



The President's Daily Brief

20 August 1973

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Last night's coup attempt in Laos fizzled when rightist leaders failed to support it. Its main purpose probably was to sabotage the political accord being worked out with the Communists. (Page 1)

Except for terrorist incidents in Phnom Penh over the weekend, Cambodian insurgents in the capital area generally have been lying low. Intercepted messages show that a new offensive against the city is still in the planning stage. (Page 2)

[Redacted] Romania [Redacted]

[Redacted] Moscow. (Page 3)

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The West Germans have surprised their NATO allies by circulating a wide-ranging draft declaration on trans-Atlantic relations. (Page 5)

In North Yemen, President Iryani has submitted his resignation to the legislature, which must give approval before it comes into effect. The legislature is in recess, however, and Iryani's supporters will have time to drum up support for having him stay in office. (Page 6)

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LAOS

Last night's coup attempt by exiled former air force commander Ma fizzled when it failed to get support from rightist leaders in Vientiane. According to fragmentary reports, Ma's company-sized force entered Laos from Thailand, captured an airfield near Vientiane, commandeered a few T-28 aircraft, and attacked a Lao Army camp on the outskirts of the capital. After several hours, government forces regained control of the airfield and of Vientiane's radio station which the rebels had also seized. Those dissidents not killed or captured have scattered, and General Ma has been executed.

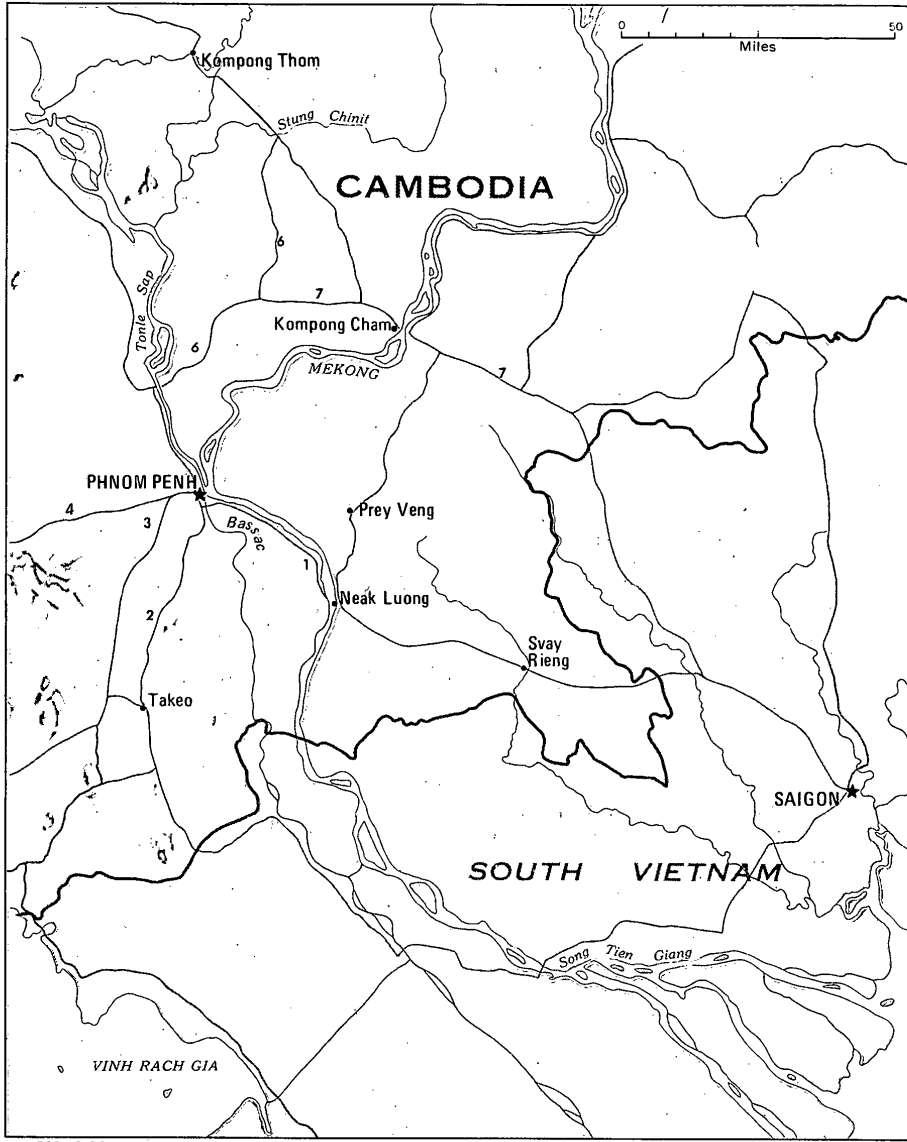
This was not General Ma's first try; he had to take up residence in Thailand in October 1966 after a previous attempt to overturn the Souvanna government. Although the precise origins of last night's operation are not yet clear, its main purpose probably was to sabotage the political accord being worked out with the Communists.

Ma apparently hoped that dissatisfaction with the terms negotiated by Souvanna would prompt rightist leaders to rally to his side. Leading rightist cabinet minister Sisouk, however, quickly expressed support for Prime Minister Souvanna, as did Lao Army commander General Bounpone and his deputy.

* * *

Although they still want changes in the draft protocol to implement the February peace agreement, there are signs of growing concern among the rightists over Souvanna's expressed determination to resign if they do not fall into line by late this month.

General Bounpone visited Souvanna on August 17 and, speaking for a group of leading rightist civilian and military leaders, tried in vain to persuade him to drop his threat to resign. Bounpone's approach suggests that the rightists realize that Souvanna's removal would block any settlement with the Communists and leave the non-Communist side in an untenable military and political position.



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CAMBODIA

Intercepted messages show that an insurgent offensive against Phnom Penh is still in the planning stage. Insurgent battlefield commanders from the capital area held a strategy session on August 14, and will meet again on August 21. The offensive itself apparently will be put off until sometime after that.

Tentative plans call for the rebels to resume fighting along Routes 2, 3, and 4 and in the Mekong River corridor below Phnom Penh. The messages suggest the rebels will try to wear down government strength by attacking the capital's outlying defenses, rather than attempt a sudden, concerted thrust into the city itself.

Except for terrorist incidents in Phnom Penh over the weekend, insurgent activity in the area has been limited to small-scale ground probes and shellings along the Bassac River five to ten miles below the city. Forty-five miles northeast of Phnom Penh, insurgent forces have moved down Route 7 and attacked outposts around the provincial capital of Kompong Cham. Government reinforcements have arrived in Kompong Cham to help strengthen defenses in anticipation of further pressure.

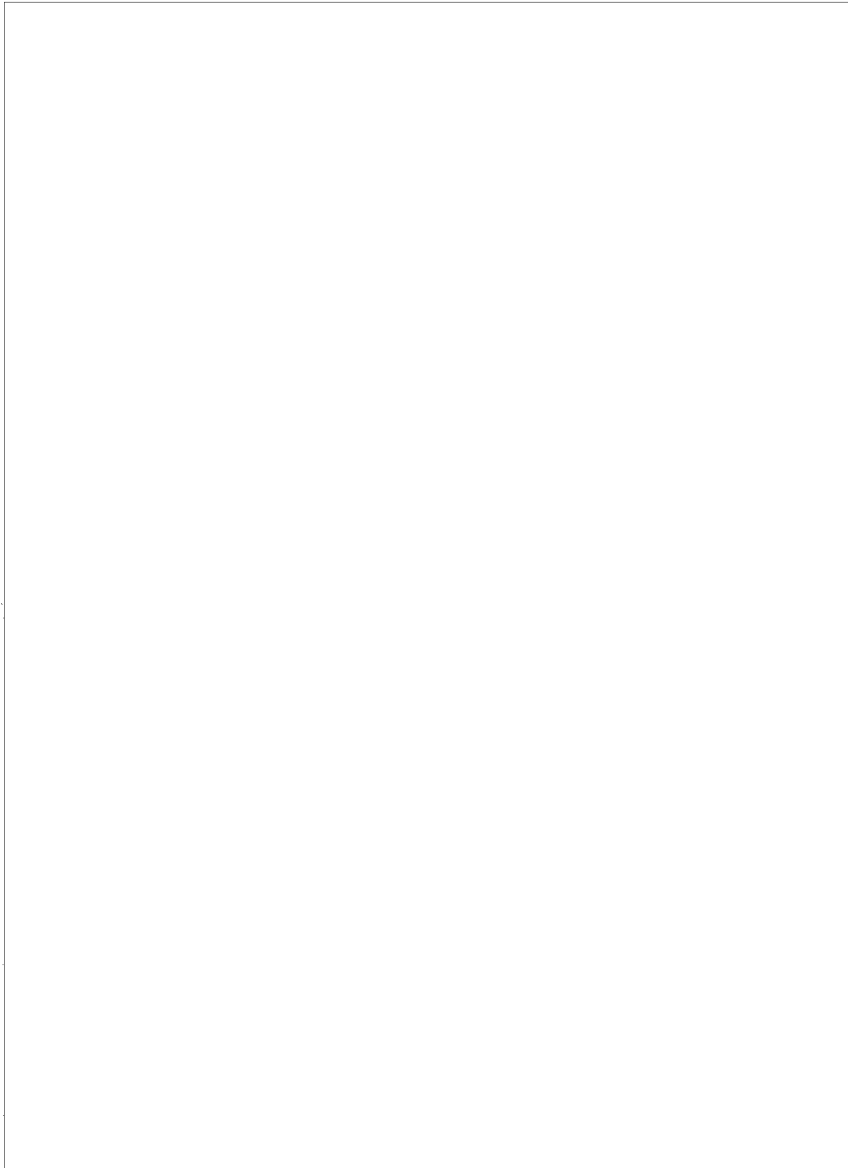


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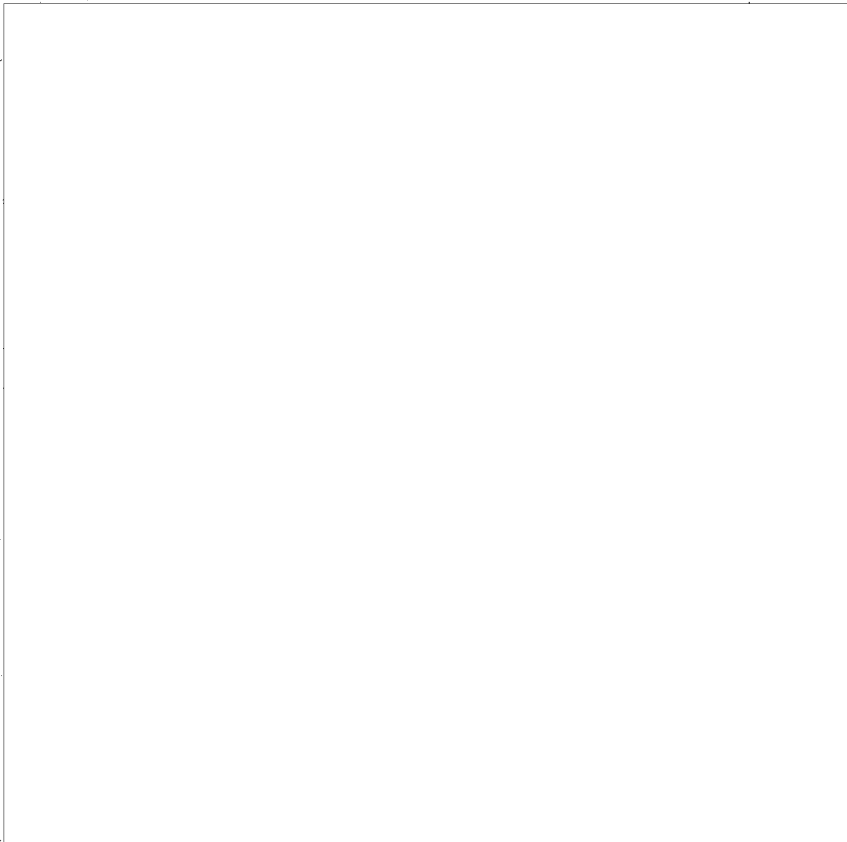
ROMANIA-USSR



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EUROPE-US

The West Germans surprised a meeting of NATO's senior political advisers on August 16 by circulating a wide-ranging draft declaration on trans-Atlantic relations. The key provisions of the draft are:

- The presence of US forces in Europe is "indispensable" for maintaining a balance of power, and the allies should adhere to the NATO strategy of flexible response and forward defense.
- The US should reaffirm its commitment to maintain and improve its European forces and make reductions only within the framework of mutual reductions with the Warsaw Pact.
- The allies should give priority to the issue of equitable burden-sharing, particularly with regard to US forces in Europe.
- The allies should approve the US-Soviet agreement on the prevention of nuclear war.

The West Germans had previously expressed reservations about this agreement. The other provisions generally reflect standard German positions, however.

There has been little direct reaction to the draft thus far. The Italian representative said that Rome also is developing its ideas for early submission. The Canadian urged that work on a declaration begin soon.

The French representative noted that movement toward a declaration has gone further than Paris had anticipated, and he expressed doubt that the North Atlantic Council had the authority to draft such a document. The British adviser commented that his government is not committed to a declaration, but that if one is desired, it would take some time to prepare.

Further NATO consideration of a draft declaration is scheduled for August 27.

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YEMEN (SANA)

President Iryani has submitted his resignation to the North Yemeni legislature, which must give its approval before it comes into effect. The legislature has just begun a two-month recess, however, and efforts are already under way among Iryani's supporters to have the 63-year-old President remain in office.



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The move may in fact be only a tactical maneuver. Iryani, a political moderate, may anticipate that he will be prevailed upon to stay in order to avert a crisis over the selection of a successor. He would thereby probably be in a better position to deal with his political opponents as well as with pressures from abroad.

Backers of Iryani in the cabinet recently told US officials in Sana that they fear serious domestic repercussions if the President's resignation is accepted. Iryani has the reputation of being the only Yemeni leader on the scene who is capable of bridging the country's political and sectarian divisions.

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