



The President's Daily Brief

2 MARCH 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Hanoi may be trying some "carrot and stick" tactics in an attempt to move the Paris talks off dead center. (Page 1)

[Redacted] Middle
East. (Page 3)

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In Laos, the pace of the Communist offensive in the north has slowed. (Page 4)

The Guatemalan Government fears violence in the aftermath of yesterday's election. (Page 5)

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NORTH VIETNAM

Two developments during the weekend suggest that Hanoi may be trying some "carrot and stick" tactics in an attempt to move the Paris talks off dead center. The "stick" took the form of a blunt assertion by Soviet diplomats in Paris that the Vietnamese Communists intend to break off the talks. American newsman Robert Boyd reports that Soviet Embassy officials in Paris told Cyrus Eaton and himself on 28 February that the Communists will "soon break off the talks" in an attempt to show that the US is responsible for the lack of progress.

The Soviet statements probably are part of an evolving effort by the North Vietnamese to test the diplomatic climate in Paris. The Communists may calculate that the prospect of a rupture at this point would dramatize their contention that the US has "downgraded" the talks and would generate pressure on President Nixon to appoint a new permanent head of the US delegation. Hanoi probably has had this objective in mind ever since it sent its Politburo "adviser" to the talks, Le Duc Tho, back to Paris in early February to attend the French Communist Party Congress. Tho has stayed on in Paris, presumably to play some role in the developing scenario.

A move--or even a threat--to break off the talks would be risky for the Communists without some steps to dress up their own bargaining positions. They seem to recognize that their intransigence has facilitated US and GVN efforts to show that the Communists are not interested in negotiations. This may be why there were some hints of a "carrot" in an interview of North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh which was surfaced this weekend by Daniel DeLuce of the Associated Press.

(continued)

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The North Vietnamese appear to have set up this interview with some care, presumably in hopes of getting a special message across in the Western press. DeLuce was notified out of the blue several weeks ago that he could make a visit to North Vietnam in the latter half of February. [REDACTED]

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DeLuce says that Trinh carefully elaborated for "a considerable time" in response to a question about the terms Hanoi might accept for a standstill cease-fire. At one point Trinh seems to have made agreement for such a cease-fire contingent only on the US accepting the principle of a total American troop withdrawal and the "right" of the South Vietnamese to settle their affairs themselves. At another point, however, he says that "genuine peace" could only be restored if the US commits itself to an unconditional troop withdrawal, elections, and the formation of a coalition government--all of which is standard Communist boilerplate.

It is conceivable that Trinh was trying to draw a distinction between a cease-fire and a political settlement, but this is not at all clear from DeLuce's account. If Hanoi intended Trinh's statement to have any special significance, the North Vietnamese are likely to broadcast their own version of the interview before long.

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Fedayeen Activity Increases Along Lebanese/Israeli Border

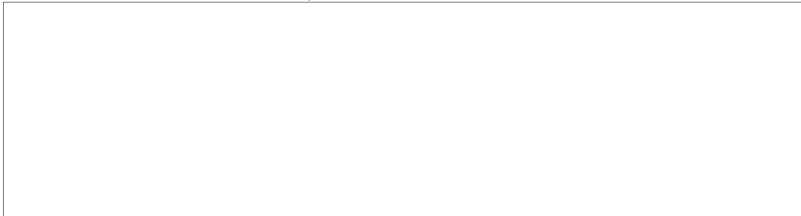


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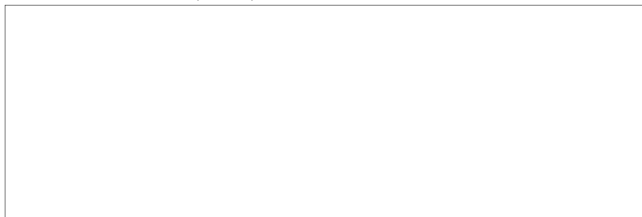
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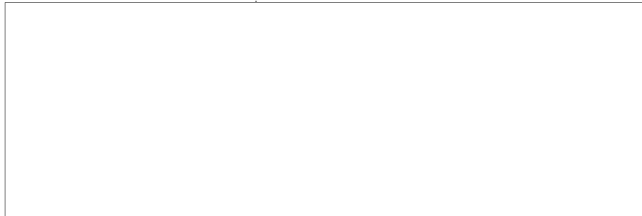
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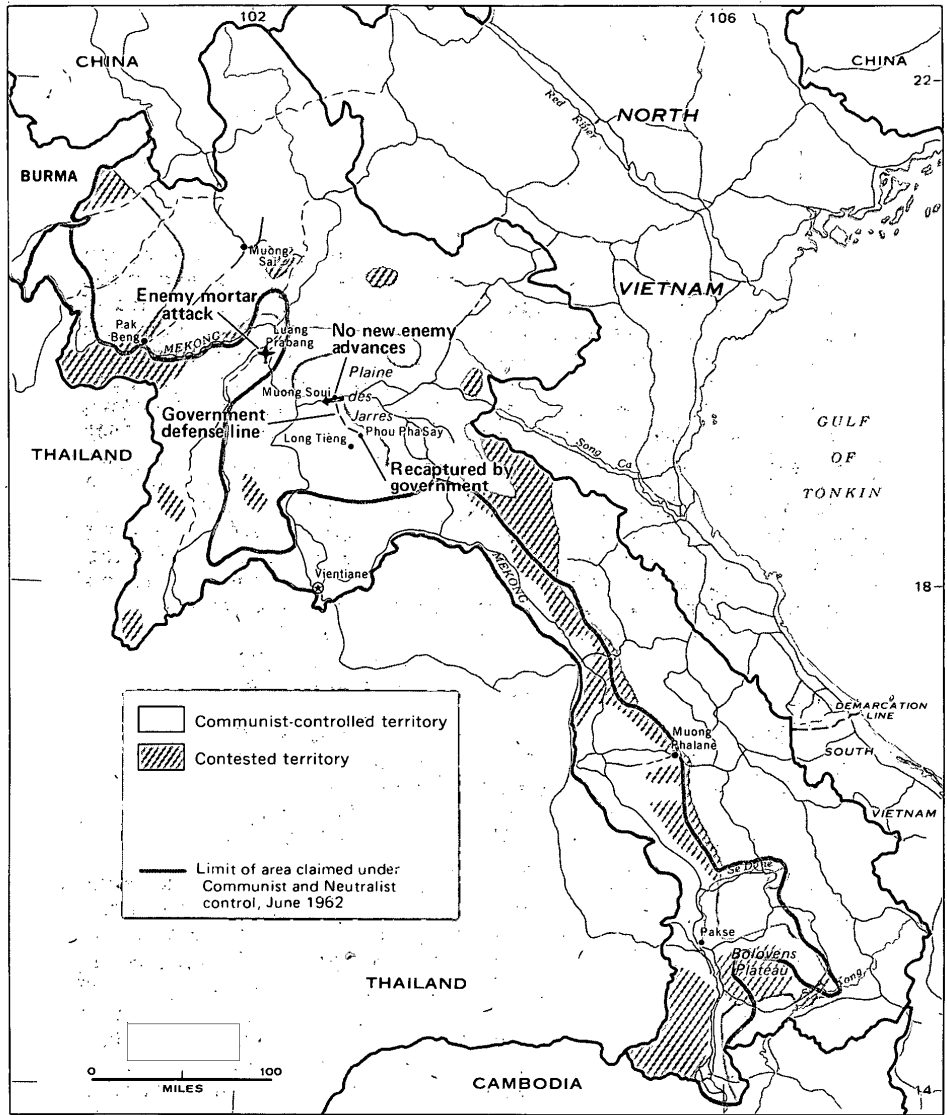


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Lebanon-based guerrillas are ignoring government restrictions and have resumed operations along the Israeli border. The fedayeen have violated the agreement reached with Beirut last November by moving several hundred men into southern Lebanon. They also have reinstated full-scale paramilitary training in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps despite public announcements that such training had ceased.

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LAOS: Communist Offensive in North Slows Down



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LAOS

For the past few days enemy military action west and south of the Plaine des Jarres has remained at a relatively low level with only minor incidents reported.

Communist supply problems are probably behind the present lull. In addition to air-strikes, enemy efforts to move adequate supplies to forward positions probably have been hampered by the recent government evacuation of 15,000 refugees off the Plaine-- an action which depleted the local coolie labor force.

Meanwhile, the Communists are attempting to play on government apprehension over the direction and extent of their offensive. In a press interview of 27 February, the Pathet Lao representative in Vientiane maintained that unless the bombing of Communist forces stops, the current campaign will go beyond the 1962 cease-fire line. He also said that if the bombing is halted the Communists might discontinue their attacks before reaching the 1962 line.

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GUATEMALA

Yesterday's general elections were free of violence, and voter turnout was heavy. There could be trouble, however, when the results of the balloting become clear. The government fears that die-hard rightists will take to the streets if rightist presidential candidate Colonel Carlos Arana loses and that Communist terrorists will exploit the situation. The government also believes it may be without an effective air arm in such a crisis because most of the first-line combat pilots are strong Arana supporters.

The early returns are inconclusive, but both Arana's party and the left-of-center opposition have already broadcast charges of government fraud. The reaction of Arana and his supporters within the military will indeed be pivotal to the election aftermath. Arana, himself, has pledged to keep any challenge of the results within legal channels.

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NOTES

Rhodesia: On 27 February Ethiopia's foreign minister warned Ambassador Hall that even moderate black African states will react sharply if the US consulate in Salisbury remains open. Specifically, the foreign minister said that failure to close the consulate would probably result in a resolution by the Organization of African Unity strongly condemning the US. Today, Rhodesia declared itself a republic--a move sure to prompt additional pressure on the US by both black African states and London.

Cuba: The seizure of a privately-owned US fishing boat by Cuba yesterday is probably the result of Havana's hypersensitivity to exile raids. Militant exile groups use both fishing boats and merchant ships for infiltration missions. Castro's security forces probably became suspicious of the American craft when it neared the north coast of Camaguey Province. The boat--which reportedly is outfitted for treasure-hunting rather than fishing--was boarded by two Cubans and escorted to the port of La Isabela for inspection. If it did not violate Cuba's three-mile limit, the boat will probably be released as soon as Havana is satisfied that it was not involved in exile activities.

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