



The President's Daily Brief



8 April 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in Laos is assessed on *Page 1*.

[REDACTED] the Vietnamese Communists, who are still keeping up their military pressure on the new government. (*Page 3*)

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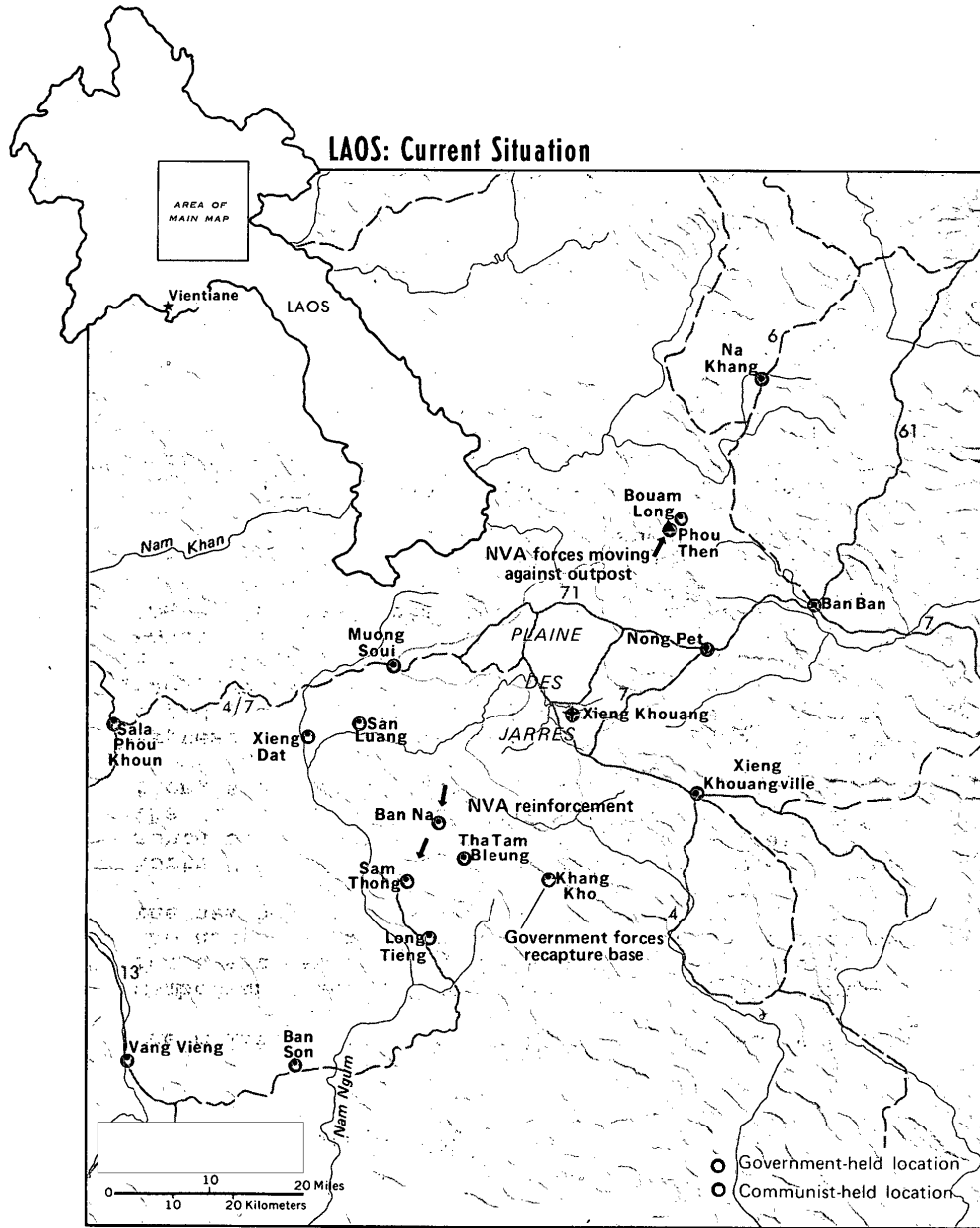
North Vietnam's efforts to supply its forces in the south prior to the start of the monsoon season, and the latest information on the rate of troop infiltration, are discussed on *Page 4*.

Protests of South Vietnamese veterans and students could lead to considerably more serious trouble for the government. (*Page 5*)

Soviet willingness to risk becoming more deeply involved in the Middle East conflict through the installation of its SA-3 missiles in Egypt is causing uncertainty among Israeli leaders and more thought among them about reliance on US support. (*Page 6*)

The Soviet Union and Communist China may exchange ambassadors once again. (*Page 7*)

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**LAOS**

Despite the ineffectiveness of enemy actions in recent weeks, the Communists are now preparing to return to the offensive and the battle for Long Tieng is headed into a new phase. The Communists' first sharp thrust toward the base, which three weeks ago came perilously close to sweeping Vang Pao's beleaguered guerrillas from the area, was blunted. At least for the present, the initiative has passed to the government. With regular Lao Army troops from south Laos

Vang Pao has deployed his guerrillas against Communist forces northward to the Plaine des Jarres. This is the kind of work the guerrillas do best, and with continuing heavy air support, they have managed to take back several strategically located ridges and are now pressing the enemy at Tha Tam Bleung.

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For their part, the North Vietnamese appear somewhat at a loss about how to respond to the turnaround in the situation. They have brought up some reinforcements to retake Sam Thong--the refugee center a few miles from Long Tieng--but so far without success. The enemy is clearly having supply problems, although efforts are under way to establish a capability for a prolonged campaign against Long Tieng.

Long Tieng is not out of the woods. The recent history of Laos is replete with instances where the Communists were able to defeat ostensibly superior government forces with remarkable speed and ease. There is no reason to suspect that the Royal Laotian forces reinforcing at Long Tieng will be any better in a serious fight. Nonetheless, time is beginning to slip through the enemy's fingers. The rainy season is about two months away, and the Communists' principal objective is still not gained. The North Vietnamese will almost certainly continue to bore in against Long Tieng, but their capacity to mount deeper offensives into government territory is beginning to slip away.

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After several weeks of preparation, the enemy yesterday launched a series of assaults against Phou Then, an outpost guarding Bouam Long, the most important government base north of the Plaine des Jarres. This action is probably being carried out by major elements of the North Vietnamese 312th Division and designed to eliminate Bouam Long as a springboard for guerrilla operations against Communist supply lines in northern Laos.

Such a use of the 312th Division, which presumably could be used in an all-out assault against Long Tieng, is a fresh sign that the enemy is almost as concerned about avoiding a repetition of Vang Pao's offensive against the Plaine des Jarres as it is about taking Long Tieng itself.

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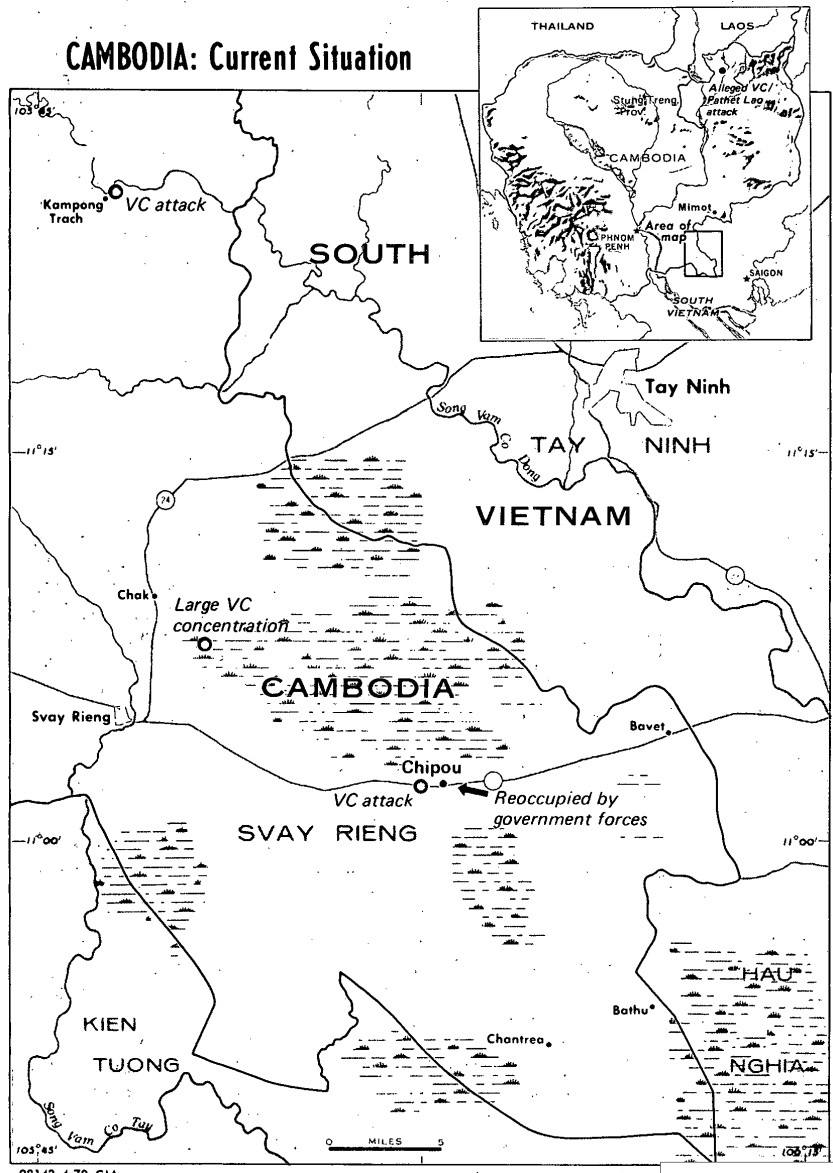
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CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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The Vietnamese Communists are keeping up military pressure. Yesterday government forces reoccupied the town of Chipou in Svay Rieng Province but already they are reported preparing to abandon it, fearing more Communist attacks. Viet Cong elements burned two district headquarters and their small military outposts in Svay Rieng on 4 and 5 April. Elsewhere, in northern Cambodia, Vietnamese and Lao Communist forces were said by the Cambodians to have attacked and burned an army outpost in Stung Treng Province on the night of 4 April. Although Stung Treng has been the scene of fairly heavy insurgent activity, this is the first time an attack there has been attributed to the Communists.

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VIETNAM-LAOS

The Communists seem embarked on a final effort to complete supply shipments to South Vietnam before the rainy season settles in. Rear service intercepts mention April as the "critical stage of the crash program," describing it as a "short period of intense work." One major organization in the Laos Panhandle claimed in a recent intercept that 83 percent of the current dry season supply program for South Vietnam had been completed by the end of March.

The possibility of an early advent of the rains may be giving the Communists added reason to finish up quickly.

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It is too early yet to judge how complete the rainy season curtailment of supply shipments will be this year. Preliminary indications are that it will be nearly as complete as last year, when the logistics organization virtually withdrew from the panhandle.

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As yet there are few signs the Communists intend to turn off the infiltration flow as completely or as early as they did last year. The input so far this month already has surpassed the total for the whole of April 1969, when only 2,300 men started south. But if most of the enemy's logistics units in Laos go home next month--which seems suggested in their recent communications--the Communists probably will be able to sustain only a token infiltration flow over the summer months.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The government over the last two days has tried by a combination of firmness and conciliation to get demonstrating veterans off the streets, but so far with little effect. Despite orders to act with restraint, the police in Saigon on a number of occasions used tear gas on the veterans. The government's offer of temporary quarters in Saigon while permanent housing is being built so far has failed to mollify the veterans. President Thieu has also asked for urgent National Assembly action on a bill providing increased payments to veterans.

Thieu is clearly concerned about the veterans' demonstrations because of a fear that their cause is viewed with some sympathy in the armed forces. His attempts to calm the situation are being complicated by a simultaneous student protest and by the general discontent over rising living costs. So far the students and the veterans have not concerted their actions. Should they do so, the government would be in for considerably more serious trouble.

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ISRAEL-USSR-EGYPT

The introduction of Soviet SA-3 missiles into Egypt has caused uncertainty to creep into the calculations of Israeli leaders about Soviet intentions. Heretofore, the Israelis had estimated that Moscow would avoid becoming directly involved in the fighting. Ambassador Barbour believes the government is less certain of this now, and is worried about drawing the Soviets deeper into the conflict. Recently, there has been more emphasis in Tel Aviv on the need for US support and for a US warning to the Soviets against further entanglement.

The changed situation has provoked a wide-ranging debate on future Israeli military actions. There is general agreement, however, that air superiority must be maintained over the Suez Canal in order to keep down casualties and prevent Nasir from undertaking new adventures. In this regard, Israeli leaders have said they would not raid Cairo, Alexandria, or the Aswan region, all areas of special interest to the Soviets, in tacit exchange for continued Israeli air superiority along the canal.

There have been no raids on SA-3 sites in any of these places, and no strikes close to Cairo since late February. At the same time, the Israelis have bombed heavily along the canal in the hope of preventing the installation of an effective Soviet air defense.

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USSR - COMMUNIST CHINA

Soviet officials say that they and the Chinese have agreed to exchange ambassadors once again, after a hiatus going back to 1966. Public announcement has been delayed pending Peking's acceptance of Moscow's nominee, Vladimir Stepakov. Stepakov, who until recently headed the party central committee's propaganda department, has neither diplomatic experience nor expertise in Chinese affairs. No one has been nominated yet by the Chinese side.

Soviet officials made a point of presenting this news to US Embassy officials in Moscow as evidence of progress at the Peking talks. Even so, there is no indication of progress on basic differences such as the frontier question, and Moscow's war of words with China continues.

The Chinese clearly view the current talks as a useful means to forestall potentially dangerous Soviet pressure. As a result they also have an interest in creating the appearance of some progress and probably will accept the new Soviet ambassador. For their part, the Soviets may be calculating that they could substitute the new ambassador for Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov and continue talks at a lower level, avoiding the appearance of failure.

We also suspect that in notifying the US of the ambassadorial agreement, the Soviets may be trying to suggest that they are bringing their problems with China under control on the eve of the second round of the strategic arms limitation talks.

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