

*The President's Daily Brief*

*26 May 1972*

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*Top Secret*

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

26 May 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Vietnam, the Communists are increasing pressure on government positions in several areas. (Page 1)

Japanese Prime Minister Sato has explicitly acknowledged that Peking is the "sole legitimate" government of China--the clearest public signal to date that Tokyo is ready to move ahead in normalizing ties with Peking. (Page 2)

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[Redacted] (Page 3)

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Romanian President Ceausescu's sudden postponement of trips to Japan and West Germany appears to stem from domestic political difficulties. (Page 4)

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Soviet leader Shelest has lost his job as party boss in the Ukraine. (Page 6)

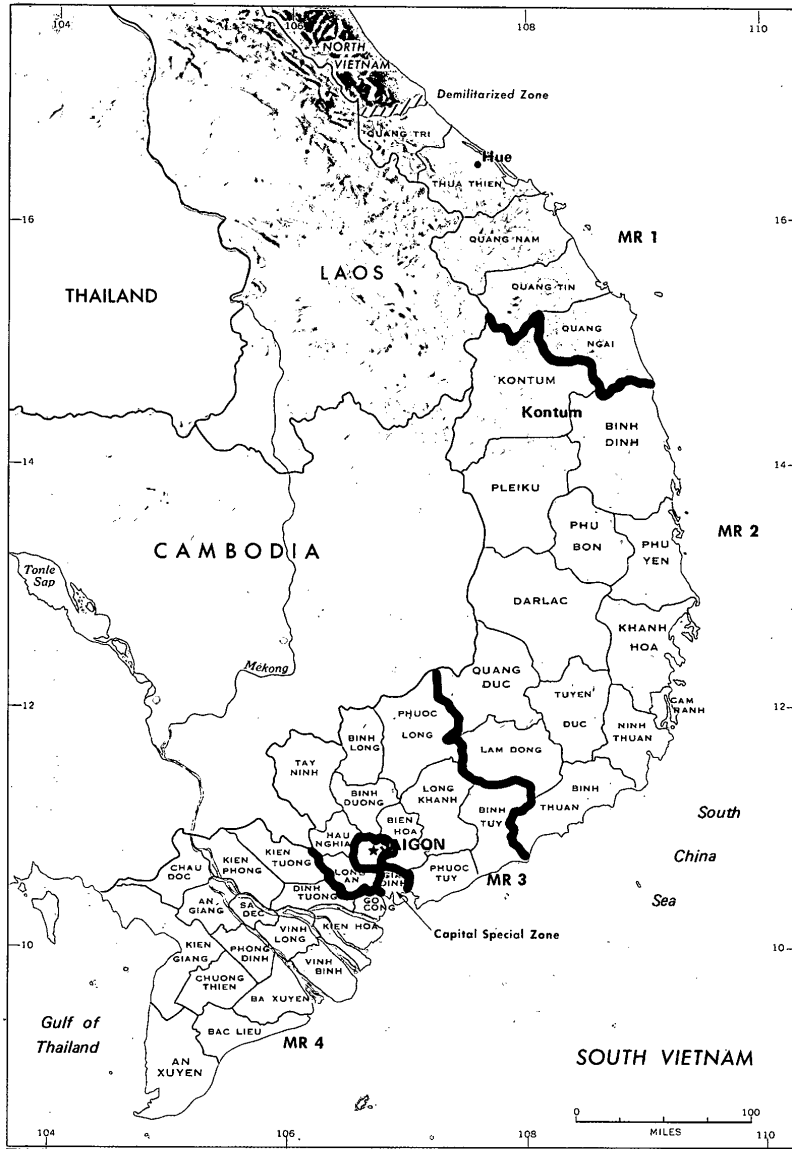
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VIETNAM

The Communists are increasing pressure on government positions in several areas.

Around Kontum City, heavy and accurate Communist shelling has knocked out a number of government artillery positions and temporarily closed the airfield. South Vietnamese defenders, however, inflicted heavy losses on a large enemy sapper force that briefly penetrated the city yesterday. There are elements of at least ten Communist infantry and combat support regiments now ringing Kontum City within a radius of 15 miles.

In Quang Tri Province, South Vietnamese Marines are meeting only light resistance and are expected to wind up their three-day spoiling operation on schedule sometime today. The heavy equipment and foodstuff losses reportedly inflicted on the Communists during this operation will, however, tend to be offset by the substantial quantities of supplies the enemy is continuing to move into northern South Vietnam from Laos. Intercepted Communist messages indicate that as much as 450 tons of supplies are en route to this region, and there are signs that this high level of logistics activity will continue in the near future.

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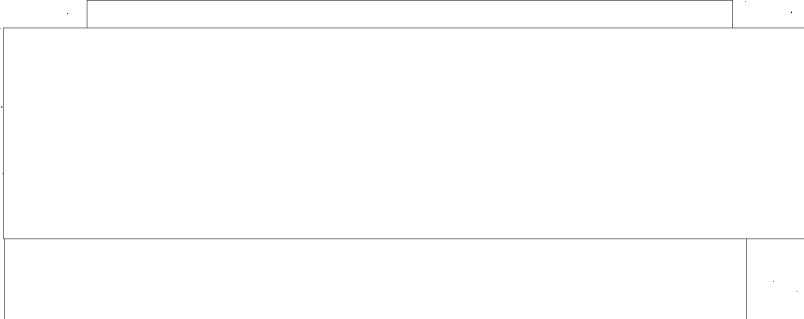
In North Vietnam, the regime is apparently still dissatisfied with the performance of its cadre in supporting the offensive in the South in the face of increased US bombing. The first hint that the regime may be considering a purge appeared in an article on 16 May in the Hanoi city newspaper by an official of the local party committee. He claimed that, in a combat situation, the "small segment" of party members who are unequal to the new tasks are "no longer worthy of being party members" and must be ostracized "in time" in order to keep the party "clean and steadfast."

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JAPAN-CHINA

In a Diet debate on 24 May, Prime Minister Sato explicitly acknowledged that Peking is the "sole legitimate" government of China.

*This statement meets one of Peking's three conditions for the restoration of relations and is the clearest public signal to date that Japan is prepared to move ahead in normalizing ties with Peking. Sato skirted China's other two demands--acknowledgement that Taiwan belongs to the mainland and renunciation of the peace treaty Tokyo signed with Taipei in 1952--by repeating his position that Tokyo cannot comment on the territorial status of Taiwan and stating that the treaty should be dealt with in governmental negotiations.*



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**ROMANIA**

President Ceausescu has suddenly postponed trips to Japan and West Germany that were scheduled for next month.

*Domestic politics appear to have been the reason for the postponement. Recent high-level personnel shifts that have received little public explanation have caused uneasiness--and perhaps opposition--among party members, who seem to fear that more extensive changes may be made at a party conference in July. Ceausescu's recent trip to eight African and Arab countries also has caused some criticism at home, particularly his promise of aid to developing nations, given at a time when Romania is struggling with a large foreign debt.*

*None of these problems, either singly or collectively, constitutes a threat to Ceausescu's leadership at the moment. Given his autocratic nature, however, Ceausescu will not overlook even a minor challenge. Apparently he has decided to take the initiative against internal grumblings by staying at home, defending his policies, and personally overseeing preparations for the party conference in July.*

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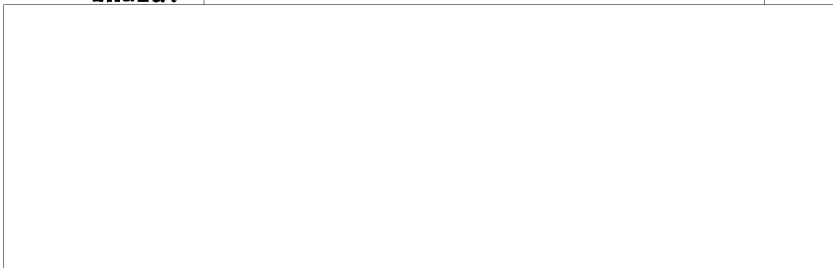


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NOTES

USSR: Yesterday Vladimir Shcherbitsky was elected party first secretary of the Ukraine, replacing Petr Shelest. Shcherbitsky has been premier of the Ukrainian government since October 1965 and was elected a full member of the party politburo in March 1971. His election to the policy-making politburo was engineered by Brezhnev and suggested that he was being groomed as Shelest's successor. The speedy change following the demotion of Shelest last week will spare Ukrainian leaders the embarrassment of having President Nixon received by Shelest, a critic of detente, when he visits Kiev.

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