

The President's Daily Brief

21 March 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Communists remain on the attack near Long Tieng. (Page 1)

Communist gunners have launched their heaviest attack to date on Phnom Penh. (Page 2)

The Chinese appear to be planning to test fire ICBMs to the Indian Ocean. (Page 3)

Party chief Brezhnev's statement on foreign policy is discussed on Page 4.

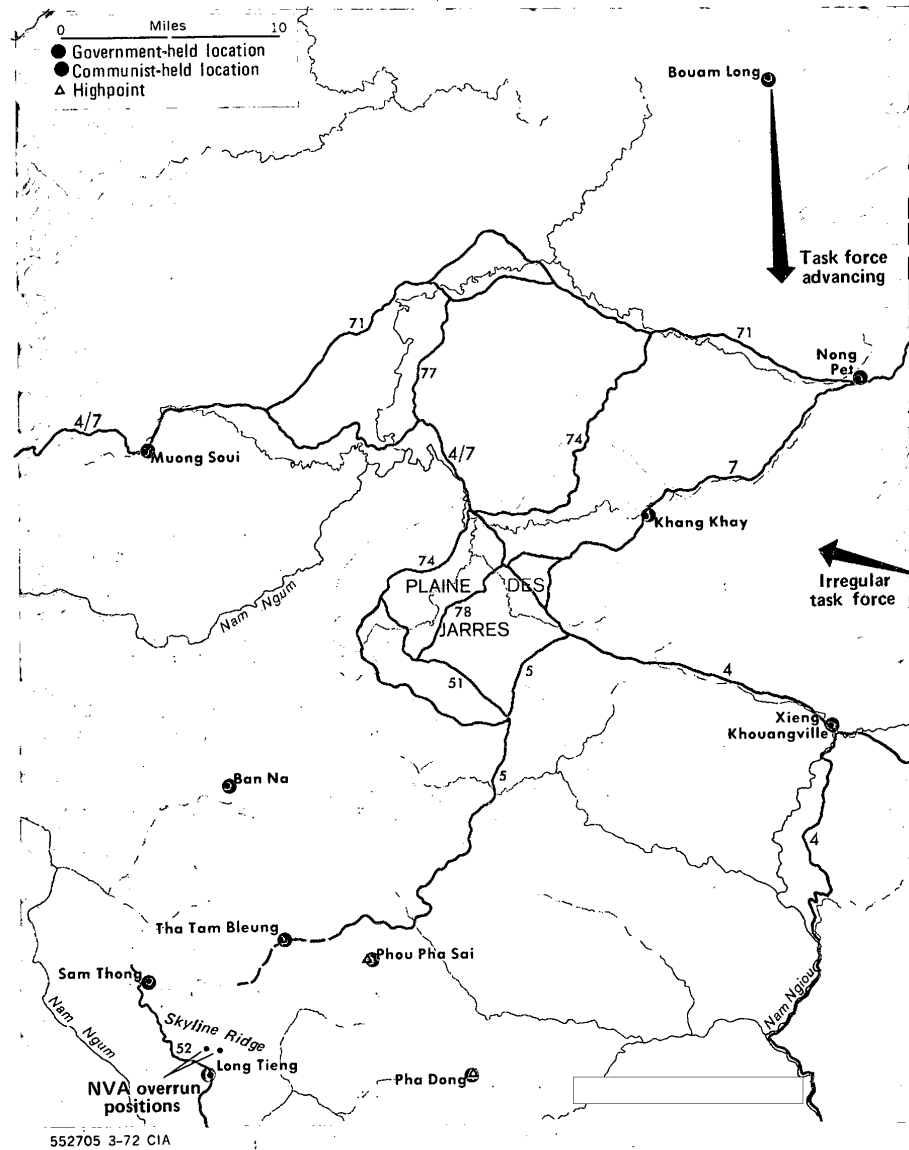
Greeks

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

The Communists have captured three of the nine irregular positions on Skyline Ridge. The remaining irregular position on the western end of the ridge came under attack today. A North Vietnamese prisoner claims that plans call for elements of the 312th Division to assault the western end and for two regiments of the 316th Division to strike to the east.

The North Vietnamese also may be preparing to launch some harassing attacks from the south. Yesterday an irregular unit clashed with small numbers of North Vietnamese troops moving northwest toward Long Tieng.

To the east, Vang Pao's task forces are moving into positions to threaten the Communists' lines of communications. Advance elements of a 1,500-man task force are now about ten miles south of Bouam Long, while a 1,300-man force is moving toward the foothills east of the Plaine. The Communists are trying to counter Vang Pao's offensive with Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops already in this area, including elements of the 174th Regiment. Thus far there are no signs that they intend to divert troops now pressing the attack on Long Tieng.

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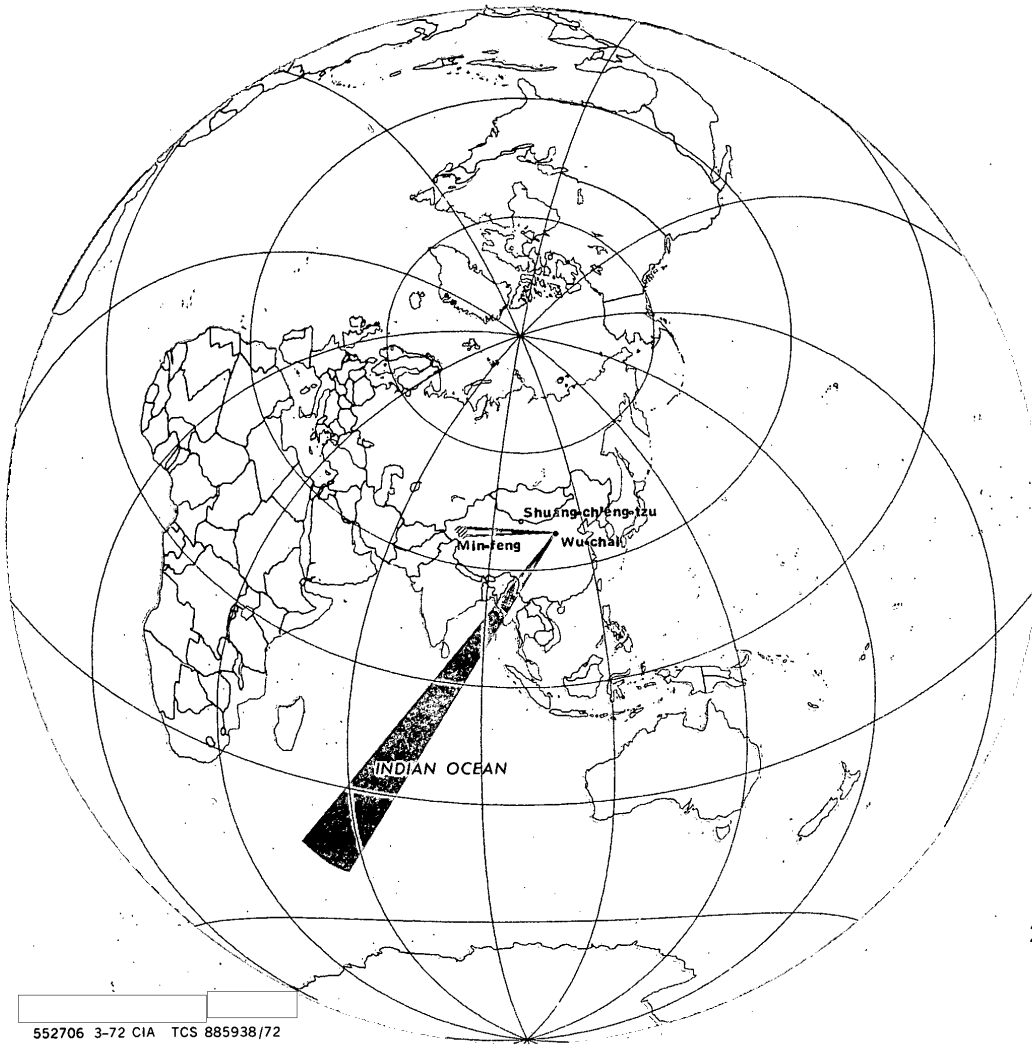
CAMBODIA

The three-month lull in enemy military action ended early this morning in Phnom Penh when Communist gunners launched their heaviest rocket and mortar attack to date on the city area. The pre-dawn barrage of over 100 rockets, along with scattered recoilless rifle and mortar rounds, destroyed one light aircraft and damaged four others at the Phnom Penh airfield. The airfield itself was only slightly damaged and has been reopened. Many rocket rounds impacted between the airfield and downtown Phnom Penh, starting fires that resulted in considerable civilian casualties, especially in one neighborhood crowded with refugees.

The shelling, which was apparently timed to coincide roughly with the ouster of Sihanouk two years ago on 18 March, was accompanied by a sapper attack on a military radio station east of the airfield, which resulted in 25 killed, most of them civilians. There are presently no signs that Communist main force infantry units, which moved away from the city last December, are returning to within striking distance of the capital area. The US Embassy in Phnom Penh points out, however, that the enemy is capable of other such shelling attacks at a time of his own choosing.

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China: Preparations for ICBM Testing



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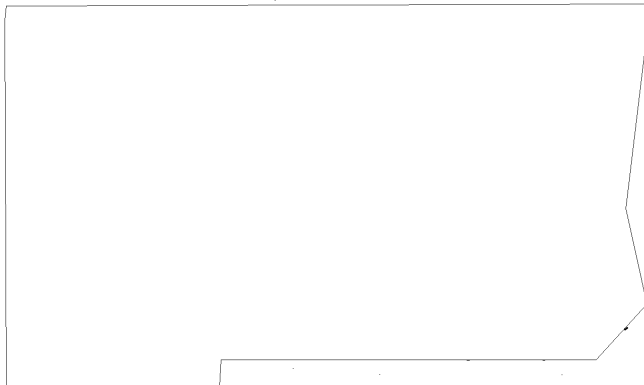
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CHINA

Satellite photography suggests that the Chinese have plans to launch ICBMs from the Wu-chai launch complex to the Indian Ocean. Since late 1970, they have been building six permanent tracking sites near the Wu-chai rangehead, where they developed the CSS-2 IRBM. Recent photography shows that at least two of these sites are located well south of the CSS-2 flight path from Wu-chai to the regular impact area at Min-feng, some 1,400 nm to the west. In addition, work on a large silo has been under way at Wu-chai since the summer of 1968.

The apparent reason for establishing a new firing azimuth from the Wu-chai rangehead is to provide additional range beyond that available within Chinese boundaries. The flight path implied by the location of the two southerly sites, if extended to ICBM ranges, passes southwest across Burma and into the Indian Ocean.



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USSR

Party chief Brezhnev's remarks to a Soviet trade union congress yesterday suggest that Soviet foreign policy may be encountering some domestic criticism. In an uncharacteristic admission, Brezhnev noted that Soviet policy toward West Germany is "not a simple question for our country." Brezhnev personally endorsed recent Soviet media criticism of West German opposition to ratification of the Eastern treaties.

While defending Soviet policy toward Bonn, he urged West Germany to make the "responsible choice" in favor of cooperation rather than confrontation. Brezhnev altered the Soviet line on the Common Market to hint that the Soviet-led Council of Mutual Economic Assistance was ready to take up relations with it--a stance presumably designed to strengthen Chancellor Brandt's position on the treaties.

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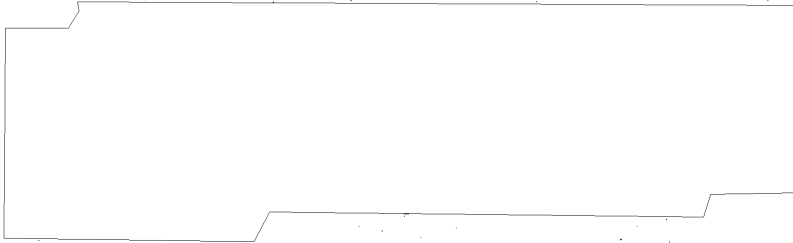
In Moscow's first authoritative comment on President Nixon's trip to Peking, Brezhnev expressed suspicion about its results. He noted the secrecy surrounding the trip as an indication that the Sino-US talks were not restricted to bilateral matters. In this connection he quoted, scornfully but without attribution, the President's remark in Shanghai that "today our two peoples hold in their hands the future of the whole world." He added that the "subsequent deeds of the US and China" would show the significance of the talks.

Brezhnev nevertheless pointed to the potential for improved Soviet-US relations in the coming Moscow summit meeting. He reaffirmed support for a "mutually agreeable" SALT agreement, and stated that it is "expedient" to widen contacts and meetings between Moscow and Washington.

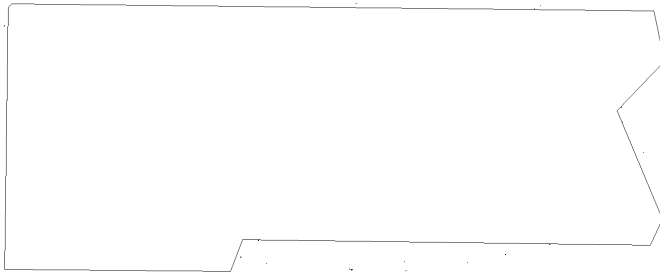
On Sino-Soviet relations Brezhnev seemed a bit defensive, citing several Soviet proposals that await a reply from Peking.

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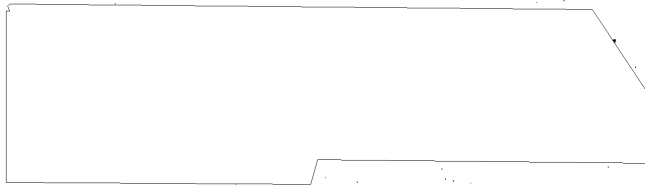
GREECE-CYPRUS



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NOTE

Cambodia: Lon Nol's new cabinet reflects the increasing political role of the military establishment. Military men hold several key ministries, including interior, defense, commerce, and education. On the civilian side, the competent information minister from the previous cabinet has stayed on, a frequent government critic has accepted the justice portfolio, and most of the rest are holdover technicians. President Lon Nol has now decided to take on the title of prime minister as well, in order to chair cabinet meetings. Son Ngoc Thanh's title, therefore, will be "first minister," indicating that he will coordinate rather than direct the work of other ministers. This underscores the narrow limits of his authority.

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