



The President's Daily Brief

14 August 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

ADDENDUM TO THE PDB

OF 14 AUGUST

MIDDLE EAST



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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The situation in Cambodia is discussed on *Page 1*.

In South Vietnam, increased Communist military pressure in the northern portion of the country may be designed to disrupt the government's pacification program. On the domestic front, incidents of violence involving veterans' groups occurred in two more provincial capitals. (*Page 2*)

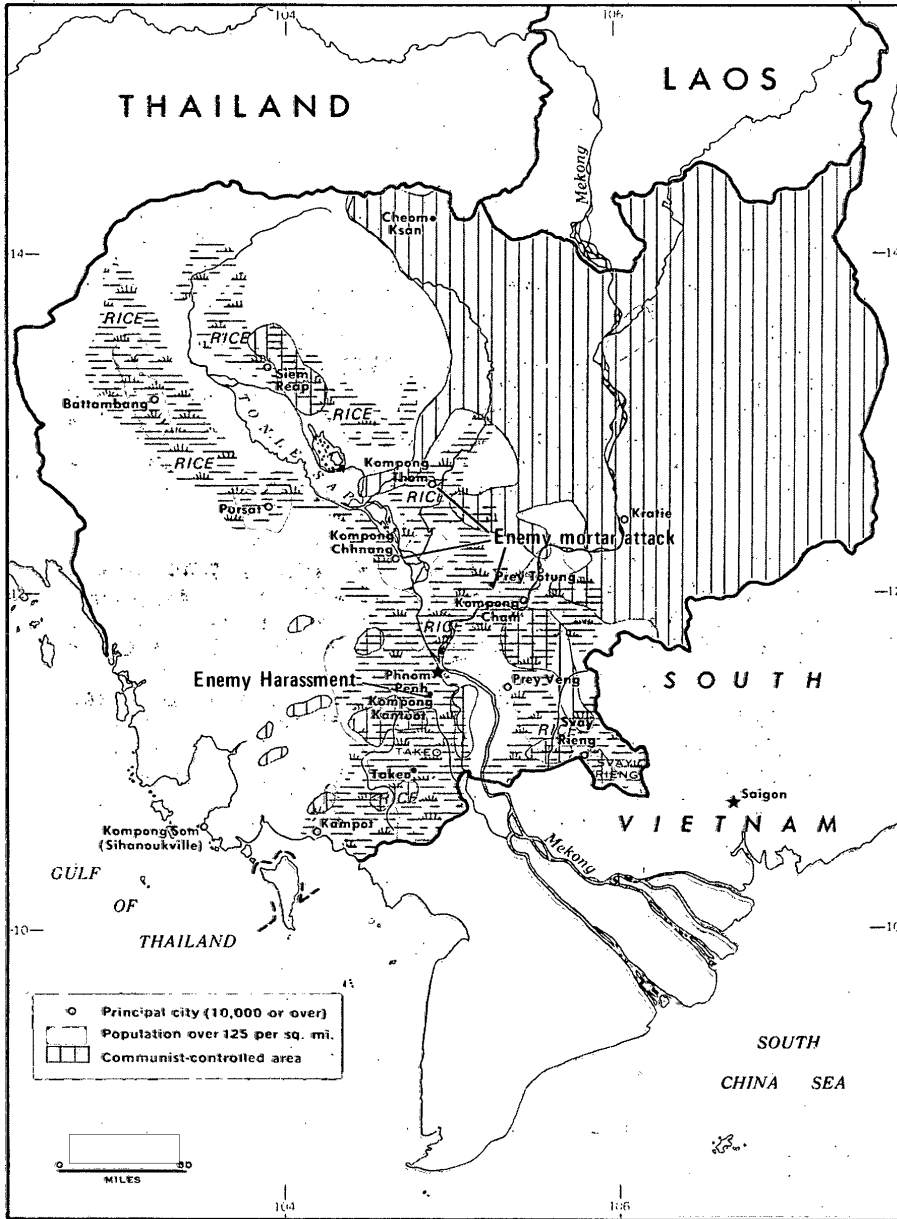
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(*Page 4*)

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CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Combat activity remained at a low level yesterday. In the west, Kompong Thom and Kompong Chhnang cities were shelled briefly, as was Prey Totung in Kompong Cham Province.

[redacted] large numbers of enemy troops were sighted moving southward toward Phnom Penh on 12 August along the east bank of the Mekong. On the same night, a government position at Kompong Kantuot, just south of the city, received light Communist harassing fire. One government message speculates that a large enemy force is planning to attack the Phnom Penh airport.

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We are dubious that the Communists--in any substantial strength--are closing in on Phnom Penh. These reports may merely reflect the jitters of Cambodian commanders.

* * *

[redacted] provided us with an account of Communist organizational methods in the countryside which he claims have been successful in lining up peasant support in Svay Rieng Province. He attributes this success to Viet Cong advisory teams from Tay Ninh Province in South Vietnam. Their primary task is to establish pro-Sihanouk committees at village, district, and provincial levels. The advisers remain in the background but make all the important decisions. The positions of chairman and section chiefs are occupied exclusively by Cambodian Communist party members.

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[redacted] the Viet Cong wanted to organize a battalion-sized combat unit at the province level, and company-sized units for the districts, but were having trouble in fleshing out these units. The general population also is being organized by the Communists into farmers', women's, or youth associations. Special emphasis is placed on recruiting Buddhist monks, whom the Communists view as potentially important propagandists. Money and rice is gathered by "voluntary donations," and each village must set aside two acres of rice land for cultivation by the Communists.

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Parts of Svay Rieng Province, particularly the Parrot's Beak area, have long been used by the Communists as military sanctuaries, and this familiarity probably has made the Communists' organizational progress there easier than it would be in other areas.

Fighting Picks Up in Northern Provinces



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SOUTH VIETNAM

Fighting continues in the northernmost part of South Vietnam. In one of their sharpest assaults in the lowlands in weeks, the Communists struck hard at a government Popular Forces unit south of Quang Tri city on 12 August, killing ten South Vietnamese and wounding 31. The South Vietnamese sent in reinforcements and, despite their losses, appear to have fought well. They are credited with killing more than 60 of the enemy. Several smaller battles and enemy shellings have taken place in the nearby lowlands area recently.

The Communists are also maintaining pressure against allied positions in the mountains of western Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. A shelling of Fire Support Base O'Reilly on 12 August, the focus of much recent enemy attention, reportedly killed the South Vietnamese major commanding the outpost. Captured enemy documents have indicated that one of the enemy's primary motives in attacking O'Reilly and other nearby bases has been to divert allied force and thus create openings for thrusts into the populated coastal areas of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces.

These Communist actions appear intended to undermine the government pacification program which has been relatively successful along the northern coast during the past two years. The Communists have not put a high military priority on this region since 1968, and tens of thousands of South Vietnamese civilians have been gathered behind a shield of territorial security forces. If the Communists keep up the pressure in the mountains, while at the same time making additional forays along the coast, government security gains could face quite a challenge.

* * *

Veterans' groups in two more provincial capitals have resorted to force since the clash between veterans and police in Nha Trang city last week. In Chau Doc, veterans seized hostages and fired on a South Vietnamese Army officer after an attempt to arrest two of their colleagues. This was followed by an armed clash by two rival veterans' factions in Bien Hoa city. One group subsequently seized the provincial headquarters without opposition from security officials.

(continued)

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Despite rumors attributing responsibility to Vice President Ky there is no firm evidence of any central direction of the veterans' agitation, and the causes of the incidents are dissimilar. Many veterans around the country, however, are concluding that they can use force with relative impunity to get what they want. The Saigon government remains reluctant to crack down on veteran protesters because of the sympathy they enjoy in the army. If the violence continues to spread, the government will be forced to adopt tougher measures to bring the situation under control.

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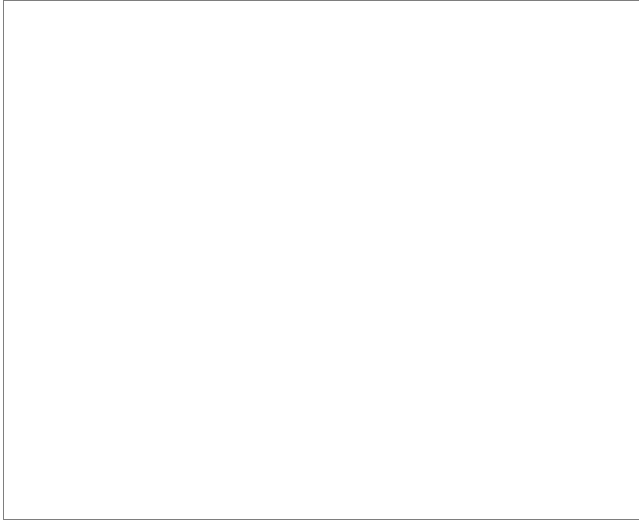


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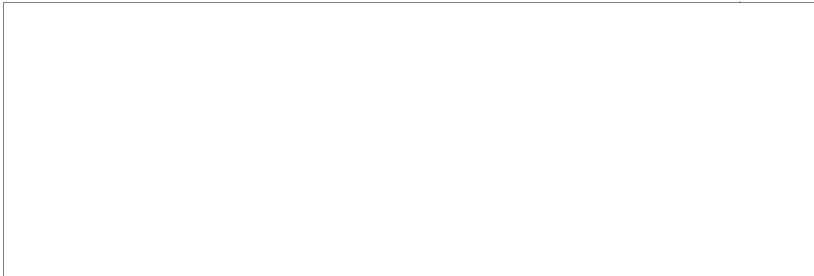
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