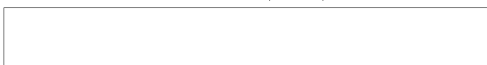




The President's Daily Brief

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Sunday Cable 28 March 71

SUNDAY CABLE
28 March 71

PAKISTAN

High-ranking Pakistani military officers are now claiming to US officials that the armed forces are rapidly re-establishing control over East Pakistan. The military situation remains confused, however, and Indian press reporting in particular, claiming that the army is battling the paramilitary East Pakistani Rifles together with police and civilians in various provinces, appears to be exaggerated.

The condition of the Martial Law Administrator for the East, Lieutenant General Tikka Khan, is not clear; he has been variously reported killed and seriously injured.

International press treatment of events is likely to be somewhat colored for the next several days as a result of the forcible departure, at gunpoint, of several correspondents from Dacca on 26 March. Included in the group were representatives of at least nine US press and television services.

The US Consul General in Dacca reported that the city experienced an uneasy calm yesterday and that the daytime curfew was lifted. He reports that the military crackdown on the city was accomplished "swiftly, efficiently, and often with ruthless brutality." No Americans are known to have been injured and evacuation is not being recommended at this time because the army is in full control of Dacca and popular retaliation against Americans is not now considered likely.

Despite repeated denials from the clandestine East Pakistani radio that Awami League leader Mujibur Rahman is under

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arrest, the army continues to claim that he and several other League leaders are in military custody.

In addition to the sympathy being expressed by Mrs. Gandhi and other Indian leaders for the East Pakistanis and the Bengalis, the Chief of Staff of India's Eastern Command has told a US official in Calcutta that the army is making contingency plans for intervention in East Pakistan. He said that, although the army considered such a course "militarily unfeasible," it could become "politically necessary." He also said that he personally believed the army could easily provide arms, ammunition, and other supplies to the East Bengalis.

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LAOS

Government forces are attempting to contest the enemy's control of the high ground overlooking the Luang Prabang airfield.

Lao irregular forces are trying to clear enemy units along the foot of the hill-mass located about five miles northeast of the capital. One government battalion advanced onto the high ground during the morning hours of 28 March and so far has encountered only light enemy resistance. North Vietnamese forces, however, can be expected to oppose the new government initiatives.

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Morale in the royal capital appears shaky. [redacted]

[redacted] the King believes that the North Vietnamese intend a siege of Luang Prabang and is concerned about arranging airdrops of food and supplies. The King remains determined to stay in the capital.

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It seems doubtful that the Communists have any intention of entirely isolating Luang Prabang, much less entering the town. They may hope, however, to maintain their grip on the territory surrounding the airfield in order to prevent its further use as a military base.

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