

The President's Daily Brief

20 January 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Laos, North Vietnamese units in the Long Tieng area may be preparing a major attack from the south. (Page 1)

Moscow may believe it can recognize Bangladesh without alienating Pakistan. (Page 2)

Hanoi and Tokyo are taking precautions to keep their trade mission talks secret. (Page 3)

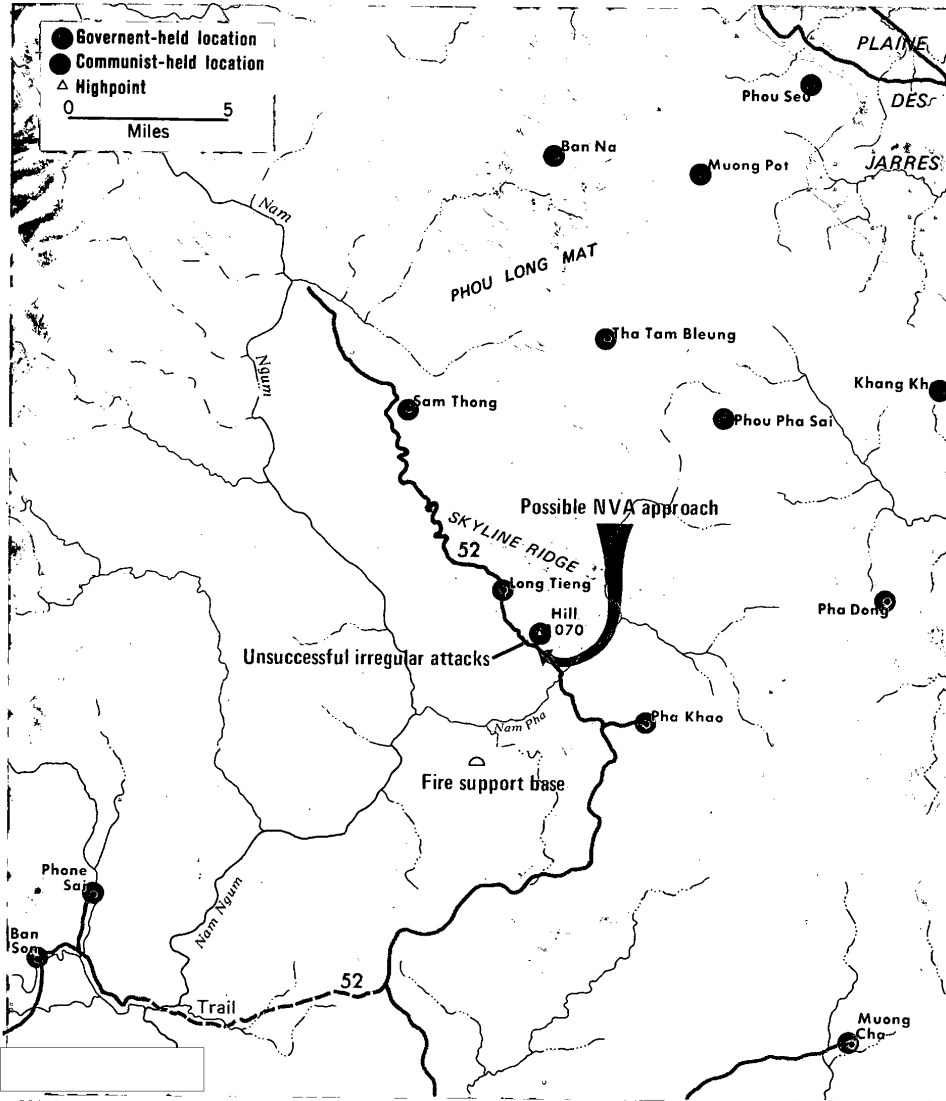
Communist China has a new foreign minister. (Page 4)

The situation along Israel's border with Lebanon has eased, but Israel may still be considering reprisals against Syria. (Page 5)

Egyptian President Sadat is faced with student dissent. (Page 5)

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LONG TIENG AREA



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LAOS

Government units have made no further progress in their attempts to clear Skyline Ridge, and the enemy threat continues to develop south of Long Tieng. General Vang Pao is increasingly concerned that North Vietnamese units may attempt to approach the Long Tieng valley from the south, where its defenses are vulnerable. An irregular battalion has tried unsuccessfully for the past two days to clear this area. Elements of six North Vietnamese battalions have now been detected west and south of Long Tieng.

The Communists' strategy appears to be to keep the government's best units tied down on Skyline Ridge while they move to encircle the valley and prepare a major assault from the south.

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The South Vietnamese have rejected the Laotian appeal

to send three ARVN battalions into south Laos. The chairman of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, General Vien, told two high-ranking Laotian generals visiting Saigon earlier this week that South Vietnamese assistance is out of the question at this time because of the withdrawal of American forces and the new enemy buildup in several regions close to South Vietnam.

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USSR-BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN

Moscow may soon recognize Bangladesh. The agreement of the European Community countries and the UK to recognize Bangladesh, plus Islamabad's relatively mild reaction to recognition by Burma and Nepal, could convince the Soviets that they too should act. Moscow probably would like further to ingratiate itself with New Delhi by being among the first of the major powers to recognize Bangladesh and may now calculate that it can do so without causing a serious breach with Pakistan.

Moscow has already made some small gestures aimed at getting back into Islamabad's good graces. Soviet President Podgorny sent a congratulatory message to President Bhutto on his assumption of office, and Soviet media have hailed Bhutto's initial economic and political moves as steps in the right direction.

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JAPAN - NORTH VIETNAM

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We reported [redacted]
[redacted] on Japan's efforts to work out arrangements for an exchange of permanent trade missions with North Vietnam. We now learn that Hanoi and Tokyo apparently are both taking great precautions to keep these plans from becoming too widely known. The key Japanese official involved in the contacts has told our Tokyo Embassy that, according to the North Vietnamese, Hanoi has taken no other government into its confidence on the subject and has asked the Japanese not to mention it even to friends of North Vietnam.

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The Japanese, for their part, are more and more inclined to postpone informing South Vietnam about these exchanges, presumably because they want the talks to make as much progress as possible before triggering the inevitable protests from Saigon. As for the North Vietnamese, they could use their contacts with Tokyo as a reminder to the Chinese of their independence, but they clearly want to be able to inform Peking at a time of their own choosing.

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COMMUNIST CHINA

Peking has moved swiftly to confirm a replacement for recently deceased foreign minister Chen I. Chi Peng-fei, a professional diplomat who has been "acting" foreign minister since April 1971, was identified as Chen's successor at a theatrical performance yesterday.

Unlike Chen I, Chi is not a member of the politburo and the party central committee. Chi's appointment thus represents a downgrading of the post and reaffirms the tight rein on foreign policy-making held by Premier Chou En-lai. His posting, however, is not inconsistent with the pattern established over the past year in which several ministerial portfolios have been awarded to functionaries who do not hold high party posts.

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NOTES

Israel-Lebanon-Syria: The situation along Israel's border with Lebanon has eased, but Israel may still be considering reprisals against Syria. The Lebanese have thus far had considerable success in a campaign to reduce the level of fedayeen activity in response to Israeli raids and the threat to occupy Lebanese territory. In contrast, the Israelis have warned the Syrians that they must bear responsibility for the continuing high level of incursions and other violations from the Syrian side. They have specifically referred to the decapitation of an Israeli civilian engineer on 6 January, an act for which they have yet to even the score.

Egypt: President Sadat is faced with his first significant manifestation of open dissent. Student demonstrations, beginning on Monday and continuing through yesterday, have occurred at two of Cairo's largest universities. The demonstrations appear directed almost entirely at the government, and placards have been displayed criticizing Sadat for having promised much and delivered little. The "no war - no peace" situation was also decried, with some students said to be demanding military training. Sadat has promised to talk to the students in an attempt to discourage further disturbances, but there is little he can do to ease their sense of frustration. If the demonstrations spread and intensify, Sadat could feel impelled to call in the police and army to quell the students.

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