



The President's Daily Brief

16 April 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

16 April 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Cambodia

(Page 1)

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In South Vietnam, the student protest seems to be spreading. (Page 2)

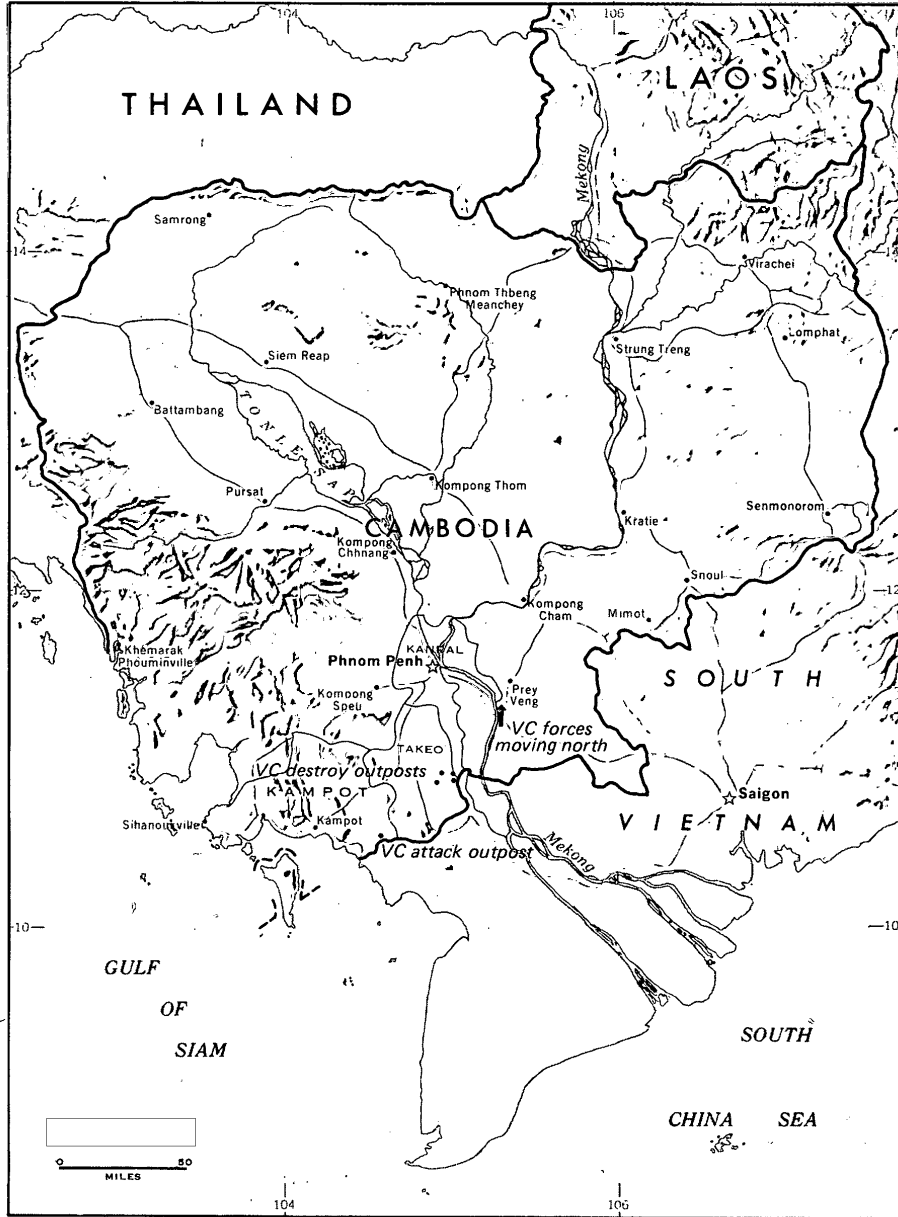
The situation in Laos is discussed on Page 3.

Former president Bosch may further snarl politics in the Dominican Republic if he returns there today. (Page 4)

King Husayn of Jordan hopes that Assistant Secretary Sisco's visit can take place as scheduled. (Page 5)

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CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

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Intercepted army messages reveal that the Viet Cong are still attacking border outposts, and that a "considerable" number of Communist troops are crossing the border and moving north in Kandal Province. Phnom Penh's growing apprehension about these developments was reflected in a 15 April communique calling for the organization of "partisan groups" to defend the country against the Vietnamese Communists.

The government, meanwhile, has done little to control the wave of anti-Vietnamese hysteria that is evidently sweeping Cambodia. Atrocities against the large Vietnamese community there will hurt Phnom Penh's efforts to win international support and sympathy and will hamper improvement of relations between Saigon and Phnom Penh.

In yesterday's Annex, we assessed some of the factors that will affect how far the Vietnamese Communists would go in putting military pressure on Cambodia. Anti-Vietnamese pogroms, if they continue, would be an added impetus toward tougher measures.

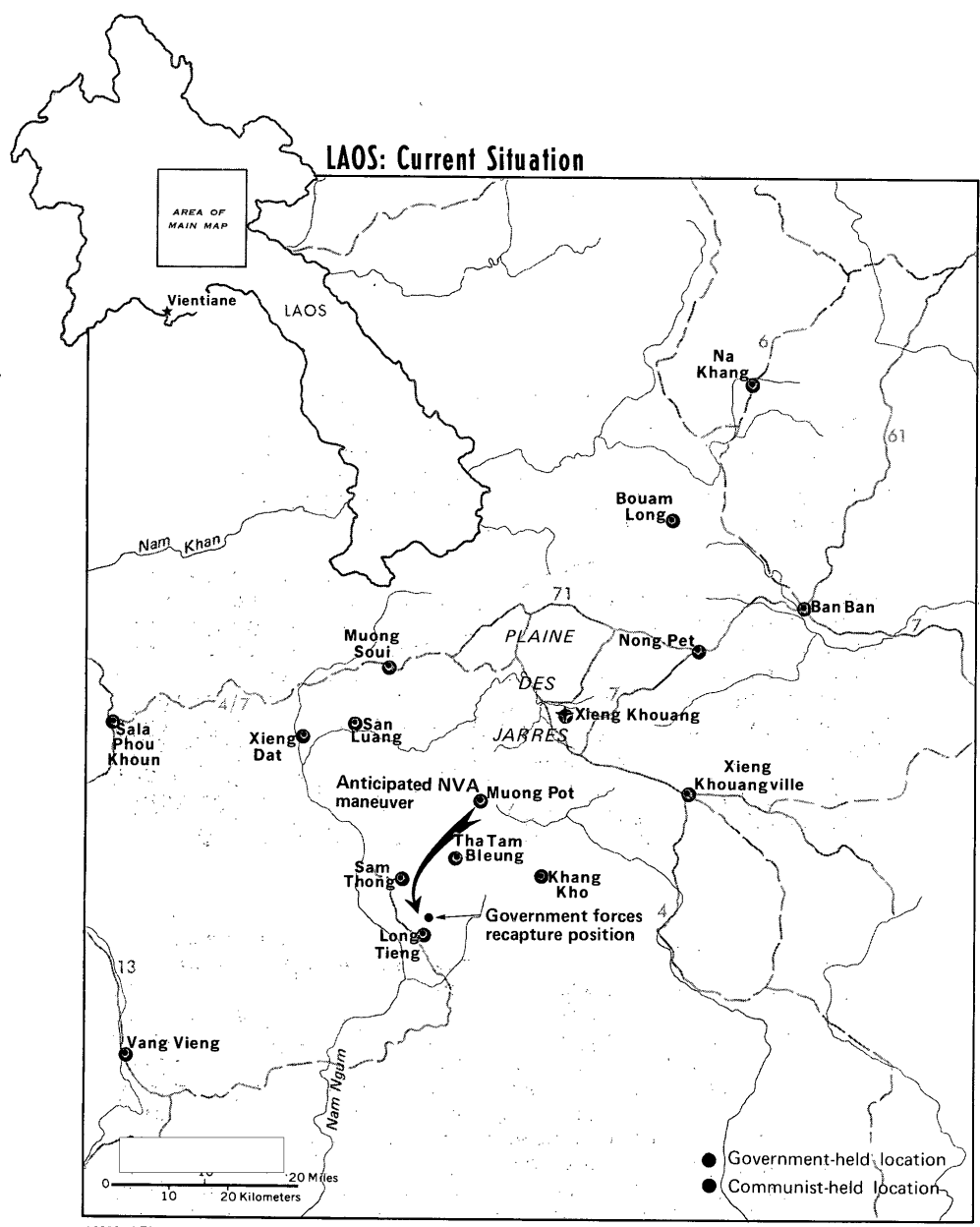
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SOUTH VIETNAM

Though still small, the student protest appears to be growing. Saigon University strikers have been joined by their fellows in Hue and Can Tho. Students from several Saigon high schools have been demonstrating in sympathy, and some of the city's Buddhist students now are getting involved. So far, the militants have been unable to mount more than minor demonstrations, which led to small clashes with police. The government's refusal to heed students' calls for the release of their arrested colleagues seems to have led to still greater demands. These include abolition of the military court that will try 21 students as Viet Cong agents. Conviction of the 21 is likely to lead to further escalation of the protesters' fury.

* * *

On the military front enemy forces appear to be preparing for another surge of coordinated attacks later this month. Intercepted messages and captured documents all refer to a second phase of the recent assaults. The next round may come between 20 and 25 April.



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LAOS

The Communist buildup southwest of the Plaine des Jarres continues, but no significant new fighting has been reported.

US advisers are concerned that enemy forces infiltrating southward from the Plaine are making an end run around the 5,500-man defense force deployed in the region between Long Tieng and Tha Tam Bleung. They fear that this maneuver might enable the Communists to isolate the guerrilla redoubt at Sam Thong and to drive a wedge between the Long Tieng garrison and the bulk of its defenders. Vang Pao is redeploying some of his troops against this possibility.

* * *

On the political front, the initial Communist reaction to Premier Souvanna's letter to Pathet Lao leader Souphanouvong has been broadcast by the Laotian "patriotic neutralists." The full text of the broadcast is not yet available in Washington, but the excerpts in hand contain denunciation of the proposals. They are described as a "trick" designed to avoid settlement of the Laotian problem. The broadcast cited the Pathet Lao's five-point proposal of 6 March as "a correct and reasonable solution to the Laotian question."

A more authoritative Communist statement should be forthcoming in the next few days, and it may give some indication whether the Communists are willing to open talks despite the wide difference between their proposal and Souvanna's response.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Former president Juan Bosch may return today from three years of self-imposed exile, in time to complicate President Balaguer's bid for re-election on 16 May. Bosch, the leader of the major opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party, had been slated to arrive in Santo Domingo yesterday, but the government avoided granting permission to land the plane. Bosch still commands popular attention and large numbers of people were in the streets yesterday attracted by his pending arrival. Confused shooting broke out between army troops and the crowds; one person was dead and several wounded before it was over. Whether this will affect Bosch's decision to return is unknown; he has reneged on similar plans in the past.

Bosch has bitterly disowned the concept of representative democracy in Latin America in the wake of his ouster by the military in 1963 and the landing of US forces in 1965. His most recent pronouncements suggest he would favor his radicalized party's participation in the forthcoming election only as a tactic designed to advance the "coming revolution." So far, the party intends to abstain. Bosch has said he is not running.

The Dominican military would strongly oppose him if he decided to run. If he returns, the moderate opposition parties are likely to keep him at arms length, while they continue their negotiations with Balaguer on the ground rules for the election.

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NOTES

Jordan: King Husayn hopes that the visit of Assistant Secretary Sisco can take place as scheduled. He has asked Ambassador Symmes to assure Sisco that he would still be welcome in Jordan tomorrow and that he would be safe. The king avoided answering several questions, however, about whether the anti-US demonstrations led by the fedayeen would be allowed to continue. Last night, however, the fedayeen called for an end to demonstrations and instead urged a 30-minute peaceful strike on Friday. Husayn implied a fear that cancellation of Sisco's visit would be touted as a considerable victory for the fedayeen and could weaken even further Husayn's position as master of his own house.

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USSR-Egypt: [Redacted]

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Hungary: Hungary's party central committee unexpectedly met today.

This strengthens our suspicion that something may be seriously amiss in Budapest. The meeting probably is concerned with the same problem which caused cancellation of the Lenin anniversary celebrations.

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