



The President's Daily Brief

20 September 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

20 September 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Vietnam, Communist attacks in Quang Ngai Province appear to be part of a coordinated campaign in the lowlands. (Page 1)



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In Cambodia, President Lon Nol has appointed a new army chief of staff. (Page 4)

Syrian-based fedayeen are continuing to harass the Israelis and may soon draw an Israeli response. (Page 5)

The Yugoslav Government has officially demanded that countries hosting large colonies of Croatian emigres put a stop to their hostile activities. (Page 6)

In Uganda, President Amin's allegation of British involvement in the recent invasion may lead to the expulsion of British citizens; the safety of all Westerners in Uganda is being endangered by Amin's xenophobia. (Page 7)

Helsinki is delaying final action on its recognition of East Germany, possibly out of fear that it may jeopardize its chances to host the main conference on European security and cooperation. (Page 7)

At Annex we discuss Communist plans to intensify the fighting in South Vietnam during September and October.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The fighting in Quang Ngai Province has spread to all five coastal districts, and evidence continues to accumulate that the attacks in this area are part of a broader coordinated Communist campaign in the lowlands.

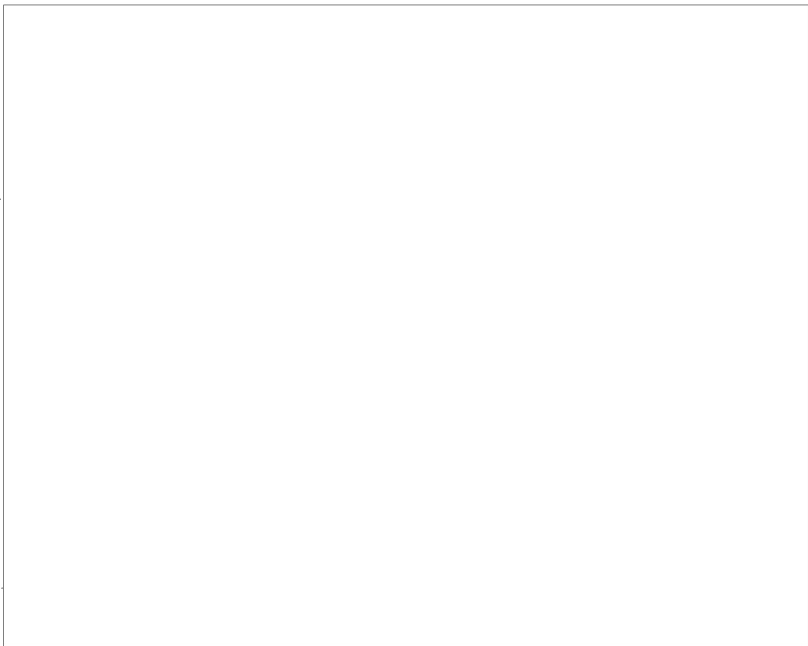
In the Quang Tri City area, fighting has eased, but intercepts indicate that the Communists are preparing for South Vietnamese air and amphibious assaults across the Thach Han River west of the city.

At Annex, there is a longer view of the fighting as we envision it for the next two months.

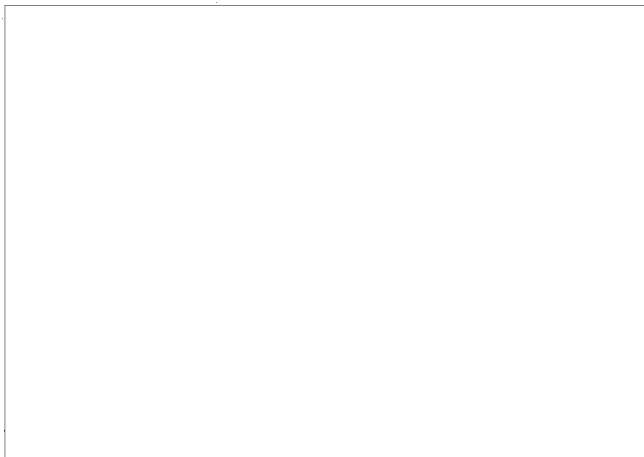
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VIETNAM



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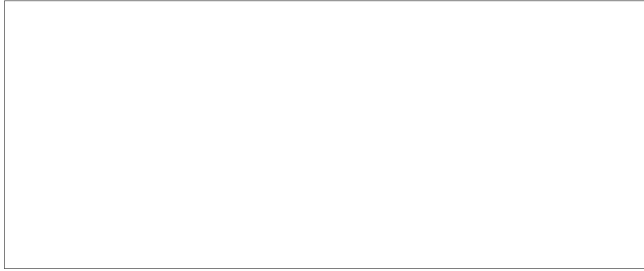


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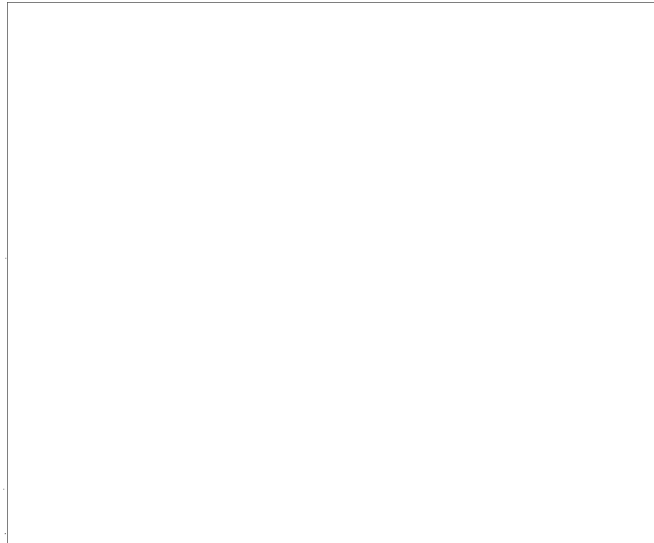


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CAMBODIA

President Lon Nol has named Major General Sosthene Fernandez as his new army chief of staff. Fernandez, a military professional with a flair for organization, has already begun to exercise his new authority. He has indicated that he intends to take responsibility for direction of combat operations and has emphasized that all field commanders wanting to communicate with Lon Nol must go through him.

Lon Nol may be seeking to derive political as well as military benefits from the appointment. Fernandez is a close associate of Sirik Matak

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Lon Nol is also aware that Matak's refusal to rejoin the government is based in part on his insistence that the President reduce his interference in military matters. Given these factors, the appointment could be viewed as a conciliatory gesture designed to induce Matak to accept Lon Nol's repeated offers of the vice-presidency.

The appointment has had a tonic effect on the military, although it remains to be seen how much authority over military operations Lon Nol is really prepared to give up. Members of the General Staff are said to be enthusiastic. Lower ranking officers, who recently have been grumbling about the government's overall poor performance, may also be pleased with the move.

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ISRAEL-SYRIA

The Israelis are still hinting that Syria is the most likely target for future military operations. A semi-official newspaper, Davar, has described the Israeli thrust into Lebanon over the weekend as only part of a campaign "with much broader aims" and noted that fedayeen bases in Syria are "within reach" of Israeli Defense Forces. Arab guerrillas based in Syria, moreover, have continued to provoke Tel Aviv by shelling Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights.

The Israelis held maneuvers on the Golan Heights yesterday, perhaps as a prelude to some sort of military action.

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The problem of rooting out the fedayeen in Syria, however, is more difficult than in Lebanon. The terrain is less passable and the distances are greater. The Syrian Army, much larger than the Lebanese, is close to the border and gives every indication that it will resist an Israeli incursion. Given Tel Aviv's policy of keeping casualties to a minimum, it seems most likely that the Israelis will avoid large-scale ground actions and keep to the air as much as possible. This could include helicopter-commando operations against selected fedayeen camps.

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YUGOSLAVIA

Croatian emigres opposed to Tito's government are elated by the publicity their terrorist acts have been receiving and are seeking more of it. In Australia, two Yugoslav tourist agencies were bombed this week, and in Spain, anonymous telephoners have threatened violence unless authorities release Croatian emigres held in the hijacking of an airliner from Sweden last week.

Following more than a year of emigre terrorism both in Yugoslavia and abroad, the government has officially demanded that countries hosting large colonies of Croatian emigres put a stop to their hostile activities. A high Yugoslav party official has warned in a public speech that failure to do so would have a negative effect on bilateral relations. The countries involved include Sweden, Austria, Australia, West Germany, Canada, and the US.

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NOTES

Uganda: President Amin's allegation of British involvement in the recent invasion may lead to the expulsion of Britons from Uganda. Amin's advisers have told him that all British technical advisers should be forced to leave. The government radio has charged that British spies are living in Uganda, thus paving the way for action against individual British citizens. Approximately 60 British citizens have been arrested. Amin's xenophobia may turn him against the entire Western presence, including Americans. Six of the 13 US citizens arrested in recent days, including three Peace Corps volunteers, remain in custody. The government has agreed to release an American newsman arrested Sunday into the custody of the embassy.

Finland: Ever since the Finns and the East Germans initialled a treaty on 6 September to establish diplomatic relations, the West Germans have ignored Helsinki's offers to engage in similar negotiations. Now the Finns say they will wait to consummate their deal with East Germany until Bonn also is ready to establish relations with Finland. One of the factors involved in this Finnish decision may be the fear that it has jeopardized Helsinki's chances of hosting the main conference on European security and cooperation.

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VIETNAM

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The Communists are continuing to press ahead with their plans [redacted]

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[redacted] to intensify the fighting in South Vietnam during September and October. Indeed, they are already on the move in some areas. Clearly, they are not capable of--and are not talking of--pulling off something to rival their three-pronged offensive last spring. Much as the Communists might hope for some dramatic new success, their current purpose seems to be to enhance their position on the ground for the contingency of either a cease-fire or further prolonged fighting. Efforts to influence the US election may also be behind the new Communist efforts.

Communist ambitions obviously have been dealt a blow by the loss of control over the Quang Tri City citadel in northern Military Region 1. The North Vietnamese had made an all-out effort to hold this position and had fed most of their major units in this area into the fight. Their failure will give considerable encouragement to the South Vietnamese and must have been a corresponding psychological blow to the Communists. At the same time, the Communists as yet show no signs of giving up the fight for Quang Tri Province, and there are indications that they may be preparing counterstrikes in the government's rear along Route 1 and nearer to Hue.

Moreover, while government reserves are still heavily tied down in the Quang Tri - Hue area, the Communists appear determined to make inroads into the populated coastal provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai in southern Military Region 1. Following up attacks they launched in the latter half of August against the Que Son Valley of Quang Nam and Tien Phuoc District of Quang Tin, the Communists have struck hard this week in Quang Ngai, using a division-plus force that recently moved to the province from the central highlands. [redacted]

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Enemy forces remaining in the central highlands appear inadequate to mount another drive similar to that undertaken against Kontum Province last spring. Nevertheless, these forces currently are conducting limited operations to isolate government bases and towns in western Pleiku Province and to keep government forces tied down there.

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The Communists appear to be planning for greater offensive activity in the delta, where they have increased their force strength and are now moving in supplies and equipment, including heavier artillery. They have about five regiments around Base Area 470 in the northern delta, and the

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equivalent of at least two divisions is in the western and southern delta. In the past week, there has been a sharp increase in shellings and attacks against government outposts in provinces around these enemy concentrations, notably Dinh Tuong and Kien Hoa in the upper delta and Chuong Thien and Kien Giang to the west.

It is still not certain that the Communists will try to use these large forces in the delta, where they are especially vulnerable to air action, to attack major towns. Their very presence, however, and the knocking out of outposts have been sufficient to cause some pullback of government administrators and troops toward the towns and to allow the Communists to circulate more freely among unprotected hamlets, recruiting, impressing, and foraging for supplies. Should the larger enemy units be withdrawn or forced out, such setbacks to pacification might be fairly rapidly reversed, but if they remain or obtain additional North Vietnamese reinforcements--like the 1st Division across the border in southwestern Cambodia--the deterioration could be more lasting.

In sum, the Communists are now moving to intensify the fighting in widely separated areas of South Vietnam. Their purpose is not to launch a major new offensive, but to get into the strongest possible position to exploit a cease-fire or, if that does not come, to continue the fighting for the indefinite future.

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