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*The President's Daily Brief*

3 January 1972

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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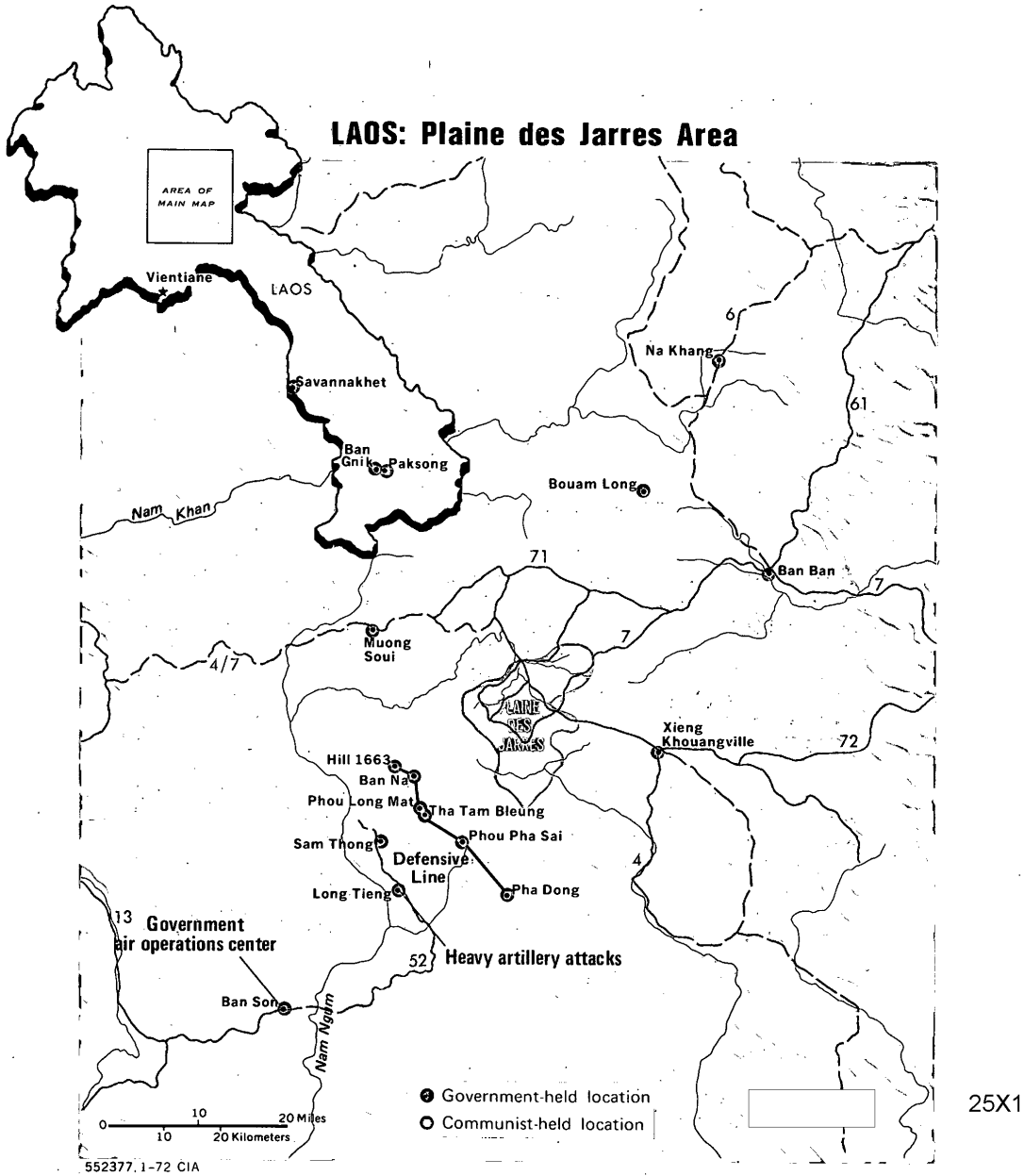
PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Vietnamese artillery attacks caused extensive damage to the irregular complex at Long Tieng in north Laos this weekend. *(Page 1)*

Pakistan's denial of a report that it will release Mujibur Rahman this week may be more indicative of a change of timing than of a change of plans. *(Page 2)*

Neither the UK nor Malta shows any sign of relaxing its terms to halt a British pull-out, while Malta is still having only limited success in seeking alternate sources of financing. *(Page 3)*

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LAOS

North Vietnamese 130-mm. guns have fired more than 300 rounds into the Long Tieng complex since 31 December when the Communists launched their first heavy artillery attacks against the base. All buildings and ordnance of the Lao Air Force have been destroyed, and one 105-mm. howitzer has been disabled. Although the Long Tieng airstrip is still usable, air operations have been shifted to Ban Son, about 20 miles to the southwest.

US tactical air strikes were flown against the 130-mm. gun firing positions, located just south of the Plaine des Jarres, on 31 December and 1 January. At least three of the guns are believed to have been damaged. Cloud cover and haze have hampered subsequent air strikes, however, and intercepts of 1 January indicate that the North Vietnamese are trying to confuse the US pilots by building decoy positions. They are also bringing up additional 130-mm. ammunition.

No enemy infantry attack has developed thus far, and ground activity in the area remains limited to scattered clashes. On 31 December, a four-battalion irregular task force, totaling over 1,000 men, arrived in Long Tieng from Savannakhet. These irregulars, who have been quite effective in south Laos, are deployed a few miles north of Long Tieng at Tha Tam Bleung and Phou Long Mat.

Casualties at Long Tieng have been light thus far. Even so, according to the US Embassy in Vientiane, the shelling is lowering the morale of the irregulars

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In south Laos, government positions about five miles west of Paksong on the Bolovens Plateau came under heavy attack on 31 December and were abandoned. The Lao Army troops manning them dispersed, leaving behind trucks and three 105-mm. howitzers which were later destroyed by air strikes. Other Lao Army units have pulled back to Ban Gnik, an irregular position on the western edge of the plateau. Ban Gnik is now the government's forward defense point.

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PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH-INDIA

*Pakistan's repudiation of a Time correspondent's report to the effect that Mujibur Rahman would be unconditionally released on 7 January does not necessarily mean that President Bhutto has changed his mind. It is more likely that press leaks of the story have caused Bhutto to reconsider his timing. Bhutto may hope the release of Mujib would ease the atmosphere for negotiations with India and hasten the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners.*

*The return of Mujib, who is regarded as Bangladesh's legitimate leader by the vast majority of the people as well as most political and guerrilla factions, would greatly help the new government to solidify its control over the country. The sheikh's presence would also help bring under control the current competition for power among the political factions.*

*Although some leftist parties have recently been rebuffed in their efforts to gain entry into the cabinet, pro-Soviet elements in the ruling Awami League have been gaining in influence. Pro-Soviet Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad gained added responsibilities when cabinet portfolios were redistributed last week, and Abdus Samad--who is also considered friendly to Moscow--replaced a pro-West politician as foreign minister.*

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh authorities, with Indian help, are making progress toward getting the country back on its feet. Rail and bus service has resumed in many parts of the country, and telecommunications links have been re-established with most areas. Many shops and banks are also reported to be back in business, as are most of the facilities at the country's main port, Chittagong. The Indian Army has been playing a major role in the restorations of roads, river crossings, and communications.

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MALTA-UK

Prime Minister Mintoff's quick trip to Libya on Friday appears to have produced only limited results in the way of alternate financing to that of the British.

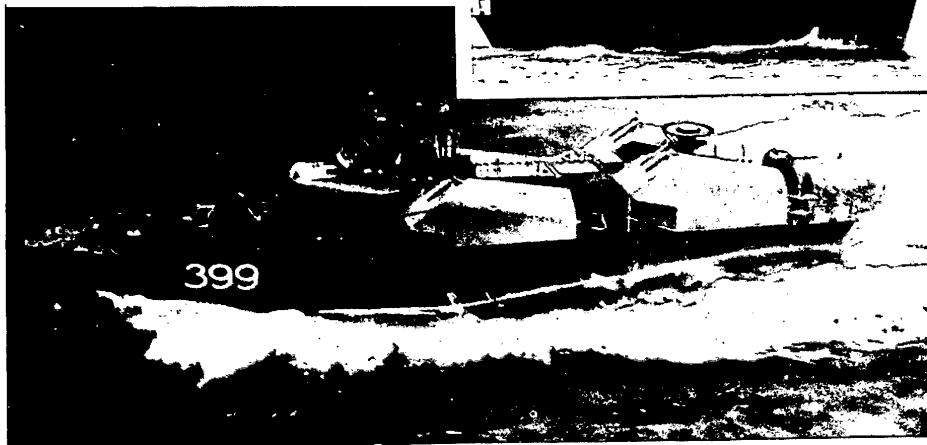
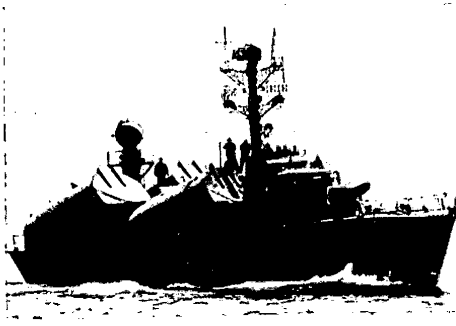
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Mintoff was promised some assistance in the form of both grants and loans, but all discussion of long-term aid was left to the future. On the same day, Mintoff told Ambassador Ellsworth that he would like the British to stay on if an agreement could be reached, but that he would prefer Malta to be "independent" if it is going to have financial troubles.

British forces, under Mintoff's last-minute extension of their departure deadline until 15 January, have begun dismantling some military equipment. In London, Foreign Office Under Secretary Wiggin raised the idea on 1 January of UK-US talks about future negotiating steps, but said he doubted any satisfactory and durable agreement could be reached with Mintoff. He reiterated that the present British attitude is to wait and see whether the imminent prospect of their departure would give the Maltese Government sober second thoughts.

**OSA Class Guided Missile Patrol Boat**

Length ..... 128 feet  
Maximum speed ..... 40 knots  
Missiles ..... 4 single SS-N-2 launchers



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NOTES

USSR-Cuba: Two Soviet ocean-going tugs, each towing an Osa-class guided missile patrol boat with crew, were sighted on 1 January some 1,100 miles east of Cuba. If they continue toward the Caribbean, it will mark the first appearance of these patrol boats in Cuban waters. The Osa carries four guided missiles, which have a range of about 20 miles. Currently, the Cubans have 18 of the Komar-class guided missile patrol boats, which have only two missile tubes.

Egypt-Israel-US: Egyptian reaction to press reports that the US will resume shipment of Phantom jet fighters to Israel has been limited to a relatively restrained comment by "informed sources" in an interview with the Middle East News Agency. Although it is unusual for such "sources" to issue a statement on a Muslim holy day, the comment seemed pro forma and closed no doors to future diplomatic moves by the US or Egypt.



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