



The President's Daily Brief

5 February 1970

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Top Secret^{50X1}



FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

5 February 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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President Thieu is pushing ahead with the prosecution of "Communist sympathizers" in the Lower House. (Page 4)

The military situation in Laos is quiet for now, but the Communists are moving into position to exert greater pressure. (Page 5)

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USSR-EGYPT



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USSR - WEST GERMANY

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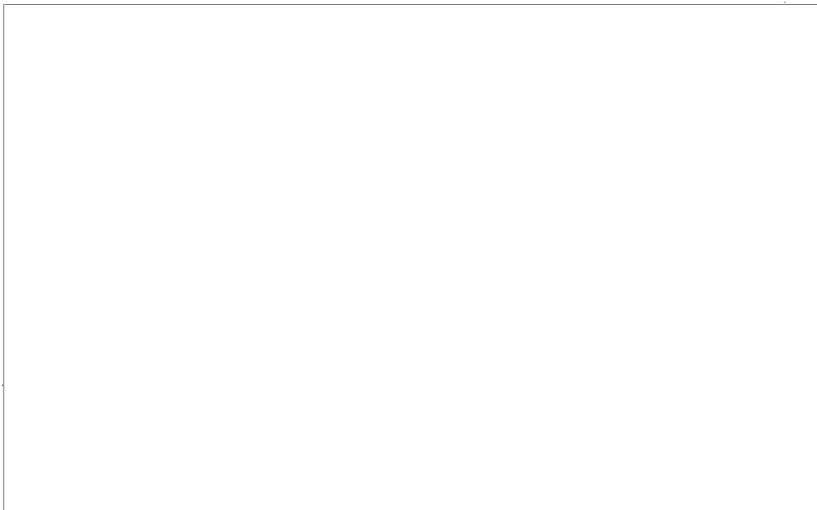
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NORTH VIETNAM



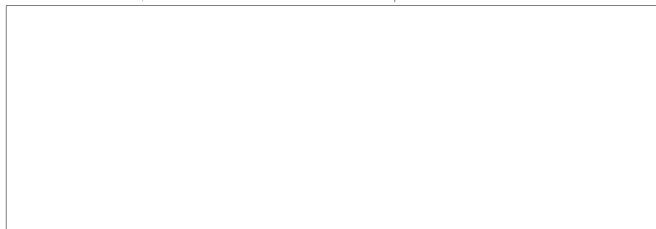
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SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu has ordered a military tribunal to proceed with the prosecution of Tran Ngoc Chau and Hoang Ho, the two Lower House deputies accused of having contacts with the Communists. Thieu decided to act after receiving official word from the Lower House that three fourths of the deputies had finally signed a government-sponsored petition calling for the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of the two men.

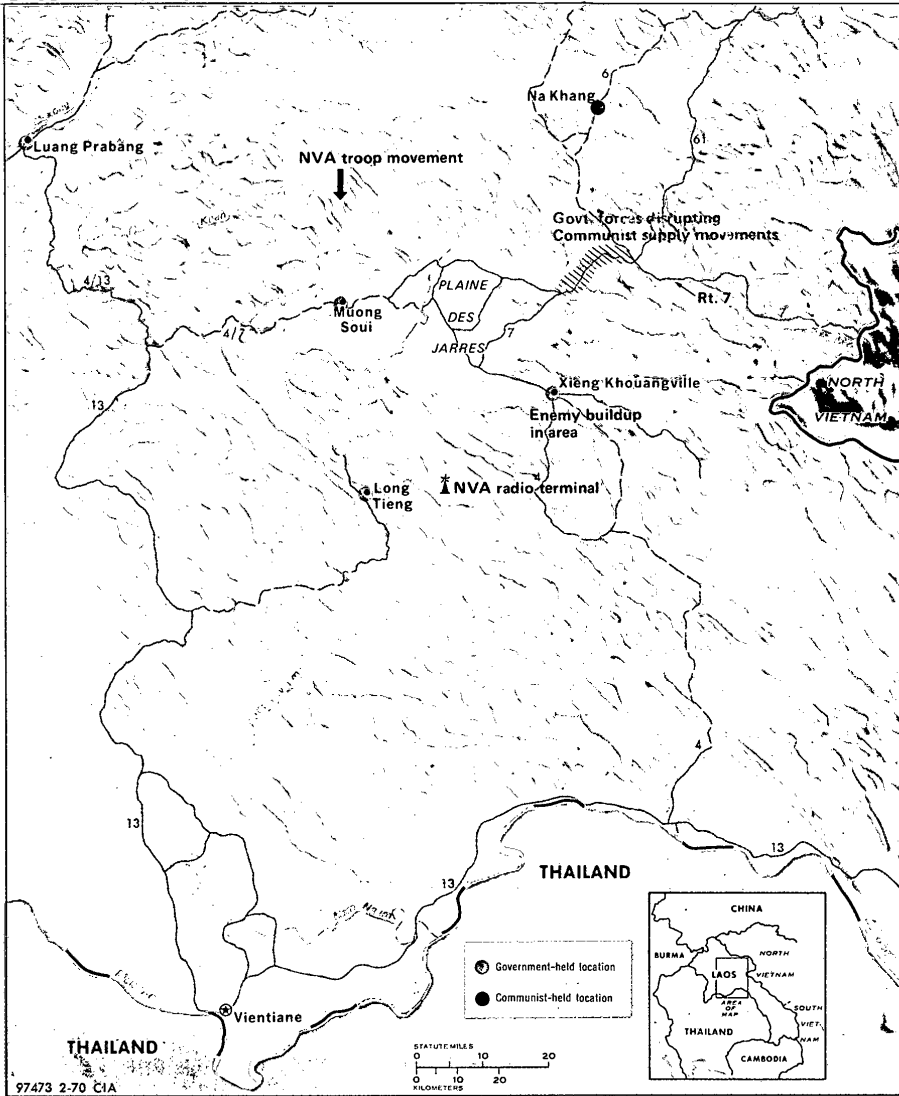
Thieu's success came only after considerable arm-twisting and does not suggest any substantial improvement in executive-legislative relations. In fact, his action may place new strains on his relations with the National Assembly. An opposition group believes the prosecution will be illegal and plans to ask the Supreme Court to rule whether the constitution permits the prosecution of the deputies without an actual floor vote by the House.

Thieu made the decision to bring the two deputies to trial in spite of the questionable constitutionality of his action because he has staked considerable personal prestige on this case.

The President has taken this strong stand against what he calls "Communist sympathizers" in the Assembly partly as a warning to those who would develop a "Third Force." He fears that those favoring such a movement might eventually compromise with the Communists. He probably realizes that although three fourths of the Lower House signed the petition, it would still be difficult to get a similar number to vote to lift the deputies' immunity. Nevertheless, if the legislators are convicted in absentia, Thieu may then go back to the House in an attempt to get such a vote, so that they can be arrested.

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LAOS: Current Situation in the Plaine des Jarres



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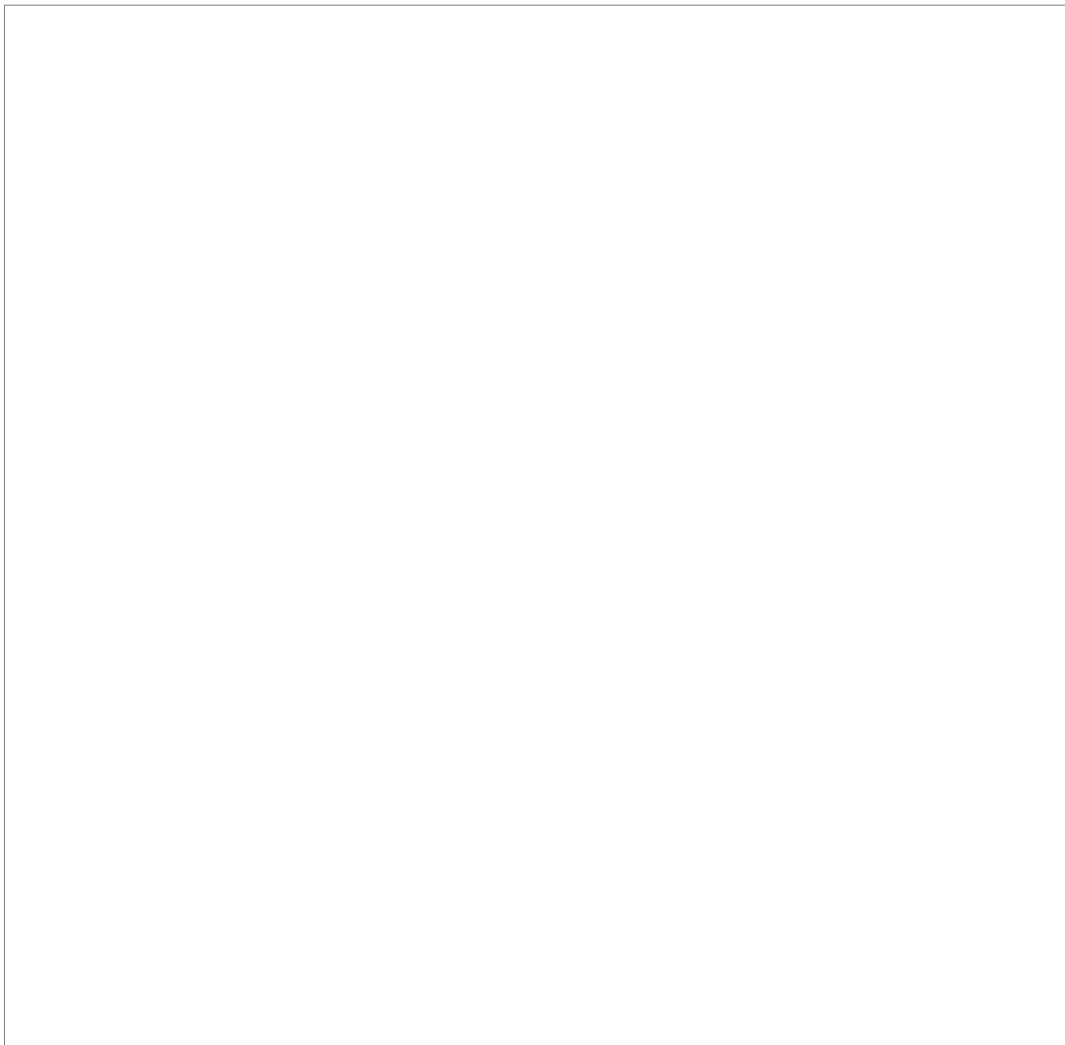
LAOS

The military situation remains quiet near the Plaine des Jarres, although recent government patrols have reported large numbers of enemy troops in motion southeast of the Plaine. Other government patrols have sighted a multibattalion force of North Vietnamese moving toward the Plaine from the northwest.

The Communists are aware of General Vang Pao's sensitivity to troop movements that could become a threat to his headquarters at Long Tieng, and they may hope to force him to pull back some of his troops that have been disrupting Communist supply movements along Route 7.

The Communists' seeming reluctance to take full advantage of their overwhelming numerical superiority near the Plaine may stem from a number of factors. Among them are their supply problems and their desire to move on a number of fronts simultaneously. They may also be interested in following up the proposal Prime Minister Souvanna made last Saturday to "neutralize" the Plaine des Jarres.

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NOTES

USSR: The helicopter carrier Moskva is returning to the Mediterranean after 20 days in the Atlantic. (See The President's Daily Brief of 19 January.) Heavy weather permitted the Moskva and her escorts to conduct training exercises on only one day of the 20.

USSR:

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TET CEASE-FIRE PERIODS
Tet Holiday—6-8 February

	Saigon Time	Washington Time
● COMMUNIST		
Begins	5/0700	4/1800
Ends	9/0700	8/1800
● ALLIED		
Begins	5/1800	5/0500
Ends	6/1800	6/0500

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South Vietnam: Enemy activity during the Tet truce period is likely to be limited to minor incidents. As in previous truce periods, some local units will have failed to get the word from higher commands, and there will be reactions to allied reconnaissance patrols. After Tet, however, we expect another spurt of enemy action against allied positions and pacification targets.

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