



*The President's Daily Brief*

15 May 1972

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*Top Secret*

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

15 May 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Soviet military and political leaders continue to conduct business as usual. The current status of Soviet naval and merchant ships near North Vietnam is discussed on Page 1.

An attack on Kontum City in the central highlands appears imminent. (Page 3)

Egyptian President Sadat has admitted that misunderstandings have arisen between Moscow and Cairo. (Page 5)

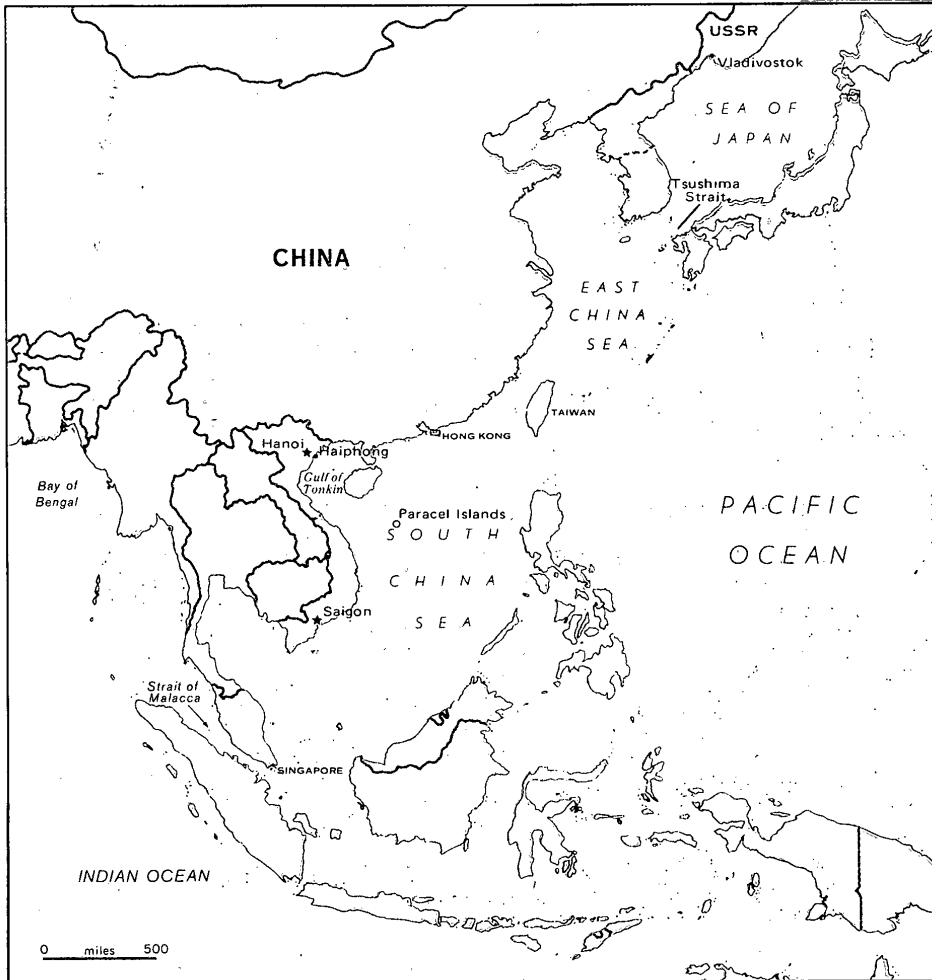
The opposition Christian Democrats in West Germany appear ready to support both the draft all-party resolution and the Eastern treaties. (Page 6)

Soviets   
 Egypt. (Page 7)

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Soviet   
Cuba  (Page 7)

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USSR-VIETNAM

Top Soviet military and political leaders are still conducting business as usual. Defense Minister Grechko and the heads of the Soviet Navy and Air Force arrived in Cairo on Sunday for a four-day stay, and Moscow has announced that army chief Pavlovsky left Sunday for a visit to France that is to last until 19 May. Pravda and Izvestia carry routine articles by Warsaw Pact commander Yakubovsky and Pact chief of staff Shtemenko marking the alliance's 17th anniversary. According to the TASS summaries, the articles mention the situation in Vietnam only briefly.

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Several Soviet press reports have recently conveyed the impression that Soviet seaborne shipments to Vietnam are still proceeding. According to a domestic broadcast on 12 May, for example, a Soviet shipping official said that eight ships carrying non-military cargoes were on their way to North Vietnam. Broadcasts from Vladivostok have said that one ship from that port is en route to Vietnam and that port workers will continue to load cargo for Haiphong.

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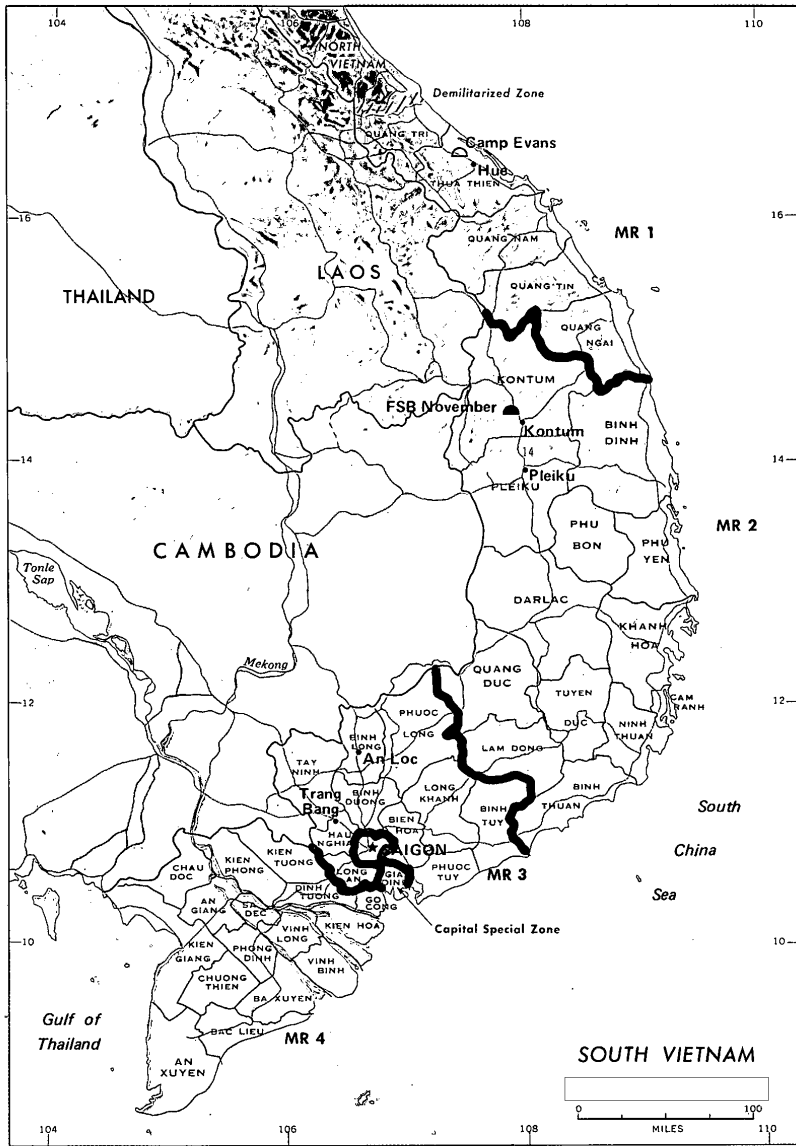
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SOUTH VIETNAM

Communist forces struck government positions around Kontum City in the central highlands over the weekend, and an attack on the provincial capital seems imminent. Early Sunday morning, infantry and tanks attacked Fire Support Base November, three miles northwest of Kontum. Failing to take the base, the Communists bypassed it and engaged other government positions within two miles of the city. Two bridges south of Kontum on Route 14 were either damaged or destroyed by the Communists, probably in an effort to hinder the movement of supplies and re-inforcements from Pleiku.

In Military Region 1, an operation by three South Vietnamese Marine battalions, which were airlifted behind enemy lines into southern Quang Tri Province over the weekend, terminated after less than 24 hours. It appears to have caused little damage to enemy units. The Communists, in fact, were aware that some kind of an attack was coming. The headquarters of the 304th Division had ordered its subordinate units last Thursday to prepare defensive positions against a South Vietnamese foray.

Farther south in Military Region 1, intercepts indicate that a North Vietnamese artillery regiment and an infantry regiment are planning attacks against South Vietnamese positions in Thua Thien Province. The attacks may be directed against Camp Evans, which has frequently been mentioned in intercepts as a likely target.

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The Lower House passed President Thieu's request for emergency powers yesterday by an 81 to 49 vote following a heated debate, but the government is not sure it can get Senate approval of the measure.

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The influential Nguyen Ngoc Huy, head of the moderate Progressive Nationalist Movement, has come out against the bill.



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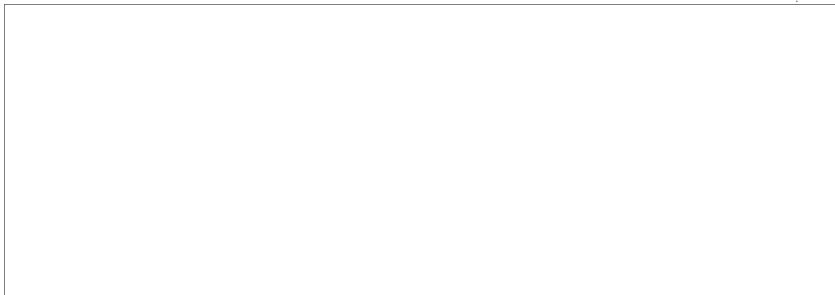
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EGYPT-USSR

President Sadat has again emphasized that the need for Soviet support in the struggle against Israel overshadows any differences that may arise in Cairo's relationship with Moscow. Speaking before the National Assembly on Sunday, and with an eye to Soviet Defense Minister Grechko's current visit to Cairo, the Egyptian leader accused the US and Israel of seeking to drive a wedge between Egypt and the Soviet Union. He admitted that misunderstandings had arisen between Cairo and Moscow, but emphasized the indispensable nature of Soviet aid.



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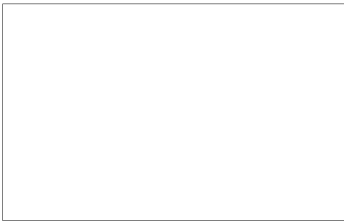
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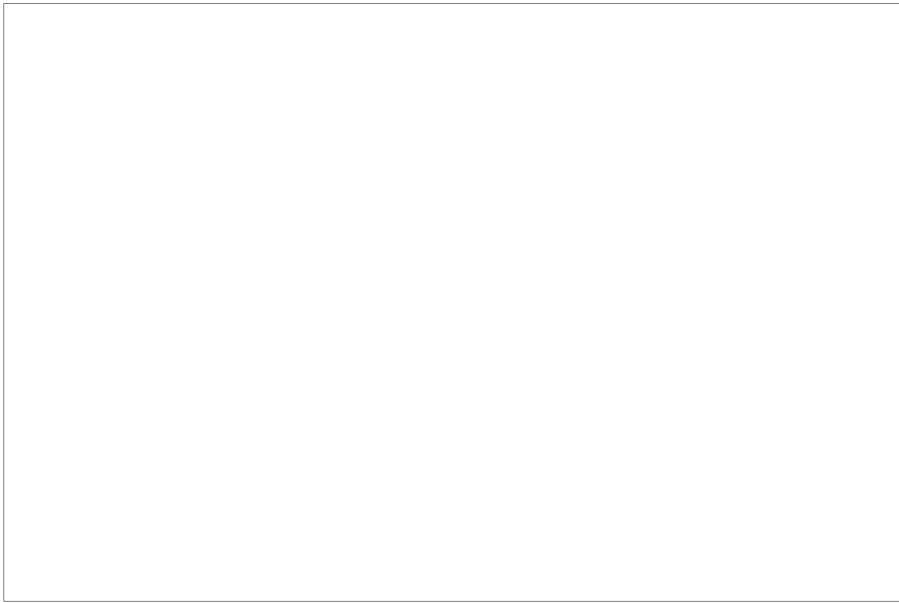
WEST GERMANY

The opposition Christian Democrats are expected to decide during caucuses today and tomorrow to support both the draft all-party resolution and the Eastern treaties, despite last-minute doubts raised last week when the Soviets for a time seemed unwilling to agree to parts of the resolution. The resolution is a unilateral West German interpretation of the treaties which the Soviets, as the price for Christian Democratic agreement not to block ratification, are supposed to accept without challenge.

*Even though conservative resistance to the treaties is apparently beginning to weaken, it is doubtful that opposition leader Barzel can convince his divided party to support ratification en bloc when the Bundestag votes on Wednesday.*



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NOTES

USSR-Egypt:

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USSR-Cuba:

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Turkey: President Sunay's rejection on Saturday of Prime Minister-Designate Urguplu's proposed government has deepened the political crisis and further undermined the Turkish parliamentary system. Sunay declared that the proposed cabinet was incompatible with the military leaders' memorandum of March 1971 when they ousted the Demirel government and insisted on installing an "above parties" cabinet. The military either dictated or endorsed Sunay's action, and the failure of Urguplu's two-week long effort increases the chance that they will directly take over the government.

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