same area where Communist tanks and troops assembled for their mid-December attack on the Se Bangfai bridge. 

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A recently captured North Vietnamese officer has claimed that Communist troops are planning an attack on Seno. He also stated that the attack would coincide with a move against Muong Phalane by the North Vietnamese 29th Regiment -- the major enemy force in the central panhandle. 

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 Although the Communists probably will try to retake Muong Phalane -- because of its proximity to the Ho Chi Minh Trail -- there is no evidence that they are planning any other major military efforts in the central panhandle. 

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[REDACTED]

Mekong Nations Present Wish-List

Representatives of the Mekong Coordinating Committee, which is seeking to use the potential of the Mekong River and its tributaries to restore the war-shattered Mekong countries, have presented a \$3.2-billion package of construction projects to the United States, pending the termination of hostilities. This committee represents South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand; project planning, however, has been based on the assumption that North Vietnam will eventually join.

The proposed program includes power, irrigation and communications projects that would require \$12 billion in investment by the year 2000. It includes a plan to rehabilitate the irrigation and transportation canals in South Vietnam's Mekong delta to enable the country to realize its former rice-growing potential. Another plan would restore the watershed areas damaged by massive forest devastation. The major project, however, is the Pa Mong dam on the Lao-Thai border; this project would supply 1,200 MW of hydroelectric power to the region--including North Vietnam--and would irrigate 100,000 acres of land, primarily in southern Laos and northern Thailand. The US Bureau of Reclamation conducted a feasibility study of Pa Mong and recommended starting the \$1.1-billion project pending favorable security conditions.

These projects will greatly aid in the restoration of the war zone and provide employment to many refugees once the fighting ends. Some projects of the Mekong Development Plan have been completed during the war; the most important has been the Nam Ngum dam and hydroelectric power station in Laos--built with financial assistance from 21 non-communist countries and dedicated in December 1972. The major portion of the Mekong projects, however, can be undertaken only upon cessation of hostilities when the World Bank and other aid organizations would be more optimistic about the possibilities of the region. [REDACTED]

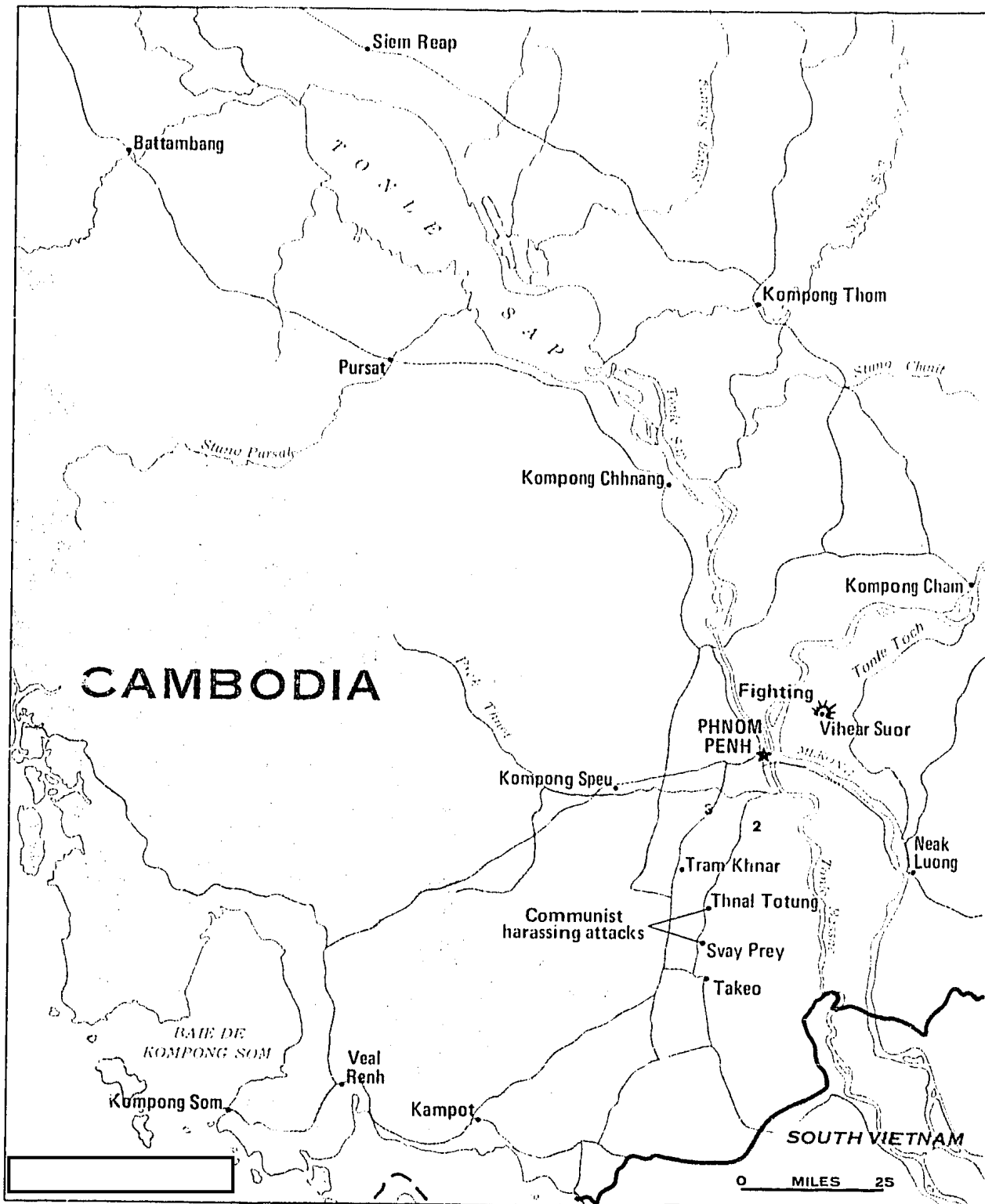
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CAMBODIA

The government garrison at Tram Khnar on Route 3 south of Phnom Penh, which had been under heavy Khmer Communist pressure for almost a week, has been bolstered by the arrival of four additional infantry battalions and a squadron of armored personnel carriers. These forces apparently are to participate in clearing operations south of Tram Khnar. On the Route 2 front, the insurgents are sustaining their harassing attacks north of Takeo against Cambodian positions at Thnal Totung and Svay Prey. Three government paratroop battalions that had been operating with South Vietnamese units along Route 2 below Takeo are now trying to reach Svay Prey.

Communist attacks by fire and ground probes against several small government positions in the vicinity of Vihear Suor, 15 miles northeast of Phnom Penh, continue to be reported. Some reinforcements have been sent to that area, but they are also meeting Communist resistance. The actions in this area may be aimed at preventing Cambodian troops from interfering with Communist supply movements southward along the Tonle Toch River. 

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