



*The President's Daily Brief*

18 October 1971

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

India has increased its military preparedness near border areas and sent out varying signals of its readiness to act. (Page 1)

On Page 3 we discuss the latest indications of Lin Piao's lessened role and other developments in Communist China.

[Redacted] Vietnam

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(Page 5)

On Page 6 we report on the Communists' military action over the weekend in the Cambodian - South Vietnamese border area and appraise their plans for the dry season.

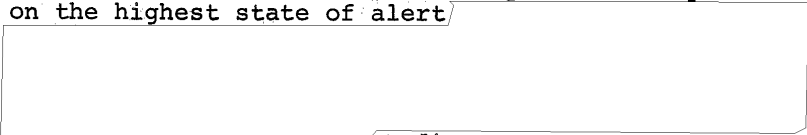
The Cambodian Government has transformed the National Assembly into a constituent assembly charged with completing a new constitution. (Page 7)

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INDIA-PAKISTAN

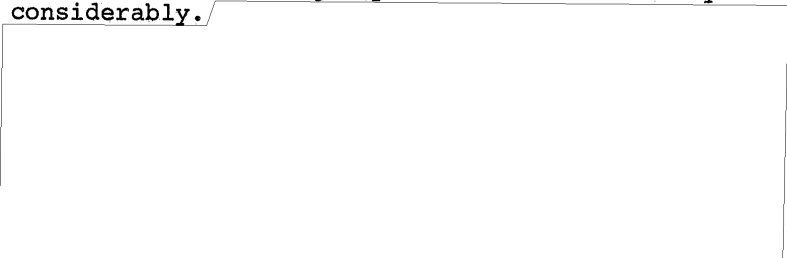
Both the Indian Army and Navy have been placed on the highest state of alert



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Indian newspapers are headlining stories of Pakistani troops massing on the border and, according to the press, a government official has confirmed that Indian troops have also moved up to the frontier.

Views of the urgency of the situation vary considerably.



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*One explanation for the latest Indian activity is fear that Pakistan is about to launch an attack. The Foreign Ministry's senior civil servant told US Chargé Stone on Saturday that Indian defensive preparations were forced by the situation in East Pakistan, Pakistani troop movements, and "bellicose" Pakistani statements. He affirmed that India would not fire the first shot.*

*The Indians have known about the Pakistani troop movements since at least 4 October, however, and the apparent delay in their reaction raises the possibility that they have other purposes. New Delhi may well be trying to force Western nations to increase pressures on President Yahya to seek a political solution by making it appear that war is the only alternative. India could also be preparing for a Pakistani countermove to*

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*the long-anticipated guerrilla offensive in East Pakistan--although we have no indications that such an offensive is imminent.*

*In any event, Islamabad is most likely to view the Indian moves as a sign that New Delhi is getting ready to attack, and so make further military preparations of its own.*

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**COMMUNIST CHINA**

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*Chinese officials are saying that extensive discussions are under way concerning "collective leadership" after Mao's death-- leaving the impression that Lin Piao's physical or political capacity has become a major question in Peking.*

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*In contrast to the rapid and persistent denials evoked by earlier rumors about Mao's health, Chinese spokesmen have deliberately evaded questions about Lin's condition.*

*The official Chinese press has recently treated Lin in an unusual way. Peking has failed to publicize toasts made to Mao's and Lin's health at two official functions, and no statement at the national level has cited Lin since mid-September. Lin's name nevertheless has continued to appear in provincial radiobroadcasts, most recently on 8 October.*

*The regime appears to be intensifying its efforts to deflect popular concern over developments at home by calling attention to alleged threats from abroad.*

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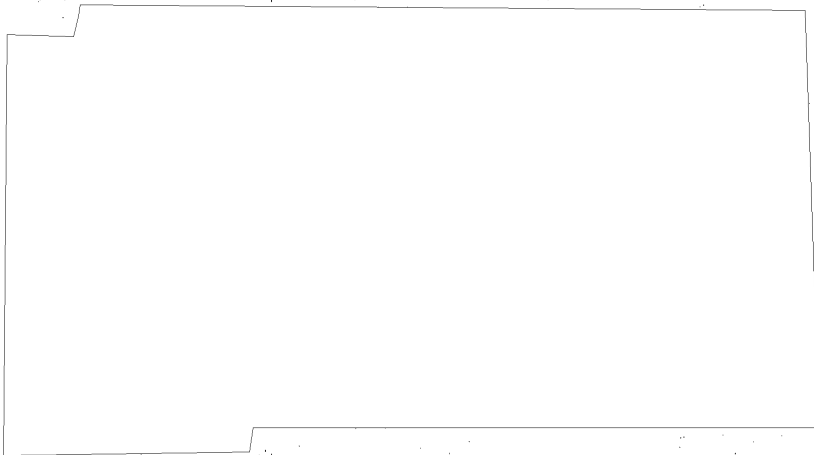
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The virtual standdown of Chinese military aircraft, evident since the early hours of 13 September, may be drawing to a close. Flights involving some 30 fighter aircraft attached to three air training schools were noted yesterday. In addition, training flights involving propeller-driven aircraft attached to a bomber training school took place on 13 October. No resumption of normal activity from operational bases has yet been noted, however, and military air transport remains at a low level.

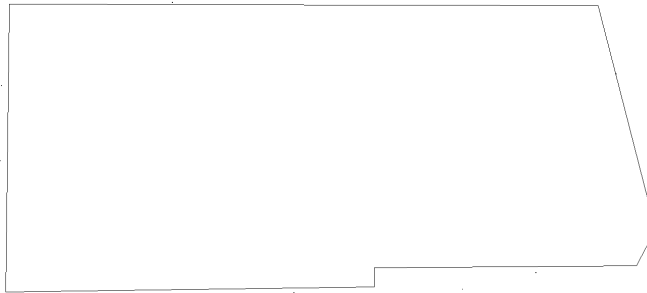
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VIETNAM

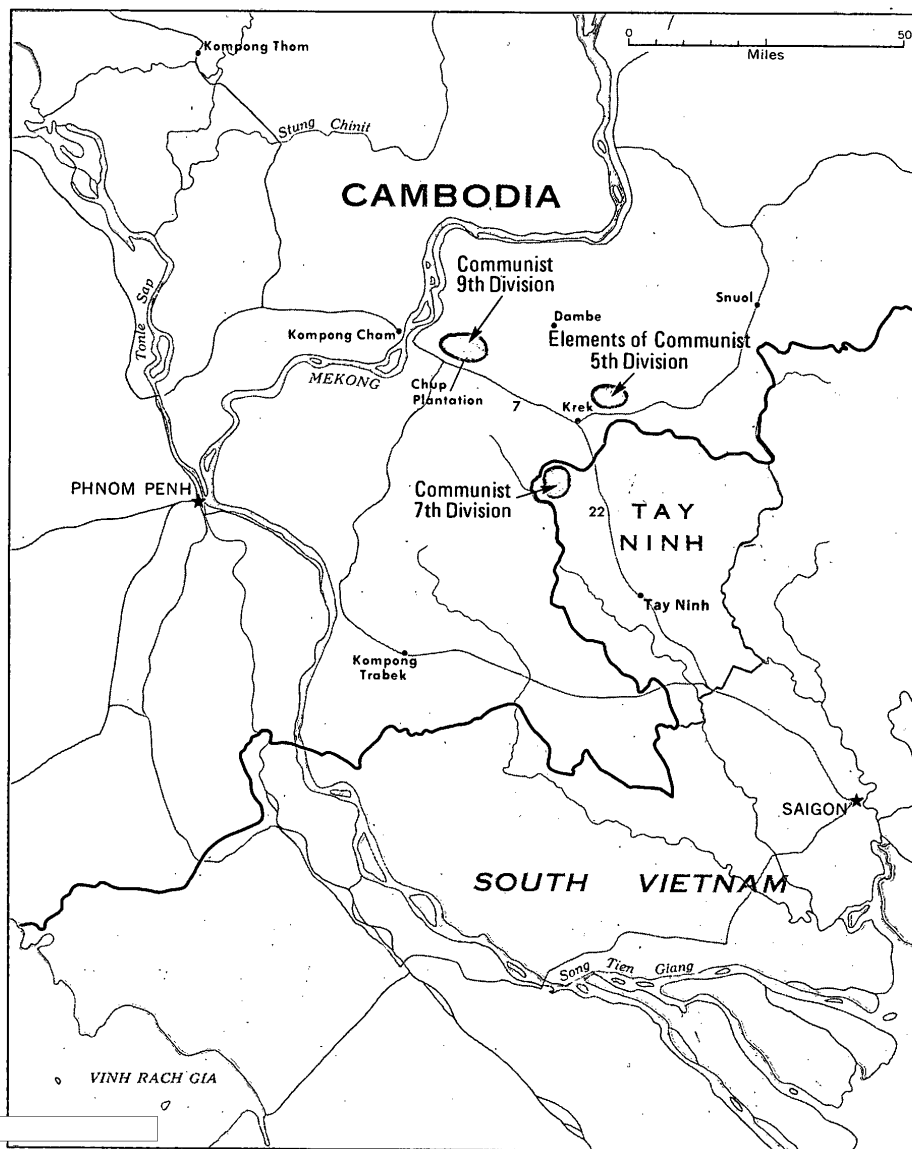


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### Operating Areas of Communist Main Forces Near Border Area



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SOUTH VIETNAM - CAMBODIA

Communist gunners continued their attacks in the Cambodian - South Vietnamese border area during the weekend, shelling three South Vietnamese artillery bases in and around Krek, as well as ARVN Ranger and armored elements operating east-northeast of Krek. [redacted] prisoners taken last week by the South Vietnamese claim the mission of Viet Cong 5th Division units is to keep up pressure in the Krek area, while that of the North Vietnamese 7th Division across the border in Tay Ninh Province is to block Route 22 and ambush any ARVN reinforcements.

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*It is likely that the primary objective of the Communists in the border area is to try to protect their positions in Cambodia by tying down the South Vietnamese. With the dry season logistics push from North Vietnam about to begin, the Communists will rely on their bases in the Chup-Dambe area northwest of Krek to handle new supplies and manpower for their operations in both Cambodia and southern South Vietnam, and they may be concerned over a possible South Vietnamese incursion similar to that during last year's dru season.*

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[redacted] the Communists are constructing defensive positions along Route 7 near Chup, [redacted]

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[redacted] In addition to keeping the South Vietnamese away from these base areas, the Communists may have a longer-range aim of eventually re-opening the old corridors from their Cambodian sanctuaries to the Saigon area.

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[redacted]

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### CAMBODIA

On Saturday the Cambodian Government decreed that effective today the National Assembly will be transformed into a constituent assembly charged with completing work on a new constitution. The new assembly's term of office extends for as long as is needed to adopt the constitution.

*Lon Nol's government now is in a position to rule by executive decree for an indefinite period. No longer does it need to seek approval of its programs by the opposition-dominated legislature, and deputies will no longer have the authority to interpellate ministers.*

*It may be quite some time before a new constitution is promulgated. A number of its draft provisions are already the subject of much controversy. A new constitution will require new elections, which many government leaders believe unwise under present military circumstances.*

*Lon Nol and Sirik Matak presumably calculate that the creation of a constituent assembly is preferable to the outright dismissal of the National Assembly--whose mandate was due to expire today--in order to soften any adverse domestic and international reactions. Nevertheless, the move may well further unsettle the internal situation by raising the specter that the regime is moving toward precisely the sort of authoritarian rule for which it faulted and ultimately deposed Sihanouk.*

*For the immediate future, the government's action does not seem likely to provoke any serious political opposition. Several prominent members of the assembly--including its president, Yem Sambaur, and recently dismissed Interior Minister In Tam--have labeled the formation of the constituent assembly as illegal, but have told the press that they have no power to fight it.*

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NOTE

USSR: The Soviet naval task force which was apparently en route to Cuba has turned northward to shadow the US carrier Saratoga. The Saratoga is heading west about 800 miles east of Bermuda. A Soviet cruise missile submarine, which was also heading toward Cuba, apparently is maintaining a position ahead of the carrier so as to participate in the surveillance. The task force may still change course again and head for Cuba, however.

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