



*The President's Daily Brief*

*2 January 1973*

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

2 January 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Communists have begun a new offensive in northern Laos against Route 13, the only road between Vientiane and Luang Prabang. Defenders of Bouam Long--assisted by effective air support--are holding their ground against continued nightly shellings by the Communists. (Page 1)

Malta



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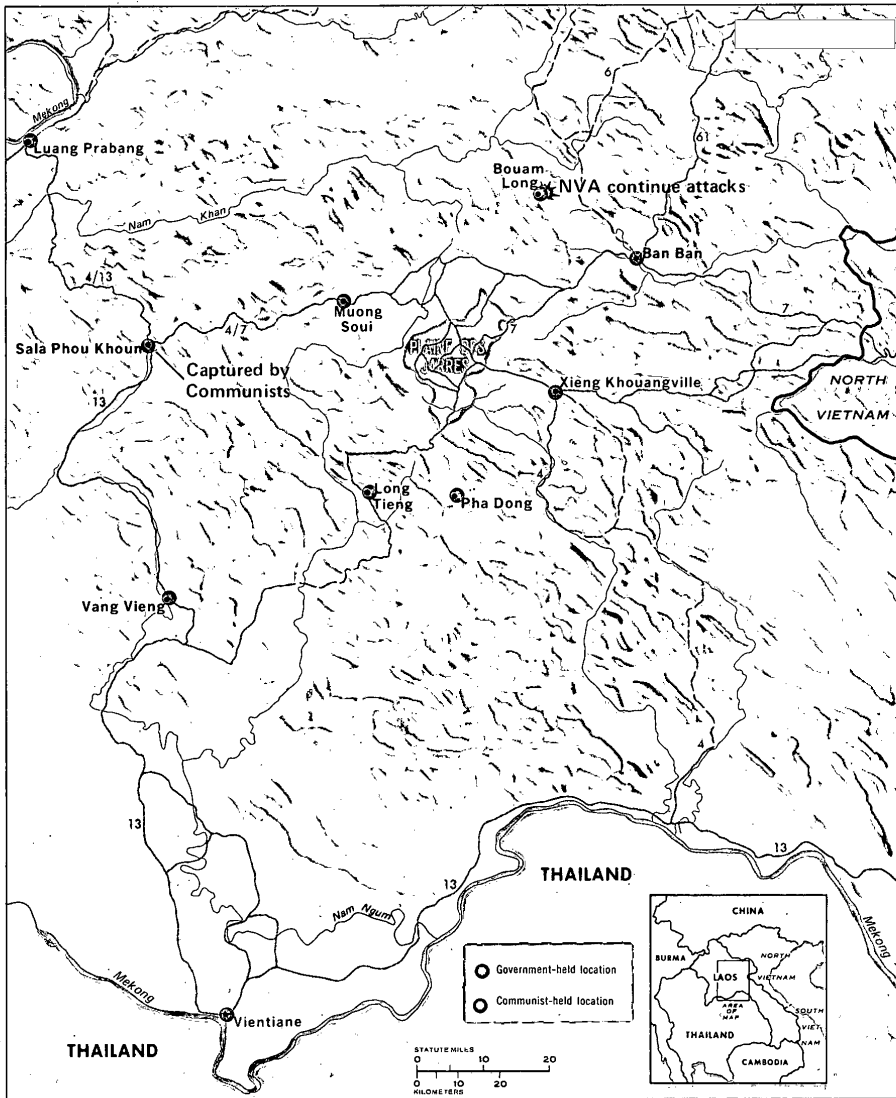
(Page 2)

The Bangladesh Government has increased the number of security personnel around US installations in Dacca, but has not guaranteed that demonstrations will stop. (Page 3)

Israeli air strikes on Syrian Army posts and Syrian shelling of the Golan Heights during the past week have heightened tension along the border. (Page 3)

# LAOS

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LAOS

The Communists have begun a new offensive in the north. Enemy units on 30 December drove a 1,000-man Lao Army force from Sala Phou Khoun located at the junction of Routes 7 and 13. Pathet Lao and dissident neutralists carried the brunt of the fighting although they were supported by a small North Vietnamese artillery unit.

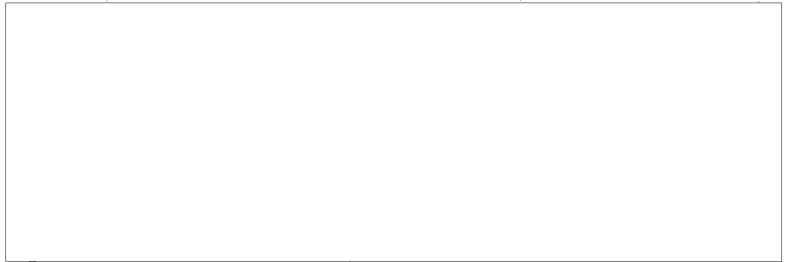
Intercepted messages suggest that the Communists will soon move both north and south against hamlets along Route 13 which is the only road between Vientiane and Luang Prabang. The government has already sent two irregular battalions from Luang Prabang toward Sala Phou Khoun.

*The Communists occupied villages along Route 13 in 1970 and 1972, but supply problems and poor organization prevented them from mounting a serious threat to either Luang Prabang or to the government's logistic center at Vang Vieng.*

The North Vietnamese have continued their nightly shellings and ground assaults against Bouam Long, the government base north of the Plaine des Jarres, but the irregular defenders--assisted by effective air support--are holding their ground. So far, the Communists do not appear to have launched an all-out effort. Only three of the seven battalions surrounding the base have been detected in the fighting.

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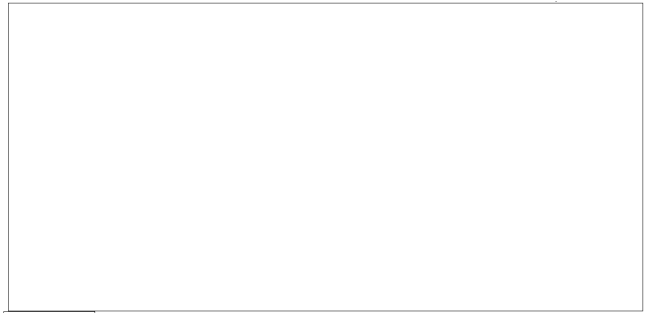
MALTA



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NOTES

Bangladesh: On 31 December the USIS center in Mymensingh, a district capital, was bombed and sacked. On the following day the USIS library in Dacca was unsuccessfully assaulted by 200 to 300 students. Ostensibly, these latest attacks on US property in Bangladesh are in protest against US policy in Vietnam. We believe, however, that the attacks have been stimulated by inflammatory rhetoric of ruling Awami League politicians, who are engaged in an election campaign and are blaming the US for the country's many serious difficulties. Privately, Bangladesh officials have acted correctly toward US representatives, but they say that Prime Minister Mujib would "have difficulty" apologizing in public because of the tense political situation. The government has increased the number of security personnel around US installations in Dacca, but has not guaranteed that demonstrations will be called off. In dispersing the demonstrators on 1 January, police fired on the crowd and killed two students.

Israel-Syria: Israeli air strikes on Syrian Army posts and Syrian shelling of the Golan Heights during the past week have heightened tension along the border. Israel has closed the area to civilian traffic and alerted its troops for further action. We expect new Israeli air strikes if the Syrians should shell the heights again.

USSR-Cuba: The Soviet naval combatants that arrived in Cuba in early December are still in Cuban ports. The group includes a cruiser, a destroyer, a nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine, and a diesel-powered submarine.

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Egypt: Demonstrations at Cairo University this weekend against the arrest of student protesters are a further embarrassment to the Sadat government. Sadat remains determined to discourage protests, but his inability to resolve the nation's difficulties only fosters continuing criticism.

(continued)

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Australia: The Communist-led Seamen and Water-side Workers' Unions voted today to continue the boycott of US flagships that are carrying supplies to South Vietnam until a settlement is reached between the United States and Hanoi. Prime Minister Whitlam has yet to comment on the strike, but there is some doubt as to how far or how long the ban can be enforced. The ban appears to be as much a left-wing political test of the new Labor government as of the US.



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