



*The President's Daily Brief*

20 January 1971

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *Page 1* we provide highlights from the [redacted] most recent assessment of the situation in Cambodia.

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New photography shows little recent progress in Chinese road construction in northwest Laos. (*Page 2*)

Labor unrest persists in the Gdansk area of Poland. (*Page 3*)

Differences within the fedayeen movement are becoming more apparent as the quiet continues in Jordan. (*Page 4*)

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CAMBODIA

[redacted]

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[redacted] there is no evidence of any serious deterioration in the morale of the population in Phnom Penh. In spite of growing hardships imposed by the shortages of petroleum and the increase in consumer prices, there is no audible grumbling over the way the war is going or the quality of leadership provided by Lon Nol or the generals. [redacted] some observers

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sense a growing malaise in the capital, but [redacted] even if the city were to be totally cut off, the life of the average Phnom Penh resident would probably be little changed. Despite the events of the past two months, there is still little sense of war atmosphere or urgency in Phnom Penh; the most readily apparent reason for this is the supreme confidence of the Cambodians that, if properly armed, one Khmer is worth three Vietnamese, and therefore time is on the side of the Cambodians.

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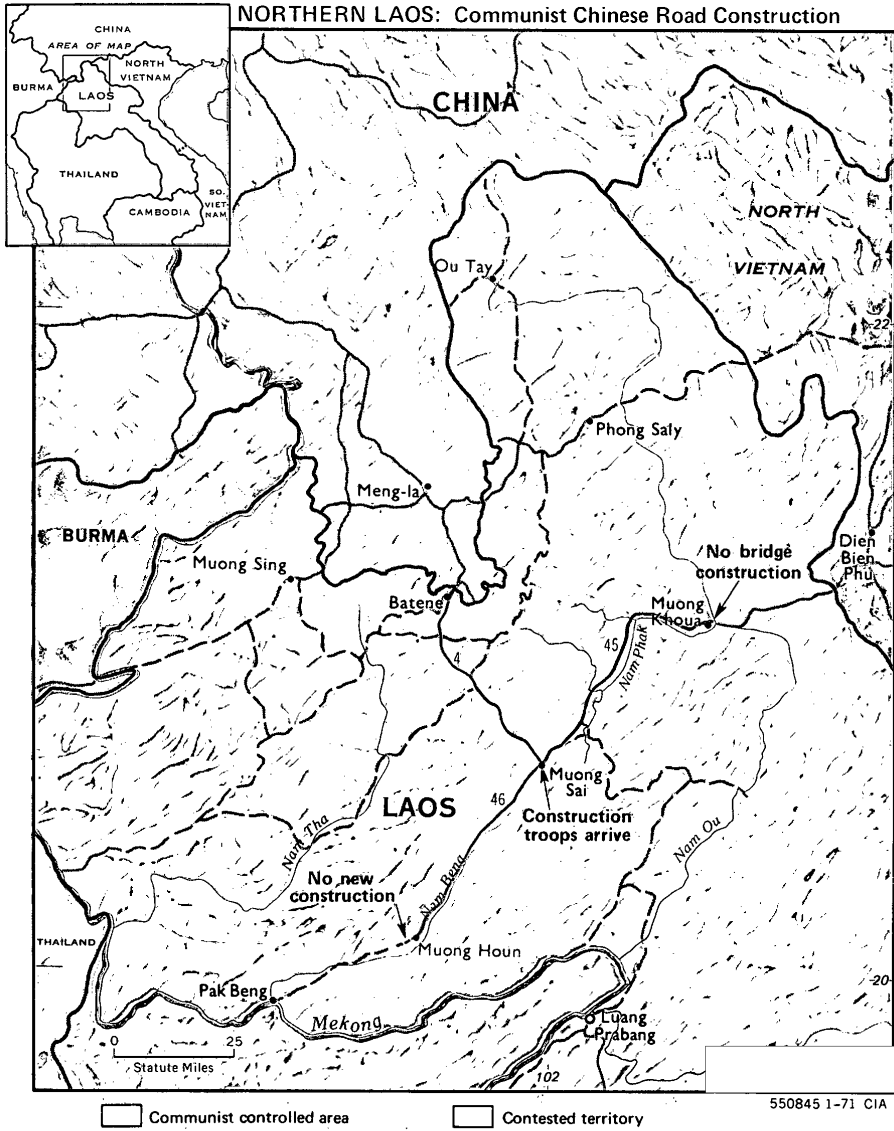
Although police procedures have been tightened and some terrorists arrested, Phnom Penh is still quite vulnerable to enemy mortar or rocket harassment and to acts of terrorism and sabotage. In the countryside, the Vietnamese Communists are having more success among the Cambodian population than the government admits, although reports of incidents between the peasants and their would-be recruiters indicate that the enemy also has serious troubles.

With the continuing help of the South Vietnamese, and the increasing availability of new weapons and trained troops, the Cambodian Army should perform better in the coming months. [redacted]

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[redacted] the exceedingly cautious tactics employed by the Cambodians, which have enabled the Communists to retain the initiative, will change until such time as field officers develop greater experience and confidence, and Lon Nol stops making most tactical decisions himself.

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COMMUNIST CHINA - LAOS

Photography [redacted] showed that Chinese road construction in northwest Laos made little progress over the last month. Construction to the northeast--in the direction of North Vietnam--has reached the Nam Ou River at Muong Khoua, but there is no evidence that bridge or ferry construction has begun. There has been no further road construction southwest toward the Mekong River since the extension of a motorable trail a few miles south of Muong Houn, which we reported in The President's Daily Brief of 3 December.

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*The fact that little construction has occurred recently may be due to a rotation of forces, which seems to occur annually at about this time. [redacted] have reported the arrival in the Muong Sai area since mid-December of 2,000 new construction troops, apparently part of this rotation process.*

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*We estimate that the Chinese now have about 14,000 to 18,000 troops--mostly in engineer and AAA units--spread along the road system in northwest Laos. The increase of about 4,000 above early December figures is due to the confirmed addition of one new construction regiment since last fall and to revised strength estimates for such regiments, as well as for AAA units in the area.*

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POLAND

Labor unrest persists in the Gdansk area. Most shipyard workers returned to work yesterday, but there was a brief work stoppage by public transport employees. A joint delegation of management and workers from the Gdansk shipyards met yesterday with Gierk and Premier Jaroszewicz in Warsaw to discuss the economic and political grievances of the workers.

A ranking Polish economist confirmed to US officials in Warsaw that a central committee plenum, to be held by late January or early February, is expected to set new guidelines for political, economic, and social policies, and to make additional personnel changes. He indicated that the plenum will chart a broad course of economic reform, but that specific changes are still being debated.

*The party undoubtedly would like to see more evidence of popular backing and calm before setting the plenum date. The workers, however, have tasted power in toppling the old regime and are stubbornly insisting on a clear outline of the future before they give their support. Although Gierk seems determined to tackle basic economic and social shortcomings, his resources for satisfying the workers' immediate bread-and-butter grievances are no greater than Gomulka's. Gierk also knows that he cannot be forever beholden to the workers and that he must soon show the Polish populace, and the Soviets, that he is in charge of his own house.*

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NOTE

Jordan-Fedayeen: The government continues to collect arms from various fedayeen militia groups-- including George Habbash's violence-prone Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)--without incident. Meanwhile, divided loyalties within the fedayeen movement are becoming more apparent.

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