

The President's Daily Brief

15 April 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in South Vietnam is reported on Page 1.

Strains within Thailand's top leadership are causing indecision and drift in the government. (Page 2)

West German opposition leader Barzel has reaffirmed his opposition to the Eastern treaties following his meeting with Chancellor Brandt. (Page 3)

The Soviets have been making more extended naval visits to Cuba since late 1971. (Page 4)

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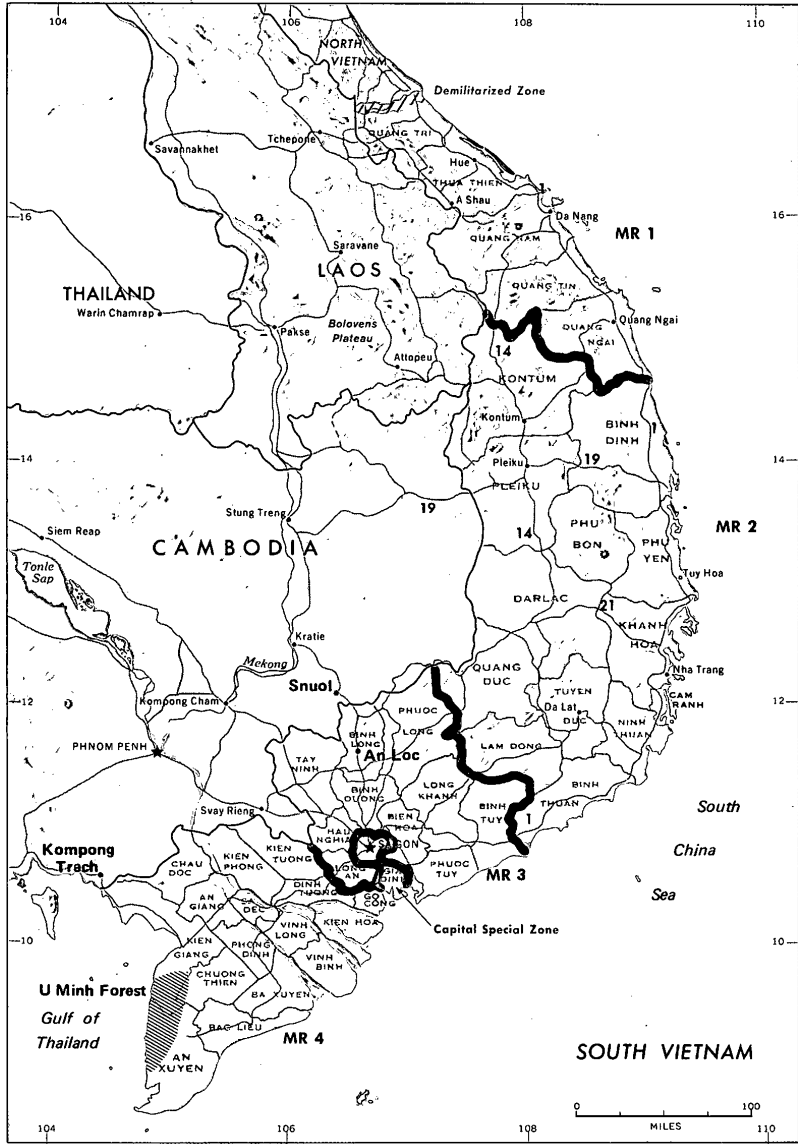
Uruguay's president is using the terrorist killings yesterday to reinforce his request for strong new security legislation. (Page 5)

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**SOUTH VIETNAM**

The Communists have renewed their drive against An Loc in Binh Long Province north of Saigon. They have been moving in heavy equipment, and numerous tracked vehicles and trucks have been spotted near the southern end of the city. There was a sharp clash on the southwestern edge of the city yesterday, but government forces are still reported to be holding most of the city. Intense bombing of Communist positions has apparently inflicted heavy casualties and has accounted for a number of enemy tanks destroyed.

The government has succeeded in airlifting more than two battalions into An Loc and is now flying in all of the airborne brigade that has been spearheading the relief column stalled on Route 13. The 21st Division, which makes up the balance of the column, will now remain well to the south of the city where it is now digging in.

The convergence in Binh Long Province of over two Communist divisions, together with the appearance of substantial numbers of enemy tanks, leaves little doubt that the Communists mean to make the fight for An Loc one of the main battles of their current offensive. They apparently are willing to accept a showdown engagement in Binh Long in the hope that they can inflict sufficient punishment on South Vietnamese forces to shake ARVN morale and arouse new misgivings toward the Thieu government.

South Vietnamese commanders in the delta believe that the thinning out of their forces there following the 21st Division's withdrawal to Binh Long has encouraged the Communists to become more aggressive. With the addition of two regiments from Cambodia in the upper delta, heavy attacks are expected in Kien Hoa and Dinh Tuong provinces. Farther south, Communist units staging from the U Minh Forest have overrun 20 of 24 outposts in one district of Chuong Thien Province and there is concern for the provincial capital. On the Cambodian side of the border, the Communists have struck hard at South Vietnamese Rangers and armored troops operating near Kompong Trach. The South Vietnamese have sustained heavy casualties, their artillery has been knocked out, and they have so far been prevented from retreating.

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THAILAND

General Praphat, number two man in the government, has been publicly at odds with his superior, Marshal Thanom, over the issue of when a new constitution should be promulgated. [redacted]

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Praphat and Thanom have frequently differed on policy issues during the almost eight years they have ruled Thailand, but now their cordial personal relationship appears to be breaking down. Praphat would like to stall on the new constitution until Thanom's term as supreme military commander expires at the end of September, a delay which would open the way for Praphat's assumption of the top military post.

The infighting at the top has already led to inefficiency and a sense of drift throughout the government. This indecisiveness and the worsening relations between Thanom and Praphat could stir up latent discontent among younger officers who are longing for a greater share of leadership.

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WEST GERMANY

Following his meeting with Chancellor Brandt on Wednesday, opposition leader Barzel put the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union formally on the record as opposed to ratification of the Eastern treaties. Barzel said that recent Communist concessions and clarifications were not enough. He again urged the government to renegotiate with the Soviets, arguing that additional improvements, particularly affecting freedom of movement between the two Germanies, could be achieved. Barzel claimed that failure to ratify the treaties would not cause the Soviets to block the Four Power Berlin Accord because Moscow wishes thus to open the way for a Conference on European Security. Barzel's statement was unanimously approved by the CDU-CSU parliamentary deputies.



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Soviet Naval Visits to Cuba



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USSR-CUBA

Beginning in late 1971, the Soviets appear to have begun more extended naval visits to Cuba. The

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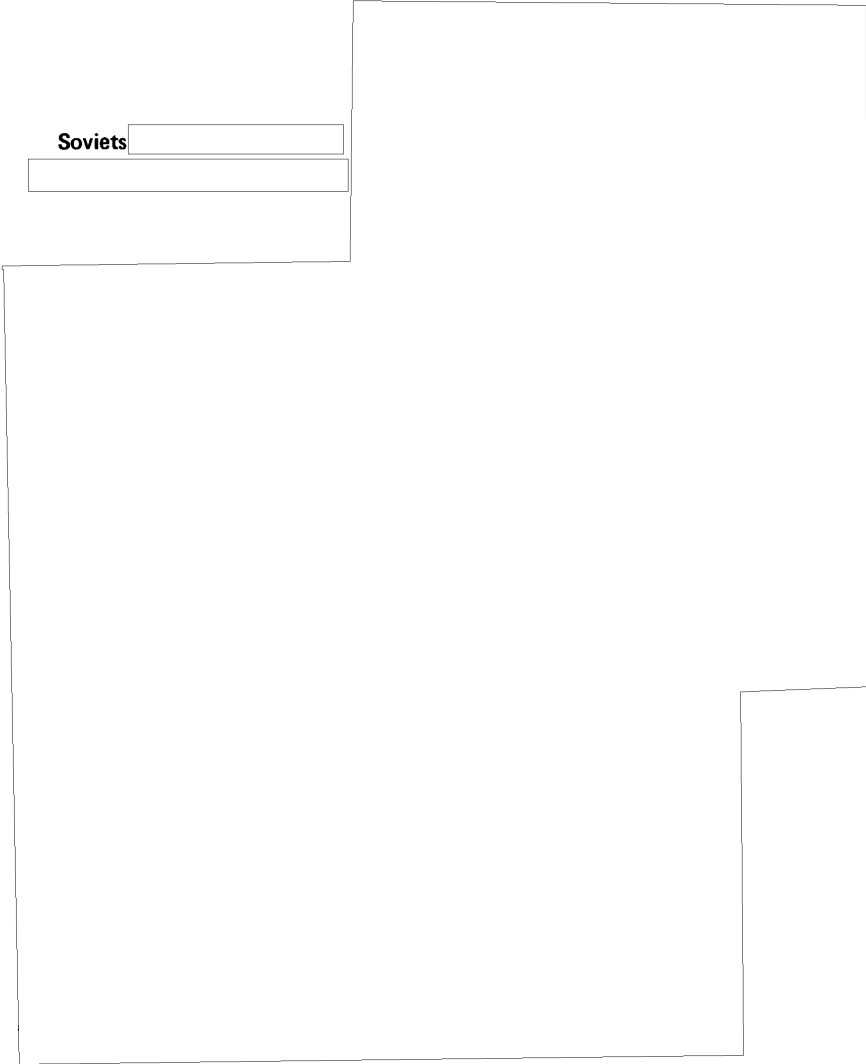
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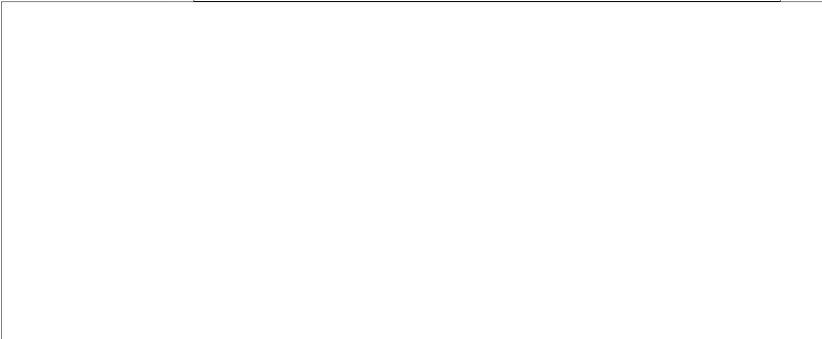
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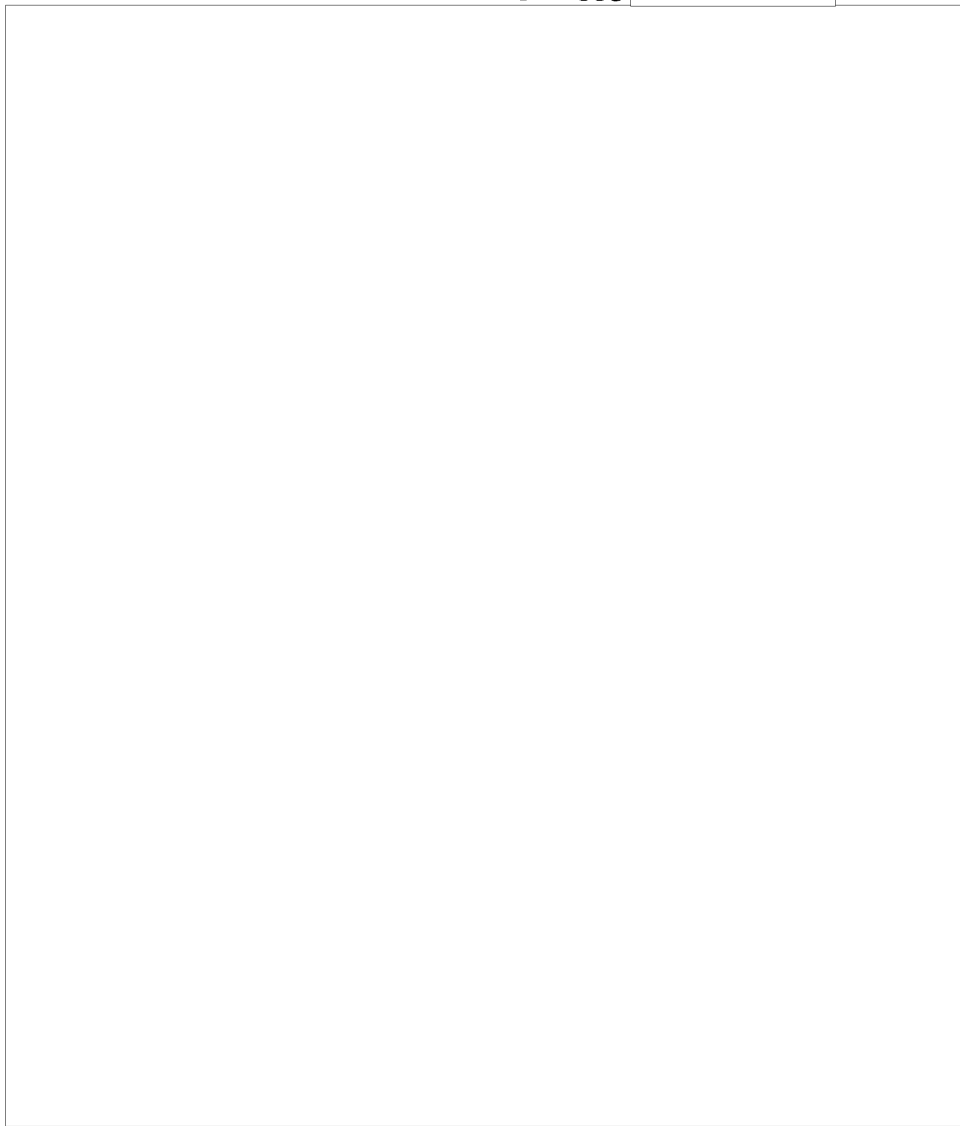
Uruguay: President Bordaberry is using the killing of four men by Tupamaro terrorists yesterday to bolster his requests for broad security legislation. Present emergency measures expire on 30 April, and his proposed new law--particularly a provision giving the military wide authority to deal with terrorism--has been encountering considerable congressional opposition. The latest outbreak of violence, which has now led to the death of at least eight Tupamaros and the capture of many more, seems to be eliciting support from some influential military and political quarters for Bordaberry's call for immediate congressional approval of his proposals.

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China-Laos:



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