

The President's Daily Brief

23 October 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

23 October 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Laotian Government has prepared a seven-point program to present tomorrow at the second round of talks with the Communists. Meanwhile, both sides are trying to expand the territory under their control. (Page 1)

President Marcos an indefinite term as the leader of the Philippines. (Page 3)

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The situation in Chile may be easing. (Page 4)

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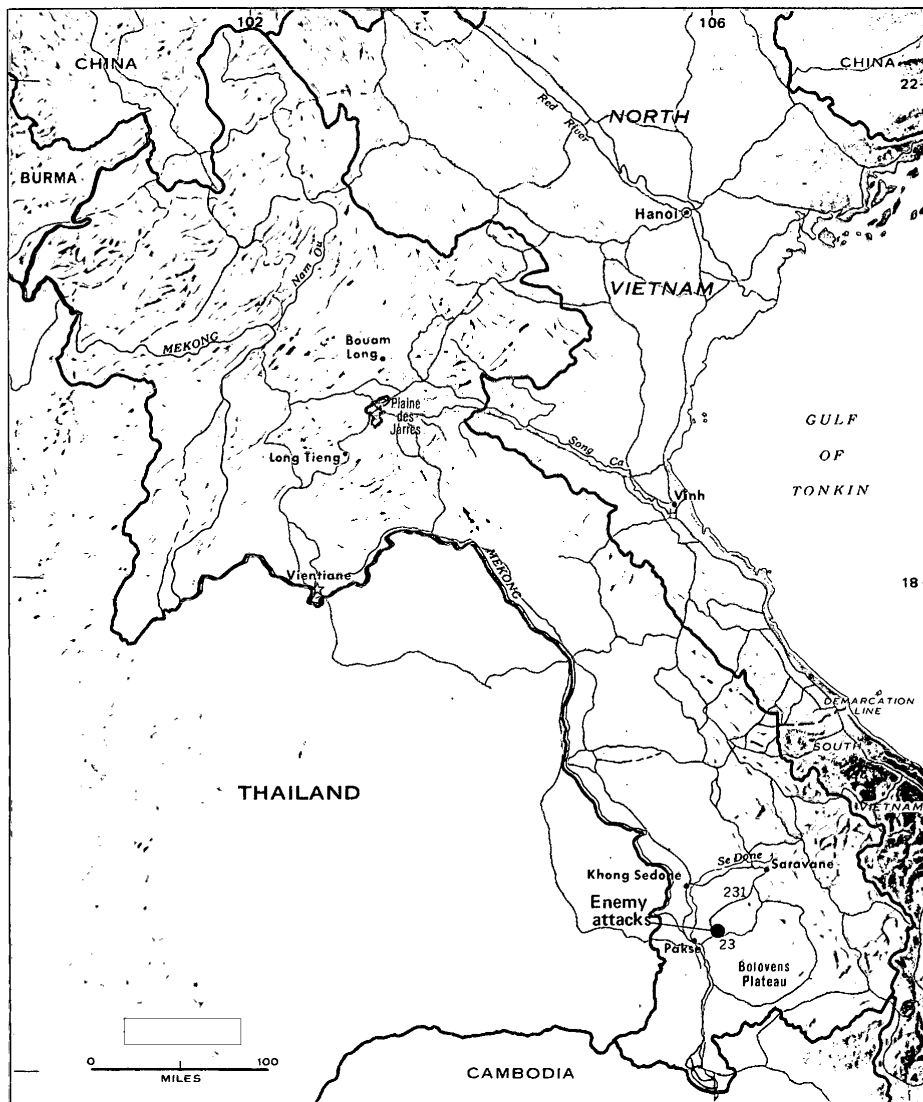
[redacted] the government's initial position for the second round of talks with the Lao Communists, which resume on Tuesday in Vientiane. In response to the Communists' initial statement of 17 October, Pheng Phongsavan, the government's chief negotiator, intends to sidestep the question of the presence of Thai troops in Laos as well as the issue of US bombing. Instead, he will hit hard at the North Vietnamese occupation of Laotian territory, a matter the Communists chose to avoid in their presentation.

Once this scene is set, Pheng will present the government's seven-point program for a settlement. It calls for:

- respect for the Geneva Accords, including an end to North Vietnamese aggression and a withdrawal of the Lao Communists from the so-called "Indochina Liberation Movement";
- a comprehensive cease-fire under supervision of the International Control Commission;
- total withdrawal of all foreign troops and a pulling back of Pathet Lao troops to lines existing in 1962;
- immediate negotiations on unifying the country, integrating the respective armed forces of all sides, and preparing for general elections of a national assembly and a new government;
- free travel after a cease-fire for all Laotian citizens;
- maintenance of a neutral foreign policy consistent with the 1954 and 1962 accords; and,
- freeing of all prisoners of war, regardless of nationality, as soon as possible after a cease-fire.

We expect the Lao Communists to rebuff the government statement, but not the seven points. Recently, a member of the Communist delegation told Deputy Chief of Mission Stearns that the negotiations would require compromise by all parties. At the moment, the government seems most interested in exploring the Communist proposal

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for establishing a provisional political council. For the future, the government negotiators are also thinking of recommending that the present cabinet be broadened to allow the Communists three portfolios in addition to the two they are already entitled to under the 1962 Geneva agreement. Both negotiating teams are operating against a background of fresh efforts to expand the territory under their control.

The Communists, for example, have thrust into the Mekong Valley after taking the town of Khong Sedone. They are also continuing their attacks near Pakse in an effort to keep government forces from returning to the Bolovens Plateau. In part, these moves may be in response to a government airlift of troops onto the plateau which resulted in the seizure of Saravane, a provincial capital long in Communist hands. The enemy's progress in the west could lead to abandonment of the Saravane operation. To the north, both sides are maneuvering for a new round of fighting around and on the Plaine des Jarres.

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[REDACTED] the Marcos-controlled constitutional convention is producing a document that will allow Marcos to continue indefinitely either as chief executive or prime minister. Marcos has told the convention to finish its draft by the end of next month.

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On Saturday, Marcos moved to strengthen his backing among the peasantry. He announced a land reform that would turn over rice and corn lands to tenants and sharecroppers.

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NOTE

Chile: President Allende appears to be gradually gaining the upper hand in the transportation strike. More strikers have returned to work, and no significant new groups have joined the strike movement. Allende claims that the situation will be back to normal by early this week.

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