



The President's Daily Brief

4 August 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

4 August 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Vietnam, the government campaign to capture the Quang Tri citadel continues to meet heavy resistance. Recent photography shows the continued expansion of the petroleum system from China into North Vietnam. (Page 1)

West German shadow foreign minister Gerhard Schroeder says the Chinese are ready to establish diplomatic relations. (Page 2)

In an effort to improve relations with Peking, Thailand will let a ping-pong team go to China. (Page 3)

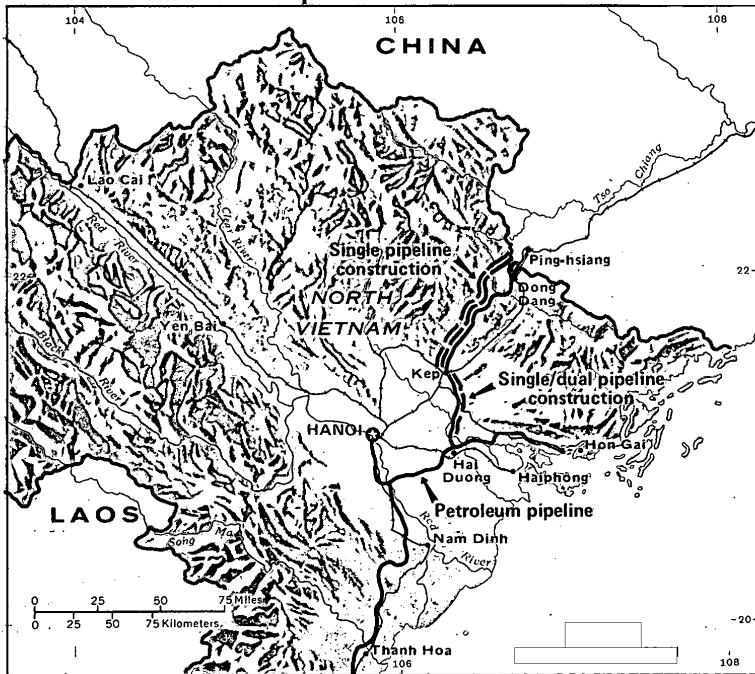
Chilean President Allende has rebuffed Congress by naming an impeached cabinet minister to another cabinet post. (Page 4)

The latest satellite photography shows another launch complex for China's CSS-1 ballistic missile. (Page 5)

At Annex, we review current evidence indicating that the Communist main force units may try to initiate a major offensive in several areas of South Vietnam, perhaps within the next few weeks.

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North Vietnam: Petroleum Pipeline Construction



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VIETNAM

The government campaign to capture the Quang Tri citadel continues to meet heavy resistance. Communist shellings and ground attacks have slowed the South Vietnamese Marine operation launched yesterday against the citadel, and sharp fighting is reported again along the northern edge of Quang Tri City. A few miles to the southwest, South Vietnamese airborne forces repulsed a strong enemy tank attack with the help of heavy air strikes.

A review of evidence pointing to a possible new coordinated Communist offensive in several areas of South Vietnam appears at Annex.

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The petroleum pipeline system from China into North Vietnam continues to be expanded. Photography indicates that the system will consist of three single pipelines between the Chinese border and Kep and a combination of a dual and single line between Kep and Hai Duong, where it will connect with the extensive pipeline network running down into South Vietnam and southern Laos. We believe the capacity of the new system, when completed, will exceed Hanoi's petroleum import requirement.

* * *

The rainy season is nearing its midpoint and we have no evidence of serious flooding in North Vietnam. Intercepted river stage reports indicate that the major rivers are at normal seasonal levels, and there have been no unusually long, heavy rains during July like those that preceded last year's disastrous floods. Photographic coverage of almost the entire delta area [redacted] disclosed no breaches in any primary dikes and only normal accumulations of water in some low areas between them.

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WEST GERMANY - CHINA

Pressure seems to be building up in Bonn to establish diplomatic relations soon with Peking. West Germany's opposition Christian Democrats, who have been openly promoting this step as a way to counter what they argue is Chancellor Brandt's too narrow focus on the USSR and Eastern Europe, recently sent their shadow foreign minister Gerhard Schroeder, on a fact-finding mission to Peking. According to Schroeder, the Chinese said they are ready to establish diplomatic relations "immediately" after a "brief" contact with a Chinese embassy in some European capital. He added that the Chinese set forth no preconditions.

Although Schroeder may be overstating the speed with which China would like to move, his report places the Brandt government under some pressure. The Christian Democrats hope to exploit Bonn's relative neglect of China in the pending election campaign; recent opinion polls show that almost 80 percent of West Germans approve immediate action on this question. Brandt prefers delaying a bid to Peking in order to avoid antagonizing the Soviets, particularly until the negotiations on a basic political treaty with East Germany--which Moscow presumably could influence--are concluded.



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THAILAND-CHINA

General Praphat, the de facto policy maker of the ruling military body, has reversed himself and announced that a Thai ping-pong team will be permitted to go to China. He has included in the sports delegation one of his close associates, Prasit Kanchanawat, a senior economic official. The Bangkok press reports that Prasit will discuss the possibility of opening commercial relations between the two countries and will meet with Premier Chou En-lai.

The erratic nature of Bangkok's slow movement toward better relations with Peking results partly from differences within the leadership. It also reflects the Thais' difficulty in reconciling their perceived need to establish contacts with China with their long-standing fears about China's intentions toward Thailand and the impact which contacts will have on the large Chinese community in Thailand.

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CHILE

President Allende has rebuffed Congress by naming impeached Interior Minister Del Canto to another cabinet post, minister secretary-general of government. The incumbent, Jaime Suarez, has been switched to the Interior portfolio. Since both are Socialists, Allende has maintained the political balance in the cabinet and avoided infighting within his governing coalition.

At the same time, the continuing friction between the President and Congress has been extended to include the Supreme Court. In an address Tuesday night Carlos Altamirano, the chief of the Socialist Party, charged that the court concerns itself more with protecting property rights than prosecuting white-collar crime.

The courts, like the military, traditionally have been immune to partisan attack, but recent decisions favoring the conservative side of politically sensitive issues have made them vulnerable to leftist criticism. A new draft constitution promised for next month presumably will call for reducing the powers of Congress and the courts and might provide Allende's coalition with a popular platform for fighting the congressional elections next March.

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CHINA

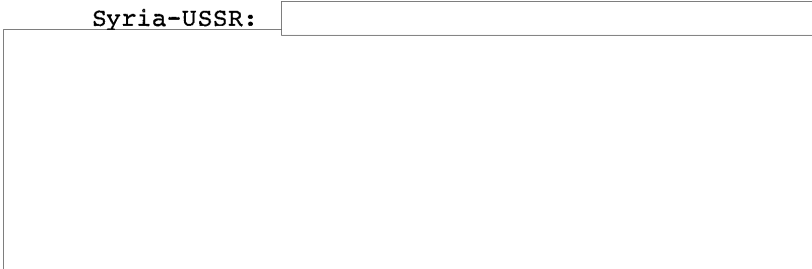
The latest satellite photography shows another deployed launch complex for the 600-mile CSS-1 ballistic missile, this one in east-central China.

The complex is at Lien-keng-wang, about 135 miles south-southwest of Nanking. It extends some 20 miles and contains three or four launch sites and a support area. No missiles are visible, but CSS-1 ground support equipment--missile transporter-erectors, propellant vehicles, A-frame cranes, and launch stands--can be identified. Numerous buildings and caves throughout the complex could be used to store missiles.

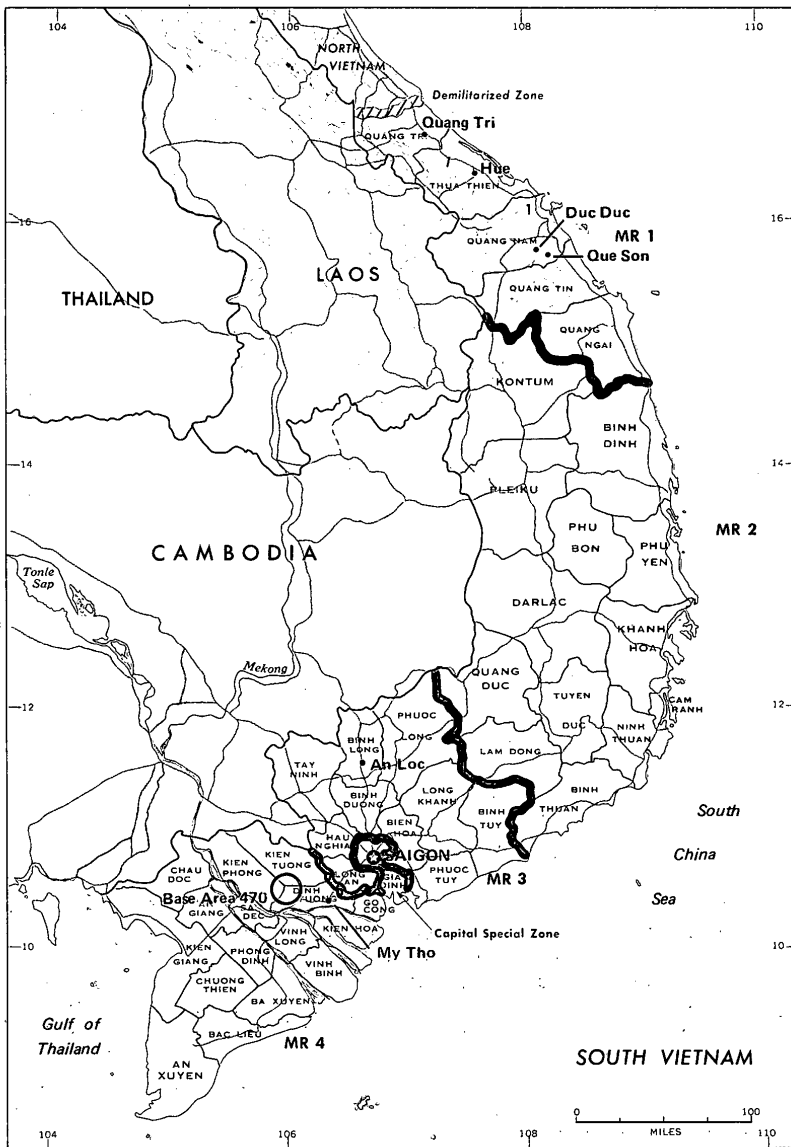
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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***VIETNAM: A NEW ENEMY OFFENSIVE SHAPING UP**

A review of current evidence indicates that Communist main force units may try to initiate a substantial and coordinated offensive in several areas of South Vietnam, perhaps within the next few weeks. Although the attacks may not be on the scale of the Communist thrusts in early spring, Hanoi will be hoping to secure battlefield gains that will influence domestic politics in the US and strengthen its bargaining hand at Paris. [redacted]

[redacted] the enemy's top southern command, COSVN, had ordered another strong round of attacks to try to force a settlement of the war on Communist terms, and that August and September would be important months because US election fervor would be rising. The recent movement of almost two additional enemy infantry divisions from North Vietnam into northern Military Region 1 and the additional deployment of enemy units into the northern delta suggest that these two areas will be the focal points for the campaign. Renewed assaults around An Loc and in the provinces northwest of Saigon also appear in prospect, along with a substantial increase in enemy operations in sectors of the central coast. In the western highlands, however, where the Communists laid siege to Kontum this spring, there are few signs of enemy planning for substantial new attacks.

The Quang Tri - Hue Front

The movement of elements of two additional North Vietnamese divisions--the 312th and 325th--into northern South Vietnam to augment four enemy divisions already there began in mid-July, shortly after the South Vietnamese counteroffensive into Quang Tri Province. There had been earlier indications that the North Vietnamese were planning to commit at least elements of these two divisions to the northern front. The South Vietnamese counteroffensive appears to have forced Hanoi's hand. The current locations of the additional divisional elements suggest that the North Vietnamese could use them in a vigorous counterpunch at the South Vietnamese units strung out along Route 1 to Quang Tri City, hoping to cut off and defeat these troops, perhaps the best of Saigon's forces.

The North Vietnamese may be moving additional tanks into the area from North Vietnam to support the new assaults. A column of 20 to 30 armored vehicles moving through the southern panhandle was only 15 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone by 1 August. Intercepts suggest that the vehicles will enter South Vietnam through the eastern part of the DMZ.

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The new enemy operations may not involve all of the forces now deployed in the province. In mid-July, after a five-month hiatus, the 308th Division resumed communications with the military high command in Hanoi, a measure which normally precedes a major move. This development suggests that the 308th may be preparing to return to North Vietnam, although it remains in position to take part in any renewed fighting.

So far, there has been little evidence that the Communists are augmenting their infantry force to the west of Hue--an action the enemy presumably would consider necessary if a full-scale push on the city were planned for the near future. The Communists have recently stepped up their attacks against government positions in Thua Thien west of Hue, where two government fire support bases have changed hands several times within the past month. Enemy gunners are within artillery range of the old imperial capital, and it appears that the Communists would like to push back the defending South Vietnamese 1st Division in the hope of undercutting and weakening the government drive into Quang Tri.

Similar enemy strategy appears to be involved in Quang Nam Province to the south, where another division-size enemy force--the so-called 711th Division--is pressing from the west against government outposts and district strongpoints in Que Son and Duc Duc districts. We believe that the Communists intend to try to keep Saigon's units there from reinforcing the northern battlefront should the fighting begin to turn against the government there. In the spring offensive, the Communists employed a similar strategy in this province to back their operations to the north.

The Delta and the Saigon Area

The Communists have massed the largest concentration of main force units ever seen in the northern delta. At least five infantry regiments and elements of an artillery regiment already have infiltrated, and we believe that two more infantry regiments are on the way. Most of the infiltrating units, including the enemy's 5th Division, have been heading for a base camp in the northwestern triborder area of Dinh Tuong, Kien Tuong, and Kien Phong provinces. During the past few weeks, clandestine sources have reported that heavier enemy action is being planned for August and September in the northern delta.

The Communists appear to have several objectives in mind in this area. It is a long-time Communist stronghold which, in the past, has provided relatively good protection and good access by waterway to resupply from Cambodia. The area lies close to

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Route 4, the government's main road link to the delta, and to a variety of canals over which food is moved to Saigon. If the Communists could regularly interdict the road and water routes through the area, they would seriously disrupt the government's ability to support its forces in the southern delta provinces, and thus facilitate gains by their own units farther south. The base area also provides a favorable position for attacks around and on My Tho, a strategic provincial capital.

Despite reports that increased attacks are being planned for the provinces to the northwest of Saigon, particularly in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia, there are few indications that the Communists are moving additional main force units into these provinces. They would need more manpower to mount a telling offensive there. Most enemy forces involved in the heavy fighting earlier in MR 3 have recently seen only limited action. Most of the units from the Communists' 7th and 9th divisions probably are still in the An Loc area. It seems likely that these units would again be used in Binh Long or Binh Duong provinces in the hope of deterring Saigon from diverting its forces north to MR 1 or reinforcing threatened units elsewhere.

Central Vietnam

We do not expect that enemy combat activity in the western highlands will increase substantially in the coming weeks. Many of the units previously engaged in the fighting in Kontum and Pleiku provinces have moved out. On the coast, however, government efforts to recapture areas in northern Binh Dinh Province suggest that fairly hard fighting lies ahead. Prisoners [redacted] claim that the Communists foresee stronger action along the heavily populated central coast in August and September.

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Prospects

The next Communist offensive is likely to be smaller and more selective than the thrusts last April and May. With heavy rains and flooding in some areas, resupply difficulties may limit the Communists' ability to sustain a heavy pace of fighting. This spring's combat also reduced the strength and fighting ability of many enemy units. The newly trained troops that Hanoi sent south may have offset losses, but even after refitting, the performance of these units will suffer from the loss of experienced leadership cadre and specialists.

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Despite such limitations, the Communists apparently believe that heavy action in the coming weeks offers a possibility of at least limited tactical gains as well as significant political impact. Some evidence of the scope of enemy plans is appearing in current North Vietnamese propaganda on the war. Hanoi's Defense Minister Giap recently claimed that "favorable opportunities" now exist in the south to push forward on the battlefields, and radio and press commentaries are emphasizing both Quang Tri and the delta as theaters of operation.

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