



The President's Daily Brief

11 May 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

11 May 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Soviets appear to have begun developing hardened ABM facilities. (Page 1)

Comments [redacted] on the situation in Cambodia are presented on Page 2.

[redacted]

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In southern Laos, unit-size defections by Pathet Lao troops have occurred for the first time in the war. (Page 4)

[redacted]

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At Annex [redacted] the Persian Gulf [redacted]

[redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Large Redacted Area]

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[Redacted]

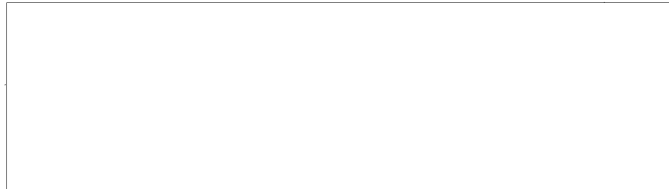
ILLEGIB

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USSR

The latest satellite photography of the Sary Shagan missile test range suggests that the Soviets have begun development of hardened ABM facilities. What appears to be a missile silo is under construction in a newly identified launch site, along with a hardened bunker. The site also contains five other excavations, but construction is not yet far enough along to reveal their purpose.

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CAMBODIA

In a review of the current situation in Cambodia.

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--The prospects for political stability for the remainder of 1971 are good, but the longer-term outlook depends heavily on the emergence of a popular leader around whom the country can rally.

--The chances are good that Sirik Matak will attempt to get a new constitution adopted. If elections are to be held this year, however, the government must make a greater effort to win over contested areas in the countryside.

[Redacted]

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--To maintain its present widespread backing, the government must show that it can at least hold its own on the battlefield. Simultaneously it must persist in its efforts to reduce corruption and inefficiency within army ranks. It must also try to deal more effectively with inflation.

--The government should be able to cope militarily with the Communists, provided the enemy does not dramatically increase the scope and tempo of the fighting. Such an increase does not seem likely to occur during the coming rainy season.

--Although FANK troops are becoming better trained and organized, and command discipline is improving, government forces will continue to need allied air support to help keep the Communists in check.

--The morale of major FANK units, particularly those which are or have been in combat, is still high. In some of the less experienced units, however, there has been a noticeable erosion of morale and discipline.

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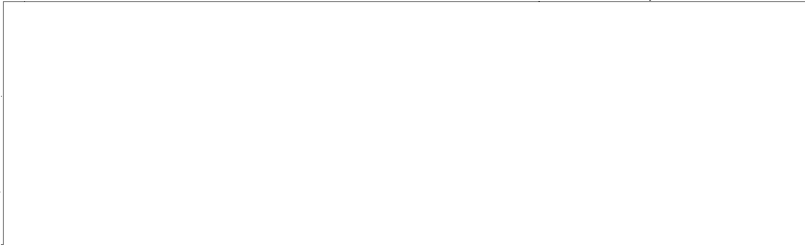
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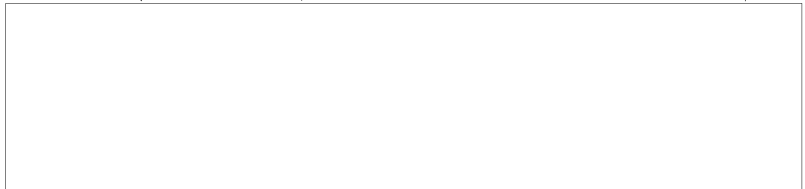
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**LAOS**

Unit-size defections have occurred among Pathet Lao (PL) troops in southern Laos for the first time in the war. In the past two months, over 200 PL troops have gone over to the government at Pakse. The latest group of 55, which rallied on 10 May, included field-grade officers and political cadre. The ralliers have helped locate North Vietnamese troop and supply concentrations for air strikes and have provided useful information on the strength and composition of NVA units in the area.

The ralliers' decision to switch sides apparently stems from what they view as North Vietnamese mistreatment and increased levies on Lao villagers, as well as their belief that the North Vietnamese were responsible for the death of a widely respected Pathet Lao general. The latter story was trumped up by the government.

It is too early to tell whether these defections are a local problem or are a sign of wider disaffection in the Communist ranks. Communist propaganda reflects a sensitivity to the problem, however, and the North Vietnamese, who depend on the PL for logistic and rear security support, will probably redouble their efforts to keep their restive allies in line.

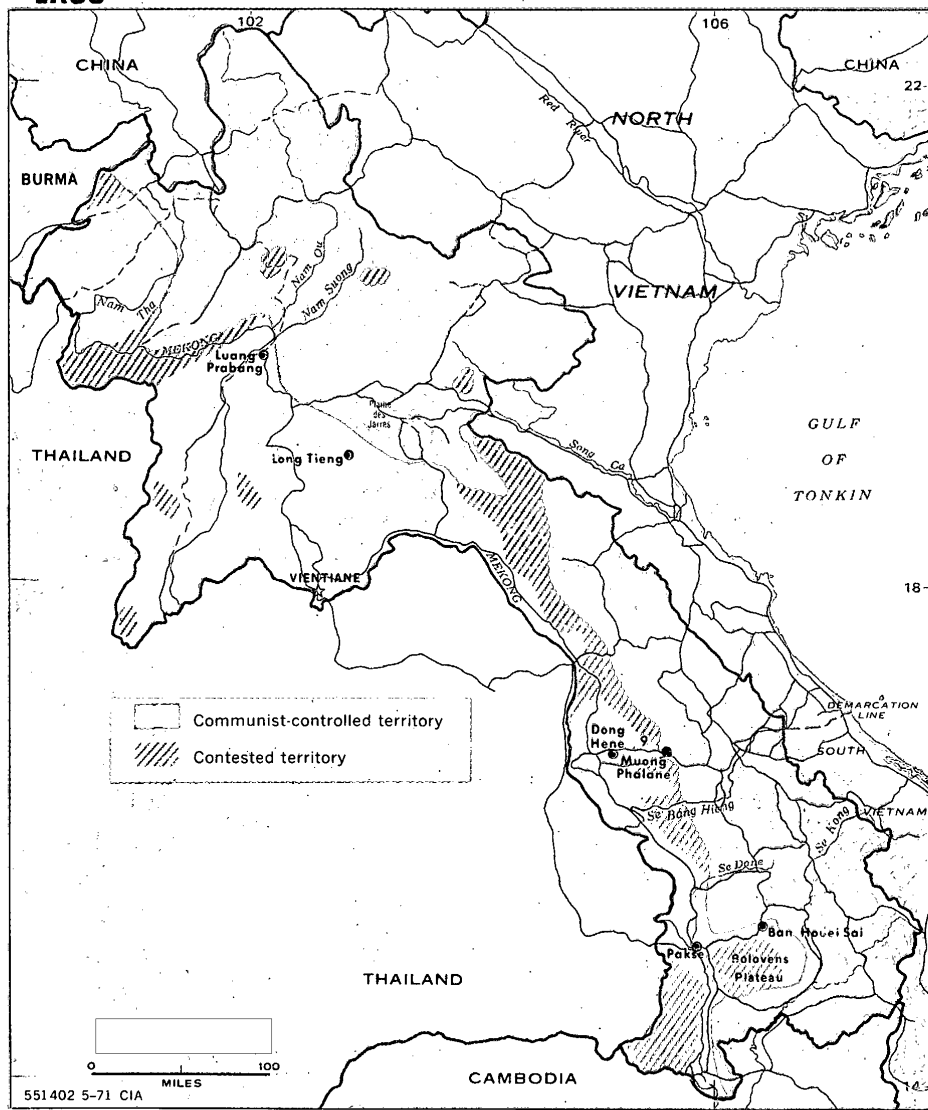
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Communist forces in the panhandle have continued to move westward on Route 9 following their capture of Muong Phalane in early May. Elements of three North Vietnamese regiments plus support units are now active near Dong Hene. Government units in that area--one battalion of irregular troops and three regular army battalions--probably are not strong enough to stem a heavy enemy attack.

The government's strength in this region has been weakened somewhat with the temporary assignment of units to northern Laos. The Communists may be trying to take advantage of this situation to extend their control along Route 9; they may also hope to force the government to return the

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LAOS



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● Government-held location ● Communist-held location

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southern-based units that have been active in the Luang Prabang and Long Tieng areas. An offensive along Route 9 will keep government forces off balance and hamper government harassment operations against the western portions of the Communist infiltration corridor.

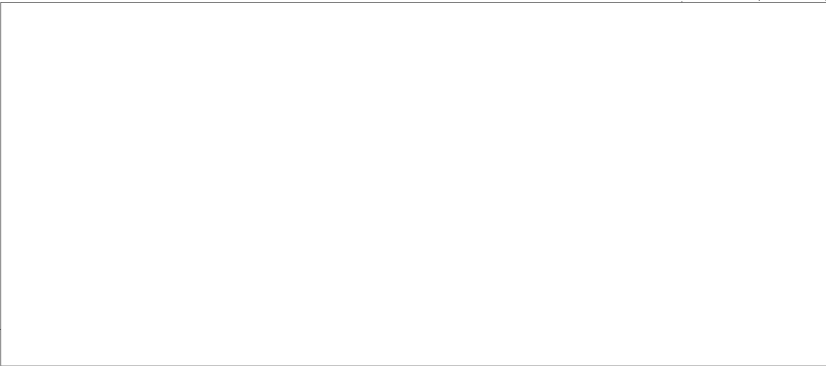
Intercepts [redacted] indicate that the Communists are planning new attacks on the Bolovens Plateau to the south. Ban Houei Sai, the principal government base on the northern approaches to the plateau, may be their first objective.

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In past years, the Communists have managed to maintain military pressure near the Bolovens well into the rainy season.

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NOTE



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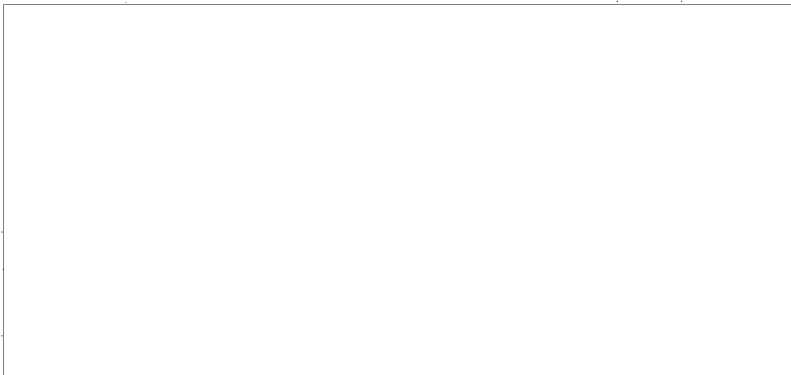
PERSIAN GULF



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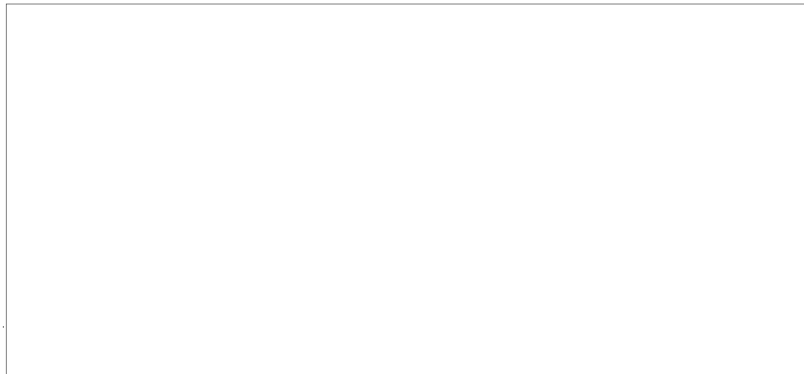
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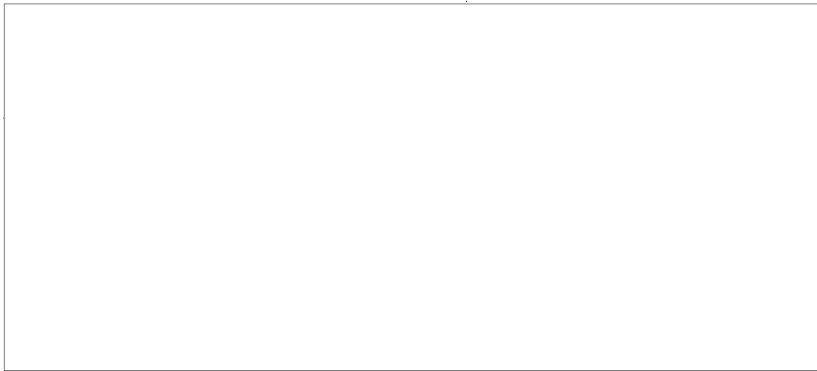
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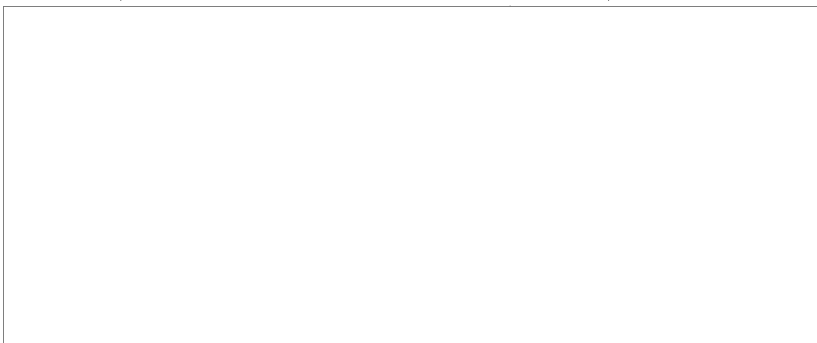
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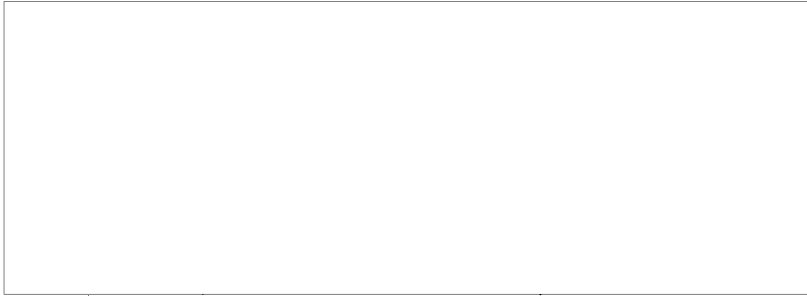
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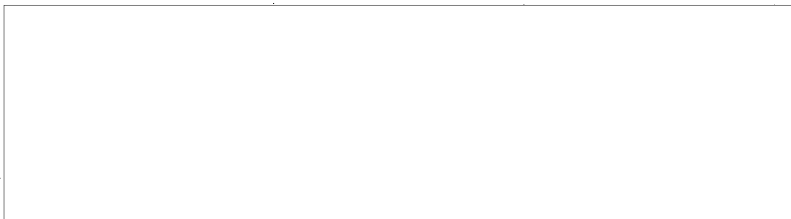
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