

*The President's Daily Brief*

*11 May 1972*

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LATE ITEM

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

11 May 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Soviet leaderships' attempt to formulate a response to President Nixon's speech is discussed on Page 1.

The USSR apparently has made no firm decision on the disposition of its ships in North Vietnamese ports. Peking's first authoritative comment on the US military measures is relatively low-keyed; Hanoi, meanwhile, is emphasizing the need for more support from its allies and stressing the threat to their ships and facilities. Communist forces continue to prepare for further offensive operations in South Vietnam. (Page 2)

In the past few days Communist forces have improved their position in southeastern Cambodia. (Page 5)

West German government and opposition leaders have agreed to postpone the debate and vote on the Eastern treaties until 17 May. (Page 6)

[redacted] Soviet [redacted] Iran [redacted] Iraq. (Page 7)

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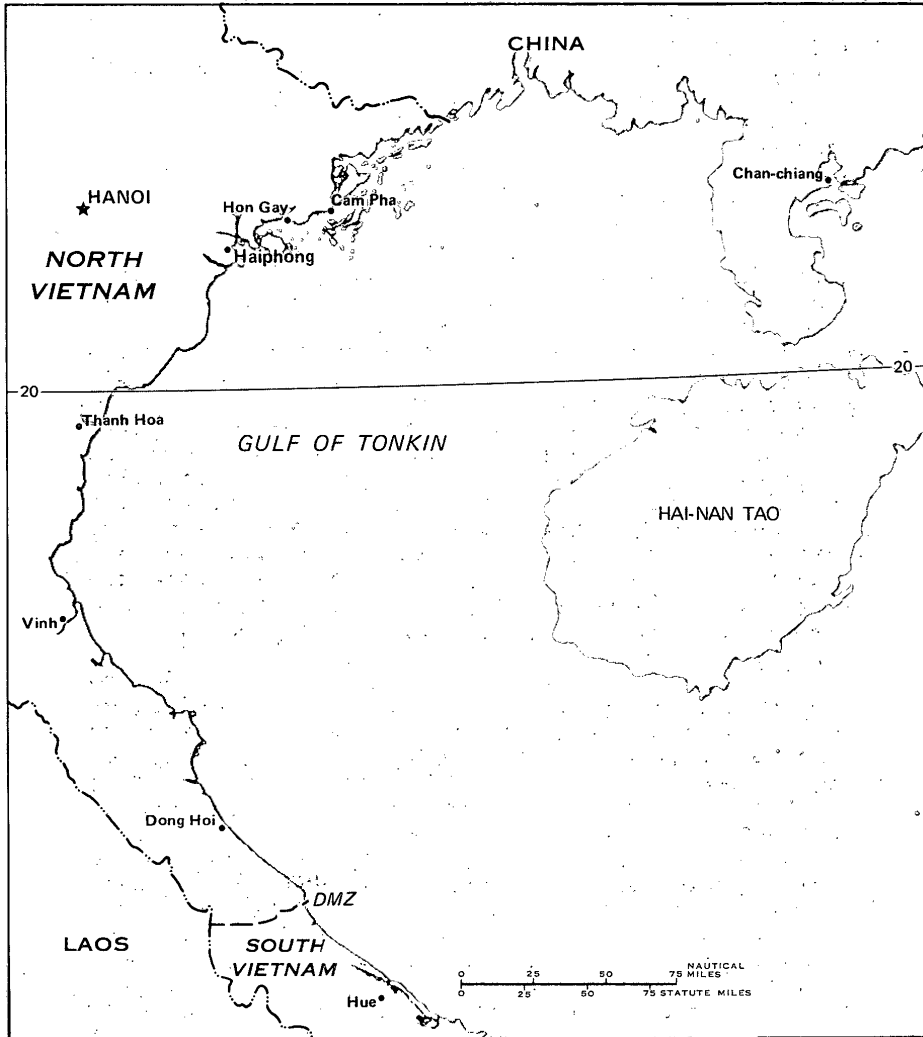
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*There has so far been no authoritative public response by the Soviets to the President's speech of Monday night, but their reaction time in the past to important developments affecting their vital interests has been slow.*

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*In addition to developing a response to the President, the Soviet leaders must deal with another matter of great importance to them, the West German Bundestag debate on treaty ratification. Indeed, the contradictory positions reportedly taken by Soviet Ambassador Falin yesterday in Bonn suggest high-level debate and indecision in Moscow. Under the circumstances, we suspect that the problems of US relations and West German relations have become entangled in Soviet deliberations. If so, yesterday's delay of the ratification vote in Bonn can only have complicated the Politburo's problem.*

*Because of Brezhnev's role in both these issues it is altogether possible that his leadership has become linked with the policy questions at stake and, although there is no direct evidence to support the speculation, that a larger struggle for political power has been touched off.*



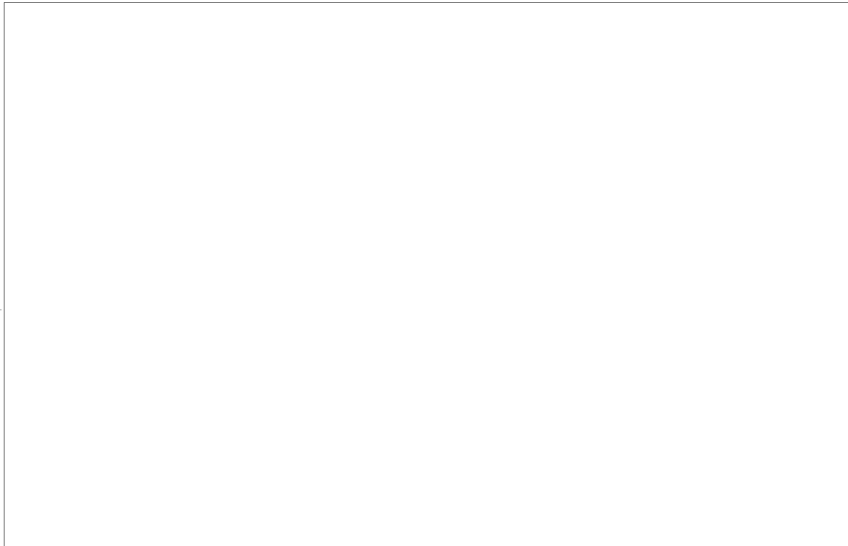
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VIETNAM

Soviet and Chinese military activities in the Indochina area continue to appear normal.

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In their first authoritative comment on President Nixon's speech, the Chinese in an 11 May "Commentator" article in the People's Daily condemned the US military measures but refrained from portraying them as a threat or a "challenge" to China. The article describes the US actions in relatively low-keyed terms and neither called for their cessation nor committed Peking to any definite course of action. Moreover, the article did not contain any personal attacks on President Nixon, and attributed the US actions to the US Government instead. The commentary did not discuss the President's proposals for a cease-fire and subsequent withdrawal of US troops, although it contained the standard demand that the US pull out of Vietnam and cease supporting the South Vietnamese Government.

The North Vietnamese Government devoted almost as much of its first official pronouncement on President Nixon's speech to the need for continued support from its own allies as to the US action itself. The government communiqué, issued yesterday, includes two long passages exhorting fraternal socialist countries "to check in good time the bloody hands of the US aggressors" and expressing "confidence" that Hanoi's allies will not fail to measure up to their responsibilities. It also reiterated most of the caustic language Hanoi's propagandists have been using to condemn the US action, including allegations that the US is escalating the war and violating international law.

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The statement is only the latest indication of North Vietnamese concern over the current level of Soviet and Chinese support. Less authoritative media have carried a similar line, heavily emphasizing the danger the US actions pose to Soviet lives and shipping. They have also publicized alleged damage to the Vietnam - Soviet Friendship Hospital and to the offices of the Chinese economic mission in Hanoi.



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Hanoi's two top negotiators have reacted sharply to Dr. Kissinger's contention that the Communists offered nothing new in the latest round of secret talks. Chief negotiator Xuan Thuy, as he prepared to leave Paris for "consultations" at home, told newsmen at the airport that it was Washington and not Hanoi that had proved intransigent in the private discussions. He insisted that Dr. Kissinger had simply repeated the old US position of "aggression and colonialism" which the Communist side had consistently rejected. Politburo member Le Duc Tho, who saw off Thuy at the airport, maintained that Dr. Kissinger had also misled newsmen about the kind of government the Communists wanted in Saigon. Tho asserted that his side was pressing only for a genuine coalition government, not a Communist regime. He also accused the presidential adviser of having violated agreements between the two sides not to disclose the substance of the secret talks.

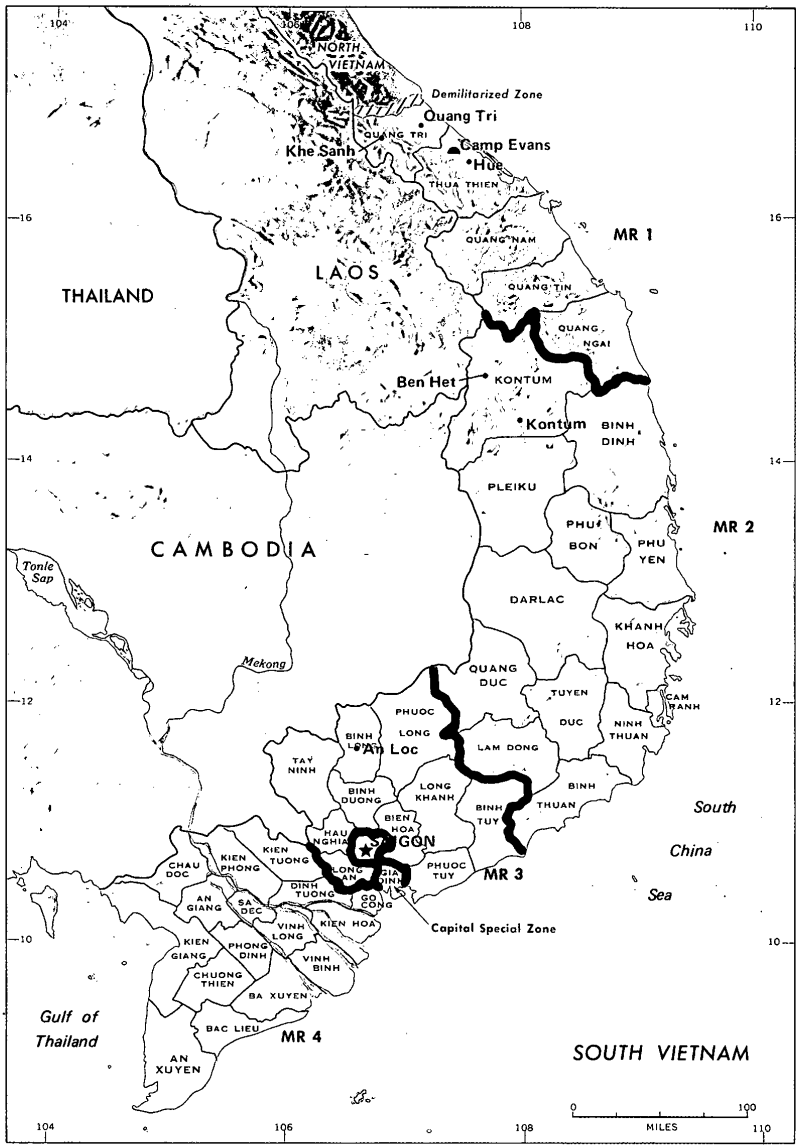
*The Communists clearly were stung by Dr. Kissinger's news briefing and may well feel that it has put them temporarily on the defensive. Once in Hanoi, Thuy probably will participate in formulating North Vietnam's position on future negotiations and the new developments in the war. Thuy will stop in Moscow and Peking en route home. He did not reveal how long his consultations in Hanoi will last. The Communists announced, however, that Tho plans to stay in Paris for the time being.*

\* \* \*

Communist forces in South Vietnam continue preparations for further offensive operations. In northern South Vietnam, enemy supply movements have increased sharply in the Khe Sanh area. Intercepts reveal that elements of the Communists' 324B Division have been ordered to monitor closely South Vietnamese positions around Camp Evans, the northernmost government strongpoint.

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In the central highlands, Communist attackers were pushed out of the Ben Het Ranger camp on 9 May after they had seized about one third of the base, and government forces there are thus far holding their positions.

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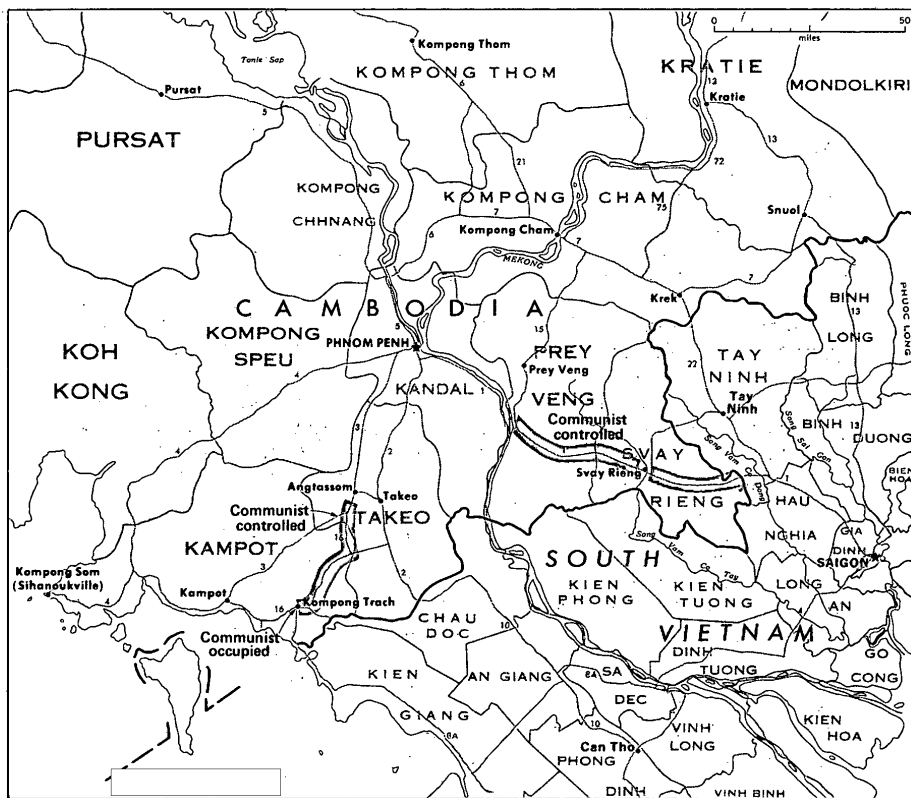
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In the southern half of the country, Communist forces early today launched heavy attacks on An Loc from all sides.

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CAMBODIA

In the past few days Communist troops have gained control over a 35-mile length of Route 16 in Kampot Province north of Kompong Trach and are in a good position to put pressure on several key government positions in Takeo Province. Enemy elements are reported to be within striking distance of the lightly defended town of Angtassom, on Route 3, and there is also evidence of increasing Communist activity around the nearby city of Takeo.

*The Communist advances represent the most significant enemy activity in Kampot and Takeo provinces since the early days of the Cambodian war. The Communists' objective in this region probably is to eliminate any effective government presence between the cities of Kampot--which is already isolated--and Takeo, thereby facilitating the movement of troops and supplies into the delta area of South Vietnam.*

*The same objective lay behind the Communists' campaign in Svay Rieng and Prey Veng provinces last month, which has given them control of all of Route 1 east of the Mekong, with the exception of the now isolated city of Svay Rieng. Phnom Penh's efforts to reopen the highway have faltered, and there are no signs that the government has any serious plans to mount new operations to clear the highway.*

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### WEST GERMANY

Government and opposition leaders decided in the midst of yesterday's Bundestag session to postpone the debate and vote on the Eastern treaties until 17 May. In the interval, a commission drawn from both government and opposition ranks will attempt to resolve the outstanding disagreement on the transmittal of the all-Bundestag resolution on the treaties to the Soviets. Further meetings between Chancellor Brandt and opposition leader Barzel are also likely.

Barzel had met with Soviet Ambassador Falin before the debate began, but the two were unable to resolve a disagreement about the modalities of the Soviet response to the joint resolution. As a result, Barzel threatened during the Bundestag session that the Christian Democrats would unanimously veto the treaties if the government insisted on further debate without granting more time to resolve the prevailing confusion. Brandt's desire to gain broad bipartisan support for the treaties was probably instrumental in his decision to yield for the time being.

*If the commission can reach agreement during the coming week, there is a good chance that Barzel can swing the bulk of the Christian Democratic Party behind the treaties. The resolution itself will present no problem for the commission, but the Christian Democrats' desire to raise the legal status of the Soviet response could cause problems and further test Moscow's patience.*

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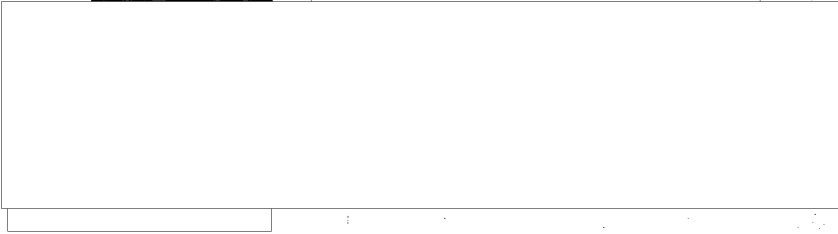
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NOTES

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Chile: The removal of two top officials this week reflects the continuing strains within the Allende government. The resignation of Labor Minister Oyarce, a Communist, probably resulted from recurrent labor unrest, including a costly strike of copper workers. The Communists will press Allende to replace Oyarce with another Communist in order to keep the former political balance. The president of the financially troubled national airline has been ousted, both from his job and from the Socialist Party. His prospective successor, Rodolfo Ortega, is President Allende's former private pilot and bodyguard.

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