



The President's Daily Brief

3 AUGUST 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Cambodian situation is discussed on *Page 1*.

Nasir is trying to solidify Arab support for his acceptance of the US peace initiative. (*Page 3*)

The lull in the fighting in northern Laos is broken. (*Page 5*)

Thieu again indicates his willingness to consider accepting a standstill cease-fire prior to an overall political settlement, but stresses the need to negotiate the conditions for such a cease-fire. (*Page 6*)



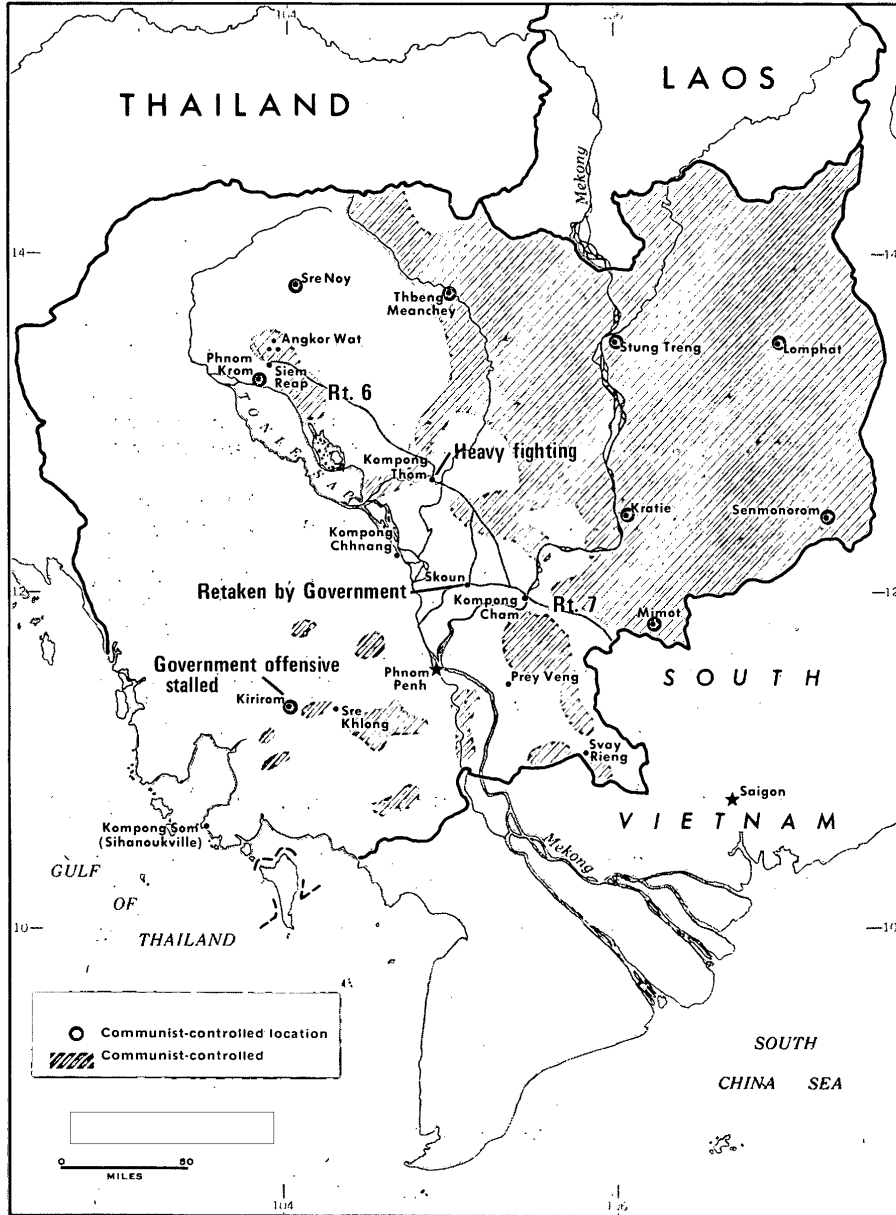
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The Soviets are unyielding on substantive matters in talks with the West Germans. (*Page 8*)

Uruguay has not yet responded to ransom demands for kidnaped foreigners. (*Page 9*)

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Cambodia: Current Situation



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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***CAMBODIA**

Communist forces yesterday pressed their efforts to retake Kompong Thom. Government forces are said to have regained control of many of the city's buildings, but the Communists continued to make a strong ground and mortar assault on the city's southern portions. Two government battalions in the northern part of the city were pinned down by enemy fire, and efforts by another battalion to link up with them were unsuccessful.

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The US defense attaché in Phnom Penh reported on 1 August that government troops at Kompong Thom were running low on food and ammunition and that their morale was declining. Continuous allied air strikes probably are the main reason the enemy has not been able to overrun the city. Phnom Penh has not yet made any plans to send reinforcements, despite urgent requests from the local commander.

In adjacent Kompong Cham Province, contrary to earlier reports, the Cambodians apparently have failed to retake the town of Skoun. The Communist occupation of Skoun may have been the first step in an enemy effort to increase pressure on Kompong Cham city. According to intercepted government messages, large numbers of enemy troops still are located east and west of the city.

In the west, the government offensive to retake Kirirom is still stalled pending the arrival of five more battalions of reinforcements from Phnom Penh. Elements of a brigade that was to spearhead the counterattack refused to participate in the operation, claiming they lack proper equipment. Southeast of Kirirom, an intercepted Cambodian Army message reported that the enemy ambushed several government vehicles near Sre Khlong on 1 August. Government clearing operations and air strikes in the Sre Khlong area apparently have not been effective, but the situation is reported to be calm.

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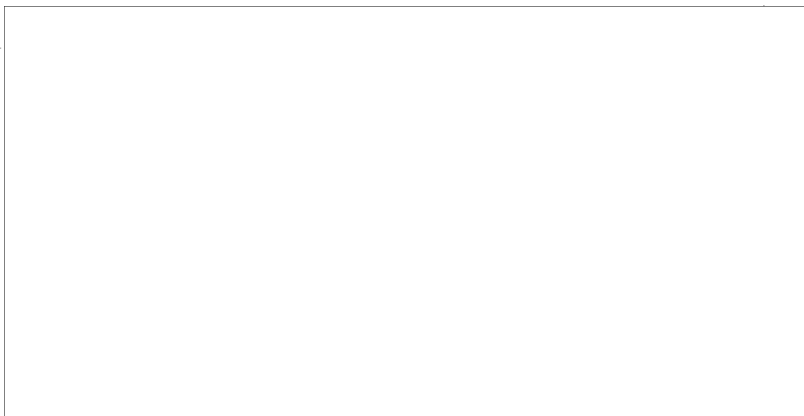
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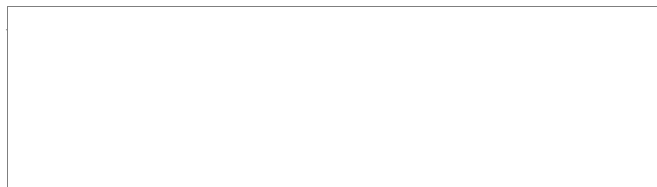
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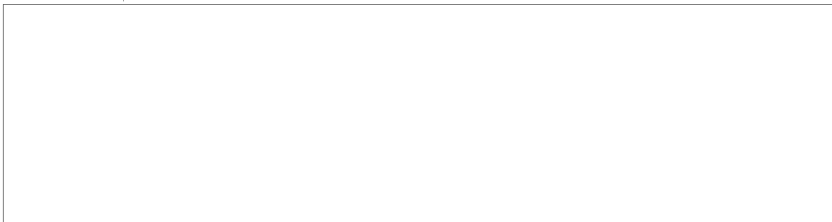
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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

Nasir is trying to solidify Arab support for his acceptance of the US peace initiative. The semi-official Al Ahram has reaffirmed Cairo's intention to explore the US proposal and has fired off volleys of criticism at Arab states not in support of Egypt's effort. Cairo, according to Al Ahram, accepted the US proposals because it thought there was a greater chance now of achieving total Israeli withdrawal. This line will presumably be pursued at today's meeting of representatives of the Arab states in Libya. Although Iraq and Algeria--strongly critical of Egypt's move--have formally declared they will not attend, Syria is sending a delegation, as are the fedayeen.

Moscow continues to manifest its strong political and military support for the UAR. Pravda minced few words on 1 August in condemning Iraq's "negative stand" with regard to Nasir's "peace initiative."



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The US Embassy in Amman reports that those favoring peace now clearly have the initiative. It states that the fedayeen position is not arousing significant support, and describes the fedayeen anti-peace demonstration on 31 July as "unimpressive." The Beirut embassy reports in addition that pro-peace sentiment in Lebanon has induced a note of caution among fedayeen leaders there.

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In Israel, a cabinet committee continued to work on a formal reply to the US proposals. The right-wing Gahal party makes its decision tonight on whether or not to quit the government. Its departure would leave Mrs. Meir with a governing majority of 76 out of 120, which would not require a cabinet shakeup.

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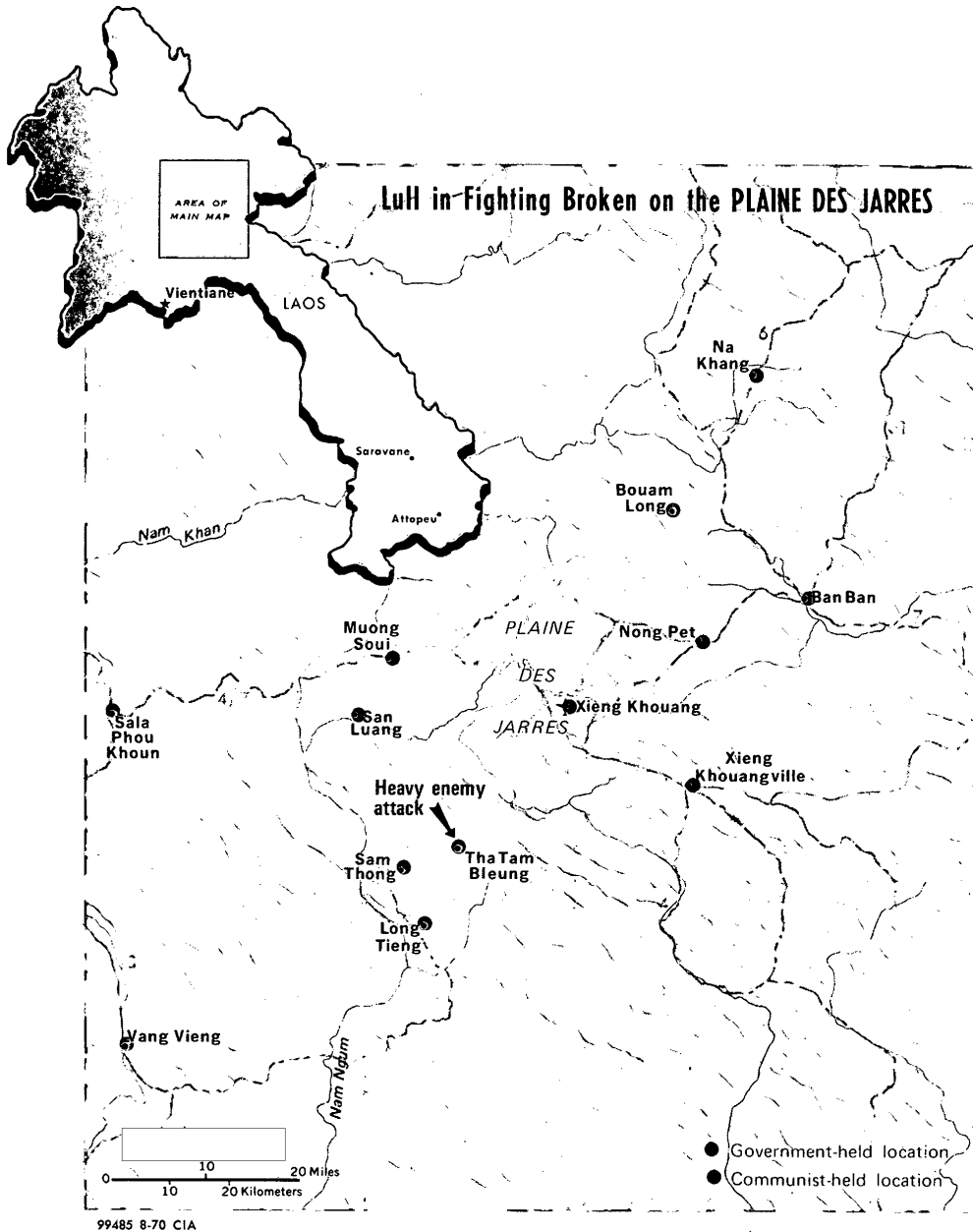
On the military front, Israeli aircraft continued to attack Egyptian targets along the Suez Canal. No further encounters with Soviet-piloted MIG-21s have occurred.



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The dispatch of the commander of the Soviet Air Force, Marshal Kutakov, to Cairo on 1 August is probably intended to provide a new general assessment of Soviet military involvement in Egypt, particularly in view of last week's Soviet pilot losses to the Israelis. Kutakov's rank will lend authority to his mission, which seems also aimed at reassuring the Egyptians and underscoring Moscow's support for Nasir.

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LAOS

The communiqué released shortly after Souk Vongsak arrived in Vientiane Friday did not contain any of the usual polemics and made no reference to the customary demand for a US bombing halt as a pre-condition for talks. Souk only noted the "numerous efforts" of the Lao Patriotic Front to reach a peaceful settlement and expressed the hope that his mission would end in success.

Shortly after his arrival, however, the extended lull in the fighting in north Laos was abruptly broken by an assault by 200 to 300 North Vietnamese troops against a Lao guerrilla battalion manning the perimeter defenses at Tha Tam Bleung. The enemy force overran all of the battalion's positions, wounding 59 of the guerrillas and leaving an unknown number dead.

It is possible that the Communist attack near Tha Tam Bleung had no connection with the opening of preliminary talks between the Pathet Lao and the government. The Communists have periodically made a show of strength southwest of the Plaine des Jarres to forestall any effort by General Vang Pao's forces to return to the offensive in this critical area. But the severity, as well as the timing, of the Tha Tam Bleung raid suggests that this was more than a routine military maneuver precipitated by local tactical considerations.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**SOUTH VIETNAM**

In his broadcast to the nation on Friday, President Thieu again indicated that he would be willing to consider accepting a standstill cease-fire before an over-all political settlement is negotiated. He strongly stressed the need to negotiate the conditions for such a cease-fire first, however, and again asserted that there must be a tight control apparatus to prevent the Communists from reinforcing and resupplying their forces and to prevent terrorist activity. Thieu also stressed that a standstill cease-fire would not involve ceding political control of areas where enemy forces might be strong, but would be a way to stop the killing until an over-all settlement is arranged that would allow the Communists to participate in internationally supervised elections. A cease-fire could only be justified, Thieu said, if there were real progress in the negotiations. He made it amply clear, however, that he expects no such progress soon.

Thieu clearly wished to reassure the armed forces and the people in general that his government is not about to drop its guard. He probably also wanted to head off any tendency among security forces to avoid battle with the enemy in the belief that a cease-fire was imminent. Some of his language seems to have been intended to caution political leaders, including candidates in the upcoming Senate elections, against playing to the war-weariness of the population by developing a peace campaign.

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USSR



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USSR - WEST GERMANY

Initial West German attempts to alter the Bahrgromyko draft agreements on a reconciliation treaty have run into a stone wall.

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Gromyko specifically ruled out any mention in a Soviet - West German treaty of four-power rights, and rejected any attempt to link the German-Soviet talks and the four-power sessions on Berlin. The Soviets also voiced strong opposition to any changes in the paragraph which relates to the border question.

All these points were raised by Scheel in an effort to make the draft agreement more acceptable to domestic critics who feel German and Allied interests are not sufficiently protected. The Soviets were polite in tone and showed some flexibility on certain nonessential matters, such as including specific mention in the treaty of a desire to cooperate in economic and cultural areas.

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it might be necessary for the West German cabinet to take another look at Bonn's substantive approach some time this coming week.

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NOTE

Uruguay: The government has not yet responded to demands by the extreme leftist Tupamaros for the release of all political prisoners as the price for freeing a wounded American AID official and a Brazilian diplomat abducted on 31 July. An impasse could easily develop if President Pacheco sticks to his position of "no negotiations with kidnapers." A legal obstacle to the release of the government's prisoners is the division of jurisdiction over them between the executive and judicial branches. Those already convicted are controlled by the judicial branch and the Supreme Court is determined not to release prisoners in exchange for the kidnaped foreigners.

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