



The President's Daily Brief

18 July 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

18 July 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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The North Vietnamese may have begun minesweeping near smaller port areas south of Vinh. *(Page 3)*

In Laos, the Communists appear to be pulling additional troops away from the Plaine des Jarres. *(Page 4)*

The Soviets have given Chile \$260 million in long-term credits for the purchase of machinery and other capital equipment. *(Page 5)*

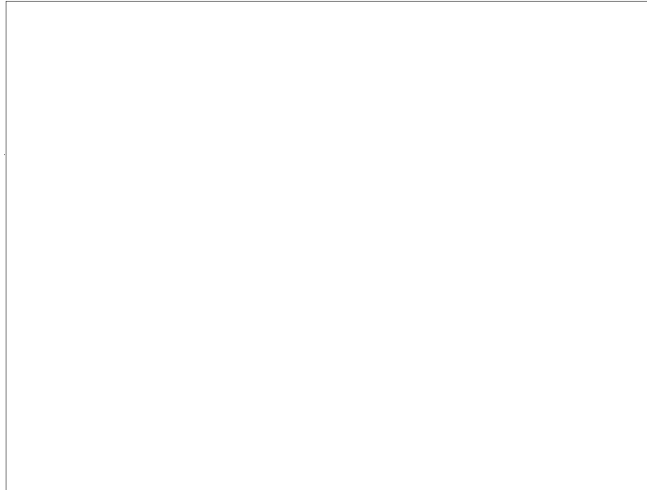
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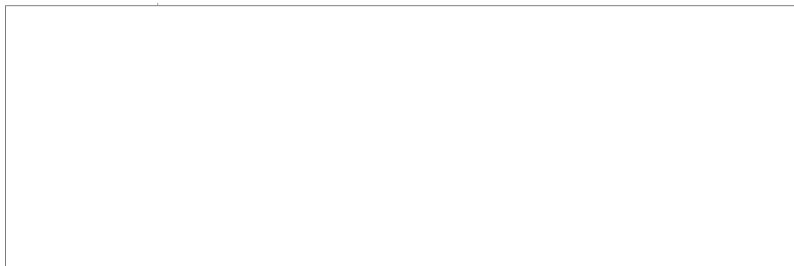
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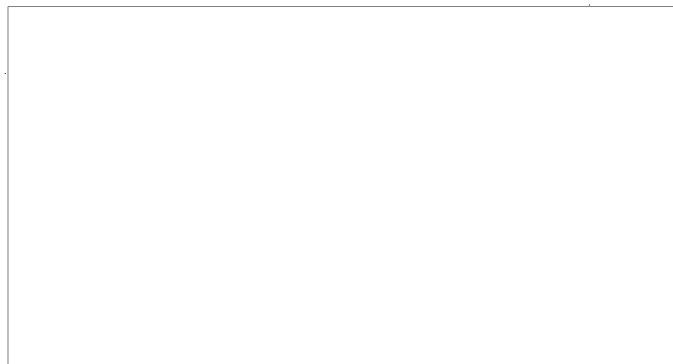
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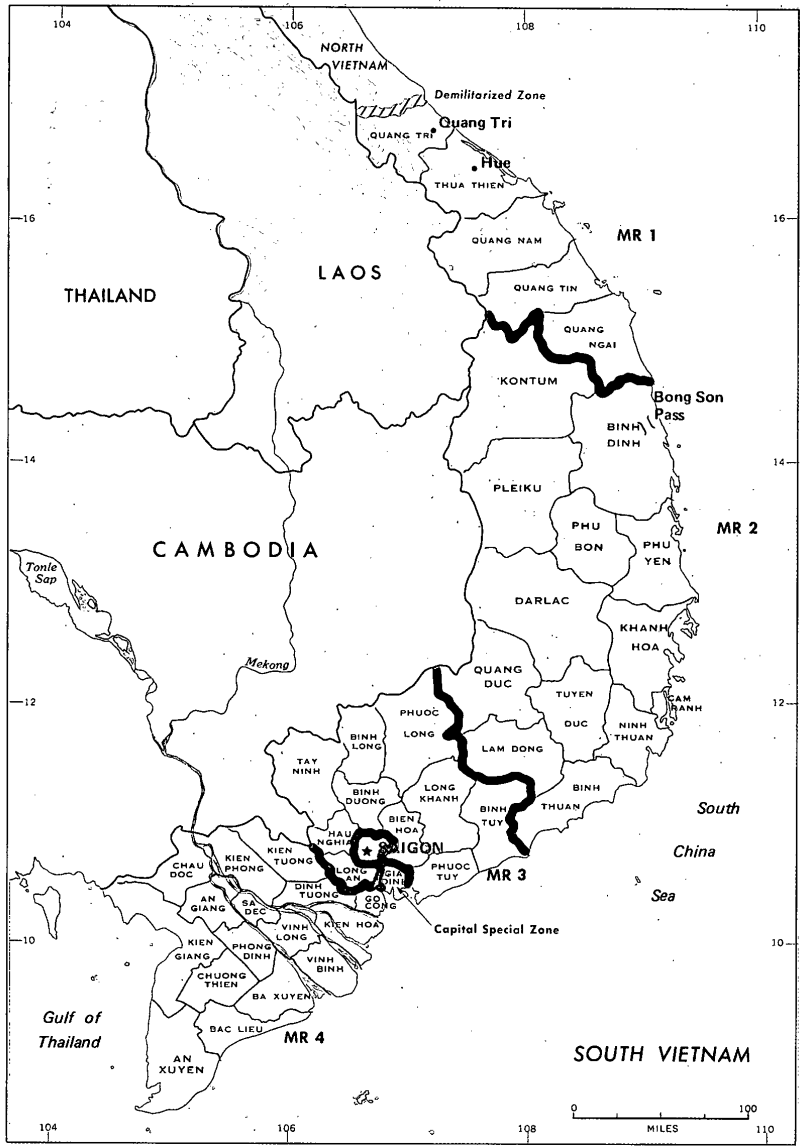
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VIETNAM

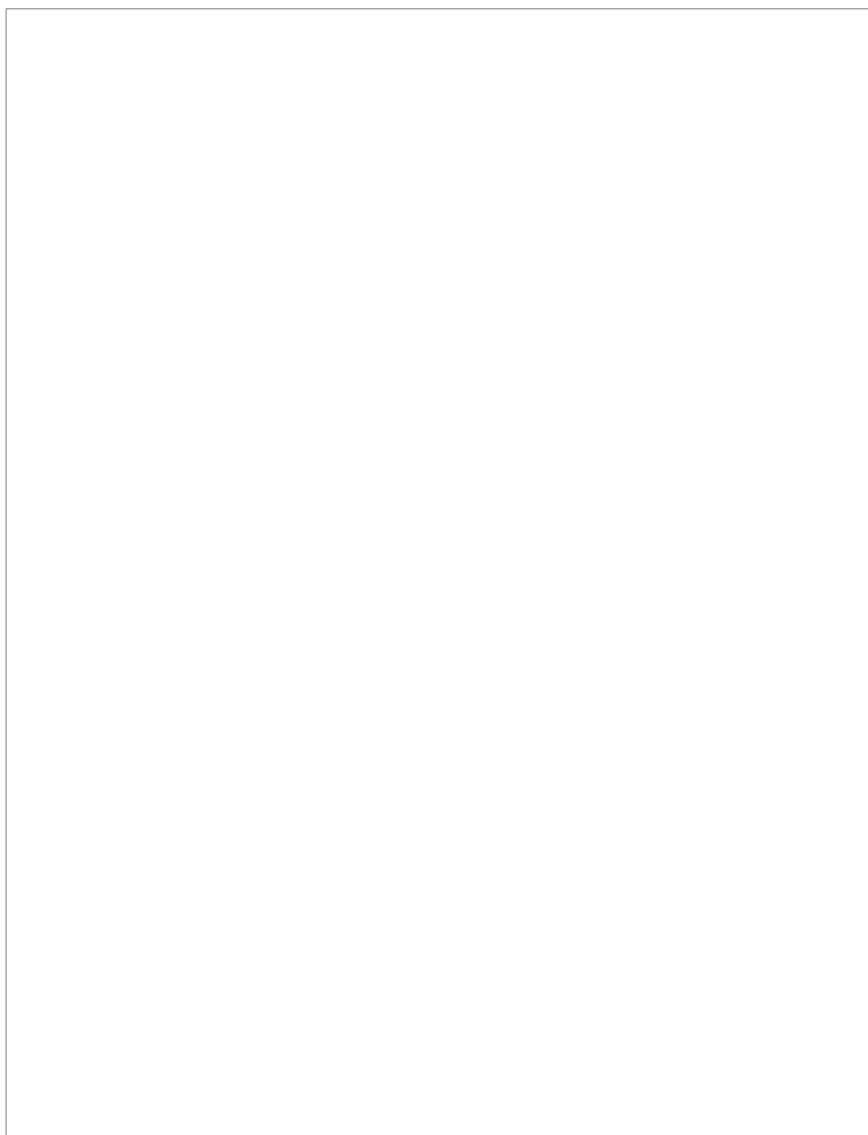
The heavy fighting around Quang Tri City has temporarily subsided, but both sides appear to be preparing for a sustained contest throughout the area. Only small clashes northeast and south of the city have been reported since the weekend, presumably because government forces currently are trying to consolidate their positions and push deeper into the province rather than merely effect a rapid recapture of the city itself. The Communists are relying primarily on intensive artillery and mortar fire to slow the government drive, directing almost 1,000 rounds at government positions on Sunday.

There is some evidence that the North Vietnamese are bringing in new forces on the government's western flank in order to attack or block government forces in the rear. Following their recent infiltration, the 95th Regiment of the 325th Division and the 165th Regiment of the 312th have bypassed the city and moved to the central part of Quang Tri Province. In this same area there are also elements of two other divisions--the recently identified North Vietnamese 320B and the 308th. A number of intercepts have stated that the Communists plan to strike the South Vietnamese from the rear. One message ordering forces within Quang Tri City to hold out for at least a month implied that these troops were to tie down the South Vietnamese until forces on the outside could attack.

The Communists may also be planning actions farther south to try to disrupt the government counteroffensive. A regiment of the 324B Division has recently been detected moving closer to Hue, where it may add to the pressure on government defenses along the western approach to the city.

The preliminary phase of a new government operation into northern Binh Dinh Province--designed to recapture the three districts lost earlier in the offensive--is meeting only light resistance so far. Government troops reportedly have occupied sections of the Bong Son Pass and have freed large numbers of refugees. The bulk of the enemy action against government forces has consisted of local force attacks of limited duration. This suggests that Viet Cong units in the area currently are charged with holding off the operation until main force units farther north can be refitted and resupplied.

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NORTH VIETNAM

Since the activation of mines in North Vietnamese waters in early May, no minesweeping operations have been observed in the deep water ports of Haiphong, Cam Pha, and Hon Gay. Beginning ten days ago, however, US naval units on three occasions have reported underwater explosions at smaller port areas some 75 miles south of Vinh, particularly near Hon La Island, and the explosions seem likely to have resulted from minesweeping.

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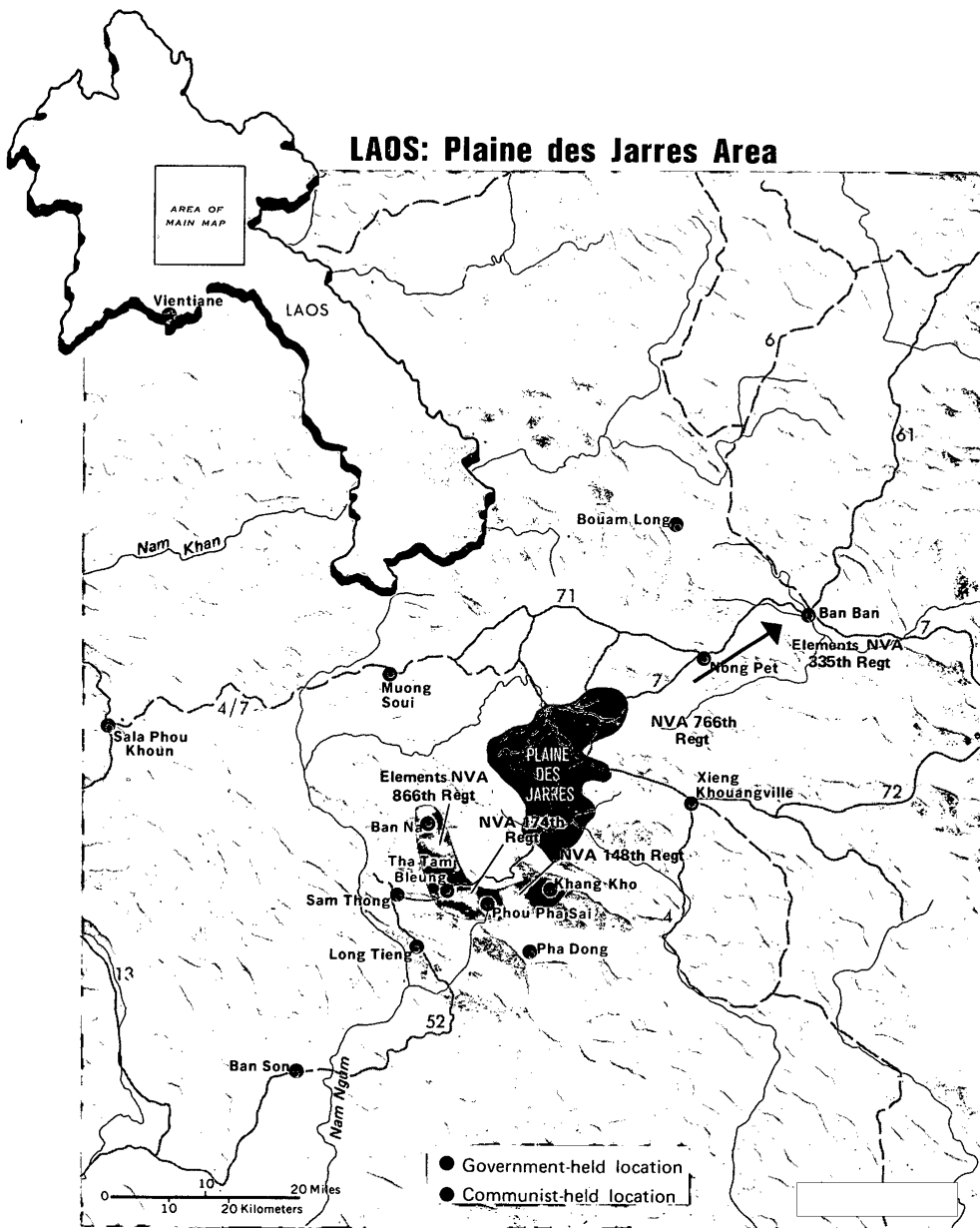
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An intercept in mid-June offered the first indication that the enemy might intend to clear the mines. At that time Hanoi's General Directorate of Marine Products (responsible for administering the fishing fleet) advised subordinate units operating between Vinh and the DMZ of a meeting to be held on 27 June to discuss destruction of the mines, among other subjects.



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LAOS

The North Vietnamese apparently are pulling additional troops away from the Plaine des Jarres. Communications intelligence indicates that major elements of the 335th Regiment have moved from the hills on the northern periphery of the Plaine to the Ban Ban area.

The Communists may be shifting their forces to afford better protection to their rear storage areas near Ban Ban from forays by Vang Pao's irregulars. The regiment could, however, be returning to North Vietnam. Its communications patterns are similar to those it used when it withdrew from the Luang Prabang area to North Vietnam a year ago. The North Vietnamese may plan to use the regiment as part of a reserve combat force to replace units currently moving toward South Vietnam.

If the 335th withdraws, the North Vietnamese will have only four infantry regiments to defend the Plaine des Jarres area, one less than they used in last year's rainy season. The Communists are now strongly resisting Vang Pao's efforts to expand government-controlled territory around Long Tieng, but the withdrawal of the 335th would indicate that they have not set a high priority on holding the Plaine throughout the rainy season.

The departure of the 335th, especially during the current rainy season when the government normally makes territorial gains, could also mean that the Communists are hoping to arrange a stand-down in military operations in the north in the coming months.



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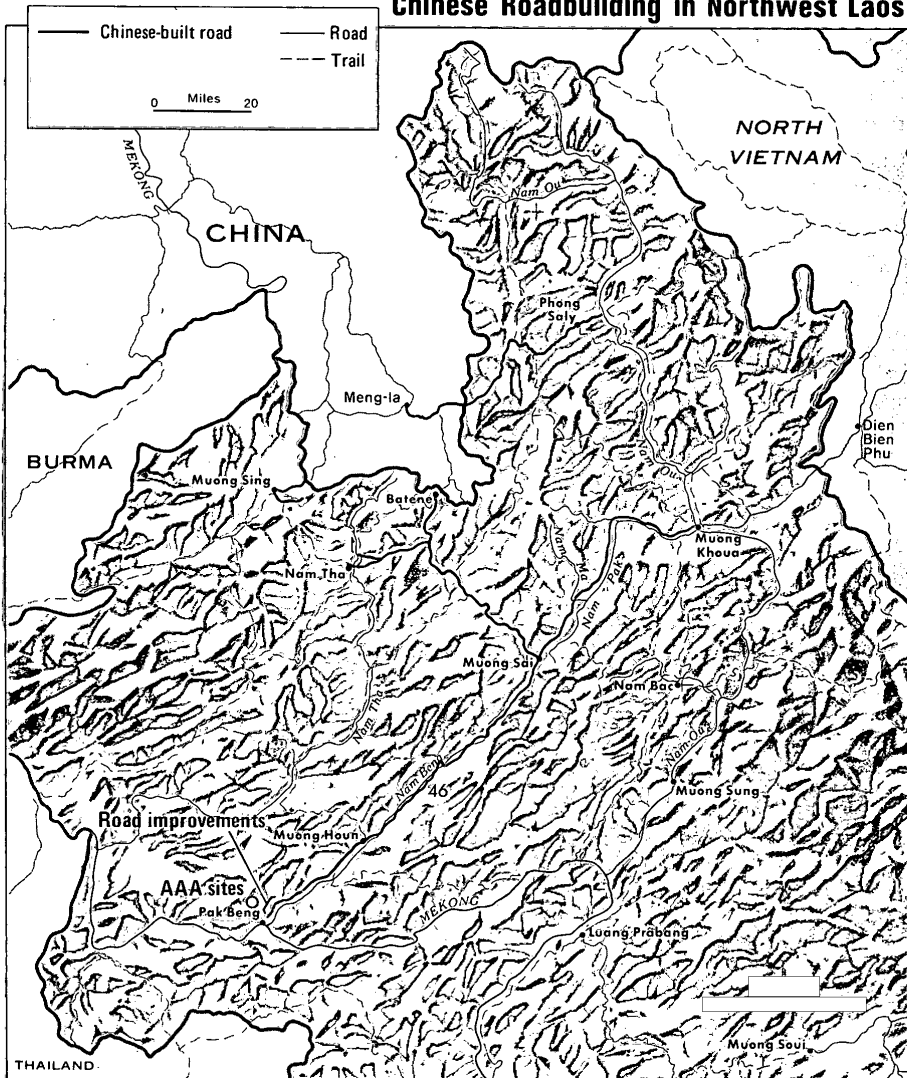
USSR-CHILE

Moscow has given Santiago \$260 million in long-term credits for the purchase of machinery and other capital equipment. At the same time, the USSR and the other East European countries have provided \$40-50 million to finance current trade.

Announcement of the new credits follows by only a month the receipt of a \$65-million credit from China. The new assistance represents substantial Soviet support for the Allende government.

Moscow's previous assistance to Chile was limited to a \$50-million short-term hard currency credit and two long-term credits totaling \$97 million for project assistance and machinery exports. Although the long-term credits were provided in 1967 and 1971, the Chileans have just begun to draw on them.

Chinese Roadbuilding in Northwest Laos



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NOTE

Laos: The Chinese are making improvements to Route 46 between Muong Houn and Pak Beng. Photography of 8 July shows that they are building bridges and are widening and realigning the road. They have also built three antiaircraft weapons sites on the hills outside of Pak Beng, the road's terminus on the Mekong River. We have no evidence that the Chinese are preparing at this time to extend road construction eastward from Route 46 into the Nam Ou River Valley, although they did some survey work there during the past dry season. No appreciable progress was noted on the other major road construction project near the Sino-Laotian border between Muong Sing and Nam Tha.

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