



The President's Daily Brief

17 January 1972

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Heavy fighting continues in both the Long Tieng valley and in south Laos east of Pakse. (Page 1)

The Israelis are threatening harsher measures against the Lebanon-based fedayeen. (Page 2)

Egypt's new cabinet is discussed on Page 3.

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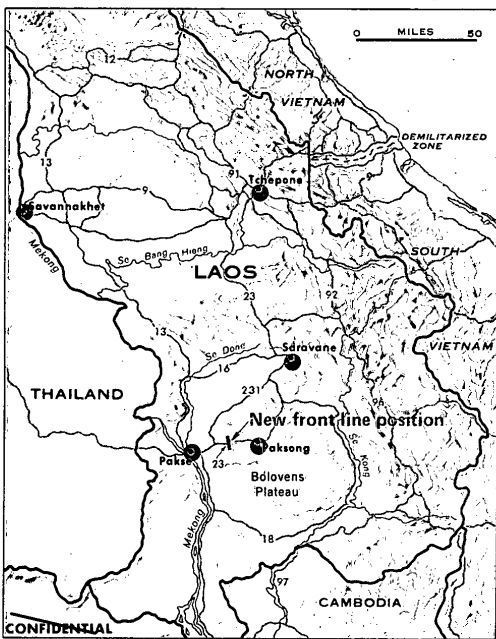
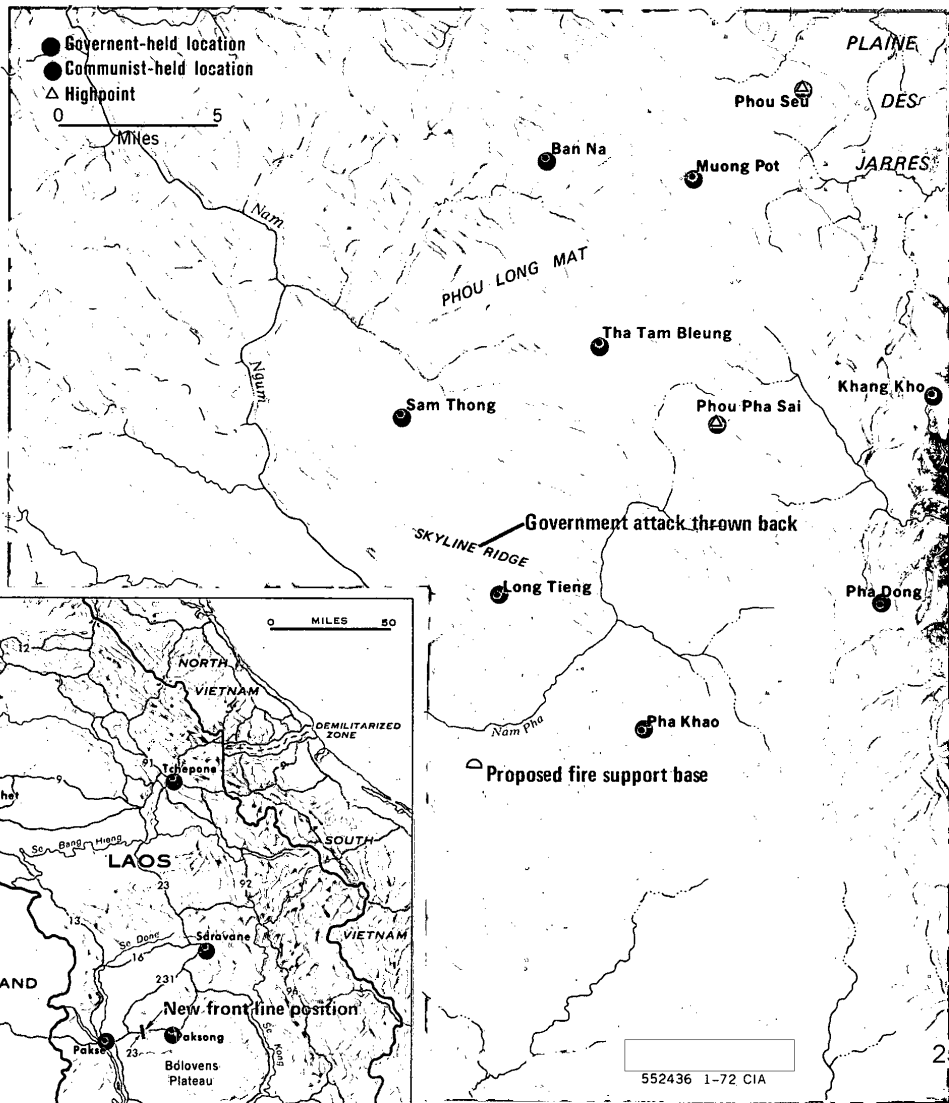
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All sides in the Malta-UK-NATO dispute are still willing to listen to offers, and the Rome talks are scheduled to resume on Wednesday. (Page 5)

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LONG TIENG AREA



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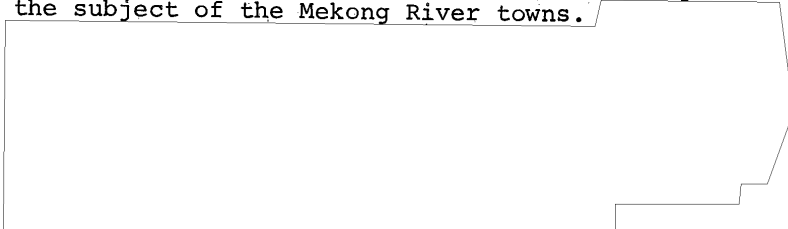
LAOS

Fighting is still going on in the Long Tieng valley and on Skyline Ridge. Government forces attempted to retake the ridge on 14 January, but were pushed back that night by a North Vietnamese counterattack. There is as yet no evidence, however, that the government is pulling back from the valley, and fresh artillery is being set up south of Long Tieng as part of efforts to shore up the southern flank.

In south Laos, government units on Route 23 west of the Bolovens Plateau have again pulled back following a heavy enemy shelling attack. The front line now is only about 15 miles east of Pakse, near the junction of Routes 23 and 231.

Hanoi is engaging in some saber rattling on the subject of the Mekong River towns.

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ISRAEL-LEBANON

At a meeting of the UN-sponsored Israel-Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission on Friday, the Israelis threatened "permanent occupation" of Lebanese territory if terrorist activity along the border did not completely stop, according to Lebanese Ambassador to the US Kabbani. Noting that this is the first time that the Israelis have made such a threat, Kabbani said that Lebanon had been compelled to order its army to take up defensive positions along the border.

Until now, the Lebanese Army has carefully stayed out of the fighting between fedayeen and Israeli forces during Israeli retaliatory strikes.

Lebanon Prime Minister Salam told Ambassador Buffum on Saturday that Yasir Arafat and other fedayeen leaders had promised to stop any current activities based in Lebanon. Salam said that Saudi Arabia had obtained a similar pledge from Arafat and that Syria had promised to intervene with Saiqa leaders in southern Lebanon.

The fedayeen have violated previous agreements on cross-border operations and may not honor their latest promises. The Israelis, although increasingly sensitive to the growing numbers and aggressiveness of fedayeen in southern Lebanon, would probably turn to "permanent occupation" of Lebanese territory only as a last resort. Should terrorist attacks continue, the Israelis are likely first to resume open patrolling on both sides of the border.

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EGYPT

The new cabinet to be sworn in today will be led by former deputy premier Aziz Sidqi. His nomination to the post of prime minister was approved yesterday by Egypt's only political organization, the Arab Socialist Union. The outgoing prime minister, aging Mahmud Fawzi, was named vice president.

Sidqi is an ambitious figure who has served in a variety of economic-related government posts since the mid-1950s and has frequently been involved in economic negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Last night's broadcast by Cairo Radio of the probable line-up of the new cabinet includes a number of new personalities, among whom is a new foreign minister, Murad Ghalib. He has previously served as ambassador in Moscow. Ex-foreign minister Riad will apparently become presidential adviser on foreign affairs.

Sadat probably believes that the formation of a new "confrontation cabinet" under the younger and more dynamic Sidqi will aid in creating a sense of urgency with regard to the Arab-Israel impasse. He may also believe that Sidqi's expertise will be useful in stimulating the Egyptian economy.

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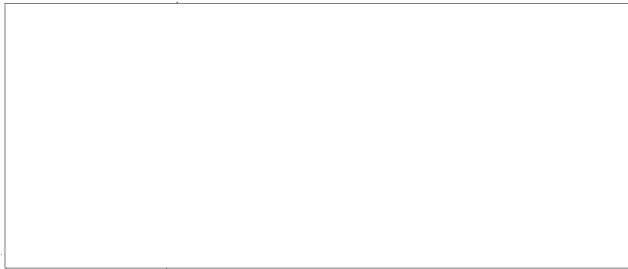
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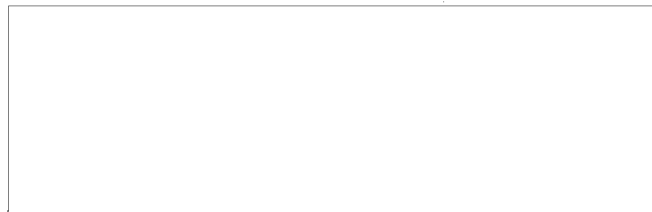
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NOTE

Malta: Malta suspended its deadline for the withdrawal of British forces following the talks in Rome on Saturday, but Prime Minister Mintoff rejected a new UK-NATO offer of about \$31 million annually. Mintoff indicated that he would consider an offer of about \$35 million, plus bilateral economic aid from individual NATO members, as the "minimum basis" for an agreement. Talks are scheduled to resume in Rome on Wednesday. The British are concerned that even if agreement is reached Mintoff might make demands in other areas--such as higher wages for British-employed Maltese workers--that would further drive up the costs of remaining in Malta.

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