

The President's Daily Brief

12 April 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in South Vietnam and an examination of the changing balance of forces in the delta are reported on *Page 1*.

Soviet party chief Brezhnev's reception of Secretary Butz is an unprecedented gesture of personal goodwill toward the US. (*Page 3*)

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Fidel Castro appears to be planning a visit to the USSR and Eastern Europe before President Nixon's visit to Moscow. (*Page 5*)

Deployment of North Vietnamese Main Force Regiments in the Delta



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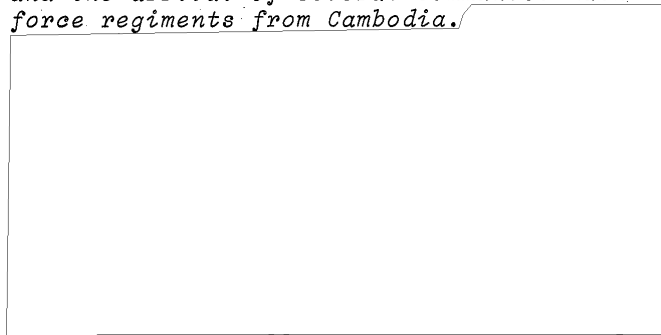
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SOUTH VIETNAM

North Vietnamese forces are maintaining pressure against South Vietnamese units in the north, the highlands, and along the Cambodian border north of Saigon. Although government defenses are stiffening, enemy deployments indicate that heavier attacks are in store for each of these regions and in parts of the Mekong Delta as well. Late reports indicate that the Communists on 11 April carried out a heavy attack against South Vietnamese forces operating in Kampot Province opposite the delta in extreme southeastern Cambodia. The South Vietnamese apparently held their ground and claim to have inflicted significant casualties.

The balance of opposing main force units in the delta (Military Region 4) has shifted significantly in recent weeks with the departure of Saigon's 21st Division and the arrival of several Communist main force regiments from Cambodia.

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The two South Vietnamese divisions remaining in the region, the 7th and 9th, together with government territorial forces, are spreading out to cover the provinces in the southeastern part of the delta that are being vacated by the 21st Division.

The commander of MR-4, General Truong, is worried about the influx of enemy forces, especially in view of the departure of the 21st Division. The South Vietnamese have had considerable success during the past year in reducing Communist influence in areas of the delta that had long been enemy bastions. For example, operations in Communist sanctuaries such as the U Minh Forest and western Dinh Tuong Province had whittled down enemy capabilities to operate in much of the rest of the delta.

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Since the upsurge of Communist activity, however, government operations in the delta provinces have been relatively unsuccessful, and Truong judges that the territorial forces are not capable of handling major Communist attacks. Furthermore, the rate of Communist-initiated incidents so far in April has jumped dramatically over previous months. Truong is also deeply concerned over the Communists' ability to lie dormant for long periods and then take rapid action that could, if not checked, have considerable adverse impact on the pacification program in the delta.

* * *

The North Vietnamese party central committee met recently and, according to press treatment, the party's elite gave a ringing endorsement to Hanoi's current war strategy. They also took a tough line on negotiations with the US and by implication excluded negotiations with the South Vietnamese until after Thieu and his government have been set aside through US intervention.

The plenum's public endorsement of the current war strategy suggests that any divisions over this strategy have been suppressed for now. While the press treatment may distort Hanoi's position vis-a-vis the South, it clearly indicates that the war has first place in North Vietnam's priorities. A similar party meeting took place last year, but the assignment at that time of first priority to the war was not publicized until much later. This year's more candid approach is intended to offer underpinning to the offensive now under way.

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US-USSR

Soviet party chief Brezhnev yesterday received Secretary Butz and, according to TASS, had an "informal, businesslike" talk with him. Ambassador Beam also participated in the meeting.

This meeting is an unprecedented gesture of personal good-will toward the US by Brezhnev. Secretary Butz is the first American official to be publicly received by Brezhnev since he replaced Khrushchev as party boss in 1964.

The Soviet leader's decision to receive Secretary Butz was apparently made at the last minute, forcing postponement on short notice of Brezhnev's meeting with a West German official.

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EGYPT



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CUBA-USSR-GUINEA

Fidel Castro plans to visit Guinea on 3 May,

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The fact that Castro is going to Conakry suggests that there is something to reports that he is going further and plans a visit to the USSR and Eastern Europe before President Nixon's visit to Moscow.

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NOTE

Chile: President Allende has finally managed to get a military officer into his cabinet, but he made the appointment without consulting with the leaders of his coalition. This independence no doubt will further hurt Allende's relations with fractious leaders of the disparate coalition. On the other hand, the appointment of a military man could bring Allende the additional political support from the armed forces that he desires.

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