

The President's Daily Brief



6 April 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Communists increased the pressure throughout Indochina over the weekend. They made their deepest penetration yet in Cambodia (*Page 1*) and renewed their advance in Laos (*Page 2*). They continued to operate at a relatively high level in South Vietnam (*Page 3*).

In Latin America, Guatemala has only begun to feel the repercussions of the kidnap-murder of Ambassador von Spreti (*Page 4*), and Colombia appears to be headed for trouble (*Page 5*).

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Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Intercepts of Cambodian Army messages show that Svay Rieng Province is bearing the brunt of stepped up Communist military pressure along the border, but there is no suggestion that a major push is under way. On 4 April the Communists attacked Chipou, about 12 miles from the border; this was their deepest penetration to date, and the first time they have hit a heavily populated area. Several government outposts also have been attacked.

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Communist activity in Svay Rieng may be in response to recent South Vietnamese cross-border operations there.

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There also are signs that the Communists are preparing to increase antigovernment activity soon in the north. since late March over 600 Sihanouk sympathizers have left their homes in Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, and Mondolkiri provinces to join Vietnamese Communist or Cambodian insurgent forces.

Communist troops are already transporting munitions from southern Laos to support insurgents in the northeast.

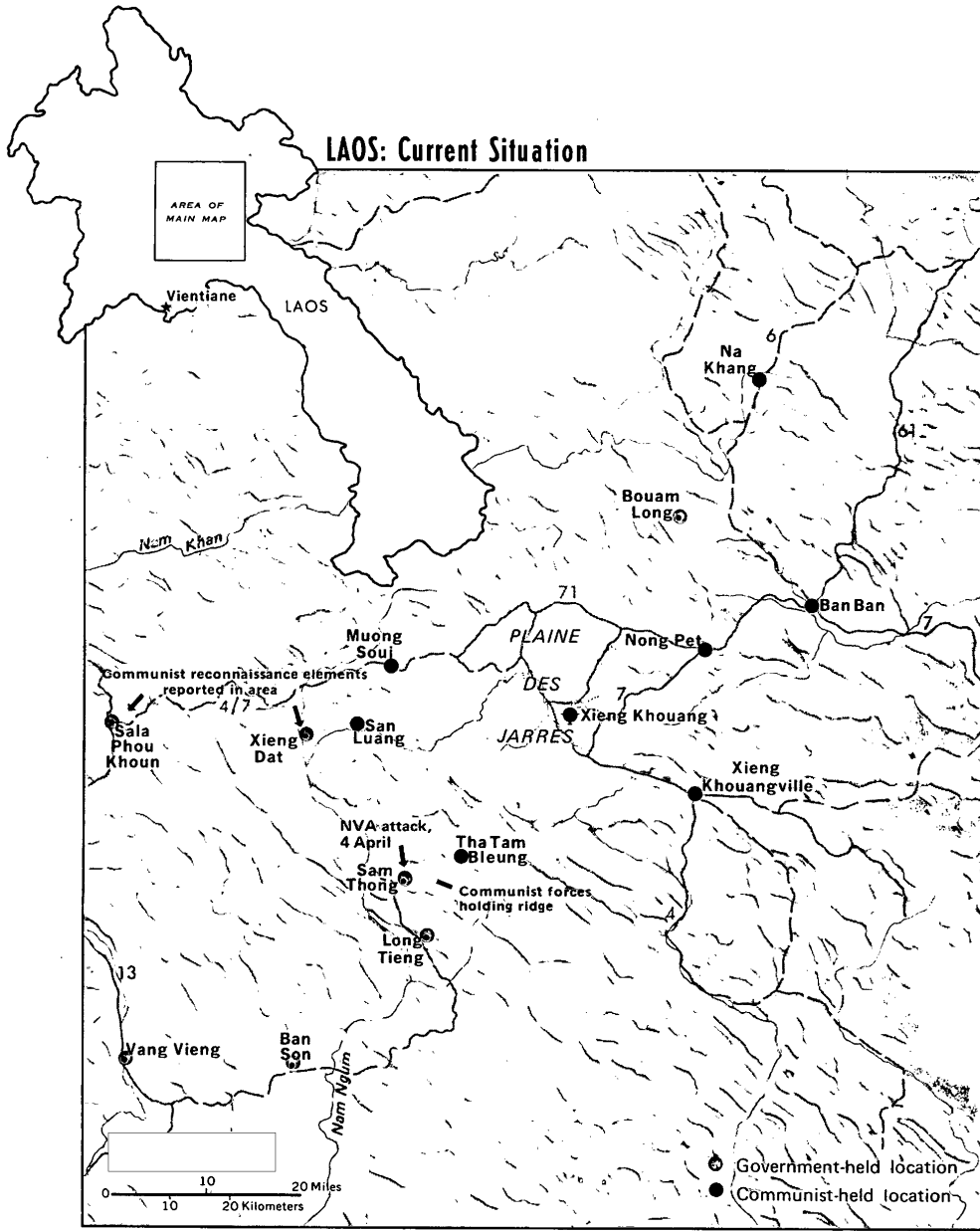
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The government has long had trouble extending its control over the isolated and sparsely populated northern provinces, and it is possible that the Communists may move to establish a "liberated area" there.

Sihanouk continues his appeals from Peking. In a message on 4 April he implied for the first time that he would return to Cambodia in the near future. This message again asked the Cambodian people to take to the "bush."

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LAOS

On 4 April, North Vietnamese troops launched their first major attack in almost a week as they pushed within a mile of the Sam Thong airstrip. At last report, reinforced government troops with air support were still holding the base and most of the Sam Thong valley. Intercepts indicate that the enemy attaches considerable importance to retaking Sam Thong, and at least two North Vietnamese battalions have moved into the area.

The situation continues to be quiet around the main guerrilla base at Long Tieng. Another battalion of regular army troops has moved into Long Tieng, raising the government total in the area to approximately 5,700. Guerrilla forces continue to patrol the valleys north of the base, but they are still having trouble dislodging Communist forces from an important ridge between Long Tieng and Tha Tam Bleung.

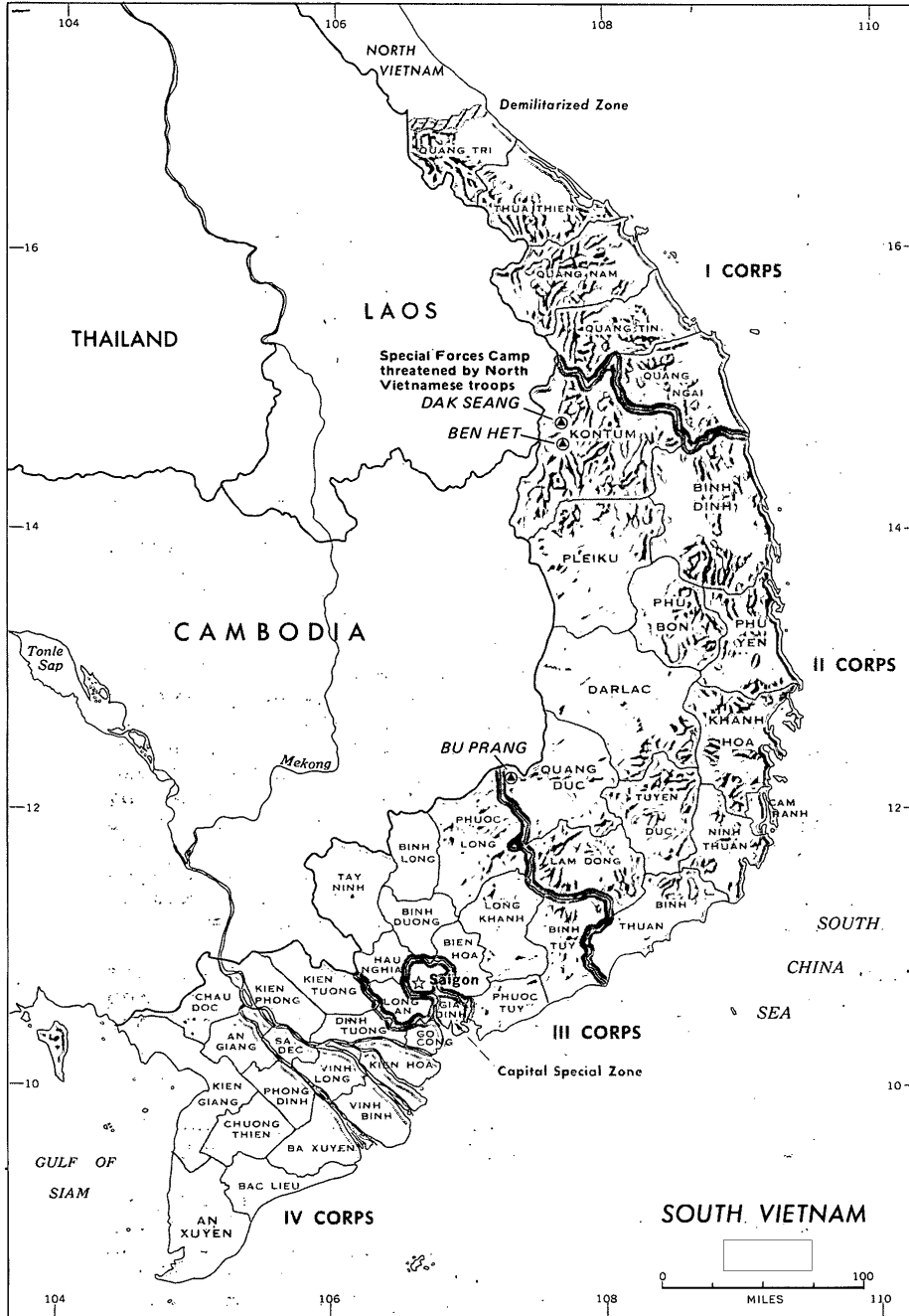
The Communists are demonstrating fresh interest in government positions west of the Plaine. Reconnaissance elements are operating near the government base at Xieng Dat, and one team apparently is being sent into the Sala Phou Khoun area, according to intercepts. There is no evidence of any imminent attack by substantial North Vietnamese forces against these two positions, however. Last year, a North Vietnamese battalion threatened the road junction at Sala Phou Khoun, and there has been some speculation that the enemy intends to cut Route 13 there, possibly as a prelude to a drive into northern Vientiane Province.

On the political front, rumors continue to circulate regarding the return of Phoumi Nosavan.



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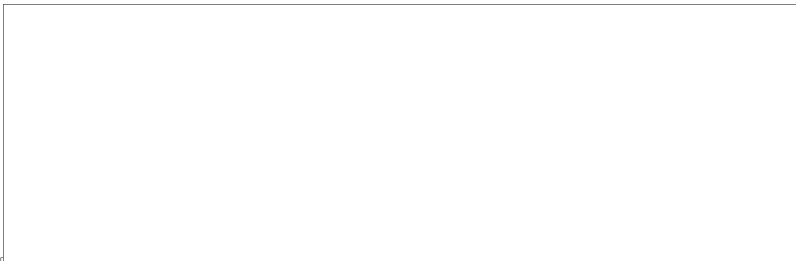
SOUTH VIETNAM

Communist mortar and rocket attacks continued at a relatively high level during the weekend. Some 100 allied positions were struck by light enemy shellings. Stiff ground fighting occurred near the Demilitarized Zone and at a half dozen locations in other areas of the country.

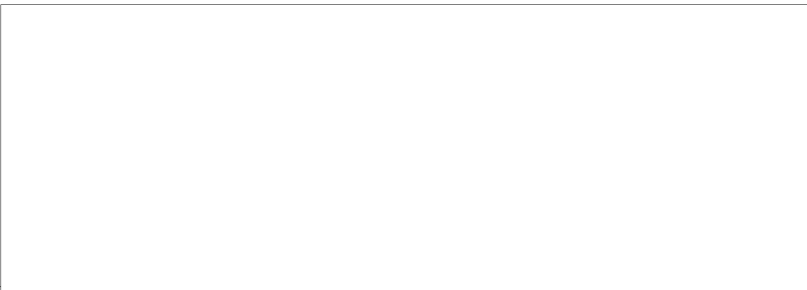
An enemy threat is building in the central highlands, where the North Vietnamese appear to be closing in again on an allied Special Forces camp-- this time at Dak Seang. The South Vietnamese now are largely on their own in the highlands. Major elements of the US 4th Infantry Division, which operated in the region for four years, were pulled out recently.

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GUATEMALA

The kidnap-murder of Ambassador von Spreti leaves the Mendez government in a precarious position. Coup plotting has long been fairly common among military officers, and it will be increased by the present widespread frustration over the terrorist incident.

The government may attempt to arrest subversives and "leftists" generally, in the hope of placating the military and the public with at least the semblance of action. Probably none of von Spreti's kidnapers will be caught in the dragnet, however.

The diplomatic community in Guatemala City is understandably worried. Additional kidnappings are likely, as are attempts at assassination. US personnel are especially vulnerable--the terrorists probably believe the US was responsible for the Guatemalans' unwillingness to free prisoners and pay ransom.

International reactions are not yet known. West Germany may break relations altogether, and other countries may recall their envoys.

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COLOMBIA

Although four candidates are campaigning for the presidency, the election on 19 April is really a contest between only two: the "official" National Front nominee, Misael Pastrana Borrero, and the former dictator, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. At this time, we cannot predict the share of the vote each will get--except that their totals should be nearly equal--and we cannot be sure the winner will take office and serve out the term.

If Pastrana Borrero becomes president (and stays president) he will attempt to carry on with the forward-looking programs and policies of President Lleras. Obviously, a continuation of the National Front's political philosophy would, in the long run, benefit Colombia and preserve its good relations with its neighbors.



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The election of seventy-year old Rojas Pinilla would present a number of sticky problems, some of which would affect relations between Colombia and the US. Following his usurption of the presidency in June 1953, Rojas was popularly acclaimed as a saviour, but within a year he was progressing toward a ruthless dictatorship. His ouster in May 1957 was greeted with widespread rejoicing among politically aware Colombians. Nevertheless, the public works and social welfare projects that Rojas instituted created a large reservoir of support among the urban and rural poor. This support has been carefully nurtured for 13 years by his daughter's radical rightist fringe party, the National Popular Alliance--usually called ANAPO, its Spanish acronym.

The ANAPO campaign probably gives us a foretaste of the Rojas administration, if there is to be one. In his speeches, Rojas has been openly, almost flamboyantly, demagogic. He has promised to raise the peso to parity with the dollar, although it is now about 18 to 1, and he says he intends to nationalize all imports. Also, ANAPO seems to have a scheme to set up some kind of corporate state, but its intentions in this regard have been so poorly spelled out that the idea cannot be assessed.

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The greatest danger to public order we can foresee is that Rojas would lose by a narrow margin. He is bound to charge fraud, and his followers, by resorting to violence, could plunge the nation into serious, prolonged turbulence.

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