



The President's Daily Brief

16 October 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In South Vietnam, the Communists appear to be preparing for a major effort against the Saigon area in the coming weeks. *(Page 1)*

Cambodian President Lon Nol has approved first minister-designate Hang Thun Hak's proposed cabinet. *(Page 2)*

The opening round of peace talks between the Lao Government and the Communists will be held in Vientiane today. *(Page 3)*

Israel's bombing yesterday of fedayeen bases in Lebanon and Syria apparently is intended as a warning against a renewal of fedayeen activity. *(Page 4)*

In Moscow, Egyptian Prime Minister Sidqi begins talks aimed at a reconciliation with the Soviets. *(Page 4)*

The Chilean Government is moving firmly to end the transportation and commerce strike, but at last word the opposition Christian Democrats have called for still broader strike action. *(Page 4)*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Communist military activity near Saigon continues to increase. Over the weekend several roads north and east of the capital were cut. At least four large-caliber rockets have been discovered aimed at the city, and we have many intelligence reports of rockets and mortar shells being moved closer to Saigon.

The current disposition of enemy units in MRs 3 and 4 shows that they are expanding their operational areas to threaten not just strategic roadways and waterways, but some major towns and military installations. In a highly unusual move the headquarters of Communist forces in the northern delta provinces, which has been operating from Cambodia for the past two years, apparently has relocated into Dinh Tuong Province southwest of Saigon. A number of unidentified Communist radio stations have been detected in sensitive areas close to Bien Hoa, Lai Khe, and Cu Chi, as well as Saigon.

Among the Saigon government's countermeasures, MR 3 commander General Minh is deploying Rangers and regional forces in blocking positions north and east of the capital.

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The severing of key highways leading to the capital--the Communists' apparent objective--can be achieved without great numbers of troops and could seriously hamper defensive deployments. Despite government security measures, we believe that some sapper and terror units have infiltrated into Saigon and its suburbs.

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CAMBODIA

President Lon Nol has approved first minister-designate Hang Thun Hak's proposed cabinet list for his new government. The new cabinet consists chiefly of technicians carried over from the outgoing Son Ngoc Thanh government, plus a few new faces from the ranks of Lon Nol's Socio-Republican Party. Key appointments include the shift of General Thappana Nginn from Interior to Defense and the naming of the former commander of Military Region IV, General Sar Hor, to the Interior post. Lon Nol's unpopular younger brother, Colonel Lon Non, has been given his first cabinet-level job. He was named a "special minister," who will concern himself with pacification. Long Boret remains foreign minister.

Hang Thun Hak's government is not likely to be any more effective in dealing with the country's myriad problems than its predecessors. The 46-year-old Hak's governmental experience has been largely limited to his service for less than a year as third deputy prime minister in charge of community development programs. Thus, his decision to retain a majority of veteran ministers seems to be necessary and prudent.

The new government fails to include any members of the opposition Republican or Democratic parties. Lon Nol had sought to include them in a "government of national union," and to that end, had recently encouraged a political dialogue between Socio-Republican leaders and the chief of the Republican Party, Sirik Matak.

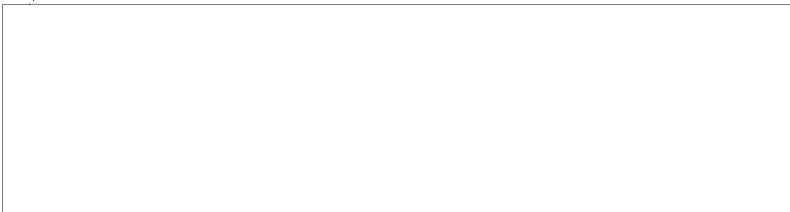
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The government did even less courting of the Democrats, whose former head, In Tam, had made it clear that he would not accept any position in a new government.

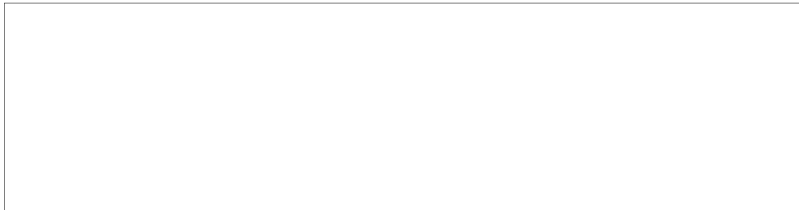
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LAOS

The opening round of peace talks between the government and the Lao Communists will be held in Vientiane today. Although the Communists have given no clues as to their negotiating tactics, their statements on arriving in Vientiane Saturday had a conciliatory tone.



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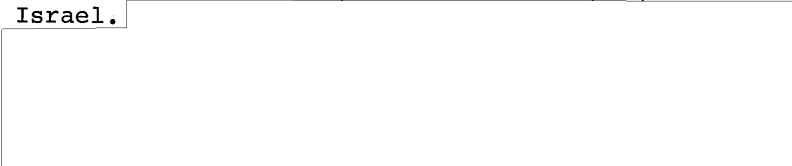


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NOTES

Israel-Fedayeen: Israeli aircraft yesterday bombed four fedayeen bases in Lebanon and one in Syria. The air strikes seem intended mainly to remind the fedayeen and the Beirut and Damascus governments that Israel will not tolerate a renewal of fedayeen activity. There have been no incidents of any magnitude nor any Israeli casualties since 20 September. Tel Aviv is certainly aware, however, of the growing opposition in fedayeen ranks to Fatah leader Arafat's agreement with Beirut to limit guerrilla activity against Israel.



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Egypt-USSR: The first round of serious reconciliation talks begins today with the visit of Prime Minister Sidqi to Moscow. On the eve of his departure, Egypt's leading journalist, Muhammad Haykal, provided another reminder that the dialogue will be far from smooth. Haykal warned against "turning the page on this dispute without deep debate." If Sidqi believes he is making progress, we expect that final arrangements will be worked out for an early meeting involving President Sadat.

Chile: The truck owners' flat rejection of the government's terms for ending their strike frees President Allende to deal even more firmly with them. Police and army troops have greatly lessened the effect of the strike by keeping impounded trucks operating. The sympathy strike of small shopowners has had only limited effectiveness. Yesterday, the military commander of Santiago ordered that all transport and commerce must return to normal this morning and warned that military and police forces would ensure compliance. In response, the opposition Christian Democrats met early this morning and called for a new wave of strikes, to begin today, in all sectors where their party has influence.

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