



The President's Daily Brief

10 April 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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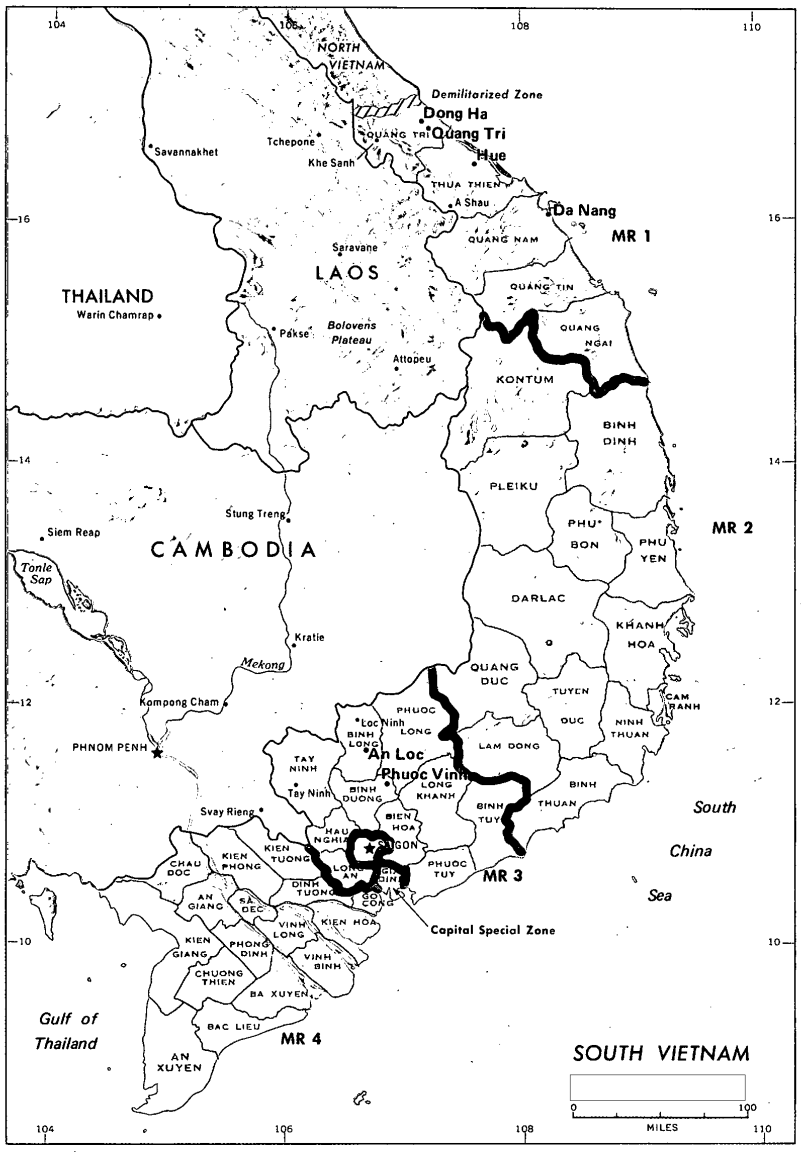
PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

We report on the current military situation in South Vietnam on *Page 1*.

The deadlock continues around Long Tieng, but the Communists appear to be preparing for another assault on government positions. (*Page 2*)

On *Page 3* we discuss the 15-year Soviet-Iraqi friendship treaty signed yesterday.

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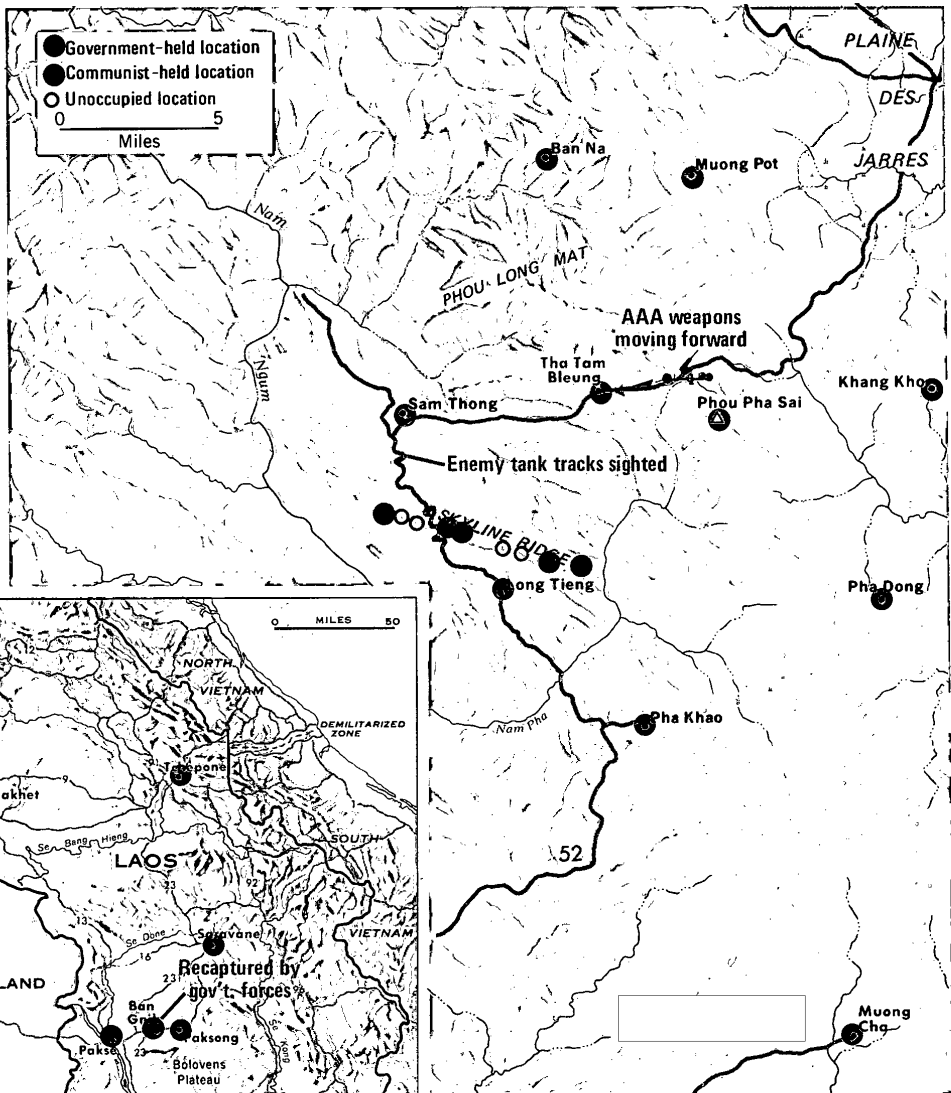
SOUTH VIETNAM

Communist forces, apparently including tanks, are continuing to advance on An Loc, the capital of Binh Long Province some 60 miles north of Saigon. US pilots have reported sighting at least nine battalion-sized formations which appear to be preparing for imminent assaults on the town. Communications intelligence confirms that one regiment of the Communist 9th Division and two regiments of the 7th Division are in Binh Long. In an effort to blunt the enemy drive, the South Vietnamese commander in Military Region 3, General Minh, has augmented his forces in Binh Long with an airborne unit from Saigon as well as the 21st Infantry Division from the delta.

In the far northern provinces, the Communists resumed their attacks over the weekend on the South Vietnamese lines defending Dong Ha, Quang Tri city, and Hue. The government troops are still holding against this pressure. The Communists have also shelled positions in southeastern Quang Tri Province, possibly to mask a movement by North Vietnamese forces that have been trying--thus far unsuccessfully--to get south of the provincial capital.

North Vietnamese Army units have mounted most of the attacks so far, but Communist local forces and sapper units are beginning to play an increased role, both in support of the main force assaults and in harassing South Vietnamese troop and supply movements. Further evidence of this is the number of bridges now being destroyed in many parts of the country as well as the increased ambushes of government convoys heading for battle zones. Guerrilla and sapper units are also responsible for much of the sharp rise in activity in the delta provinces south of Saigon.

LONG TIENG AREA



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LAOS

North Vietnamese and government forces remain deadlocked at Long Tieng. For the past week enemy action has consisted largely of shelling attacks--directed principally at government fire support bases--and small probes. Irregular forces now control five of the nine major positions on Skyline Ridge, while the other four are unoccupied because neither side has been able to hold them in the face of heavy artillery fire.

The Communists' main force--composed of elements of seven infantry regiments with artillery, anti-aircraft, and armor units--remains dug in around Long Tieng, and intercepts continue to refer to plans for new attacks. US pilots report that the Communists are making heavy use of the new road from the Plaine des Jarres to Sam Thong and that they have sighted tank tracks along the road between Sam Thong and Long Tieng. The pilots also report that the North Vietnamese appear to be moving their anti-aircraft weapons closer to Long Tieng.

In preparing for another attack on Long Tieng, the North Vietnamese undoubtedly realize that time is beginning to run out and that they must either take the base in the next few weeks before the heavy rains or begin pulling back. Their failure so far to take advantage of the diversion of US air strikes to South Vietnam suggests, however, that they are encountering significant difficulties in readying their forces for the attack.

The two diversionary task forces that Vang Pao has had operating north and east of the Plaine for nearly a month are withdrawing. They did not succeed in disrupting North Vietnamese rear supply lines nor did they cause any enemy forces to pull back from the Long Tieng area.

In the south, government forces are making gains in their effort to clear North Vietnamese units from the western edge of the Bolovens Plateau. Irregular units east of Pakse on Route 23 recaptured Ban Gnik on Saturday against limited enemy resistance.

We expect that the North Vietnamese forces in the area--consisting of elements of two regiments--will stiffen their defenses if the government forces continue farther east toward Paksong.

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USSR-IRAQ

The signing of a 15-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation yesterday was a major step in Moscow's effort to establish a political position in the Middle East independent of the demands of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Soviet presence in Egypt.

The treaty's military aspect, providing for continued cooperation in "strengthening the defense capabilities" of each country, falls somewhere between Moscow's similar pacts with India and Egypt concluded last year. The Indian treaty had no defense commitment, but the Soviets and Egyptians agreed to develop military cooperation and the Soviets specifically agreed to "assist in training Egyptian military personnel." None of the treaties provides for mutual assistance or military coordination in the event of hostilities.

Although Egypt remains central to Soviet policy in the Middle East, the Iraqi treaty provides one more sign that Moscow is intent on cultivating additional assets in the area

For Iraq, which receives nearly all its military equipment from the USSR, the treaty marks a further edging away from isolation within the Arab world as Baghdad seeks support against Iranian ambitions in the Persian Gulf.

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NOTES

USSR-Vietnam: The Soviets are sticking to their gingerly approach in commenting on the current fighting, and are yet to issue a serious, authoritative statement. On Saturday TASS carried a low-key report on Secretary Laird's press conference of the previous day and avoided any mention of the Secretary's remarks concerning the Soviet role in the conflict. The dispatch routinely criticized US actions against North Vietnam. Also on Saturday a low-level article in Pravda criticized "the Pentagon" for increasing its "aggression" in Vietnam.

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Pakistan: The rift between President Bhutto and his main political opposition is growing. Over the weekend a spokesman for Bhutto's party announced that last month's agreement between Bhutto and Wali Khan, leader of the opposition coalition in the two western border provinces, had broken down. Yesterday Wali rejected a new proposal on governing the provinces and extending martial law. When the National Assembly convenes this Friday Bhutto seems likely to have the votes he needs to extend martial law, but Wali is capable of fomenting considerable unrest in border areas if he wants to do so.

Tanzania: The assassination of Abeid Karume, Vice President of Tanzania and dictator of the autonomous off-shore island of Zanzibar, late Friday does not appear to have been part of a general coup attempt and Karume's Revolutionary Council remains in control. Karume's death will improve President Nyerere's chances of tightening Zanzibar's loose ties with the mainland, for the island's new rulers can scarcely be as obstinate as was Karume during the eight years of federation.

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