



The President's Daily Brief

31 July 1973

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Scattered fighting goes on in Cambodia, but little ground has changed hands in the past few days.

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Notes on the harvest in China, on political uncertainty in Argentina, and on France's nuclear testing appear on *Page 3*.

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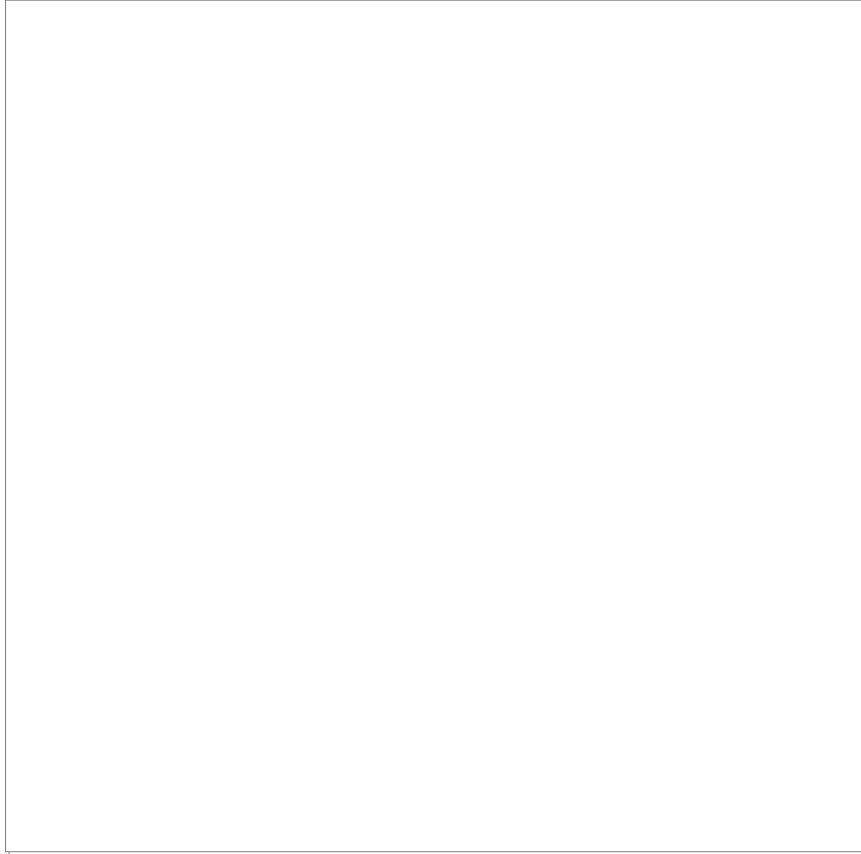
CAMBODIA

Scattered fighting continues, but little ground has changed hands in the past few days. Government forces have been fending off insurgent probes a few miles south of Phnom Penh and have begun sweep operations northwest of Pochentong Airport.

Shelling over the weekend briefly halted convoy traffic on Route 4. This key highway is now open, however, as are the capital's other key lines of communication--Route 5 and the Mekong River.

As for the mood in Phnom Penh, there are mixed signals from high government and military officials. Some profess cautious optimism that the army can hold on after August 15, and a few still have hopes that US air support will continue after the deadline. Others, including several ranking field commanders, expect a sharp decline in the army's performance without US air support.

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NOTES

China: Official figures released in Peking yesterday confirm earlier indications that China's initial harvest of summer grains was equal to the one last year. Peking had hoped for a larger harvest to make up for poor results last fall. Preliminary reports on the early rice crop--now being harvested--suggest it too may be no better than last year. China's over-all grain supply position, including import requirements, will thus depend heavily on the coming fall harvest. Changes in cropping patterns will result in an unusually late fall harvest, however, making the crop more vulnerable to weather problems.

Argentina: Governmental decision-making has been stalled, and there is growing uncertainty in the country as to what to expect for the future. Peron has still not named a vice presidential running mate. Recent reports throw doubt on earlier signs that he would pick Radical Party leader Balbin. There is now talk that Peron will turn to a "new face," but so far there has been no indication that he has made a selection that he can sell to his diverse movement. Peron is said to be planning a speech today or tomorrow that may throw some light on his intentions.

France: The second nuclear test of the 1973 series detonated on Saturday

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The
next French test is expected in about three weeks.

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