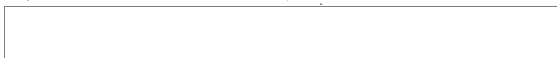




The President's Daily Brief

30 April 1971



46

~~Top Secret~~ 50X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

30 April 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Sirik Matak is reported to have been given responsibility for forming a new Cambodian Government following Lon Nol's abrupt decision yesterday to bow out. (Page 1)

A new military recruitment and conscription drive is under way in North Vietnam. (Page 3)

The Laotian Government has welcomed a Pathet Lao proposal to resume discussions looking toward peace talks. (Page 4)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CAMBODIA

A government communiqué has announced that Cheng Heng has designated Sirik Matak to try to form a new government, according to late reports. This development follows Lon Nol's abrupt decision yesterday not to stay on as prime minister. Lon Nol met with Matak yesterday for the first time in over a week, but the substance of their discussions is not yet known.

Lon Nol's latest maneuver may have come as a result of Matak's unwillingness to serve in a reduced capacity as one of a troika of deputy prime ministers. With Cheng Heng's choice boiling down to Matak, Son Ngoc Thanh, or some eventual dark horse, Matak has probably been given the first crack because he has been acting prime minister and has had the support of Lon Nol.

Matak has indicated he would be willing to become prime minister provided all political factions close ranks behind him. He is dealing from a fragile power base, as he is not overly popular and is something of an old guard symbol to students and certain elements in the National Assembly. Matak, however, is capable and energetic and has established rapport with a number of senior military officers. All of the country's top military commanders pledged support to Matak earlier in the week when it looked as if Lon Nol would be remaining as prime minister, but whether this support will hold with Lon Nol stepping out is another matter.

If Matak can not or will not put together a government, Son Ngoc Thanh's prospects will improve considerably. He is clearly interested in the prime ministership, and he would appeal in this role to younger elements who have been pushing for a thorough housecleaning at the top of the government. Moreover, Thanh may have an active supporter in Lon Non, Lon Nol's brother, who seems to find Thanh more congenial than Matak.

(continued)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

Thus far, the political maneuvering in the capital has been notably free of tension or a sense of crisis. Further indecision or prolongation of the current impasse in forming a new government, however, will begin to strain nerves and increase the potential for serious trouble.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NORTH VIETNAM

A new military recruitment and conscription drive is under way. Since around mid-March, there have been numerous articles in the North Vietnamese press of the kind noted during past induction drives. These accounts have described large numbers of youths--more than 10,000 from Haiphong and a handful of rural provinces alone--"enthusiastically volunteering" for service.

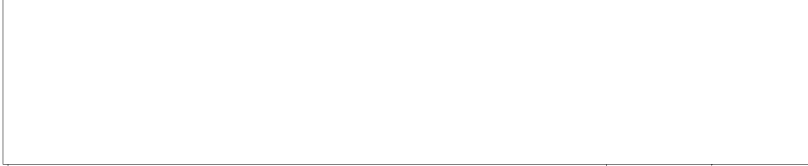
50X1

Not all the fresh inductees into the regular army are raw recruits; some are to be shifted from the local self-defense and militia forces. This upgrading process long has been an important source of partially trained personnel for the army.

The current drive will in part make up for Communist losses in eastern Laos and Cambodia during the dry season. It also could signal Hanoi's intent to increase its military effort in the South later this year. The recent articles indicate that many of those now entering the army are earmarked for duty outside North Vietnam. Because of normal training requirements and the condition of the infiltration trails during the oncoming rainy season, the presence of the bulk of the new troops is unlikely to be felt in South Vietnam or Cambodia before the second half of this year.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LAOS



50X1



50X1

Preliminary negotiations between the two sides last year were largely concerned with procedural questions, in which both sides tried to gain the advantage before beginning substantive talks. The Communists proved fairly flexible in their tactics, avoiding sweeping demands for a total bombing halt as a prelude to talks and accepting a face-saving formula on the question of whether Souvanna's negotiator represents him as "prince" or as "prime minister." The preliminary talks broke down in January of this year, however, when Souvanna rescinded his earlier agreement that the talks would be held in the Communist-held town of Khang Khay on the Plaine des Jarres.

The Communists presumably are still seeking the same goals as in previous exchanges: to lay the groundwork for a future political settlement that will enable them to play a political as well as a military role and, more immediately, to gain a bombing halt or some other diminution of the war that would be to their advantage.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTE



50X1

50X1

Top Secret