



The President's Daily Brief

9 June 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

9 June 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

South Vietnamese forces have driven the Communists from within firing range of Kontum City's airfield, and an airborne unit has linked up with a government position just south of An Loc. (Page 1)

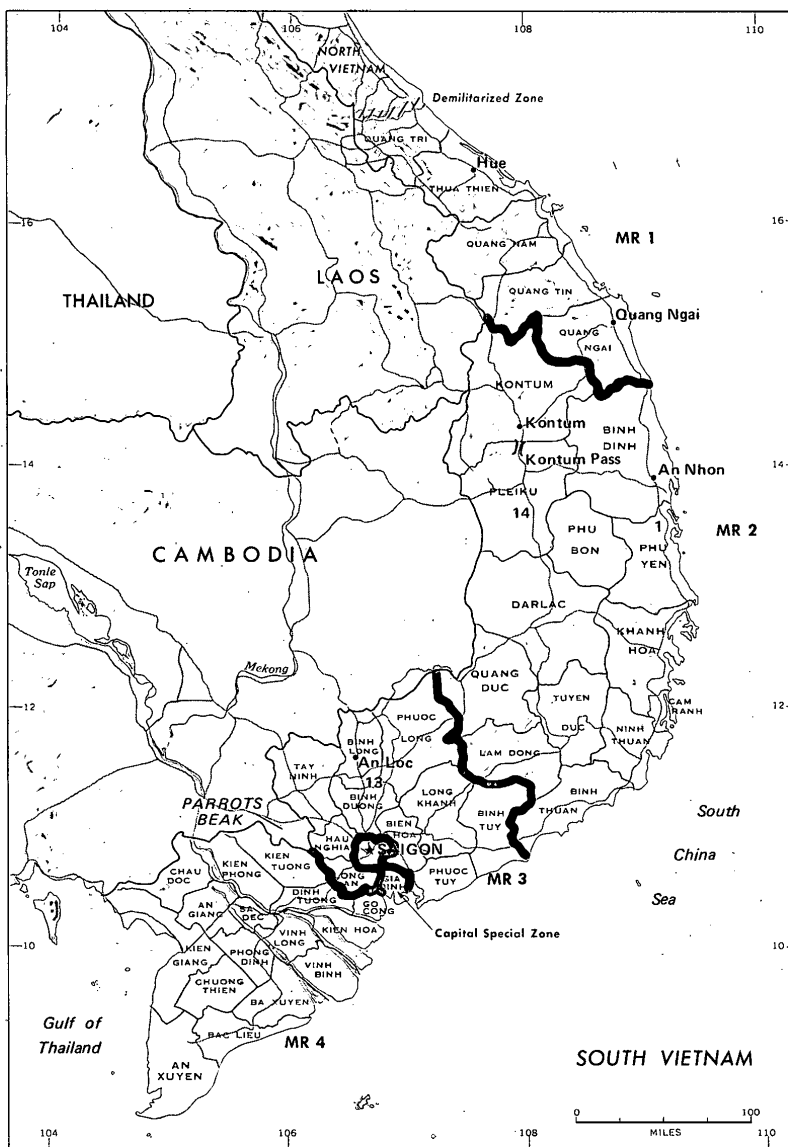
Japan [redacted]
[redacted] China [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] (Page 3)

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Chinese [redacted] suggestions that might lead to Peking's participation in a reorganized Geneva disarmament conference. (Page 4)

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At Annex, we discuss the results of last Sunday's presidential election in Cambodia and the prospects for the country's political stability.



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VIETNAM

The attack by five South Vietnamese marine bat-
talions into Quang Tri Province apparently has met
only light resistance.

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South Vietnamese forces still are clearing the
northern outskirts of Kontum City of the last enemy
troops dug in there. The enemy has been driven from
firing positions within range of the town's airfield
and aircraft can land there again. Bad weather is
hampering the government's efforts to clear the Com-
munists from Route 14 at Kontum Pass. To the east,
in Binh Dinh Province, the Communists appear to have
committed two battalions in An Nhon District.

A South Vietnamese airborne unit has linked up
with a government position just south of An Loc.
The main relief column, however, remains stalled
along Route 13 about nine miles south of the city.

Saigon has assigned more than two infantry di-
visions, an airborne brigade and an armored cavalry
regiment to the An Loc operation. Forces defending
other parts of MR-3 are spread thin, and the enemy
is trying to take advantage of this. Elements of
the Communists' 5th Division in the Parrot's Beak
area of Cambodia pose a threat to Tay Ninh and Hau
Nghia provinces and to the nearby delta. These areas
are defended primarily by territorial security forces
which have fought well but could not withstand a de-
termined main-force assault. The North Vietnamese
7th Division is responsible for keeping Route 13
closed. Some reports indicate that elements of the
Communists' 9th Division, which took part in the
early heavy fighting around An Loc, have slipped
south and are preparing to attack in Binh Duong and
Bien Hoa provinces north of Saigon.

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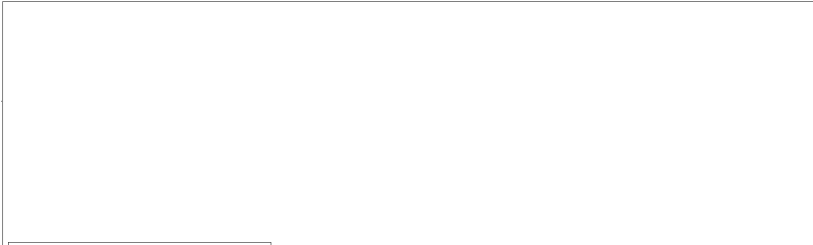
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JAPAN-CHINA

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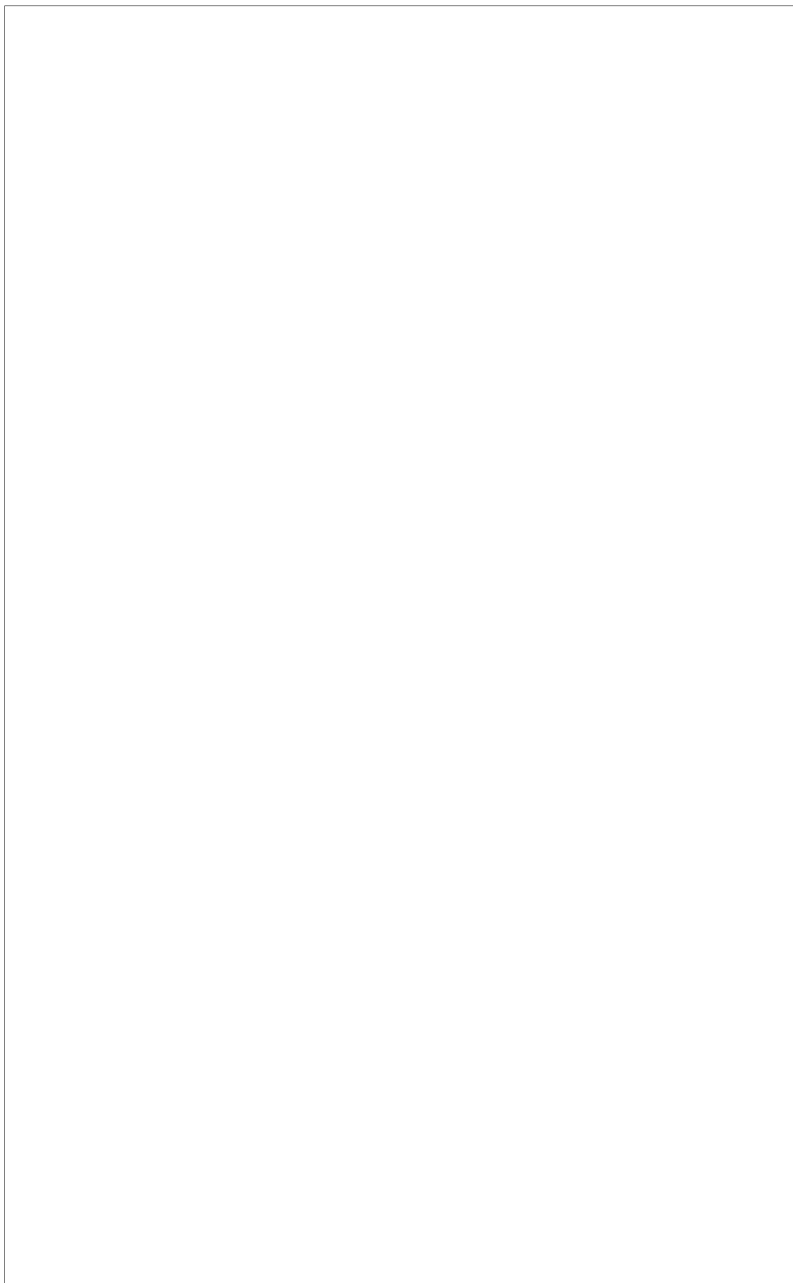
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CHINA

Chinese [redacted] seeking
reactions [redacted]
[redacted] on the possibility of Peking's participation in a reorganized Geneva disarmament conference. They stressed Peking's desire to take part from the beginning in any discussions on reorganization, even though China is not now a conference member.

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The Chinese have long held open the option of joining the conference, but this appears to be their most explicit sounding to date. The Chinese apparently seek to have non-members allowed to attend conference sessions. They would presumably also call for the elimination of US-Soviet co-chairmanship. Consultations on so extensive a reorganization would, of course, be protracted.

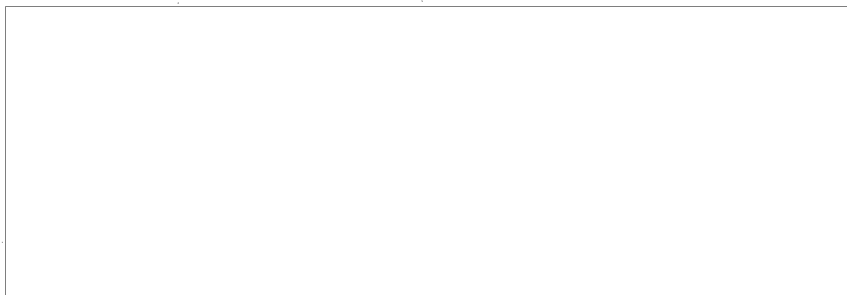


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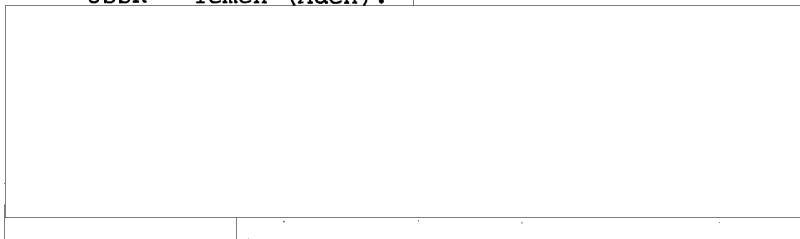
NOTES

Cambodia: Communist shelling and ground attacks in the Phnom Penh area early yesterday resulted in only light damage and casualties. Targets included the Defense Ministry, the railroad station, the water works, and the airport. Shelling just south of the city was accompanied by small harassing attacks by a battalion-size sapper unit. Government units quickly responded with clearing operations and with fire against suspected enemy rocket positions, but the attacks underscore the capital's continuing vulnerability to Communist harassment.



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USSR - Yemen (Aden):



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CAMBODIA

Although this week's presidential election results fell short of Lon Nol's expectations, the outcome appears to augur well for Cambodia's short-term political stability. The government engaged in just enough skulduggery to ensure Lon Nol's election, but it stopped short of manipulating the lopsided victory Lon Nol wanted but could not win honestly. The result is that opposition elements cannot make a strong case for foul play, the students are quiescent, and the election has received favorable treatment in the international press. Moreover, Lon Nol's claim to legitimacy is enhanced. He can now counter Sihanouk's assertion that the royal government was illegally deposed by citing victory in an open and honest election as the legal basis for his rule.

On the other hand, the narrowness of his victory exposes the fragility of Lon Nol's hold on the Cambodian people. In Cambodia, where obeisance to the man in power is a matter of course, Lon Nol's 55 percent of the vote comes close to being a repudiation. In the populous and politically sophisticated Phnom Penh area, Lon Nol ran well behind his chief challenger, In Tam. Lon Nol almost certainly did poorly among the country's students and intellectuals, who have been particularly upset over his authoritarian style and over his failure to crack down on widespread corruption in the government and armed forces. He lost the votes of many civil servants and even some foot soldiers who have been hit hard by rising prices. Primarily, however, Lon Nol has been vulnerable to the complaints of Cambodians in all walks of life that he is responsible for the war and for the government's failure to defeat the Communists and end the fighting.

Many Cambodians obviously are drawing invidious comparisons between conditions under Lon Nol and those under Sihanouk. This is demonstrated by the remarkable 21 percent of the vote won by Keo An, a political nobody who had no money and did little campaigning. Keo An's only attraction was his promise to allow Sihanouk to return to Cambodia. The significance of his showing will not be lost on Khmer Communists, who continue to exploit the Prince's name for their own ends. At the same time, this also serves to harden the determination of Lon Nol and others not to accept any settlement with the Communists calling for Sihanouk's return.

The election also has further enhanced the political power of the military. Until recently, the country's senior military leaders have eschewed national-level politics. In this election, however, they openly campaigned for Lon Nol, and if it had

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not been for the large military vote they delivered, Lon Nol might have been forced into an embarrassing runoff election, or even defeated. As a result, Lon Nol is now more dependent on the support of his military colleagues. In addition, the generals' statements critical of In Tam during the campaign indicate that they intend to exercise a veto over who rules Cambodia after Lon Nol is gone.

With the military solidly behind Lon Nol, the prospects for political stability in the short run appear good. Significant battlefield defeats could cause the military once again to question Lon Nol's leadership, but major reverses are not expected in the next four months or so. The rainy season will impair the Communists' mobility, and North Vietnamese main force units will most likely either remain preoccupied in South Vietnam, or will be in no condition to undertake a major offensive in Cambodia.

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[Redacted] Lon Nol has not indicated whom he intends to appoint as his deputy. Prior to the election he offered the post to Sirik Matak, who turned it down, in part because he mistrusts the reliability of Lon Nol's support for him. However, in view of Matak's evident desire to remain in politics, he may reconsider if Lon Nol renews the offer. Matak seems to have more support among the military than any other successor now on the horizon [Redacted]

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[Redacted] First Minister Son Ngoc

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Thanh is another possibility, but he is closely associated with the South Vietnamese, and it is doubtful that he has the adroitness and forcefulness to whip his opponents into line. In Tam, who would command support among civilian elements in Phnom Penh, is apparently unacceptable to the military. The military itself may put forth someone like Defense Minister Sak Sutsakhan as a candidate, but at this juncture events have not reached a point where the principal actors themselves have thought through the possibilities.

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