



*The President's Daily Brief*

12 January 1972

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in Laos is described on *Page 1*.

a reasonably accurate picture of the South Vietnamese armed forces' successes and problems. (*Page 2*)

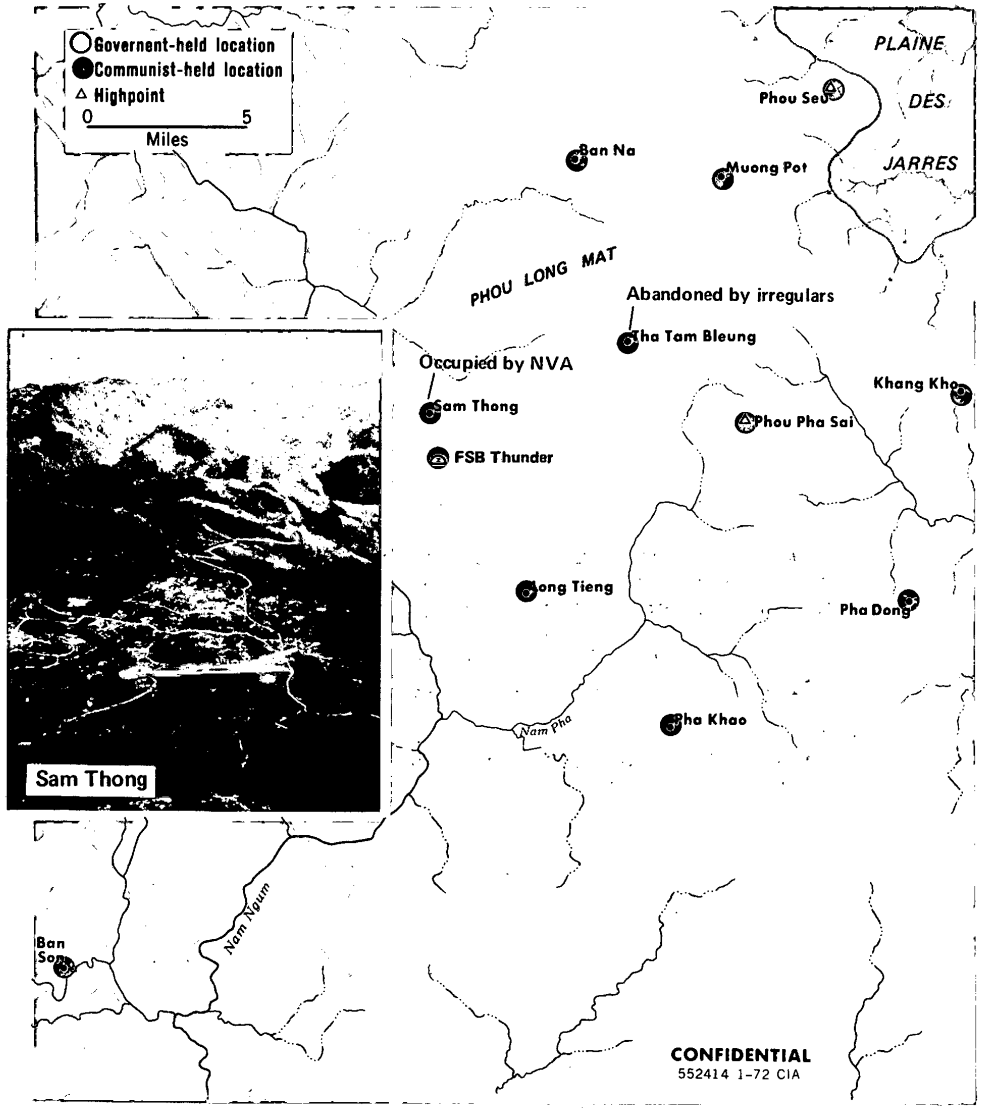
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Issues likely to be dealt with at the coming Warsaw Pact meeting are discussed on *Page 3*.

North Korean Premier Kim has hinted he is willing to conclude a "peace pact" with South Korea, possibly before US troops are withdrawn. (*Page 4*)

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# LONG TIENG AREA



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LAOS

Heavy fighting has broken out in the Long Tieng valley, as the North Vietnamese continue to breach the government's defenses in the area. By the early morning of 12 January, the Communists had overrun at least two positions on Skyline Ridge overlooking Long Tieng, and heavy fighting was under way in the valley near the airstrip.

Earlier, on 10 January, irregular units abandoned Tha Tam Bleung and some nearby positions and withdrew to the south. At last report these units were being shelled by the North Vietnamese 130-mm. field guns. It will be difficult for other irregular units nearby to attempt to regain the position. The North Vietnamese have now occupied Sam Thong and the Sam Thong valley. [redacted] numerous enemy are active throughout the area, reducing the likelihood that the valley can be quickly retaken.

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*Many of the units in outlying positions are isolated, and their aerial resupply and medical evacuation is increasingly vulnerable to North Vietnamese firepower. With the Pha Dong - Ban Na defensive line shattered, Sam Thong lost, and heavy fighting under way in the Long Tieng valley, the government's strategy appears to be boiling down basically to defending what it now holds in the hope [redacted] Communist logistic problems will keep the enemy at bay. [redacted]*

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Laotian Defense Minister Sisouk has sounded out Ambassador Godley regarding the US attitude toward a proposed request to Saigon to send three ARVN battalions to the Pakse area. According to the Laotians, President Thieu has said that troops are available but would require US assistance and support while in Laos.

*Saigon used this formulation as a way of turning down a previous request by Vientiane. In view of the possibility of fairly substantial Communist activity within South Vietnam this spring and summer, President Thieu would be most reluctant to airlift troops deep into south Laos at this time. The request is symptomatic, however, of the Laotians' extremely depressed mood over the worsening military situation.*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

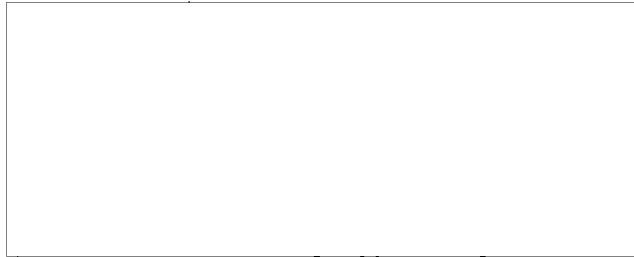
[redacted] a shortage of replacement personnel last year tended to undercut ARVN's improvement in fighting performance.

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[redacted] now 111 battalions--compared to 83 in 1970--involved in combat operations daily, but the average infantry battalion operated at only about two thirds of its authorized strength. Army casualties during the period rose by more than 11 percent. The army's monthly desertion rate increased by ten percent over the previous year, totaling 70,000 [redacted]

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[redacted] The monthly average rate of troop replacements--which probably means total recruitments--for the armed forces as a whole in the period decreased by over 38 percent from 1970.



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*War weariness, however, may have increased the recruitment problems of the government as well as the Viet Cong.*

Although the study reports that there were also manpower shortages in the air force during 1971, this service achieved a creditable over-all increase in performance and activity. Sorties by all types of aircraft and helicopters increased by more than 50 percent [redacted]

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[redacted] *strikes us as a reasonably accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the South Vietnamese armed forces.*

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## FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

### WARSAW PACT

*The Warsaw Pact summit meeting to be held in Prague later this month is expected to deal with issues related to European security. The Soviets have convened such Pact meetings at key intervals in their push toward detente.*

*Besides calling for ratification of the Polish and Soviet treaties with West Germany, Moscow may also seek to use the meeting to keep the East Germans in step. Pankow has been conducting a sharply worded anti - West German press campaign, which reflects its concern over the destabilizing impact of the current detente atmosphere on the East German internal situation.*

*The Soviets also are likely to use the summit to give another push to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The summit may reiterate last month's call by the Pact's foreign ministers for the start of multilateral preparatory talks for the conference. Moscow continues to propose convocation of the conference itself in 1972, but probably is willing to settle for preparatory steps this year.*

*Another important agenda item may be the implications for bloc solidarity of President Nixon's trip to Peking. Moscow would like to obtain a strong condemnation of Peking's opening to Washington. In the face of Romanian ties with Peking, however, the Kremlin probably will have to be satisfied with a boilerplate call for continued unity against imperialist intrigues.*

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

KOREA

In an exclusive interview with Japanese news-  
men on 10 January, Premier Kim Il-song proposed ex-  
panding the current North - South Korean Red Cross  
talks to include political matters. He also said  
he is willing to conclude a "peace pact" with South  
Korea, possibly before US troops are withdrawn.

*Much of what Kim said was merely an elab-  
oration of earlier Pyongyang proposals.  
His suggestion that an accord might be  
concluded before US troops are withdrawn  
from the South, however, is new.*

*Kim's main purpose--as in earlier state-  
ments--is to project an image of reason-  
ableness and flexibility. While accusing  
Seoul of foot-dragging in the Red Cross  
talks, the North in recent months has  
muted its invective against the South Ko-  
rean Government and has maintained a rela-  
tively harmonious atmosphere at Panmunjom.*

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