



The President's Daily Brief

24 February 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in northern Laos is presented on *Page 1*.

The South Vietnamese operation in Laos met sharp resistance at several places yesterday. (*Page 3*)



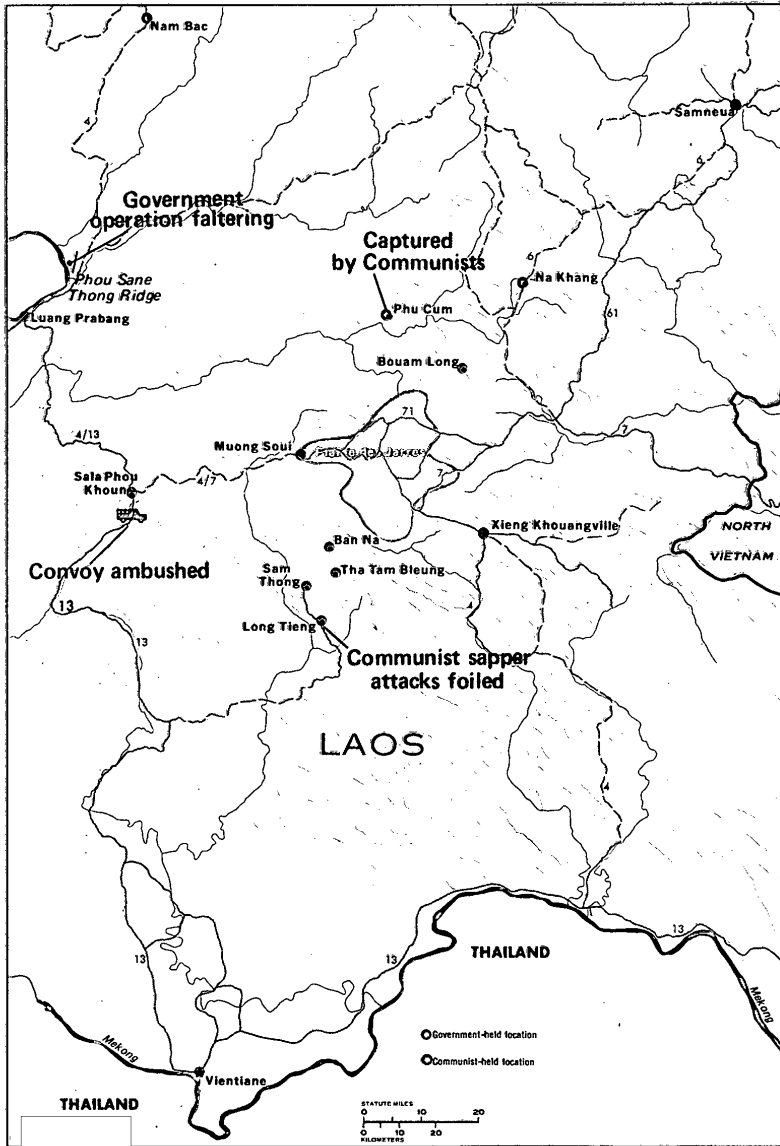
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Laotian political circles are showing increased nervousness. (*Page 5*)

A growth of terrorism in Turkey has sparked fresh reports of imminent military intervention. (*Page 6*)

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LAOS

Yesterday Communist units overran Phu Cum, some 30 miles northeast of Muong Soui and one of the last two government positions north of the Plaine des Jarres.

The government's remaining post, Bouam Long, is strongly defended and does not appear to be the center of any major Communist force concentration at this time, although it has been the object of increasingly frequent Communist probing attacks. The only large North Vietnamese unit in the Bouam Long vicinity, the 766th Independent Regiment, has not usually been used in heavy combat.

Communist main force units are still inching closer to the Long Tieng complex and are maintaining the pressure on the base and its outposts. On 21 February, local security forces intercepted and dispersed ten North Vietnamese sappers in the Long Tieng valley, only a few hundred yards from the ramp used by T-28 aircraft. The Communists have also been trying to reach positions in the hills overlooking Long Tieng to get a clear shot at the base facilities, which are partially protected by rock outcroppings on the valley floor. Yesterday morning, however, government irregulars recaptured a position six miles to the northeast, one of the four outposts that the North Vietnamese had overrun last weekend.

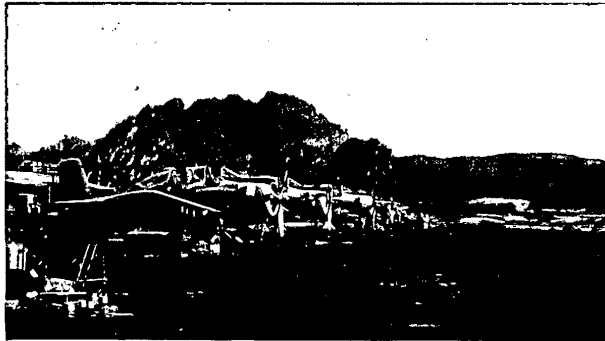
The Communists apparently are paying a heavy price for their efforts against Lona Tiena.

casualties have been heavy, and medicine and ammunition have been used up.

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LONG TIENG AIRBASE



T-28 flight line



Rock outcroppings near logistic facilities

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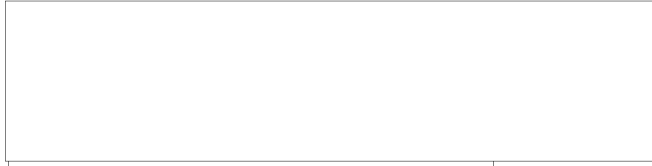
To the west of the Plaine, Route 13 between Luang Prabang and Vientiane is again open, but under a night curfew. Early this week the Communists ambushed a small truck convoy on Route 13 near Sala Phou Khoun, killing two civilians. The government has moved some 525 reinforcements into the Luang Prabang area, but its operation to secure defensive positions northeast of the royal capital appears to be faltering. An irregular battalion attempting to reoccupy the northern end of the Phou Sane Thong ridge was driven from its positions yesterday and scattered by an enemy mortar attack and ground assault. The southern end of the ridge, taken last Sunday, is still in government hands.

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VIETNAM-LAOS

South Vietnamese forces met sharp enemy resistance at several places in Laos yesterday, but there have been no new large-scale attacks. North Vietnamese tanks were sighted again northeast of Tchepone, and there were reports that the enemy in that area has been using 130-mm. artillery--the weapon used extensively during the siege of Khe Sanh in 1968. This artillery has a range of 29,200 yards.



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NORTH VIETNAM

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LAOS

Laotian political circles are showing increased nervousness in the face of current military developments.

A group of national assemblymen has informally proposed that the King make a goodwill trip to Hanoi and Peking to persuade the Communists to bring about an end to the fighting and to begin negotiations.

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Communist diplomatic missions are also showing some signs of concern. The Chinese charge d'affaires, whose tour is at an end, has postponed his long-planned return to Peking. No official explanation for this abrupt change has been made, but Chinese Embassy officials are said to be concerned about the viability of the Souvanna government and the possibility of a military take-over in Vientiane. The North Vietnamese mission has been receiving requests for evacuation to Hanoi from some local Vietnamese who fear government reprisals for Communist military actions. On 22 February the Soviet Embassy notified its invited guests that today's traditional Army Day reception was being canceled.

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TURKEY

A growth of terrorism--which has taken on the character of an urban guerrilla movement--has sparked fresh rumors of imminent military intervention. Actions by terrorists in recent days have led to the death of one high school student and injuries to police and students. Homes, offices, and police stations have suffered bomb damage and several vehicles have been burned. Clashes between students and police have also resulted in the closing of many urban schools and universities.

The militant left--which is primarily responsible for the violence--now appears to be better armed and to be using more sophisticated explosives than previously.



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Prime Minister Demirel, whose Justice Party government has been seriously weakened by intraparty conflict, faces a dilemma in dealing with the terrorism. The employment of harsher police measures to control student radicals could bring charges of the kind of repression that helped bring down the Menderes government in 1960. On the other hand, declaration of martial law would reflect an inability to maintain law and order short of military intervention. Once having invited the military to step in, he might find it difficult to return them to the barracks.

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