

*The President's Daily Brief*

6 May 1970

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

6 May 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Allied cross-border operations into Cambodia have met only limited enemy resistance. In Saigon, a dispute between two Buddhist factions and an increase in militant student activity could result in serious civil disturbances. (Page 1)

Sihanouk's government-in-exile and the military situation within Cambodia are discussed on Page 3.

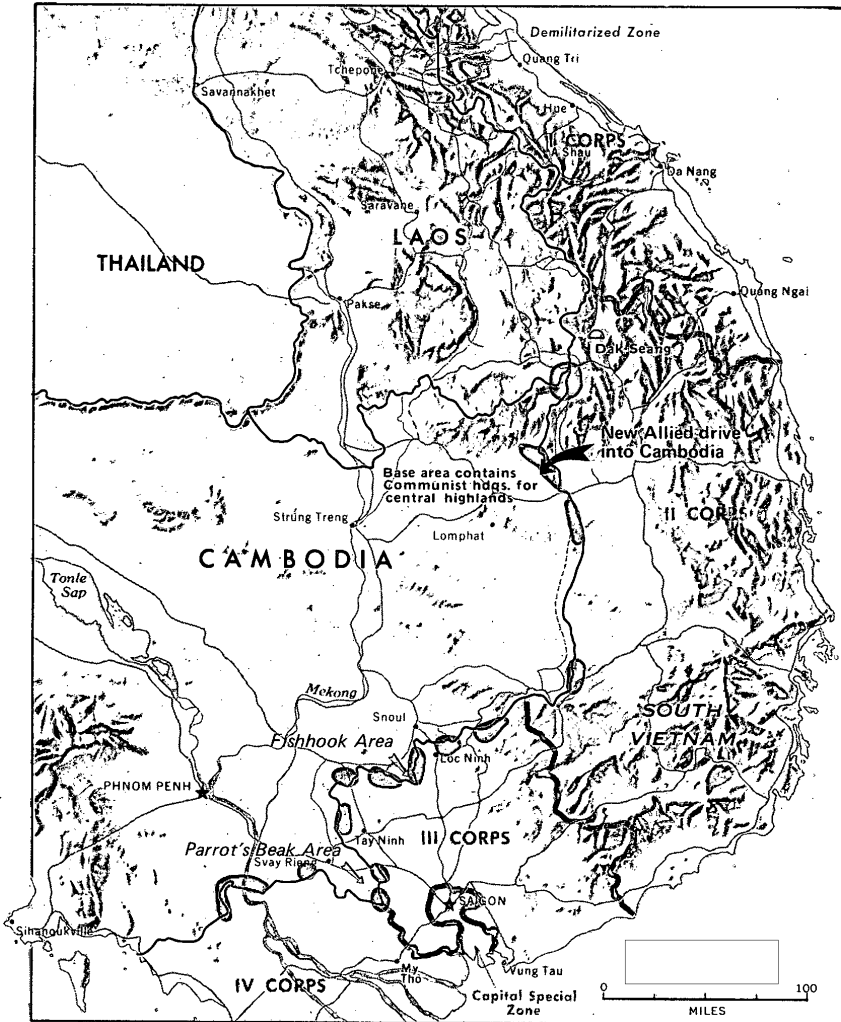
In Laos, the southern provincial capital of Saravane may be the next Communist target. (Page 5)

Soviet [redacted]  
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### New Allied Drive Meets Little Communist Resistance



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○ VC/NVA base area along Cambodian border

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## SOUTH VIETNAM - CAMBODIA

The allied drive from the central highlands into Cambodia has not yet encountered any major enemy combat units. The regional Communist headquarters complex in this area contains extensive support facilities and houses command elements responsible for enemy operations throughout the central highlands.

US and South Vietnamese sweeps through enemy sanctuaries farther south appear to be closing in on fairly large Communist military complexes including a base in the Fishhook area which may be one of the dispersed components of COSVN. In the Parrot's Beak, allied units are moving into what appears to be an extensive enemy training and logistics base.

American armored forces operating out of the Fishhook area ran into some of the stiffest enemy resistance to date yesterday at the border town of Snuol. The allies have reported killing some 2,500 enemy troops in the Fishhook and Parrot's Beak operations, with air strikes and in scattered small clashes. Some 2,200 enemy weapons, 230 vehicles, and about 450 tons of rice, have been captured or destroyed.

\* \* \*

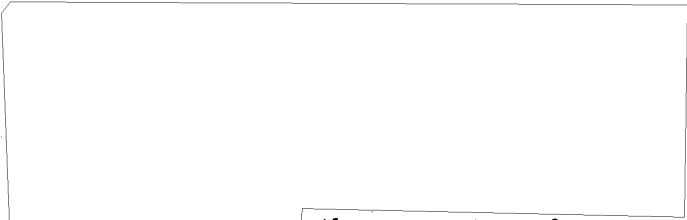
The South Vietnam Government's internal problems have been complicated by a conflict between rival Buddhist factions over who shall occupy a pagoda in Saigon. Each faction has forcibly evicted the other from the pagoda this week and more serious armed clashes between the two major sects are possible.

*The An Quang Buddhists have long resented the fact that the Quoc Tu faction is recognized by the government as the official Buddhist church in South Vietnam. Sporadic attempts at reconciliation--the most recent was last month--seem merely to have furthered hostility between the two factions.*

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*the present confrontation between the groups poses a new and potentially explosive problem for the Thieu government. If the government uses undue force to maintain control, it will be vulnerable to fresh charges of heavy-handedness.*

The government may also soon face more trouble with the students. Control seems to be slipping from fairly moderate student leaders to a more militant group.



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The government, clearly concerned, has ordered all schools and universities in South Vietnam closed indefinitely.

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## CAMBODIA

The government unveiled by Sihanouk in Peking yesterday is a mixed bag of veteran politicians and younger, more energetic leftists. Penn Nouth, a well-known Cambodian politician who has served as prime minister in past Sihanouk governments, has been picked to head the "Royal Government of National Union."

*Nouth's long loyalty to Sihanouk and his political prestige made him the logical choice for the position, but because of his age and his poor health, he probably will be only a figurehead. Government leaders in Phnom Penh who had hopes that Nouth might be persuaded to return will be disappointed that he has lent his name to Sihanouk's cause.*

As anticipated, a number of prominent Cambodian leftists were given key portfolios in the cabinet, including national defense, interior, and information. These individuals, three of whom were leading members of the National Assembly until Sihanouk's 1967 purge forced them to flee the capital, are young, capable, and at one time had some following among the youth and intellectuals in Cambodia.

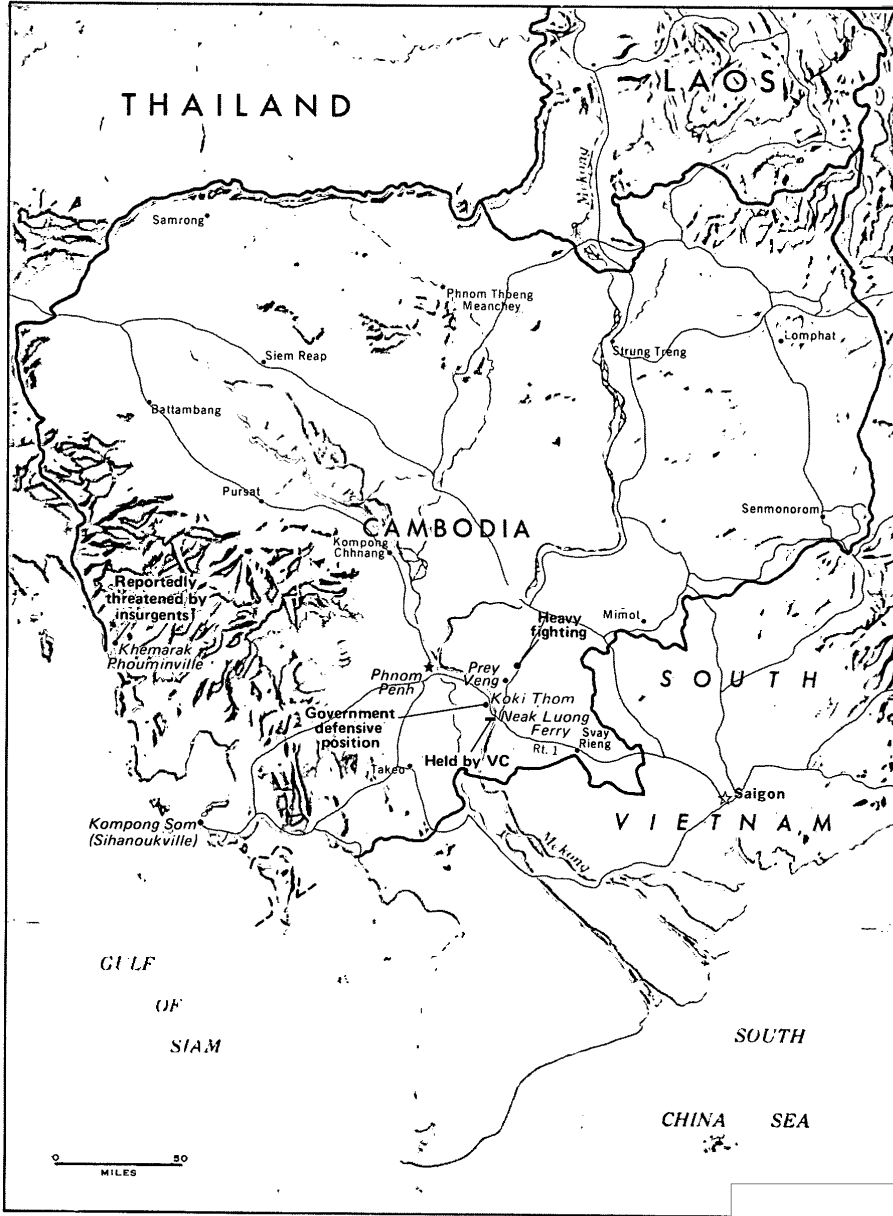
The new government is nominally under the direction of the "National United Front of Cambodia," whose chairmanship is held by Sihanouk and probably will continue to function in the Chinese capital. The announcement did not make any further mention of Sihanouk's own plans to return to Cambodia.

*The Chinese quickly endorsed the new government, and broke diplomatic relations with the Lon Nol government--the first time Peking has taken the initiative in breaking relations with another state. It was almost certainly first coordinated with Hanoi, which probably will issue a similar announcement shortly. Formation of the government-in-exile probably was in train for some time and flows logically from previous Communist actions and pronouncements. Its timing, however, may have been finally fixed by US military moves in Cambodia.*

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### Cambodia: Current Situation



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In military action in Cambodia, Communist troops still hold both banks of the Mekong River at the Neak Luong ferry crossing. No significant fighting has developed as yet between government defense forces dug in at the village of Koki Thom, several miles north on Route 1, and Communist elements said to be advancing toward them. To the north, heavy fighting has been reported near the town of Prey Veng, which has been cut off from possible reinforcement by Communist blocking forces on the major road into the area.

In the southwest, a fragmentary army message indicates that the gulf town of Khemarak Phouminville may be in danger of falling to the Communists. In late March the town was attacked by Cambodian insurgents.

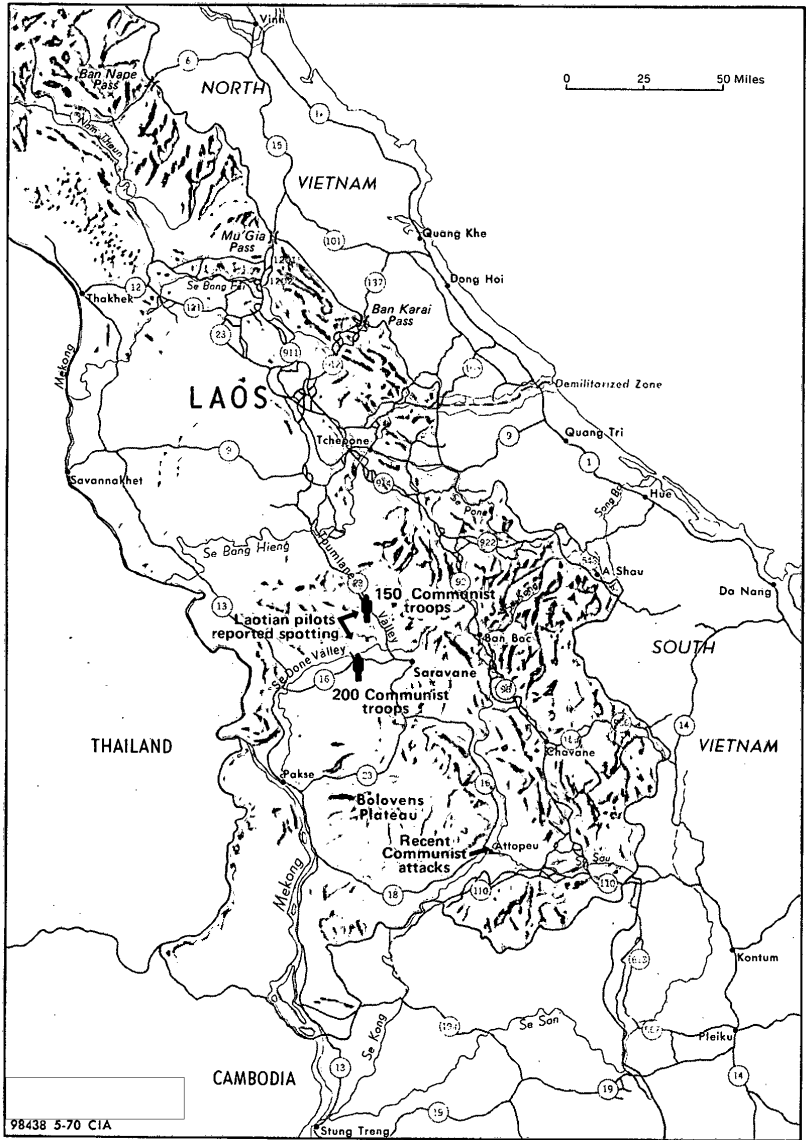
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The government is continuing to blame Vietnamese residents of Cambodia for many of the recent military reverses. It has ordered a daily 20-hour curfew for all Vietnamese in Phnom Penh. This course runs some danger of stimulating a blood bath against the Vietnamese Communists in the capital despite the government's cooperation with Saigon in setting up a repatriation program.

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### Laos: Current Situation



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LAOS

[redacted] company-size enemy forces north and west of Saravane have increased apprehensions that the Communists may soon attack Saravane. Although these units were still some distance from the town, their presence tends to support earlier reports from villagers that a movement of new Communist units into the region is under way. [redacted]

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[redacted] enemy troop movements of regimental size are moving toward the Toumlane area, [redacted]

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The Communists apparently are capitalizing on this uneasiness by spreading leaflets in Saravane that the town will be attacked on 20 May. Persons recently escaping from Attopeu reported that similar warnings were posted there shortly before the town was seized.

*Saravane is a provincial capital which, despite enemy control of much of the surrounding countryside, has remained free from attack. It is possible, however, that the Communists are looking for another relatively cheap victory in southern Laos to help compensate for their continuing frustrations in the north.*

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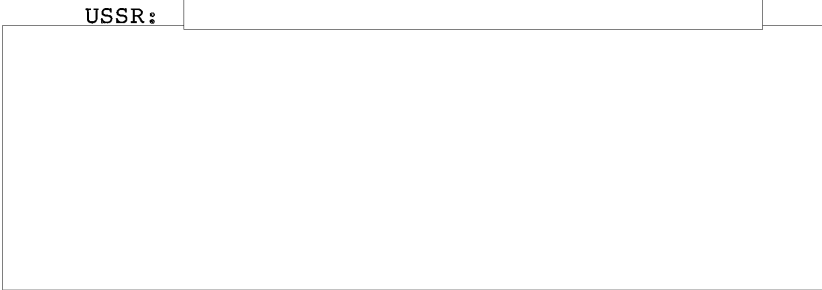


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