



The President's Daily Brief

6 February 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

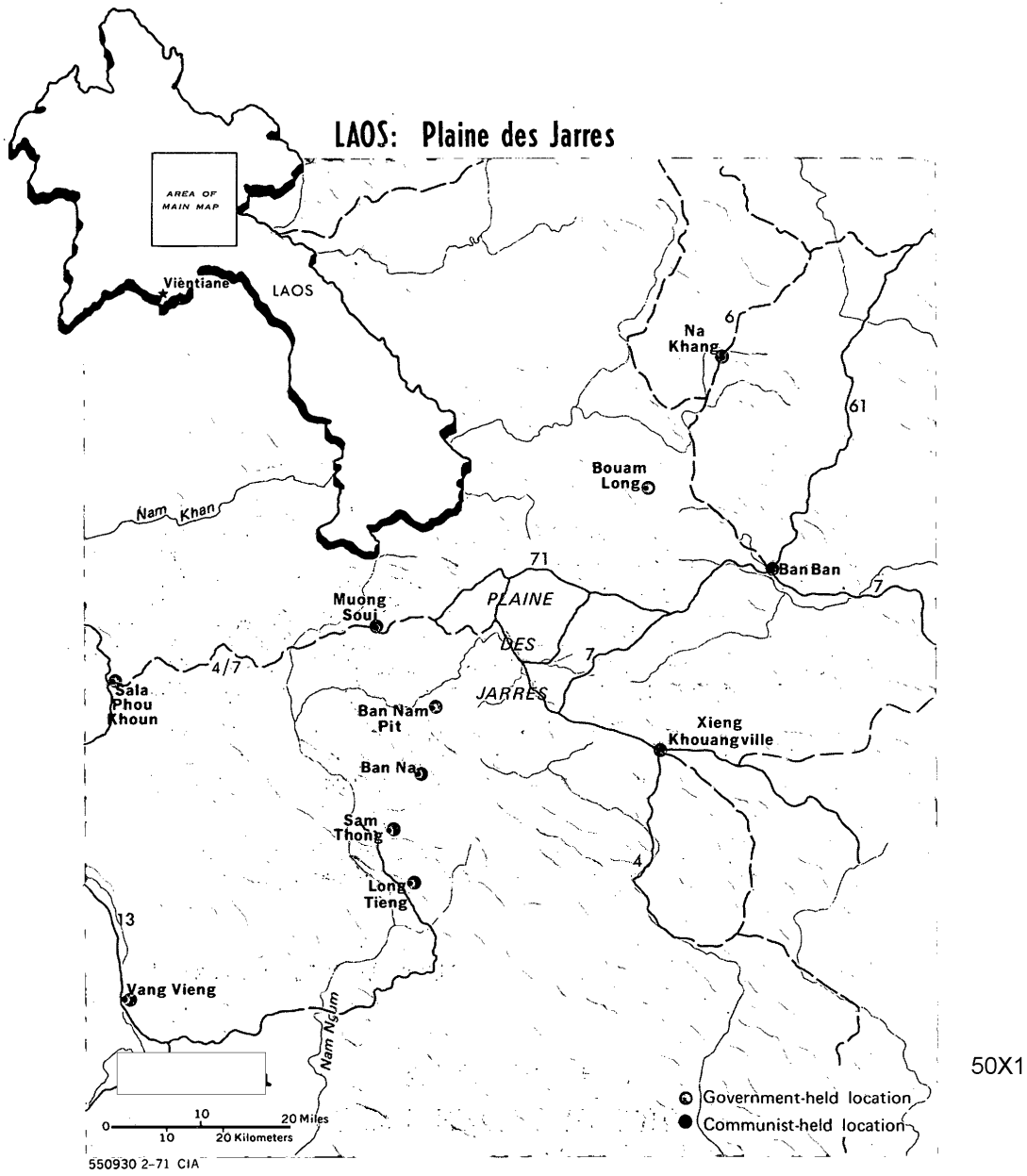
The North Vietnamese are positioning troops for attacks against government forces in northern Laos. (Page 1)

The Lon Nol government is being widely criticized for the continuing incidents of misbehavior by the South Vietnamese Army in Cambodia. (Page 2)

Bonn's inaction to Berlin autobahn harassment has disheartened the West Berlin populace, but West German leaders believe that a tough response may make matters worse. (Page 3)

The Soviets are lurching toward their party congress. (Page 4)

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LAOS

Intercepted communications from North Vietnamese units in the vicinity of Ban Na suggest that an attack on government positions there is imminent.

Messages of 4 February between elements of the NVA 174th Regiment said that preparations were being made to "initiate combat operations" and that units were moving to high ground west and south of Ban Na. According to other intercepts, elements of the NVA 316th Division are preparing to shell Ban Nam Pit, four miles north of Ban Na, and a surgical team is to move into an area west of Ban Na "in time for combat."

The government maintains about 1,300 troops and several key artillery positions at Ban Na. The enemy can bring to bear at least an equivalent number of troops.

A few miles to the south, in the vicinity of Sam Thong and Long Tieng, government irregulars report increasing contact with small enemy units.

[redacted] noted evidence of greater North Vietnamese use of the trails in this area. On 3 February, ten NVA troops briefly probed an irregular position only three miles to the northwest of Long Tieng, and early this morning irregular forces repulsed attacks against three of their positions in the Long Tieng area.

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Enemy strength in the vicinity of the government's key bases southwest of the Plaine des Jarres thus seems to be growing. This continued probing apparently is the forerunner of major offensive action in the near future.

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CAMBODIA

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Thus far, the government has mollified its critics by arguing that the ARVN presence is a necessary evil,

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[Redacted] the government would be in political difficulty by mid-year if incidents continue at the present rate, and [Redacted] Cambodia must soon become capable of waging the war on its own without any help from ARVN. [Redacted] despite substantial high-level good will between Phnom Penh and Saigon, the government doubts that Saigon is doing all it can do to reduce incidents.

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Foreign Minister Koun Wick expressed similar sentiments to Ambassador Swank on the same day, stating that the incidents are causing Matak and Lon Nol considerable anguish. He claimed, without providing details, that a proposal for the total withdrawal of all ARVN forces from the country had been rejected.

Lon Nol and Thieu are said to have agreed last month to establish a joint committee to investigate incidents. This and other ameliorating measures are unlikely to help much, however, in view of the centuries-old antagonism between the two peoples.

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WEST GERMANY - EAST GERMANY

The prospect of further Berlin autobahn harassments against West German political activities in the city poses a dilemma for Chancellor Brandt. Most of the top government leaders in Bonn prefer to avoid aggravating the situation further, but the West Berlin city elections on 14 March compel Brandt to go along with the unusually high level of federal political activity in the city for the next several weeks.

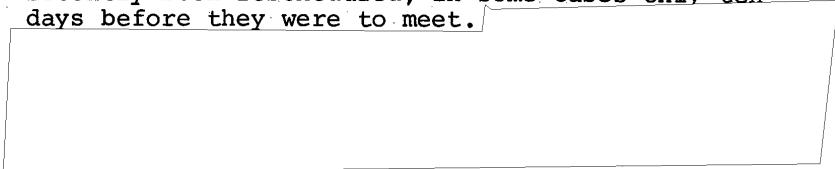
The reassurance that these political activities are intended to convey to West Berliners, however, is essentially negated by Communist harassments of the city's vital access links to the West. Bonn has warned of "countermeasures," but it is reluctant to take any meaningful retaliations for fear they would make matters worse. Many West Berliners, however, find this attitude disheartening. City leaders are warning not only of a possible electoral setback for Brandt's ruling Social Democrats, but of the danger that many residents may be sufficiently discouraged to find new homes in West Germany.

For the immediate future, Bonn's primary hope of dealing with the situation appears to be centered on its exploratory talks with the East Germans. The West Germans have told the three allied powers, however, that the latest meeting on 3 February between Egon Bahr and his East German counterpart, Michael Kohl, again failed to make any progress on the transit question.

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USSR

Several party congresses in the various Soviet republics and important regional conferences have recently been rescheduled, in some cases only ten days before they were to meet.



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Normally the republic congresses precede the national party congress by about three weeks, and their schedules may have been upset when the main event was postponed from early March to 30 March. Plans for the 24th party congress appear to be going forward, although with a greater degree of confusion than usual, and further delays may occur. Obviously, the leadership has had problems reaching decisions on plan directives and resource allocations.

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