



The President's Daily Brief

11 December 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Lon Nol has requested and Saigon has approved a greater Vietnamese role in trying to reopen major roads leading to Phnom Penh. (Page 1)

North Vietnam is taking increased precautions in apparent anticipation of further raids on its territory. (Page 3)



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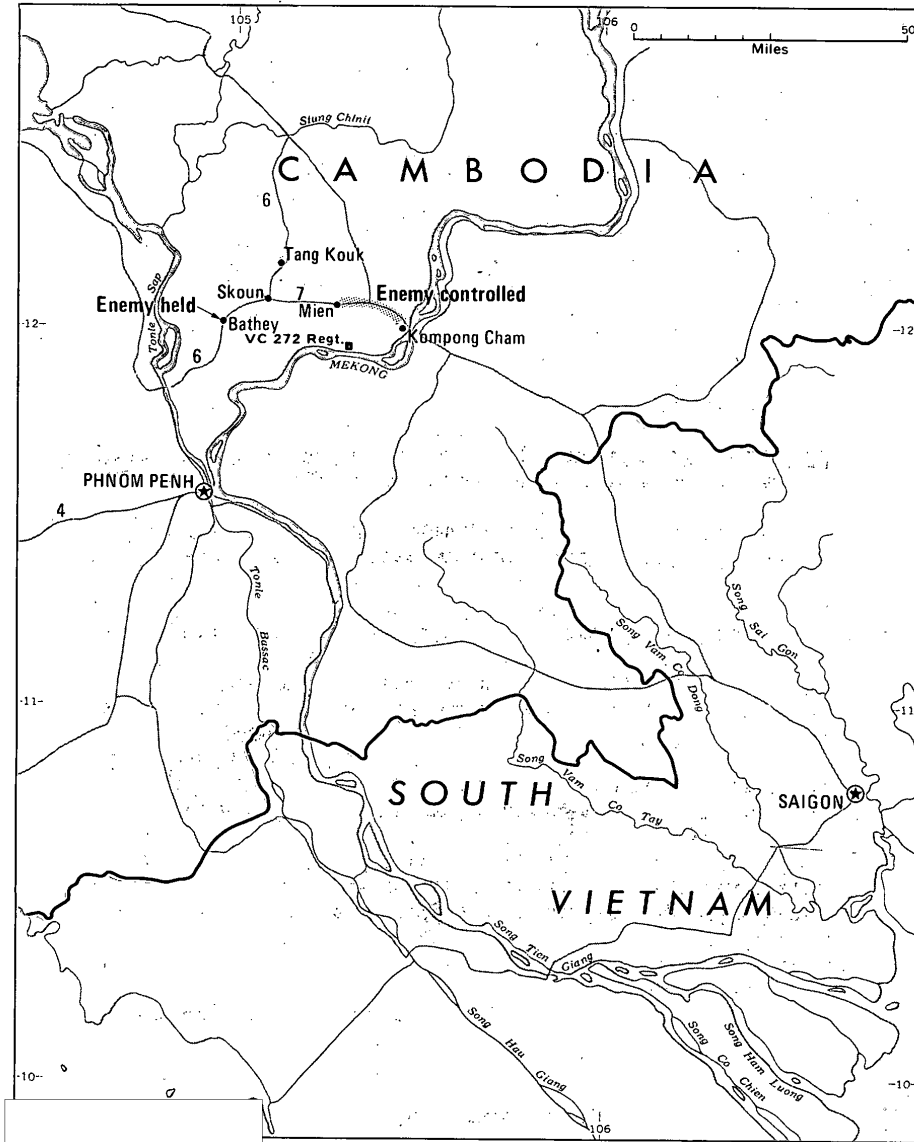
Developments at the SALT talks are discussed on Page 5.

On Page 6, we comment on Ulbricht's speech to the East German central committee.

An imminent rightist coup against the Vientiane government seems to have been thwarted. (Page 7)

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Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Prime Minister Lon Nol told a US Embassy officer on 9 December that he had asked the South Vietnamese to send troops and helicopters for use in re-opening vital lines of communication southwest and northeast of Phnom Penh. Under his plan the Vietnamese would help clear Communist blocking positions along Route 4 and along Routes 6 and 7 in the Skoun - Kompong Cham area.

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Lon Nol's appeal to Saigon indicates that he now believes that Cambodian troops are incapable of rectifying the situations around Kompong Cham and on Route 4 without outside help.

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[Redacted]

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(continued)

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No major new Communist troop movements have been detected since the Viet Cong 272nd Regiment moved to the west bank of the Mekong last week. Previous Communist performance suggests that they are not likely to oppose South Vietnamese troops head on if the latter move to clear Route 7 between Kompong Cham and Skoun.

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NORTH VIETNAM

[redacted] special precautions are being taken throughout the country against the possibility of more US raids.

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[redacted]

the North Vietnamese press has been full of articles about increased defense readiness, particularly in the southern provinces.

On 10 December the government and the Communist Party central committee issued an extraordinary joint statement warning that North Vietnam faces new US attacks and calling for even greater preparedness.

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The current alarm goes well beyond the tightening up we saw in the immediate aftermath of the Son Tay raid. It is also at a higher pitch than the air defense precautions taken in the spring of 1969 when the North Vietnamese expected retaliatory US air strikes to follow a new Communist offensive in South Vietnam. The current measures strongly suggest that Hanoi genuinely expects fresh air and ground raids at any time, especially in the southern portions of North Vietnam and Laos.

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JORDAN



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SALT

At yesterday's meeting Semenov reverted to the Soviet argument on forward-based systems, repeating the "radical" solution and tabling the "partial" solution. The latter entails a reduction in FBS but also a cut in US intercontinental systems. In addition, he reaffirmed Moscow's position on bomber limitations and explicitly rejected the US formula limiting silo modification.

In discussing "modernization," Semenov asserted that national means of verification permit a distinction as to which missiles--light or heavy--are deployed in existing, modernized, or new silos. The US delegation suggests that this statement may have implied Soviet readiness to accept a separate numerical limit on modern, large missile launchers. The next session, which may be the last formal exchange, will be held on 16 December.

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EAST GERMANY

In a speech before the East German central committee this week, Ulbricht claimed he is ready for additional movement in East-West negotiations on Europe, but he did not make any new proposals to further this movement. On Berlin, Ulbricht said an agreement on reciprocal transit traffic would be possible only if Bonn ceased its "unlawful" interference in West Berlin. Ulbricht also said his Warsaw Pact allies fully support his demand that relations with West Germany be established on "the basis of international law" and several times ridiculed Bonn's position that a "special relationship" should exist between the two Germanies. He flatly stated that he is suspicious of Brandt's motives and believes that West Germany intends to subvert the Communist world through the popularization of social democratic ideas.

Ulbricht's remarks show he is not entirely pleased with the Warsaw Pact policy to which he is committed. His stand against social democracy in Western Europe, for example, pits him against Soviet ideologists, who have promulgated a doctrine of renewed cooperation between Communists and socialists in the West. Ulbricht also seemed bitter about the West German - Polish treaty and particularly about Brandt's warm reception in Poland.

His vague reference to West German activities in West Berlin may mean that East Germany will not insist on a complete withdrawal of the West German presence from West Berlin. Instead, the East Germans may be prepared to settle for a promise that West Germans will not conduct official or semiofficial political business in the city. It could also mean that Ulbricht wants Bonn's agreement to unhindered transit of East German travelers and goods to the West.

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NOTE

Laos: An imminent move by antigovernment conspirators to gain control of Savannakhet appears to have been thwarted by the arrest in Thailand last night of former Lao colonel Bounleut Saycocie.

[redacted] prior to the arrest a number of Bounleut's cohorts had infiltrated Savannakhet from nearby points in Thailand, but that tightened security imposed by forewarned Lao officials has kept them from taking any action. Although the current tension in Laos is now likely to ease somewhat, it is still not clear whether the erratic Bounleut was plotting a coup largely on his own or was acting to further the political designs of more powerful Lao rightists.

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