



The President's Daily Brief

20 April 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Lon Nol resigns; Matak has inside track as successor to head Cambodian Government. (Page 1)

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Ky's strong blast indicates he is more likely to run for president than be Thieu's running mate again.
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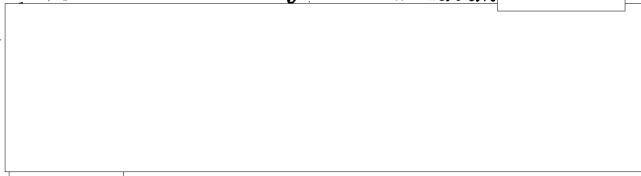
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CAMBODIA

Lon Nol submitted the resignation of his cabinet today. Sirik Matak has stated that the present ministers will continue in office for the time being. He also said that a short "crisis" is likely but appeared confident that no serious problems would arise during the time it takes to install a successor government. Matak added that he would like to create some sort of figurehead position for Lon Nol.

Matak appears to have the inside track to be named the successor but there are some uncertainties ahead. The responsibility for designating a new prime minister falls to Chief of State Cheng Heng in consultation with the presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate. The premier-designate must then form a new cabinet, subject to the assembly's approval. Chena Heng is now leaning toward Matak

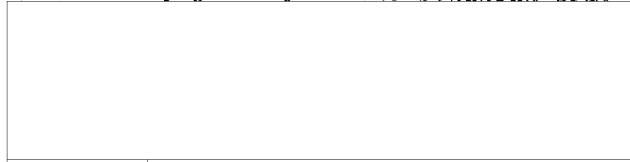
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Matak's principal liability is his reputation for venality and his close association with figures from the Sihanouk era.

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Matak presumably will have the support of senior military officers, with whom he established a good working relationship during Lon Nol's absence.

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Lon Nol's decision to quit has caused considerable consternation, however, among younger military officers

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Although they are putting out the line that Matak will be acceptable to them, they may hope that a man more to their liking--such as former prime minister Son Ngoc Thanh--may emerge the winner if there is a struggle for power.

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NOTES

USSR:

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South Vietnam: Vice President Ky's strong blast at President Thieu yesterday, in which he called Thieu disloyal, scored government corruption, and criticized the conduct of the war, appears to be the opening salvo of Ky's campaign for the presidency. Although he has not formally committed himself, Ky's statements would indicate that he has given up any idea of serving as Thieu's running mate again. Indeed, his emphasis on the necessity for a political solution to the war seems to put him closer to Big Minh's position and raises the possibility of eventual collaboration between them.

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