

The President's Daily Brief

16 December 1972



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

16 December 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

We have reports that the Communists plan to keep up sapper raids around Saigon for several weeks and to mount infantry attacks against facilities to the northwest. (Page 1) Meanwhile President Thieu's Democracy Party, intended to be his main political vehicle against the Communists, is about to make its public bow. (Page 2)

In Cambodia, we have some evidence that the Lon Nol government is prepared to open political discussions with the Khmer Communists. One unproductive contact at the provincial level reportedly has already been made. (Page 3)

A high Soviet official describes relations with Egypt as normal "but without kisses." On Page 4 we appraise the current state of affairs between Moscow and Cairo.

Pakistan

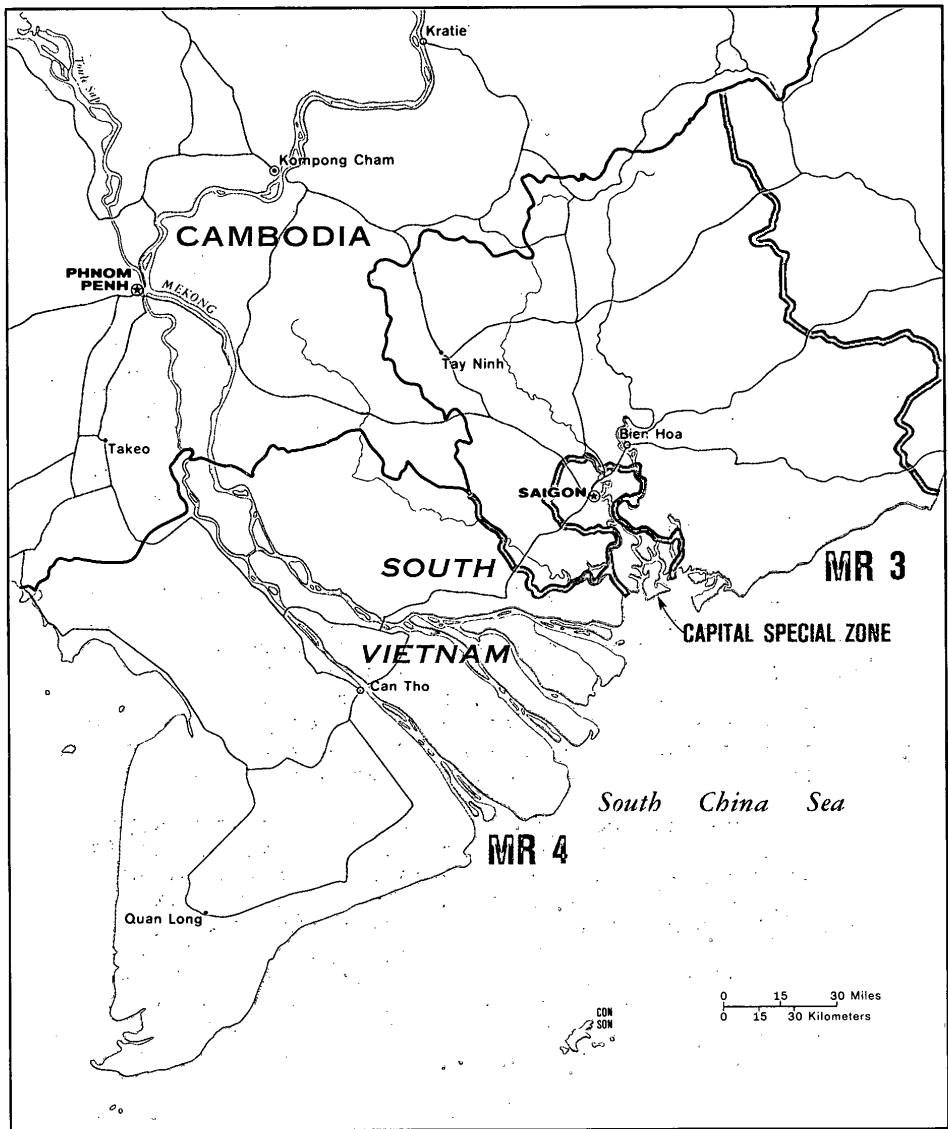
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Ugandan President Amin is scheduled to tell the local British community on Monday of a "drastic decision" concerning the British presence. (Page 6)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

[REDACTED] Commu-
nists plan to continue low-cost sapper raids against munitions storage facilities around Saigon for several weeks. In addition, infantry forces will attack important government facilities and population centers northwest of the capital. Tay Ninh City, the main administrative center in this area, is a primary target. The Communists hope to take the city and use it as a political headquarters.

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Communist military units in this region are not considered strong enough to inflict serious losses on the government over the next few weeks. At best, they are capable of continuing artillery fire and sapper raids against a wide variety of targets, and they could possibly overrun some smaller population centers.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu's Democracy Party, intended to be his main political vehicle for countering the Communists, is about to make its public bow. Senator Nguyen Van Ngai, one of the party's chief organizers, has informed US Embassy officers that province-level chapters will begin holding inaugural ceremonies this weekend. Such ceremonies will continue until February, when a national party convention will be held.

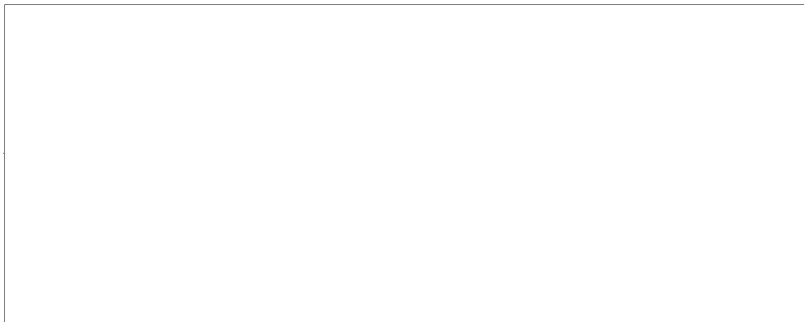
The Democracy Party seems designed more to strengthen Thieu's position with groups already sympathetic to the government than to broaden his popular support. Recruiters have been active for more than a year, chiefly among civilian officials and military officers throughout the country. Although many high-level military officers have joined, several senior commanders reportedly have refused because they believe that the military should not be oriented toward any party.

Leaders of some of the country's established parties are concerned over the inroads that Thieu's party is making among their own supporters. Many of these politicians probably would be receptive to cooperating with or even merging into the Democracy Party if Thieu would give them a significant role. Thus far, however, the President and his lieutenants have preferred to concentrate upon assembling a relatively disciplined following of officials and army officers.

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CAMBODIA

We have some evidence that the Lon Nol government is now willing to open political discussions with the Khmer Communists. Its previous approach to the Communists was confined to a largely unsuccessful rallier program.



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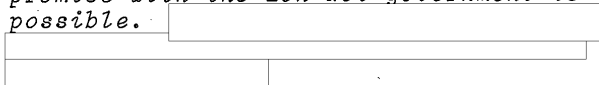


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Meanwhile the government has made a first effort to contact the Khmer Communists above the local level. A French expatriate within the Cambodian Government has told Ambassador Swank that government emissaries met with anti-Sihanouk Khmer Communist representatives in the enemy-held province of Kratie in the northeast. The meeting was unproductive.

This initial result is in keeping with the frequent insistence by dissident leaders that no form of political compromise with the Lon Nol government is possible.

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USSR-EGYPT

Yevgeniy Pyrlin, the deputy chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Near East Division, recently described relations with Egypt as normal and business-like "but without kisses." In a conversation with a US diplomat, he said that Moscow had restated its policy in clear terms during Premier Sidqi's visit in October, and that the Egyptians were now convinced that Moscow is firmly opposed to providing the sophisticated weaponry Cairo had requested. The Sidqi visit "solved all problems," according to Pyrlin, thus obviating the need for a summit meeting.

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From the Egyptian point of view, the Sidqi visit did not by any means "solve all problems." We expect that Cairo will continue to press for more military aid and maintain a suspicious attitude toward Soviet professions of diplomatic support.

While Pyrlin would naturally want to put the best possible face on Soviet-Egyptian relations, the USSR does in fact find some advantages in the current situation. Its role in Egypt has greatly diminished, but so have its costs. In addition, Egyptian ports are still available, and Moscow's relations elsewhere in the Middle East have not been impaired.

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PAKISTAN

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Bhutto's relations with the military are generally sound, but at a time of growing civil disorder and political opposition he may feel it prudent to root out even small pockets of discontent.

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UGANDA

President Amin has scheduled a meeting on Monday with 200 representatives of the 3,500-member British community in Uganda to deliver what he terms his "drastic decision" on the British presence.

he will order the expulsion of all British merchants, teachers, and lawyers by Christmas. The British appear resigned to at least some diminution of their activity, and many families are preparing to depart.

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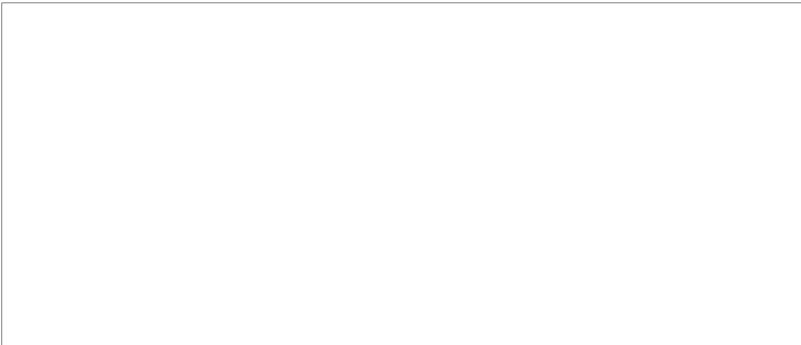
Amin's steady stream of anti-British statements and his expulsion of the British High Commissioner have already produced great pessimism in London over the chances of salvaging much during Amin's rule. As a result, London recently canceled a \$24-million loan and stopped paying supplements to the salaries of British technicians under contract to the Ugandan Government.

Amin's announcement, even if it falls short of a total expulsion of the British, could prompt some elements of his undisciplined army to make difficulties for Britons and other white residents. If Amin breaks completely with the UK, he will soon need new scapegoats and could easily turn on the 700-member American community. Despite past diatribes against the US, however, he has had unusually kind words for the US lately.

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