

The President's Daily Brief

11 September 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

11 September 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

South Vietnamese forces have launched a major campaign to recapture the citadel in Quang Tri City.
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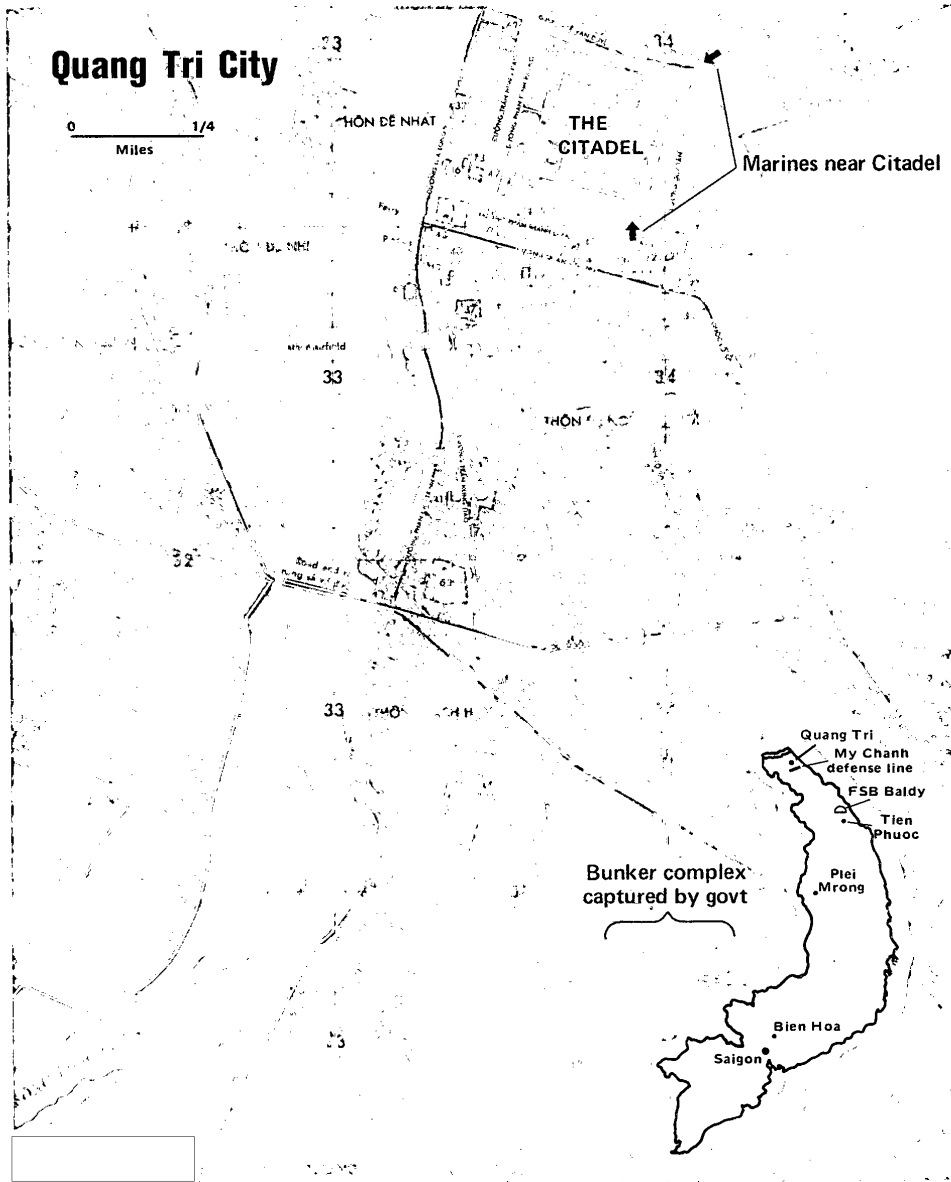
Relative calm has returned to Phnom Penh after last week's looting, and government troops have moved to positions for starting their operation to reopen the route to the main rice-producing area. *(Page 3)*

Military action in the Middle East has subsided

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The chances that Panama will bring the canal treaty issue before the UN General Assembly appear reduced.
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VIETNAM

On Saturday government forces began a major campaign to recapture the citadel in Quang Tri City. South Vietnamese Marine and Ranger units are encountering stubborn enemy ground resistance to their joint effort, but have moved close to the fortress on two sides. In the southern portion of the city, paratroopers have pushed the Communists from a heavily fortified bunker complex, cutting a major enemy supply route into the citadel and clearing the way for a move against enemy positions along the west side of the city--the last Communist-controlled corridor into the citadel.

Intercepts show that Communist forces in the citadel have been ordered to go on the offensive to counter the South Vietnamese thrust. According to one message, ammunition for enemy tanks, evidently within the fortress, was transported into the city on Friday. Fresh Communist infantry troops may also be moving into the area. The headquarters of the North Vietnamese 325th Division has ended a month-long stay at a major transshipment point 15 miles to the northwest and moved closer to the city.

There is some evidence that the Communists may try to interdict South Vietnamese supply routes and attack positions near the My Chanh defense line to the south. Units of the North Vietnamese 312th Division are shifting south from the Quang Tri City area, apparently in coordination with units from the enemy's 304th Division that are moving still farther south below the My Chanh River. A substantial Communist troop movement is also under way along the western end of the defense line.

In Quang Tin Province, South Vietnamese regulars and territorials abandoned Tien Phuoc District capital Saturday after three days of heavy Communist shellings and repeated tank-led ground assaults. In adjacent Quang Nam Province, a headquarters element of the North Vietnamese 711th Division's 270th Regiment has been detected close to Fire Support Base Baldy, the government's staging base for the Que Son Valley campaign.

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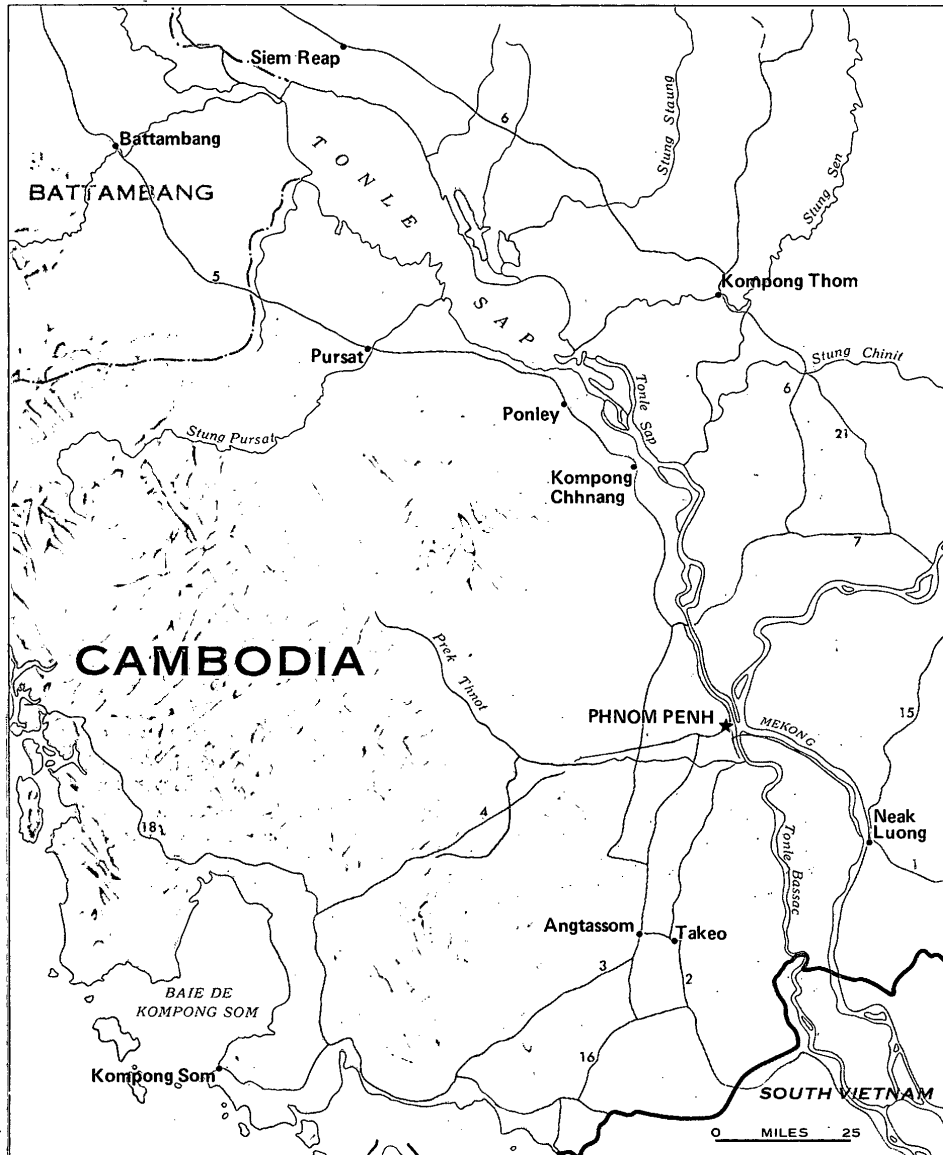
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This is another sign that the Communists may soon resume their offensive against the coastal lowlands. Similar moves in the central highlands by the enemy's B-3 Front units could also presage new attacks in Pleiku Province, notably around the Plei Mrong Ranger camp.

Ground action remained generally light in other areas of the country, with mostly sapper raids and sporadic shellings reported. Explosions at Bien Hoa air base caused substantial ammunition losses yesterday, along with light to moderate damage to nearly 100 aircraft, but casualties were light. The action may have been the work of enemy saboteurs.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**CAMBODIA**

Relative calm has returned to Phnom Penh following the institution of tight security measures and the confinement of the military to their barracks. Commercial activity resumed over the weekend, but on a much reduced scale. On Saturday, the government distributed about 450 tons of rice from its own stockpile throughout Phnom Penh and plans to resume distribution today. In addition to the scheduled US airlift of 60 tons of rice per day from Saigon, the Lon Nol government is airlifting about 40 tons a day from Battambang Province.

The rice situation remains serious, however. Phnom Penh usually consumes about 400 tons of rice a day; at the present rate, government stocks will be exhausted in four to five days. The anticipated arrival of 2,400 tons of rice from Thailand within the next ten days should help alleviate the situation.

Meanwhile, more government forces have been assigned to the long-delayed operation to reopen Route 5 leading to Battambang. Elements of two infantry brigades, supported by armored vehicles, moved to Kompong Chhnang City over the weekend. Plans call for them to begin a coordinated drive today against Communist positions along the highway in the vicinity of the enemy-controlled town of Ponley.

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ISRAEL - ARAB STATES

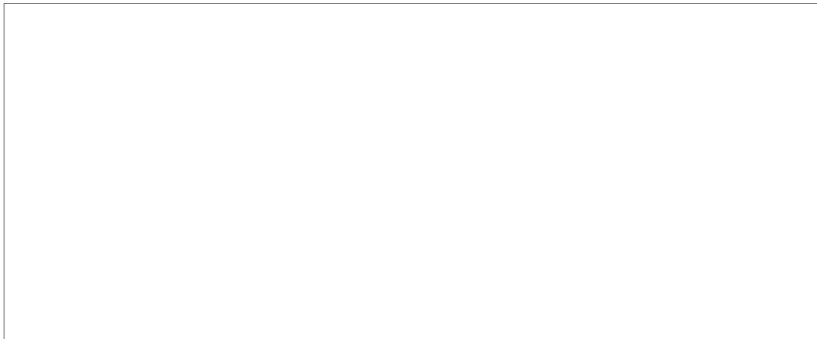
Military action has subsided following the Israeli air strikes into Lebanon and Syria and the subsequent Israeli-Syrian air battle. Israeli aircraft remained active yesterday in reconnaissance over Lebanon and southern Syria, but there have been no further Israeli attacks or Arab responses.

Further Israeli action, however, has been implied by General Elazar, the Israeli chief of staff. Over the weekend Elazar publicly referred to Israel's "continuous war" against the fedayeen.

Syrian suspicion of US officials traveling in the area has apparently been heightened by the military activity. On Saturday, a US Embassy officer from Jordan was arrested while crossing through Syria to Lebanon, and subjected to a two-hour interrogation and search. The Syrians may also be holding the embassy's assistant defense attaché, who disappeared on Saturday while traveling through Syria to Beirut.

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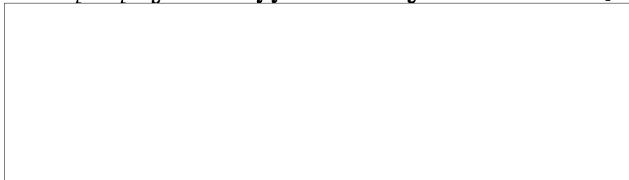
PANAMA

The chances that Panama will bring the treaty issue before the UN General Assembly appear considerably reduced.

Foreign Minister Tack was preparing a speech on the canal issue for delivery at the General Assembly. Last Wednesday Tack told Ambassador Sayre that he will not attend the session and that Panama does not intend to raise the issue in any forum this year in a way that would disturb bilateral relations. Preliminary agreement later in the week on purchase of the US-owned power and light company also alleviated one major issue that might have spurred General Torrijos to attack the US.

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Torrijos could still order a diplomatic and propaganda offensive against the US,



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