

The President's Daily Brief

17 May 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LATE ITEM

- USSR: In what appears from a TASS dispatch to be a Pravda editorial today, the Soviet leadership reaffirms its support for Hanoi and at the same time asserts that the improvement of Soviet-US relations is possible and desirable--although not at the expense of "some third countries." The editorial declares that the Soviet Union will continue giving "all necessary assistance" to North Vietnam. The emphasis of the article, however, appears to be on the Soviet "peace program" and the solution of problems by negotiation.

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On page 1 we [redacted] discuss military developments in South Vietnam. 25X1 25X1

We note only a few new groups entering the infiltration corridor from North Vietnam. Hanoi clearly anticipated heavy losses in the current offensive and prepositioned troops infiltrated earlier in the season to act as replacements. (Page 3)

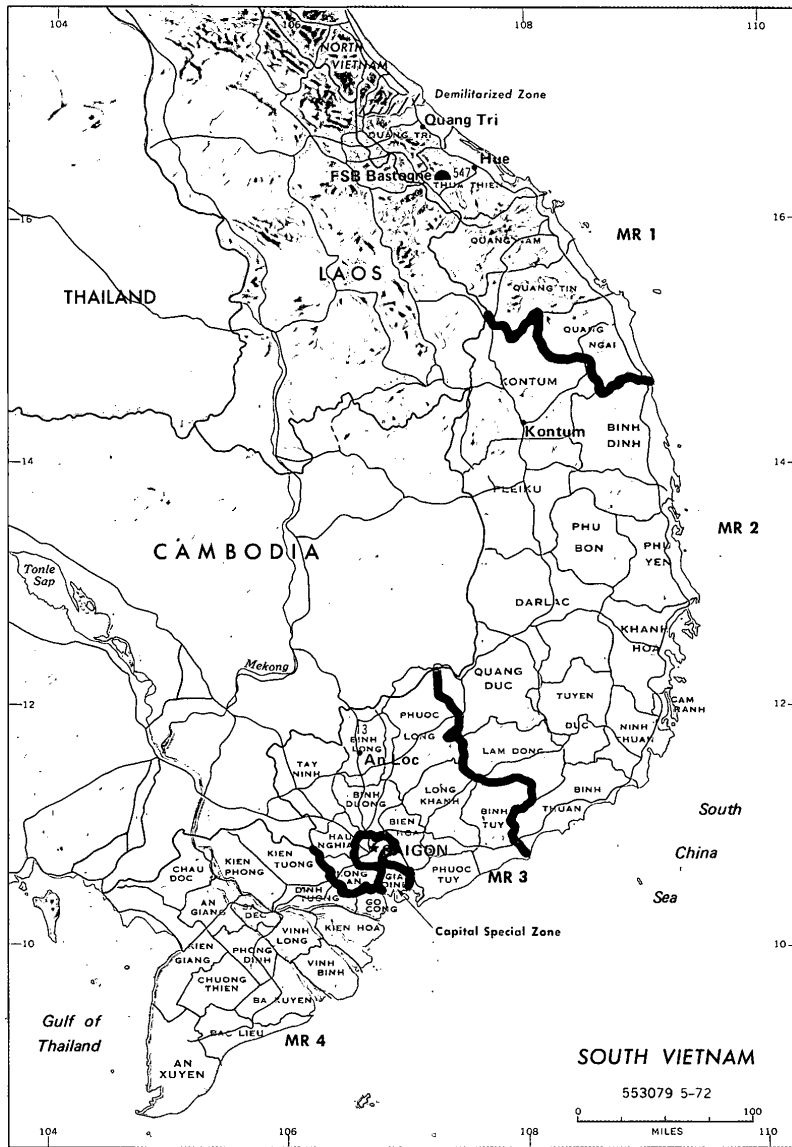
Egypt [redacted] (Page 4) 25X1 25X1

[redacted] Egypt [redacted] Soviet [redacted] (Page 5) 25X1 25X1

[redacted] Israel [redacted] Soviet [redacted] (Page 6) 25X1 25X1

[redacted] Fatah is planning further acts of terrorism against US, Israeli, and European interests. (Page 7) 25X1

The vote on the Eastern treaties in the West German Bundestag comes today and we still expect them to be approved. (Page 8)



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USSR-VIETNAM

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South Vietnamese forces are becoming more aggressive in some sections of the country. North of Saigon, for instance, they have organized a task force to relieve the garrison at An Loc. The force has met with only light resistance while moving to within eight miles of the town. Another battalion has been airlifted to a point within five miles of An Loc and two regiments of the long-stalled 21st Division have begun to move north to link up with these advance units.

South Vietnamese units near Hue have made three forays out of Fire Support Base Bastogne since they reoccupied the base on Monday. They claim to have captured seven tons of ammunition in these operations. Intercepted Communist communications, however, indicate that North Vietnamese units have moved to within a few miles of Bastogne, suggesting that the Communists may attempt to dislodge government forces from the base again.

(continued)

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The Communist forces that have been trying to get into position for a major assault on Hue have been taking a heavy pounding from the air and have been disrupted by recent government forays. Nevertheless, they still appear to be bringing in supplies and reconnoitering the battlefield. They may be withholding heavy fire in order to keep their heavy weapons concealed until they have assembled stocks of ammunition in forward positions adequate to support a substantial operation.

In the highlands near Kontum City, too, most Communist forces are concentrating on reconnaissance and other preparations.



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VIETNAM

This year's "infiltration season" may be ending, and only a few new groups are now entering the infiltration corridor. [redacted]

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Hanoi clearly anticipated heavy losses in the current offensive and prepositioned large numbers of replacements in base areas near the major battlefields before beginning the campaign. During the lull after each major assault, the wounded have been evacuated and replacements brought in from the nearby base areas.

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USSR-EGYPT

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USSR-EGYPT

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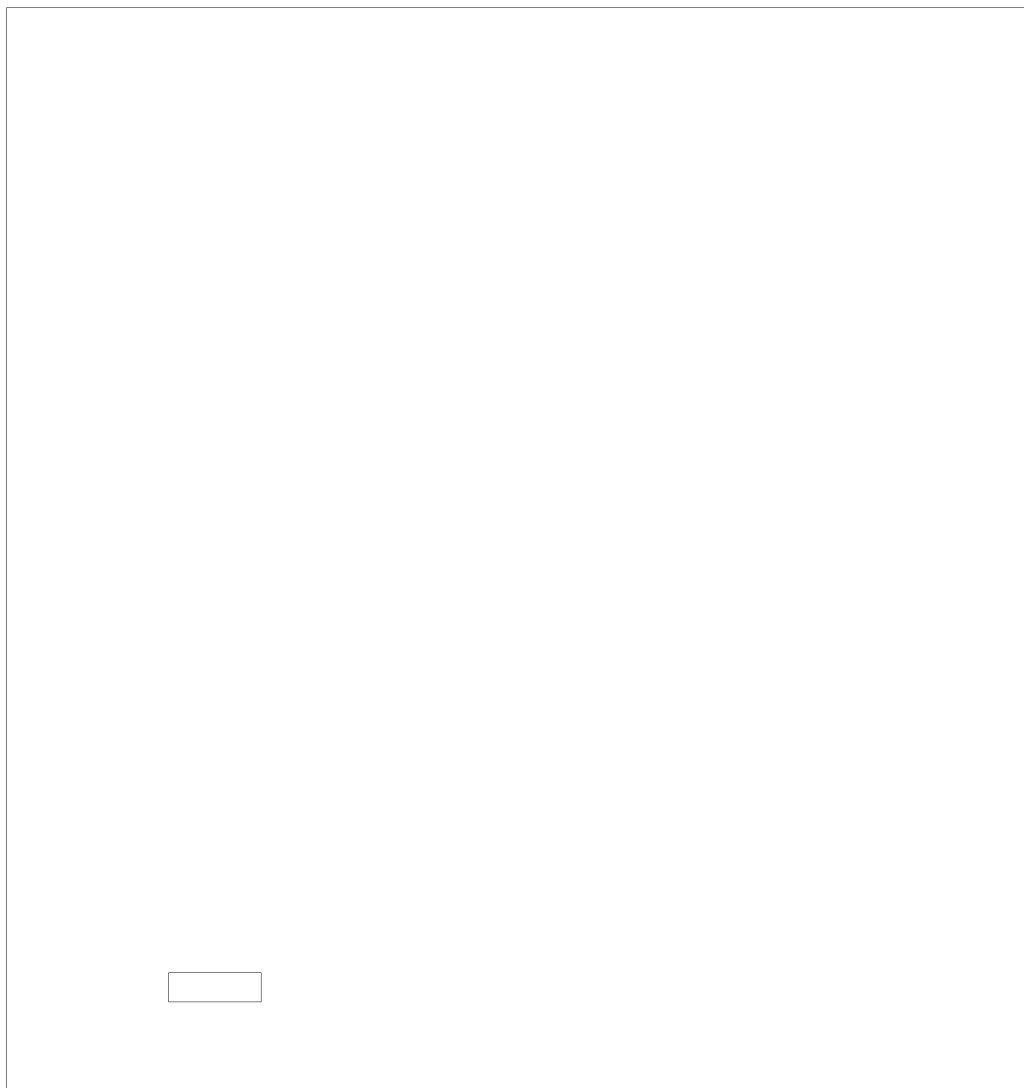
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ISRAEL-USSR

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FEDAYEEN

[redacted] Fatah is planning further acts of terrorism against American, Israeli, and European interests over the next month or so. After the fiasco at Tel Aviv on 8 May, when Israeli commandos frustrated the hijacking of a Belgian airliner, Fatah planners engaged in a series of post-mortems to analyze their mistakes. [redacted]

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These are just plans, of course, but the terrorists do have the ability to strike scattered individual targets without warning.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

WEST GERMANY

The vote in the Bundestag on the Eastern treaties is to take place today. We still expect the treaties will be approved. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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A procedural hitch may have developed that could delay the Bundesrat vote scheduled for Friday. The land government of the Saarland is reported to have lodged an objection to consideration of the treaties that could put off the vote until the middle of next week, but it does not affect the outcome.

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NOTE

Egypt-US: Without offering a reason, Cairo has requested a reduction in the size of the US Interests Section in Egypt from 20 to ten individuals, the level that existed following the break in relations in 1967. The Egyptians also plan to reduce the size of their representation in Washington. Although no deadline for the reduction was initially given, the chief US representative in Cairo was told later that a month would be satisfactory. His efforts to elicit an explanation met only the response that the decision had been made at the "highest level." The action seems to have been taken to dramatize Egypt's dissatisfaction with US policies in the Middle East. Agreement to expand the size of the US Interests Section to the present level was reached a year ago, during a period of relative cordiality in US-Egyptian ties.

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