



The President's Daily Brief

12 June 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

12 June 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Vietnamese Army units are continuing to attack the Laotian Government task force on the western edge of the Bolovens Plateau. (Page 1)

In Cambodia, the Communists have inflicted reverses on government forces south of Phnom Penh, while keeping the pressure on government positions north-east of the capital. (Page 2)

Thailand [redacted] (Page 3)

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Brezhnev has indicated that the USSR would welcome discussions aimed at restraining great power naval deployments. (Page 5)

The Soviets have again spoken out critically about West Pakistan's handling of the situation in the East wing. (Page 7)

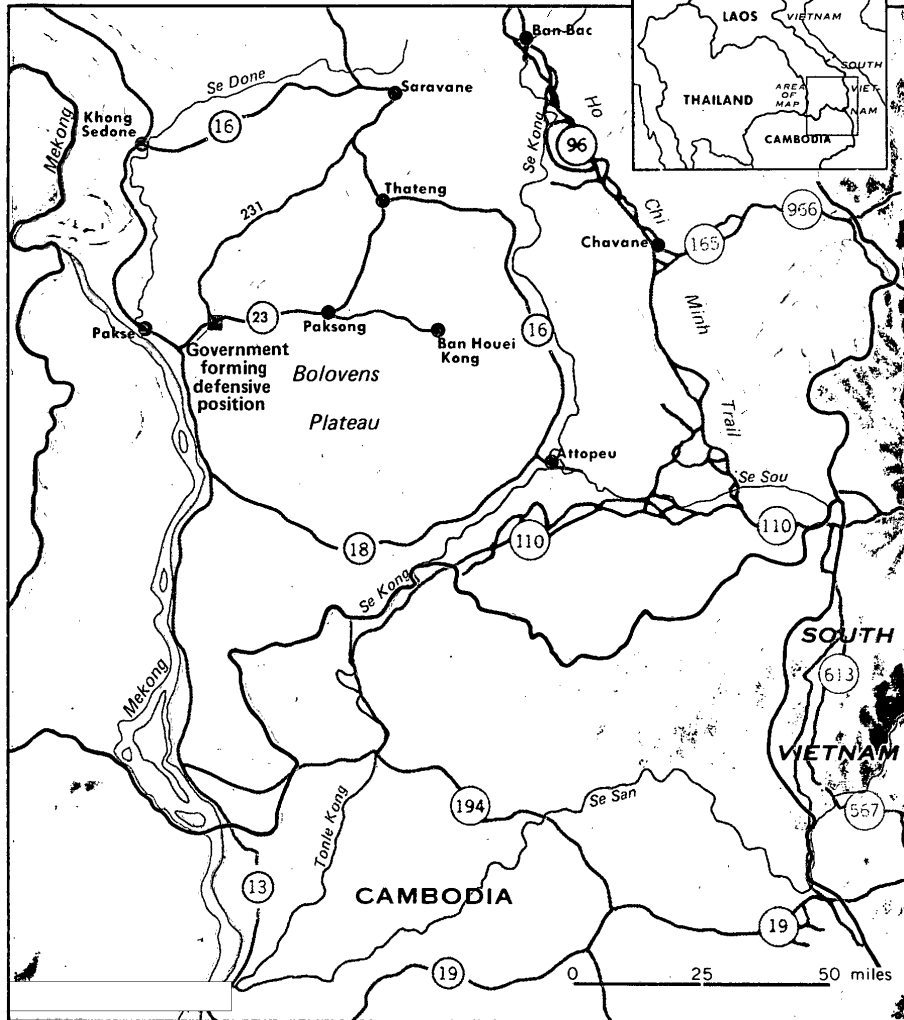
Japan [redacted] (Page 8)

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Yesterday's attacks on two Israeli-chartered ships at the southern entrance to the Red Sea apparently were carried out by fedayeen terrorists. (Page 9)

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LAOS: Bolovens Plateau Area



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- Communist-held location
- Government-held location

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**LAOS**

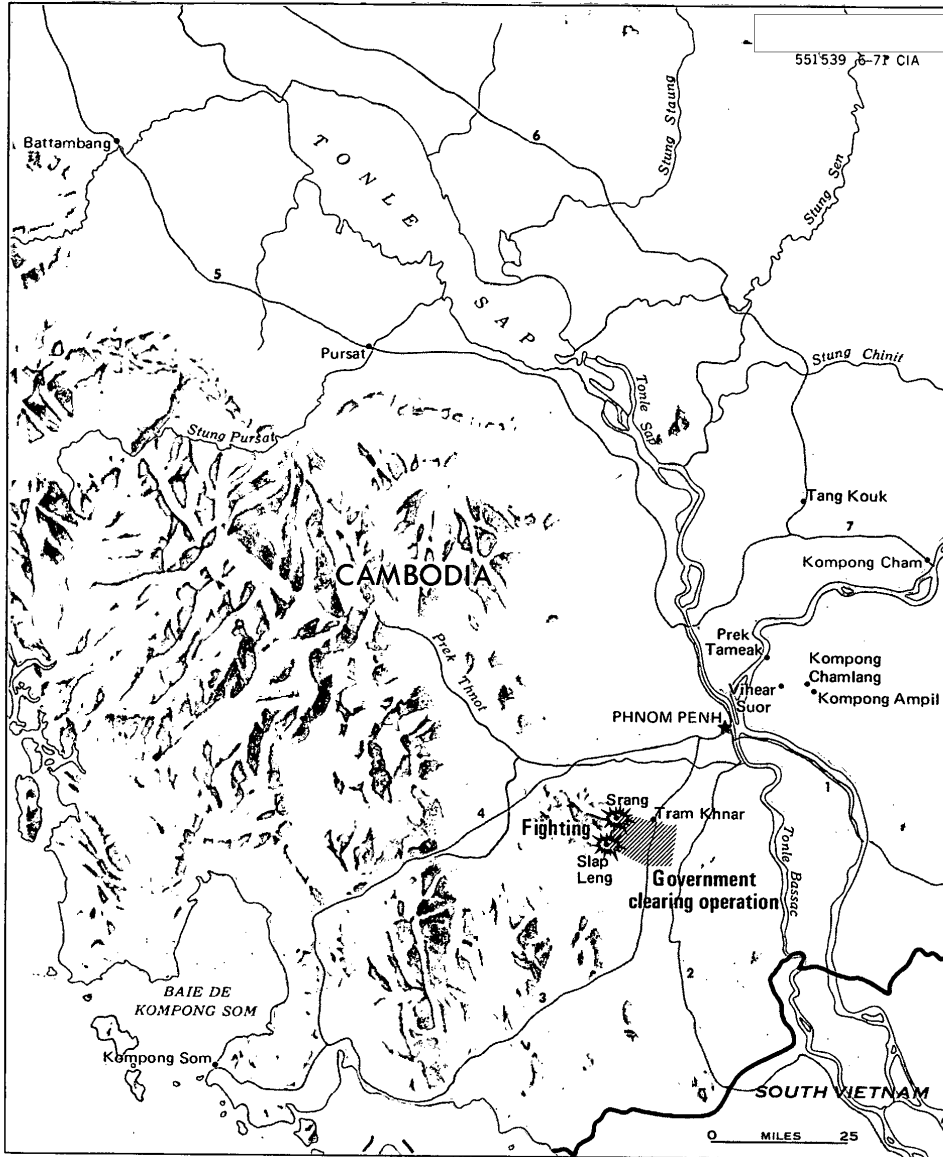
Yesterday morning North Vietnamese Army units supported by four tanks overran the Lao Army task force command post on Route 23 at the western edge of the Bolovens Plateau. Four government battalions that had been in positions to the east of the command post were scattered and apparently suffered heavy casualties. By noon yesterday, the most forward army position along Route 23 was about 15 miles east of Pakse. It was manned by one irregular company, which was encircled and under attack. Tactical air support for the task force, previously limited by bad weather, relieved some of the pressure on government units later in the day. Air strikes reportedly caused substantial North Vietnamese casualties and damaged at least two tanks.

The government is trying to form new defensive positions along Route 23 and at the junction of Routes 23 and 231, just west of the plateau. Two regular army battalions and two battalions of irregulars have been brought in as reinforcements and to try to locate and relieve the cut-off units.

All of the government's mobile reserve force in Military Region 4 has now been committed. Government forces could probably do little more than slow a North Vietnamese advance westward off the Bolovens Plateau, if the North Vietnamese choose to move in that direction. Prior to the current government operation, the North Vietnamese had seemed content to consolidate their recent gains on the Bolovens.

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CAMBODIA

Cambodian Army units have been under strong enemy pressure in an area some 30 miles southwest of Phnom Penh. A government battalion defending Srang withdrew temporarily to Tram Khnar, on Route 3, but later reoccupied the town without serious opposition. At last report the three army battalions in Slap Leng had retreated to the north. Initial reports indicate that government losses total 40 killed, 41 wounded, and almost 600 missing.

The next Communist target could be Cambodian forces trying to clear a section of nearby Route 3. These Cambodian forces are reported to have been weakened by recent large-scale desertions and the transfer of several battalions to positions northeast of Phnom Penh.

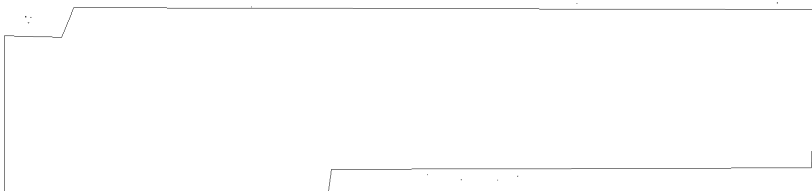
The Cambodians apparently are planning to send several battalions assigned to the Mekong Defense Command up the river to help relieve enemy pressure on Kompong Chamlang and Kompong Ampil. Two or three battalions are to make a diversionary move south from the Tang Kouk area on Route 6 toward the Mekong.

These moves are said to stem from the orders of Lon Nol, who appears to have cut short his convalescence to take personal command of the government's campaign against the Communists in the area northeast of the capital.

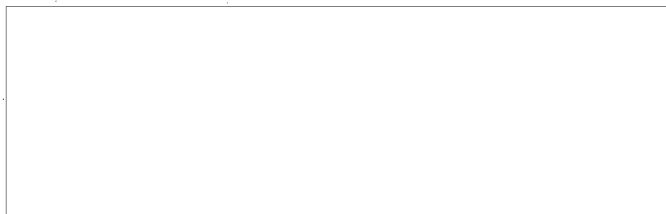
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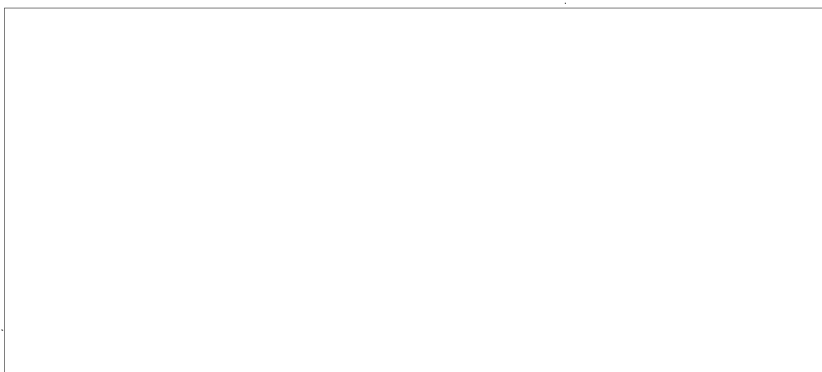
THAILAND



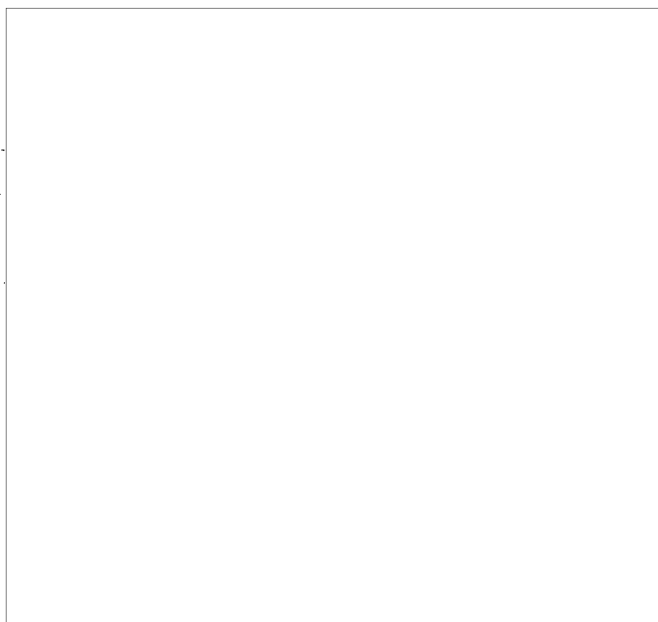
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**USSR-US**

According to a TASS summary of Brezhnev's speech yesterday in Moscow, the Soviet leader indicated that the USSR would welcome discussions aimed at restraining great power naval deployments "at the other end of the world, away from native coasts." He alluded to US naval deployments in the Mediterranean and in the Far East, and he complained that, although the US contends these are "normal and natural," the US has launched a propaganda campaign against Soviet naval activity "in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and other seas." Brezhnev professed Moscow's readiness to "solve" this problem by making an "equal bargain," and offered to discuss any proposals.

Brezhnev's comments seem aimed, in part, at putting the US on the defensive, while maintaining the momentum of Moscow's "peace offensive" with yet another gesture to be portrayed as a new Russian initiative aimed at reducing East-West tension. The remarks also reflect Soviet sensitivity to accusations that Moscow's increasing naval activity points to expansionist aims.

The Soviets, however, are probably motivated by more than a mere tactical desire to engage in grandstanding. Moscow had earlier probed US willingness to consider limiting great power competition in the Indian Ocean, and this may be the area of primary concern to them. In a conversation with Secretary Rogers on 26 March, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin asked "informally" for US reaction to the idea of a "declaration" that the Indian Ocean should be "free of military bases and fleet concentrations."

The Soviets are aware of press speculation that the US may propose some kind of regional arms control arrangement for the Indian Ocean. Brezhnev's remarks, therefore, may have been timed in part to pre-empt and upstage any such US initiative, and at the same time to increase pressures against possible US plans to strengthen its naval presence in the area. Moscow seems particularly sensitive to the possibility that the US might be considering deploying ballistic missile submarines on regular patrol in the Indian Ocean.

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In view of Moscow's genuine concern on this score, Brezhnev's unusually explicit suggestion that an "equal bargain" might be struck is particularly intriguing. The Soviet leaders may possibly wish to float the idea of some kind of trade-off, whereby the USSR would undertake to exercise some restraint with respect to Soviet naval activity close to US shores in return for limitations on US deployments in the Indian Ocean.

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USSR-INDIA-PAKISTAN

The Soviets have expressed their concern about the "grave situation" resulting from the flow of millions of East Pakistani refugees into India. Both the joint communiqué issued at the end of Indian Foreign Minister Singh's visit to the USSR and Premier Kosygin's election speech on 9 June called for prompt measures to stop the flow of refugees and expedite their safe return home.

Moscow's declarations seem based on concern that the situation could deteriorate rapidly. The Soviets evidently see danger that India might follow through on its threats to take drastic action if it is unable to cope with the refugee problem. Moscow probably hopes that its public criticism of Pakistani policy will build pressure on Yahya to move toward some form of accommodation with the East wing.

Soviet assistance to India includes the promise of an initial contribution of 50,000 tons of rice and 100 million doses of smallpox vaccine.

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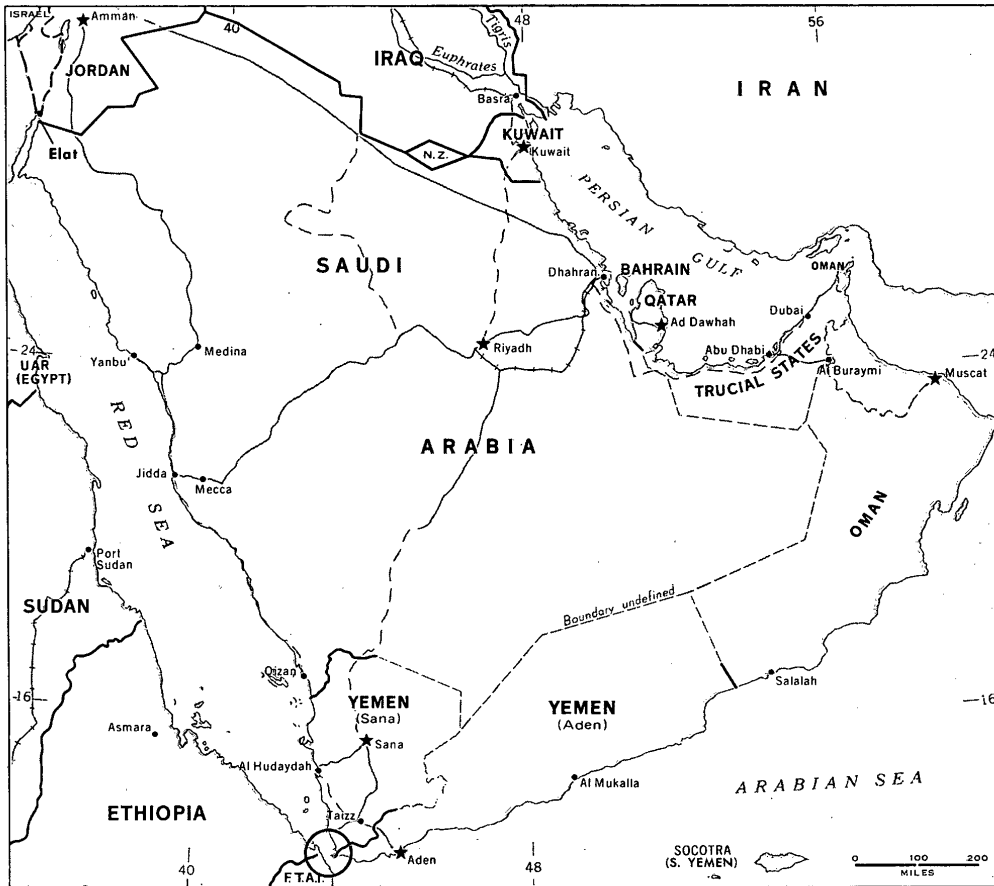
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JAPAN



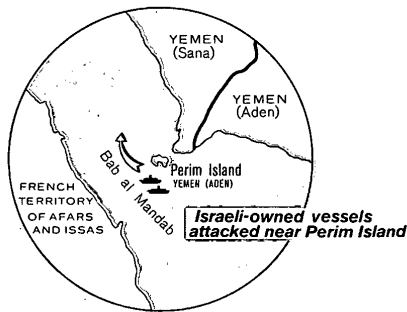
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ISRAEL

Two Israeli-chartered ships were attacked yesterday by "pleasure-type" boats near Perim Island at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

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There were no casualties although the attack started fires that apparently were later extinguished.

[Redacted]

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The attacks apparently were the work of fedayeen terrorists. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine has threatened on a number of occasions to strike at international shipping as a means of deterring trade with Israel. Yesterday's action was typical of the spectacular tactics favored by the Front.

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