



The President's Daily Brief

10 February 1973

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

10 February 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Laos, the loss of Paksong has sparked a hasty withdrawal of nearly all government forces from the Bolovens Plateau. General Vang Pao is trying to make some last-minute gains around the Plaine des Jarres [redacted]

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The Saigon government has dispatched three battalions to replace departing South Korean troops in central South Vietnam. In the North, a small convoy of vessels has left Haiphong and moved through the minefields. (Page 2)

One of Prime Minister Tanaka's closest advisers says that Japan cannot "forever" recognize Saigon as the only legitimate government in Vietnam. (Page 3)

Cambodian President Lon Nol is accelerating his campaign to make Sirik Matak his vice-president. (Page 4)

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As the international monetary crisis showed no signs of easing yesterday, [redacted]

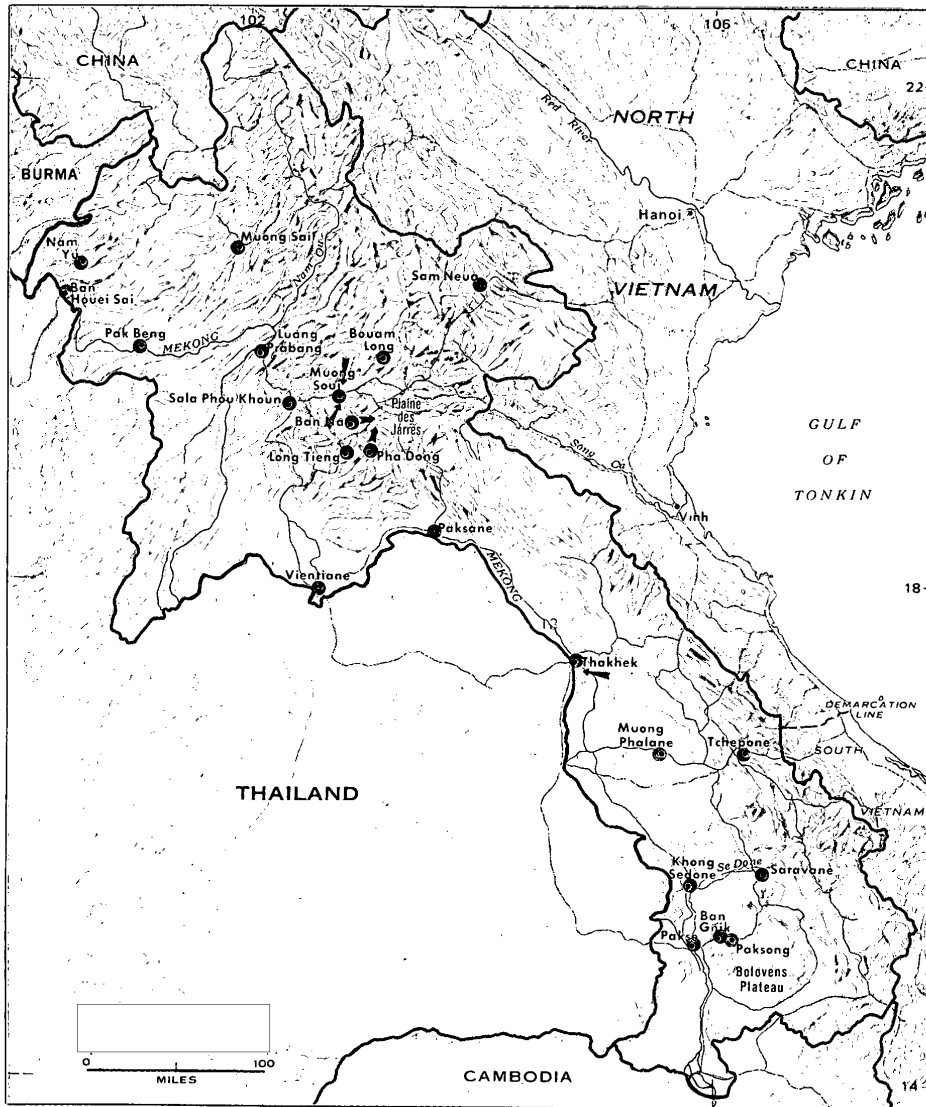
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(Page 5)

The Soviet Union plans to use underground nuclear explosions to aid in mining gold in eastern Siberia. (Page 6)

Uruguay's President Bordaberry has bowed to rebelling military leaders and sacked his new defense minister, thus saving his own job for the moment but acknowledging the reality of military dominance of his government. (Page 7)

LAOS



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- Government controlled
- Communist controlled
- ← Government operation

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LAOS

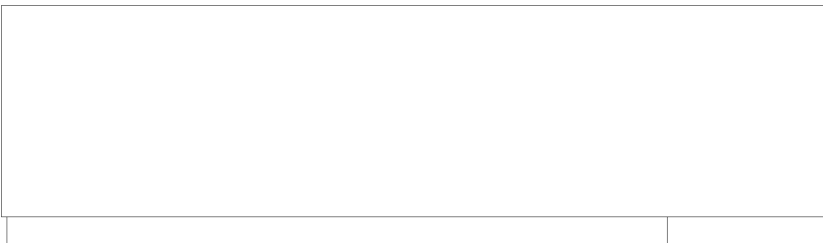
The loss of Paksong on Thursday has sparked a disorderly withdrawal of nearly all government troops on the Bolovens Plateau. Commanders are now attempting to rally their units at Ban Gnik, the last natural defensible position on the western Plateau. Late yesterday two other positions farther east on Route 23 were still in government hands.

The North Vietnamese, apparently now consolidating their control of Paksong, can be expected to move soon to push government forces from the western Bolovens. We see no evidence, however, that they intend to depart from their long-standing policy and attack Pakse, the major town in southern Laos. They are more likely to try to tie down as many government troops as possible to forestall a counterattack prior to a cease-fire.

With government units on the defensive elsewhere in the country, General Vang Pao has been trying for several weeks to make some last-minute gains around the Plaine des Jarres. A force of over 2,000 irregulars in the Muong Soui area is trying to move into that Communist logistics base west of the Plaine. Lead units are within three miles of Muong Soui to the north, but Communist units have been diverted to the area from Bouam Long and Sala Phou Khoun, and there appears to be little chance that the irregulars will capture the village.

Elsewhere a 1,000-man irregular force is moving from Ban Na toward the western edge of the Plaine and a smaller force is attempting to push toward the southern Plaine from Pha Dong. Intercepts indicate that the Communists have been anticipating a move toward the Plaine for some time and have positioned their heavy artillery and infantry units to counter such a drive.

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VIETNAM

Three government battalions have been dispatched to fill the gap caused by the departure of two South Korean regiments from Phu Yen Province in central South Vietnam. The fresh troops will join the heavy fighting against Viet Cong forces in the province. Local officials have privately said they hope that truce teams will not arrive for four or five days to give them time to clear the Communists from about 24 hamlets.

Elsewhere in the country, the Communists initiated little action. The South Vietnamese have opened additional sections of major roads leading to Saigon that the Communists had blocked.

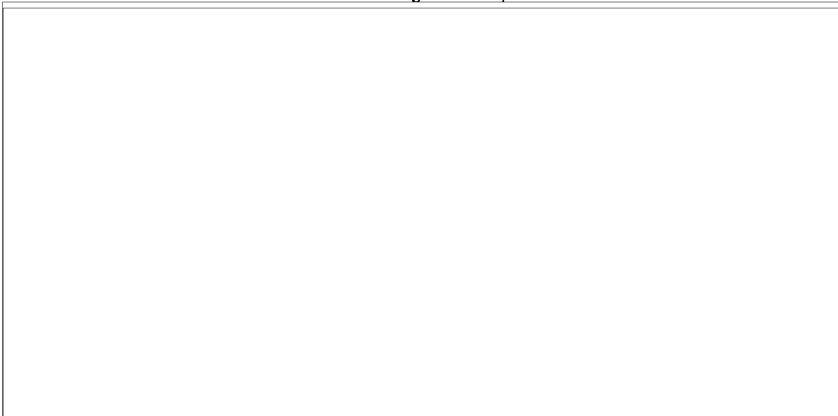
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A US Navy helicopter crew spotted a small convoy of vessels, including two foreign merchant ships and a coastal freighter, leaving Haiphong harbor and passing through the minefields yesterday. The two 500-foot ships--one Soviet and one Cuban--were preceded by as many as eight small craft. After the convoy cleared the minefields, the small craft returned to the port.

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Both ships recently took on fuel, and intercepted communications indicated they would be leaving the port on the 8th or 9th.

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JAPAN - NORTH VIETNAM

One of Prime Minister Tanaka's closest advisers has told the press that Japan cannot hold "forever" to recognition of Saigon as the only legitimate government in Vietnam.

He was responding to remarks made earlier to Japanese journalists by the chief editor of North Vietnam's party daily. The editor indicated that Hanoi is prepared to "overlook" Japan's cooperation with the US in the Vietnam war, and that Tokyo's relations with Saigon would not hinder the establishment of normal relations.

Japan wishes to retain its ties in Saigon. Partly for this reason, the Japanese will oppose any suggestion that they make unilateral contributions to the rehabilitation of North Vietnam or to areas of South Vietnam under control of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. A delegation from the Japanese Foreign Ministry plans to visit Hanoi on 20 February.

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CAMBODIA

President Lon Nol is moving into high gear in his campaign to make Sirik Matak his vice-president.

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Lon Nol is also trying to persuade former Democratic Party chief In Tam to become presidential "adviser on national accord."

[Redacted]

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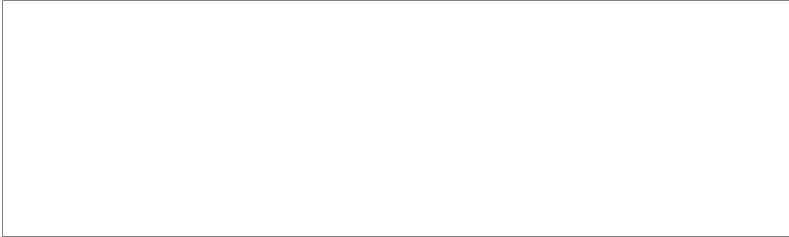
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INTERNATIONAL MONETARY DEVELOPMENTS

The monetary crisis showed no sign of easing yesterday as foreign central banks, principally the Bundesbank, took in another \$2 billion. The West German, British, and French finance ministers met last night in Paris to seek a solution.



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Tokyo did not open its foreign exchange market today for the usual half-day session.

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USSR

The Soviet Union plans to use underground nuclear explosions to aid in mining gold near Yakutsk in eastern Siberia later this year [redacted]

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[redacted]

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The Soviets have significantly expanded their program for peaceful use of nuclear explosions during the past two years, using them to extinguish gas well fires, to dam a river, to create underground storage cavities, and to stimulate oil and gas production.

The use of nuclear devices in gold mining would be another example of the intensive Soviet effort to increase their gold production. Over the past eight years, the Soviets have expanded their output by about 70 percent despite the extraordinarily high cost of mining gold in remote areas. The Soviet Union's estimated production of 270 metric tons in 1972 was exceeded only by South Africa's output.

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URUGUAY

President Bordaberry has capitulated to rebelling army and air force leaders by removing newly appointed Defense Minister Francese as they had demanded. The entire cabinet resigned in an attempt to disguise the surrender. Radio stations seized by the army and air force had broadcast communiqués outlining programs for combatting inefficiency and corruption in government and offering policy guidelines on subjects as varied as export promotion and land reform.

Bordaberry has saved his own titular leadership for the moment, but the reality of the military's will and ability to dominate the Uruguayan Government has now been demonstrated. Although the crisis erupted over an area of their special concern--the Defense Ministry--the military have underlined their claim to influence broad policy issues extending far beyond their traditional responsibility. Thus even if Bordaberry retains the office of president, his freedom of action in all areas of government is certain to be increasingly curtailed.

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NOTES



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Egypt: The resumption of university classes last Saturday was followed almost at once by minor anti-government demonstrations. About 160 students were arrested this week. A group of Cairo University students is planning protest marches in downtown streets today to protest the arrests and the lack of freedom of expression. Egyptian security forces plan to disperse the marchers by force, if necessary.

France: A district-by-district analysis prepared by the Interior Ministry shows the left alliance continuing to gain in voter preference. The survey shows the alliance as likely to win 220 of the 490 assembly seats in the elections on 4 and 11 March, the centrists 35 seats, and the Pompidolian coalition 235 seats. Public polls show a similar trend. The government coalition still has found no issue to capture the public imagination and is maintaining its emphasis on the dangers of giving power to the left.

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