



The President's Daily Brief

26 March 1971



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military is attempting to reassert its authority in East Pakistan. (Page 1)

Communist forces in Cambodia appear to be increasing the tempo of their modest dry season military campaign. (Page 2)

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On Page 5 we review the military situation around the Laotian royal capital of Luang Prabang.

The Soviet reaction to Mexico's expulsion last week of five Soviet diplomats is discussed on Page 6. 50X1

In Egypt, a press feud [Redacted] (Page 7) 50X1

Sudan [Redacted] Israeli-Congo. (Page 8) 50X1

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PAKISTAN

The military is attempting to reassert its authority in East Pakistan. Citing the "deteriorating situation" arising from "unbridled political activities" the martial law administration has issued a series of orders banning political activity of any kind, outlawing the three-week old boycott of central government activities, and making the carrying of weapons illegal.

Before issuing the orders, the army moved to take control of Dacca, East Pakistan's capital. The US consulate-general reported that firing and explosions began about midnight Dacca time (2 p.m. Thursday EST) and army patrols and fixed sentries could be seen from the consulate firing at civilians. A curfew is in effect, and Dacca radio--which had been under local control--has been taken over by the military.

So far, there are no reports from other parts of the province. There have, however, been serious clashes between the army and East Pakistanis at the southern port of Chittagong and in the far northwestern part of East Pakistan in the past two days.

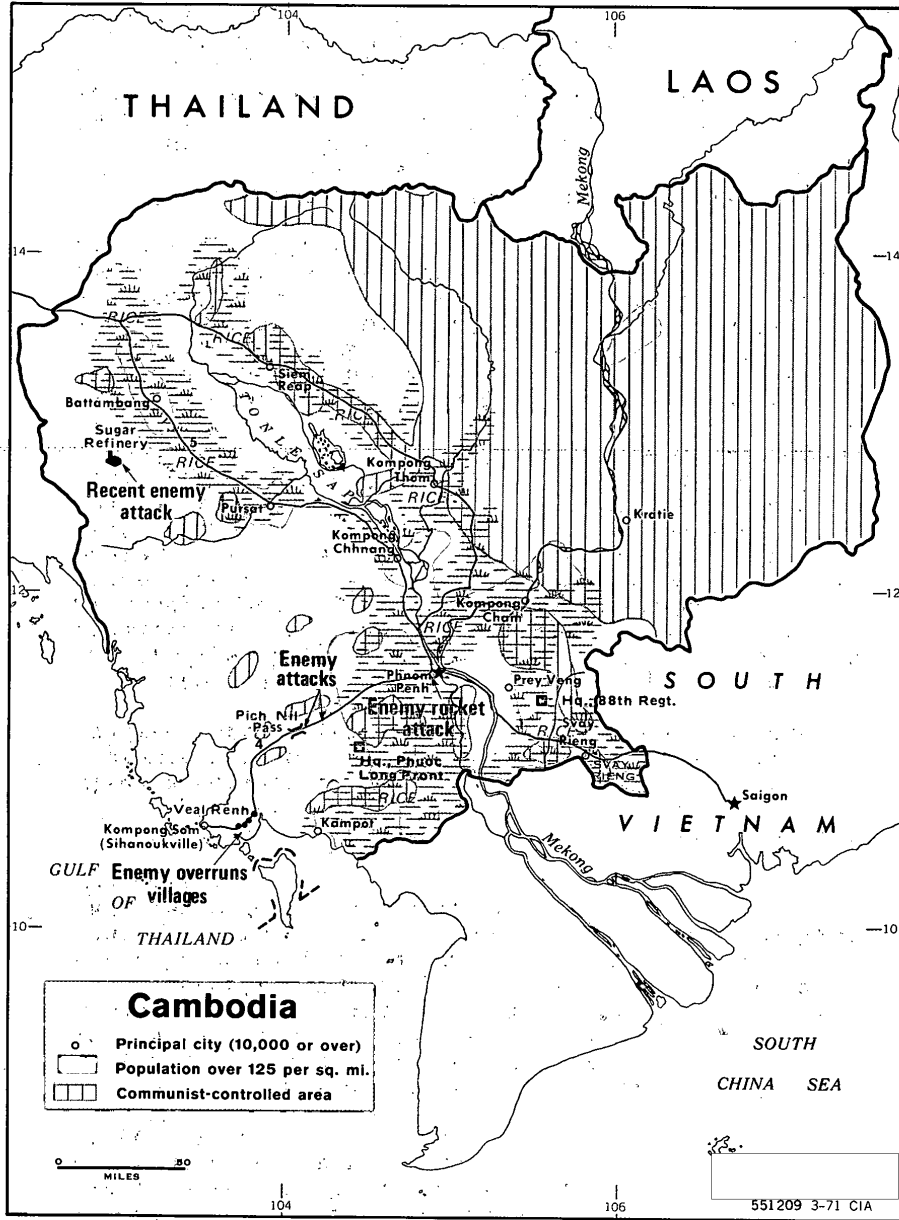
According to unconfirmed press reports from India, fighting has broken out between West Pakistani troops and East Pakistani police and paramilitary forces. East Pakistani leader Mujibur Rahman has reportedly called for resistance to "the enemy forces at any cost." Another unconfirmed report that six ships landed troops at Chittagong and another port yesterday may well be exaggerated, but could have some basis. Four C-130s, loaded with troops, have left Karachi for Dacca.

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Yesterday, leaders of Mujib's Awami League presented their final position to President Yahya. Apparently they asked for the immediate establishment of a civilian provincial government and assurance that any constitution to be written would limit the central government to control of defense and foreign affairs.

Initial indications had been that Yahya would agree to their demands, but the recent reports from Dacca seem to indicate that a decision has instead been made to try to hold the country together by force. Yahya--who returned to West Pakistan from Dacca late yesterday--is scheduled to make a public announcement presumably explaining the situation this morning.

Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Communist forces appear to be increasing the tempo of their modest dry season military campaign.

The Communists staged a prolonged attack yesterday against the two poorly prepared Cambodian Army battalions holding the Pich Nil pass on Route 4, and also ambushed an eight-truck government munitions convoy near the pass. Communist attacks were also reported further south on Route 4, where enemy forces apparently have gained control over a section of the highway by overrunning three villages between the seaport of Kompong Som and the town of Veal Renh.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Communists carried out their first significant action in the Phnom Penh region in several weeks when they fired five 122-mm. rockets into the Pochentong airfield area. No damage was reported.

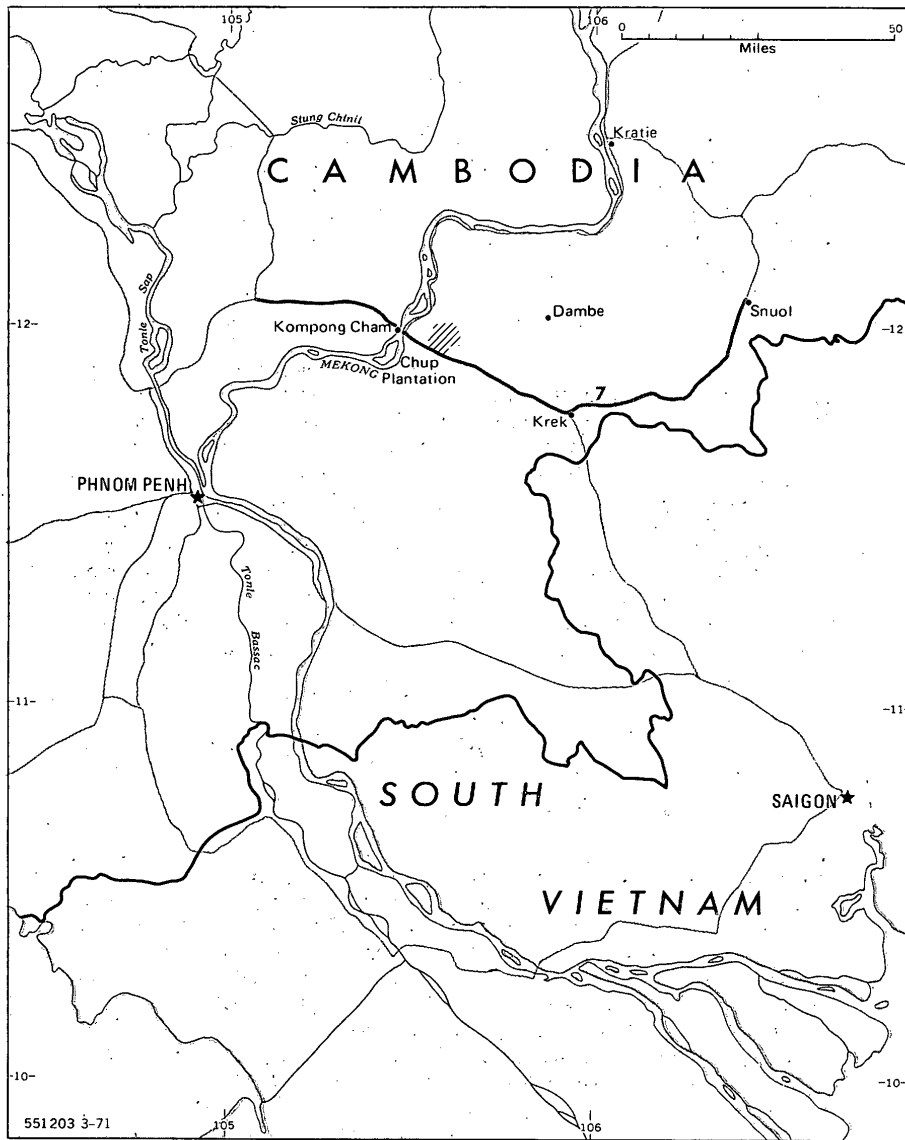
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Communist operations in Svay Rieng Province also appear to be on the rise. [redacted]

[redacted] the failure of government troops to man some of the positions recently vacated by South Vietnamese troops along Route 1 has permitted the enemy, possibly elements from the 88th Communist Regiment, to interfere with the movement of supplies from villages along that highway to Svay Rieng city. In the northwest, Communist leaflets spread during last week's attack on a sugar factory in Battambang Province have threatened enemy attacks closer to Battambang city.

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During most of the dry season, the Communists have concentrated on keeping a fairly steady level of pressure against the government's main lines of communication; this, in most cases, has caused only temporary disruptions. In the countryside, Communist activities have been limited mainly to small-scale harassment.



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SOUTH VIETNAM - CAMBODIA



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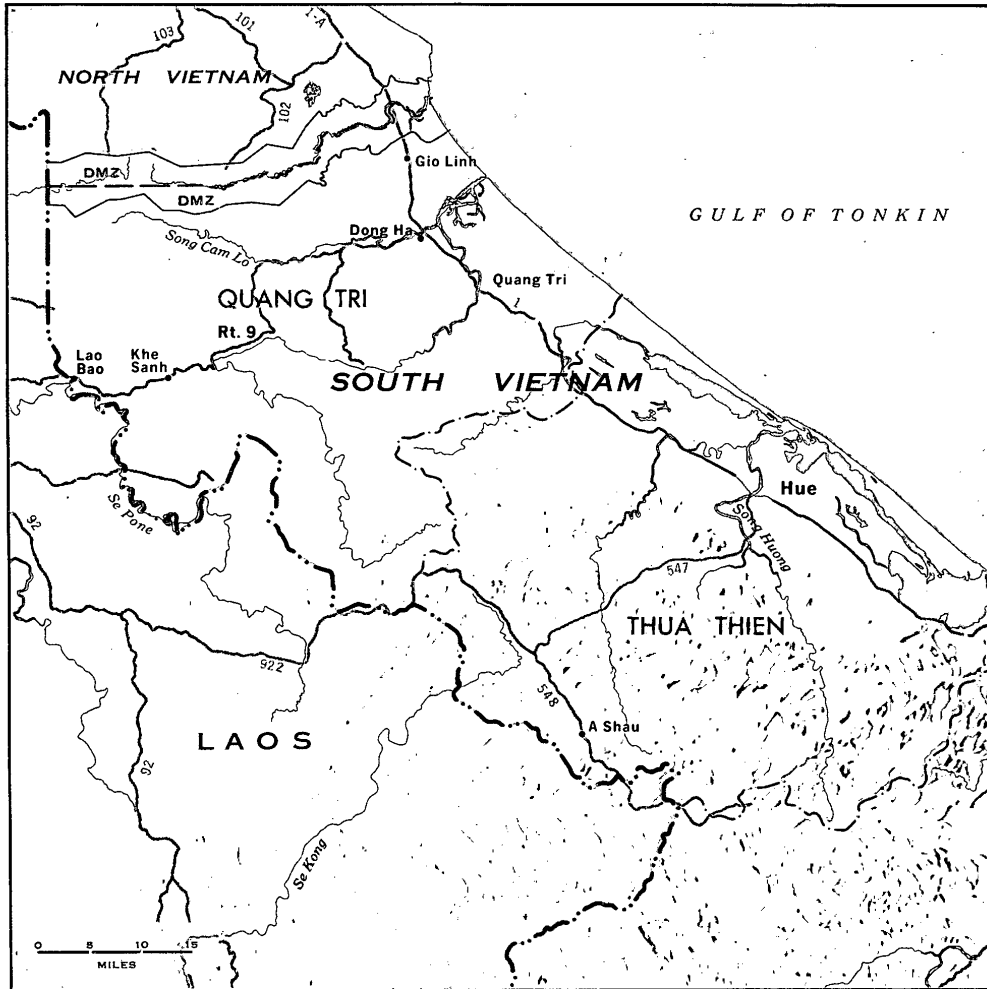
General Minh, who replaced the late General Do Cao Tri several weeks ago, pulled South Vietnamese forces back from Communist strongholds near Chup and Dambe north of Route 7 early this month to regroup and refit. Since then, he has mounted a number of forays on roads north of Route 7 but the fighting has been considerably less intense than that seen earlier. The generally lighter action seems to result in part from the more conservative approach of the South Vietnamese, but also in part from the enemy's unwillingness to stand and fight. In several instances the Communists have moved out of the path of the South Vietnamese probes.

Current South Vietnamese tactics in Cambodia also are in line with the general views expressed by President Thieu last year.



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further large expenditures of men and materiel in Cambodia might put unnecessary burdens on the army, run the risk of a major military setback, and thus undercut his chances for re-election.



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SOUTH VIETNAM



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LAOS

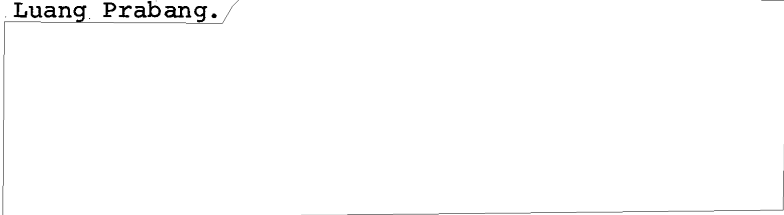
For the second straight day, elements of the North Vietnamese 335th Regiment on Wednesday turned back Laotian troops attempting to advance northeast of Luang Prabang. Heavy mortar fire and sharp ground fighting stopped the government forces about a mile and a half short of their objective.



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small enemy units are making a number of offensive jabs, keeping government forces off balance and further constricting the capital's defense perimeter.

Government officials in Vientiane are increasingly restive over continuing enemy pressure on Luang Prabang and are especially concerned for the safety of the King. The Permanent Committee of the National Assembly voted on Wednesday to recommend that Souvanna urge the King to come to Vientiane, despite his oft-repeated intention to remain in Luang Prabang.

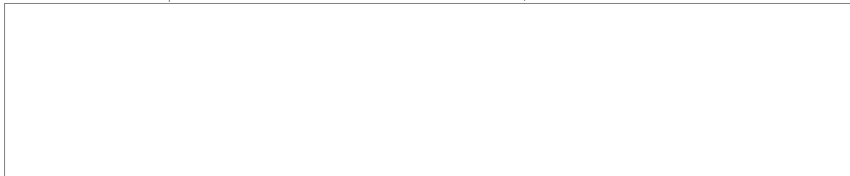


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USSR-MEXICO

A Soviet Foreign Ministry statement handed to the Mexican Government on Wednesday termed the expulsion of the five Soviet diplomats "totally groundless" and "an unfriendly act." It charged that the move helps "elements" interested in disrupting Soviet-Mexican relations. Moscow tempered the tone of the statement somewhat by saying that it is working for normal, friendly relations with Mexico.



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Moscow professes to be "astonished" by the embarrassing turn of events. There is, in fact, no evidence of direct Soviet support for the Mexican terrorists--the Revolutionary Action Group--and the Kremlin probably views itself as the victim of circumstances. Thus far, the Mexican Government has only circumstantially implicated the Soviets with the terrorists by citing the presence of some of the guerrillas at Lumbumba University in Moscow several years ago, and the fact that some of them transited the USSR using North Korean passports.

Moscow's policy has been to cultivate friendly relations with all Latin American states, and it particularly values Mexico as a base for intelligence activities. It has on occasion actively discouraged formation of terrorist organizations and has generally urged pro-Moscow Communist parties to follow the example of the Chilean party by working for the formation of popular front governments.

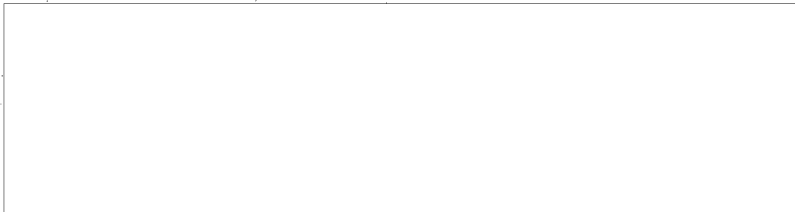


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EGYPT

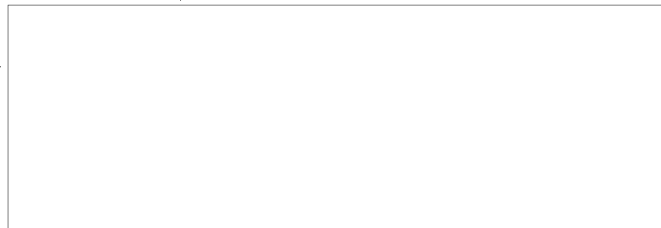
The chief editor of the semiofficial newspaper al-Ahram, Muhammad Haykal, has been accused in recent weeks of writing articles that are "defeatist" in nature and unmindful of Egypt's determination to liberate the occupied territory. The charges against Haykal have appeared in some of Egypt's less prestigious newspapers, and most of the criticism has been levied by members of Egypt's sole legal political organization, the Arab Socialist Union.



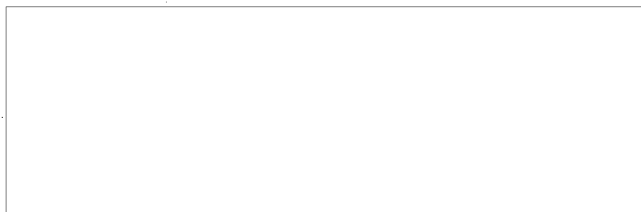
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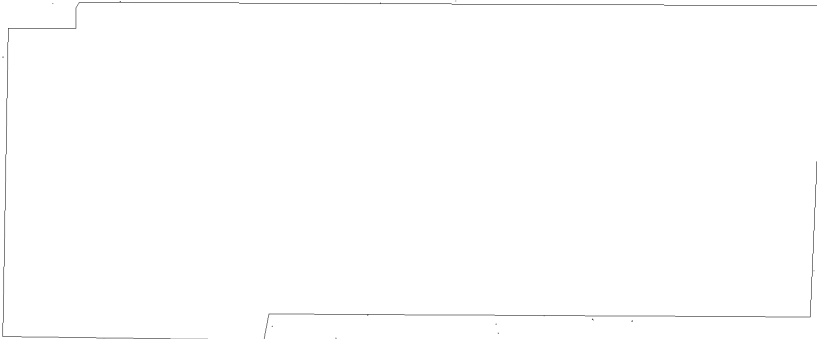
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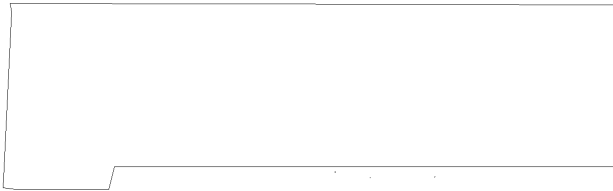
CONGO (KINSHASA) - ISRAEL - SUDAN



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NOTE

Libya: Signature of an agreement with the oil companies has been delayed--and perhaps jeopardized--by further Libyan demands. Preliminary reports indicate that the Revolutionary Command Council insists on certain changes in the draft settlement that representatives of Libya and the oil companies had agreed to last Sunday, including still higher prices. Moreover, Tripoli refuses to consent to a five-year agreement, which the oil companies consider an essential point. No further meetings are scheduled to take place before Saturday.

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