

The President's Daily Brief

22 July 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

22 July 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS



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In South Vietnam, fighting around Quang Tri City remains relatively light, but the Communists appear to be trying to increase activity on the government's western flank. (Page 2)

The Soviets are continuing early phase test launchings of their new large ICBM. (Page 3)

The Cuban leadership has issued a central committee resolution indicating dissatisfaction with some key Soviet policies. (Page 4)

 Chile 
 (Page 5)

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The Soviets have now responded favorably to King Husayn's request to visit Moscow. (Page 6)

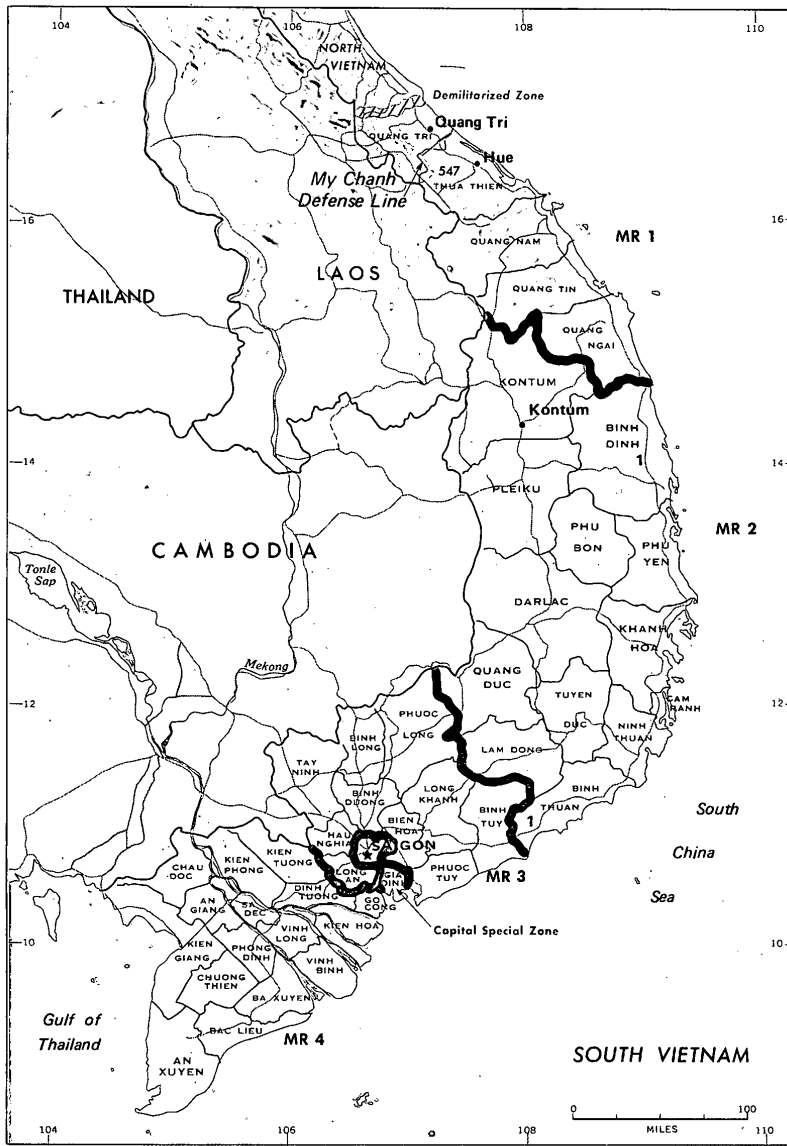
At Annex, we discuss the dike bombing issue.

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EGYPT-USSR



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VIETNAM

South Vietnamese Airborne and Marine forces report only scattered ground contacts with enemy troops in the vicinity of Quang Tri City, but the Communists are continuing to shell government forces. The Communists are maintaining pressure on government positions along Route 1 just below the My Chanh River. Two enemy prisoners, captured just before these attacks began, [redacted]

[redacted] have been assigned the mission of interdicting Route 1 along the Quang Tri - Thua Thien provincial border. Other elements of this division have been active west of Route 1 and just north of the My Chanh River.

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Intercepts indicate that all three regiments of the enemy's 324B Division are now west of Hue. The messages order division elements to coordinate prior to a "coming heavy mission," suggesting that the enemy plans increased action against government positions along Route 547, the main road into Hue from the west.

In coastal Binh Dinh Province, the government drive to retake the northern three districts, which has been moving ahead on schedule, may soon face stronger opposition. A North Vietnamese regiment is apparently moving to join two regiments of the Communist 3rd Division that are already in northern Binh Dinh.



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USSR

The latest satellite photography of Tyuratam shows more missile debris in the complex used in test launchings of the USSR's new large ICBM.

This photography gives us fresh evidence that early phase test launchings of the new missile are continuing. There now have been several such tests since late last year, and in each instance, the missile apparently was destroyed immediately after lift-off. If this phase of testing has proceeded satisfactorily, firings from Tyuratam to the Kamchatka Peninsula could begin at any time. About two years of flight testing will be required before the missile is ready for deployment. We believe the new ICBM could be equipped with MIRVs and that it will be installed in the new large silos currently under construction at five SS-9 complexes.

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CUBA

A carefully worded resolution on Fidel Castro's recent trip issued by the Communist Party central committee indicates that the Cuban leadership is less than satisfied with certain key aspects of Soviet policy. The choice of the central committee to make the statement--the committee has met only twice since 1965--indicates that Castro wishes to emphasize the unity of the Cuban leadership as well as the importance of the statement.

Havana's major problem is with Moscow's policy of detente with the US. The resolution states that the "struggle against imperialism" must be "based upon the full awareness that imperialism's apparent cooperation with any truly revolutionary process is deceptive and false in the long run."

Havana's displeasure is primarily linked to what it views as a lack of Soviet support for North Vietnam. The resolution declares that victory in Vietnam requires "international solidarity" and points to the statements on Vietnam made by Fidel during his trip. In Poland, for example, he affirmed that "today Vietnam is the supreme test of proletarian internationalism...the supreme test of the principles of Marxism-Leninism." Although the Cuban leader may be genuinely concerned with the fate of Vietnam, he is even more concerned over its possible implications for Cuba's security.

The resolution also hints that Havana is upset over Soviet attempts to press Cuba into more orthodox economic policies in exchange for increased economic assistance. It asserts that assistance from socialist countries is a "moral right" of those nations "where truly revolutionary changes are being made."

Despite his displeasure, Castro has few alternatives to continued close cooperation with Moscow. Cuba is almost totally dependent on the Soviet Union, and we do not foresee that Fidel will attempt to alter this relationship significantly at this time.

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NOTES

Jordan-USSR: After several months of tempo-
rizing on King Husayn's request to visit Moscow,
the Soviets on 19 July informed the Jordanians
that they will be delighted to receive the King at
any time. Husayn originally had hoped to persuade
the Soviets to support his West Bank federation
proposal, which he put forth last March, but the
acrimonious Egyptian and fedayeen reaction to his
plan apparently forced the Soviets to put off his
trip. The timing and apparent urgency of the re-
sponse, in the aftermath of events in Egypt, may
well foreshadow additional Soviet efforts to shore
up relations with the other Arab states.

Iraq: Satellite photography of 9 July shows
four SA-3 missile sites around Baghdad. Equipment
for these sites was seen at Rashid Airfield near
Baghdad last April, but this is the first time
operational SA-3 sites have been observed in Iraq.

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Laos: Lao Communist leader Souphanouvong's
latest message to Prime Minister Souvanna contains
no new proposals for settling the war. The letter
refers to earlier Communist proposals and repeats
the Communist line that any progress toward a
settlement depends on a US bombing halt throughout
the country. It does not rule out, however, addi-
tional preliminary contacts between Souvanna and
Souk Vongsak, the Communists' envoy.

Thailand: The appointment of Field Marshal
Thanom as supreme commander of the armed forces
has been extended for one year. This will delay
other changes in the top leadership and postpone
significant changes in Thailand's internal and
foreign policies. The extension, the second granted
Thanom since he reached the retirement age of 60
last year, indicates that the deputy chairman of the
ruling National Executive Council, General Praphat,
still lacks sufficient popular support to move into
the number one spot. The intense rivalry between
Thanom's and Praphat's supporters, which tends to
have an immobilizing effect on government operations,
is likely to continue.

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Panama: Foreign Minister Tack told Ambassador Sayre on Wednesday that a new negotiating position on the Canal is ready for final review by General Torrijos. Tack plans to bring it to Washington himself, and his past comments suggest that he wants to discuss it with Secretary Rogers. [REDACTED]

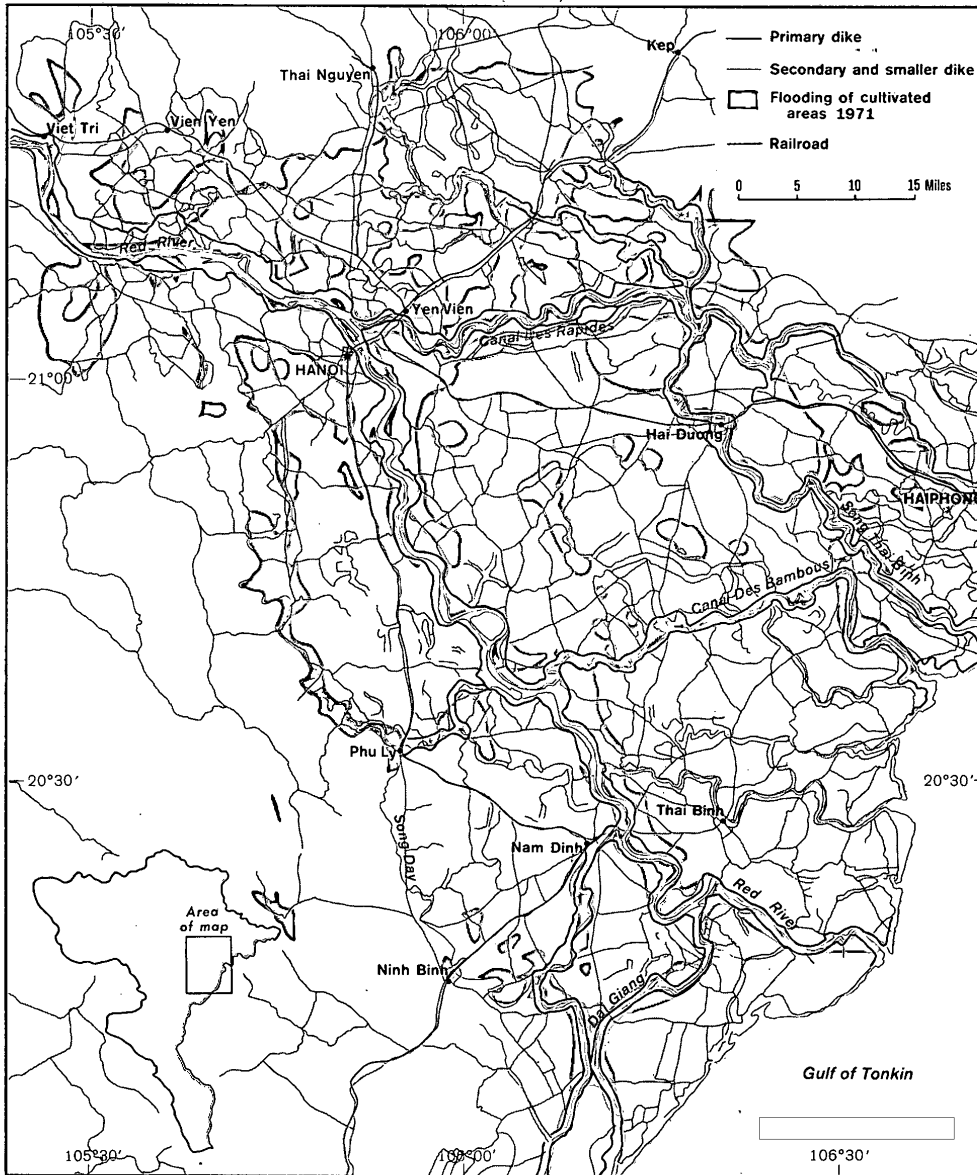
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North Vietnam Water Control System



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Example of cratering near Hai Duong

DIKE CRATERED

11 JULY 1972

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***NORTH VIETNAM: THE DIKE BOMBING ISSUE**

Since the early weeks of the US air interdiction program, Hanoi has tried to convince the world that North Vietnam's elaborate dike system of water control is a direct and deliberate target of US bombing. We now have photographic coverage of the Red River Delta as of mid-July which enables us to assess Hanoi's claims. It provides evidence of scattered and inconsequential damage done by bombs directed at nearby military targets, but in no case of serious or deliberate attack.

North Vietnam's Water Control System

North Vietnam's elaborate network of dikes, dams, and locks controls the water of the heavily populated Red River Delta. The delta farmland depends on irrigation during the dry months and is endangered by flooding in the wet months. The country's major transportation waterways--the Red River, the Thai Binh River, and the connecting Canal des Rapides and Canal des Bambous--link the principal urban centers. Fertilizer, foodstuffs, petroleum, and other commodities are moved, in part, by these waterways, as is the coal mined in the Hon Gai and Cam Pha areas. Southern North Vietnam also contains rivers necessitating a dike and lock system for water control and navigation, but the system is less important than that of the delta.

Dikes to control flooding and the course of the waterways are most fully developed along the Red River. The Red River system begins near Viet Tri, only 43 feet above sea level, although about 100 miles inland. The great amount of silt brought down from the mountains and deposited along the river beds in the delta has raised the waterways above the surrounding countryside in many places and requires a constant elevation of the restraining walls. In some areas--particularly around Hanoi--the height of the dikes reaches 40 feet. Some are as broad as 80 feet at the flood line and spread to 200 feet at the base. A secondary system between 4 and 22 feet high running parallel to the main dikes is designed to localize and minimize damage if the primary dikes are breached. A tertiary system of smaller dikes divides the rice-growing plains into compartments, assists irrigation, and controls the level of small streams and local waterways. In addition, small natural or man-made dikes along the coast keep out brackish sea water.

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Dams and locks play a lesser role. Only a few large dams are constructed of concrete with gates to permit passage of watercraft, and only one major waterway in the Red River Delta has navigation locks to control water levels and facilitate transport.

Recurring Floods

The rivers rise to a seasonal peak during July and August, when unusually heavy rains frequently cause breaches in the levees. Extensive floods and destruction to property and agricultural crops result. Although there have been only a few major breaches since the mid-1940s, minor breaks occur almost every year.

The floods of last August rank with the most serious ever recorded. Four major breaches occurred in the primary dikes along the Red River. An estimated 1.1 million acres of riceland--a quarter of the country's rice acreage--were seriously flooded and the entire crop in that area destroyed. Storms took out a half-mile section of a levee outside Hanoi and closed the railroad north to Dong Dang. The area of heavy flooding continued to expand through late September, probably because prolonged soaking and high water pressure had undermined the secondary dike systems.

Apart from immediate rice losses, the floods produced extensive longer term physical damage. The enormous force of water unleashed through breaches in the primary dikes caused widespread erosion far beyond obvious scouring effects near the breaks. Long stretches of irrigation canals were cut, and the press reported many washed-out pumping stations. Flood water everywhere deposited silt in drainage ditches. The prolonged inundation during the floods may have caused subtle undermining of the primary dike systems that will not show until late this summer. The possibility that the dike system has been weakened thus adds to this year's flooding threat.

Resiliency of the System to Bombing

North Vietnam's water control system includes a large number of widely dispersed individual components which could be substantially affected only by a large-scale, coordinated air offensive. Such attacks would be necessary against specific locks, dams, and dike areas, and bomb damage would have effect only during the relatively short periods of high water. Even then, the North Vietnamese, long accustomed to battling against floods, could be expected to act promptly to mend breaches in the system.

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Damage to the locks would have little effect on either North Vietnam's transport or its water control systems. Inland craft could be diverted to waterways not dependent on locks, and some cargoes could be sent by the many alternative land routes. Accidental bomb damage during the 1965-68 period made some locks inoperative, but had little effect on water transport or flooding in the area. Similarly, breaching of dams, even during periods of high water, would not cause significant disruption because most are small and easily repaired.

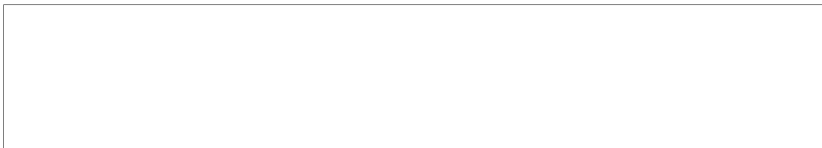
Dikes are particularly resistant to bomb damage. Those in the primary system could be breached only by a series of overlapping craters across the entire top of a dike, and the lips of the craters would have to be sufficiently lower than the river surface to initiate the flow and subsequent scouring action of water rushing through the breach. The dikes along the Red River near Hanoi are approximately 80 feet wide at the flood line.

Hanoi's Claims Versus Actual Damage

North Vietnam's official press agencies and radio services have repeatedly described alleged US bombing attacks on the dike system. In April and May, the North Vietnamese made more than 40 specific allegations, and on 30 June the official press quoted the Deputy Minister of Hydraulics as saying that 20 bombing attacks had been made on dikes during that month. Foreign diplomats, newsmen, and, most recently, actress Jane Fonda have been escorted to dikes to view damage--most of it around Hai Duong, southeast of Hanoi.

A detailed examination has been made of photography of mid-July of the North Vietnamese Red River Delta. No flooding has been identified resulting from bombing. Dikes cratered by bombs were detected at 13 locations, four of which were just north of Hai Duong. None of the damage has been in the Hanoi area, where destruction of the dikes would result in the greatest damage to North Vietnam's economy and logistics effort. Nearly all the damage has been scattered downstream from Hanoi, as well as downstream from the areas of major breaks resulting from the 1971 floods. Most craters are on primary dikes, with the others on the secondary system.

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[REDACTED] Because a large number of North Vietnamese dikes serve as bases for roadways, the maze they create throughout the delta makes it almost inevitable that air attacks directed against transportation targets cause scattered damage to dikes.

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There are no signs of destruction of vital dike portions stretching to a length of several kilometers-- as reported by Hanoi-based newsmen. In comparison to the dikes, the craters are small, and no flooding has occurred as a result of the damage. Although water levels are not yet at their highest, the absence of leakage through the craters indicates that damage was limited.

The bomb craters verified by photography can be repaired easily with a minimum of local labor and equipment--a crew of less than 50 men with wheelbarrows and hand tools could repair in a day the largest crater observed. Repairs to all the dikes could be completed within a week, as the necessary equipment is available throughout the delta. Local labor historically mobilizes to strengthen and repair dikes to avoid serious flooding. An occasional bomb falling on a dike does not add significantly to the burden of annual repair work normally required. North Vietnam must, however, complete the repair of damage caused by the 1971 floods before next month when this year's rainy season will reach its peak.

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