



*The President's Daily Brief*

4 February 1971

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

**THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF**

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**PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS**

In Laos, the Communists have overrun several government positions northeast of Luang Prabang in their first significant actions since November. *(Page 1)*

A Soviet commentary on SALT marks a departure from Moscow's normal public reticence on specific points at issue. *(Page 2)*

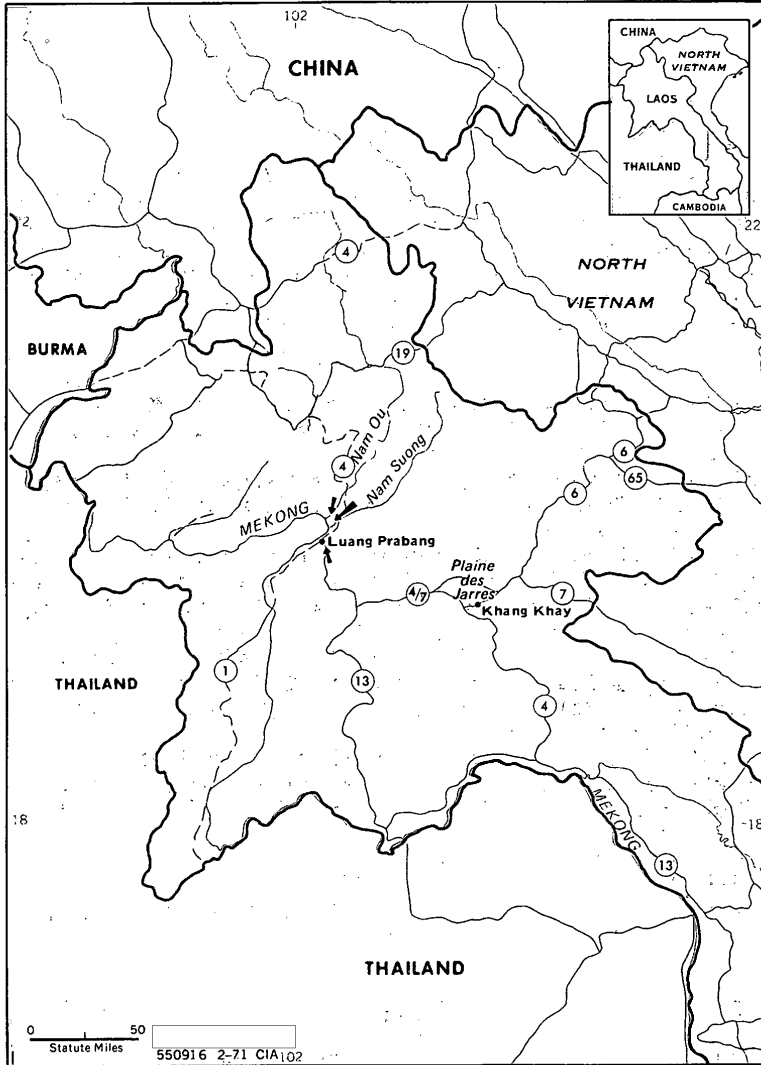
The Egyptians, too, have departed from past practice by telling us they are extending the cease-fire in advance of the public announcement. *(Page 3)*

A new class of submarine of Chinese design has been detected at a shipyard in northern China. *(Page 4)*

The Chinese have about completed preparations for another nuclear test at Lop Nor. *(Page 4)*

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Communist Attacks in Northern Laos



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LAOS

The Communists overran several government positions northeast of Luang Prabang on 2 February, with the brunt of the enemy effort falling on Lao Army units about 10 to 15 miles from the royal capital where the Nam Ou and Nam Suong rivers join the Mekong. One Communist unit raided a village about five miles from Luang Prabang, but failed to hold it.

*These are the first significant enemy actions in the Luang Prabang area since last November, when the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao launched a series of unexpectedly sharp attacks along the lower Nam Ou. The November attacks were viewed as a possible reaction to a government effort to stop the Communists from moving supplies along the river rather than as a serious threat to Luang Prabang itself.*

*The latest attacks may indicate, however, that the royal capital, long assumed to be immune from Communist attack because of the Pathet Lao's professed allegiance to the King, is in some danger. Lao military leaders are now expressing some doubts about their earlier assumption, and King Savang recently expressed a belief that the North Vietnamese intend to occupy the capital with Pathet Lao troops in order to bring down the government in Vientiane.*

[redacted]  
[redacted] as many as five North Vietnamese battalions are active in the vicinity of Luang Prabang. [redacted] there are actually six battalions--four North Vietnamese, one Pathet Lao, and one mixed--located north, east, and south of the town.

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*Such a force is far in excess of what the Communists have heretofore maintained in this area.*

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USSR-SALT

*A Soviet commentary issued yesterday marks a departure from Moscow's normal public reticence toward contentious SALT issues, and may be an initial maneuver prior to the renewal of talks in Vienna on 15 March.*

An article in Pravda by V. Shustov, a disarmament expert in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, charged that US "militarists" ordered the American press to stress that the talks should not be concerned with "nuclear facilities advanced to the frontiers of the USSR and other socialist countries." This viewpoint is said to "deliberately disregard" the fact that a mutually acceptable agreement must yield no unilateral military advantages to either side. The article also stated that the strengthening of US military forces over the past year is incompatible with efforts to reach an agreement.

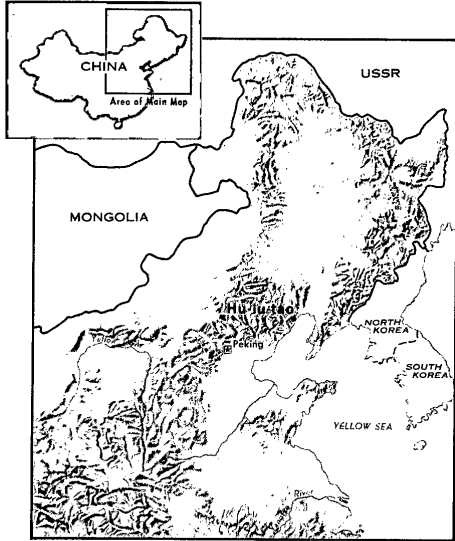
*These views are consistent with private Soviet statements at the arms talks, and amplify Defense Minister Grechko's comment in Finland Friday that the US "wants to take advantage" of the talks. Previously in public, however, Moscow took the position between sessions that it remained committed to seeking an agreement and that it would be self-defeating for Washington to try and negotiate from a "position of strength." In calling attention for the first time to one of the fundamental differences of the negotiations, the Soviets presumably have tailored their cautiously worded statement directly for consumption in Washington. In stressing Moscow's concern with the specific issue of forward-based systems, the statement seems intended to increase pressure for further US movement before the Vienna round begins.*

*The Soviets' decision to plead their case in public was forecast in comments to Governor Harriman in Moscow last month. Pravda commentator Yury Zhukov told him that the Soviets were irritated by US press leaks on SALT, and would be responding in their own way.*

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EGYPT

*Cairo's decision to extend the cease-fire for another month, communicated in advance to the US, will be formally announced by Sadat later today. The Egyptian move to advise the US of its decision is in marked contrast to Nasir's practice, which was to make full use of suspense and surprise in an effort to achieve maximum impact at home and abroad. The Egyptians no doubt count on favorable world reaction to their decision. They apparently regard the extension as of short enough duration to insure continuing pressures for substantive movement in the diplomatic arena.*

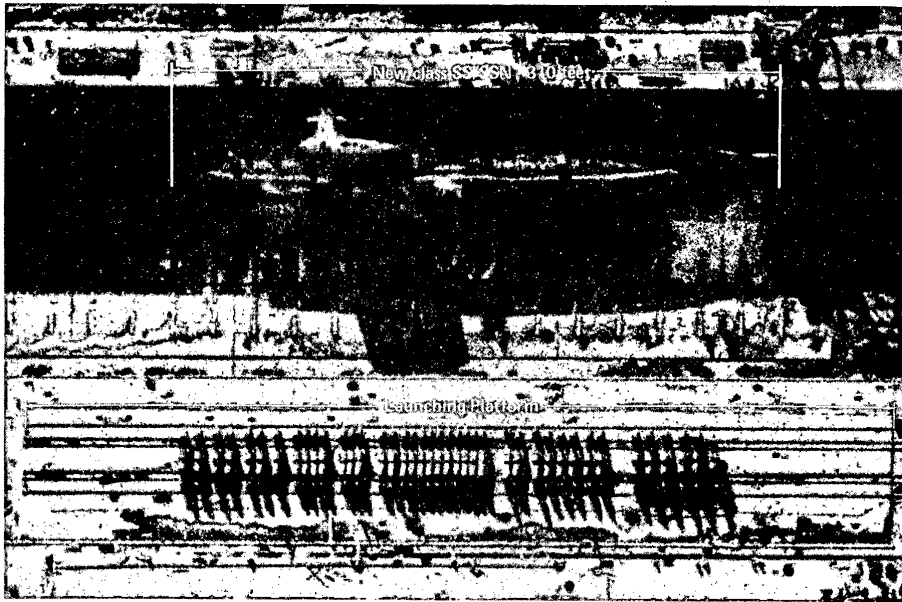


### New Chinese Attack Submarine

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NOTES

Communist China: Satellite photography [redacted] January shows an attack submarine, which is a new class of Chinese design, in the launch basin at Hu-lu-tao shipyard in northern China.

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The submarine is a modern, high-speed type, about 310 feet long with a 33-foot beam. It cannot be determined yet whether it has a nuclear or diesel propulsion system.

Communist China: Satellite photography of late January shows that preparations are nearing completion for a nuclear test at the new ground zero at Lop Nor, first identified last November. The type and location of structures in the test area indicate that the Chinese will detonate the nuclear device from a platform, or possibly a balloon, and that it will be of relatively low yield. China's last test [redacted]

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[redacted] occurred on 14 October 1970.

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