

The President's Daily Brief

9 February 1972



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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

9 February 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are many indicators of impending Communist attacks in South Vietnam. (Page 1)

The military situation in Laos is reported on Page 2.

North Vietnam [redacted] Indonesia [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 3)

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The Indians now appear to want negotiations with Pakistan and may be ready to turn some of their earlier preconditions for talks into ultimate goals. (Page 4)

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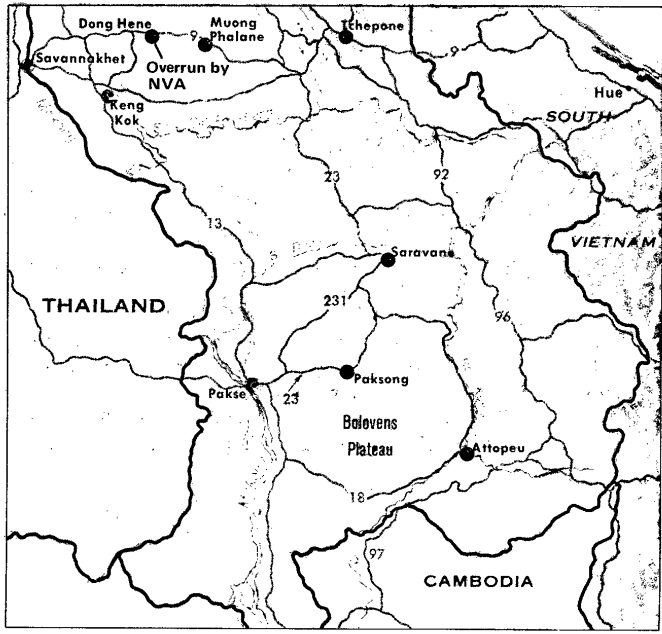
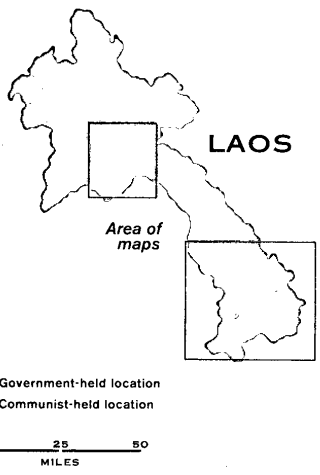
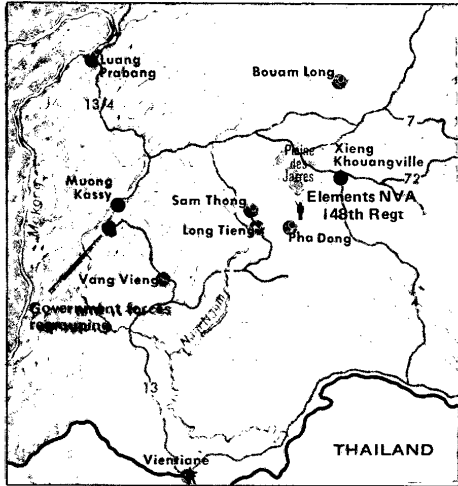
SOUTH VIETNAM

There continue to be indicators of impending Communist attacks in many sectors of the country. A forward element of the Communist 320th Division now is only 14 miles from Kontum city in the central highlands, while farther north in Military Region 1, over 70 unidentified radio terminals associated with enemy units have been located in Quang Nam Province in the past several weeks.



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LAOS

Vang Pao's new operation to harass Communist lines of communication south of the Plaine des Jarres has so far met little resistance, but there are indications that the North Vietnamese are preparing to counter his move. Yesterday, irregular positions northwest of Pha Dong--the jumping-off point for Vang Pao's 5,000-man task force--received mortar fire. Pha Dong itself took about 50 rounds of heavy weapons fire, including some 130-mm., but sustained little damage. Radio direction-finding now shows that at least two battalions and the command post of the North Vietnamese 148th Regiment are moving into position northeast of Pha Dong, and irregular patrols are beginning to report signs of enemy troop concentrations in this area.

The 148th was involved in last month's intense fighting along Skyline Ridge. It took heavy casualties, but may have received replacements. Its current moves suggest an intention to block the irregular push northeast toward Route 4.

To the west of Long Tieng, government forces are regrouping between Muong Kassy and Vang Vieng in an attempt to halt any further southward advances by Communist forces on Route 13. The government is bringing in a battalion from the Luang Prabang area to strengthen its defenses, and may also transfer a battalion from Savannakhet.

Shifting units from southern Laos may be difficult, however, in view of renewed enemy attacks along Route 9 in the panhandle. On Monday, the North Vietnamese took the town of Dong Hene, a place they captured during last year's dry season campaign.

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VIETNAM-INDONESIA

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SOUTH ASIA

Prime Minister Gandhi's agreement with Sheik Mujibur Rahman to bring home Indian troops now in Bangladesh somewhat improves the chances for Pakistan to enter bilateral discussions with Bangladesh and with India. Officials in New Delhi also seem to be making a determined effort to show their readiness for talks. Last week Foreign Secretary Kaul twice told US Embassy officials that India is willing to talk with Pakistan without conditions on all outstanding differences at any time, level, or place.

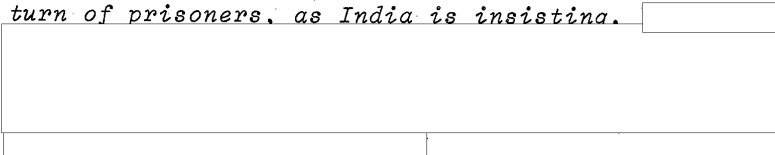
There remain, nevertheless, fundamental problems to overcome before any meaningful settlement can be reached. Although the Indians now deny the existence of preconditions, their ultimate objectives-- recognition of their claim to Indian-occupied Kashmir, a border agreement, and an end to Pakistan's policy of "confrontation"--almost certainly remain unchanged. Although there is growing pressure within Pakistan for the return of the 90,000 prisoners of war, Bhutto could face serious political consequences at home if he is too accommodating toward the Indians, particularly regarding Kashmir.

Bhutto will also be reluctant to deal directly with Dacca and New Delhi at the same time over the return of prisoners, as India is insisting.

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NOTES

Israel: The army is developing a 280-mm. rocket that could alter Egypt's present two-to-one edge over Israel in artillery. [redacted]

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[redacted] At the farthest ranges in the tests, the rocket was more accurate than US-supplied 175-mm. artillery. [redacted] rocket salvos could be effective against SAM sites near the Suez Canal and against troop concentrations.

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Ecuador: [redacted]

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