

The President's Daily Brief

22 August 1973

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

22 August 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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West and south of Hue, the Communists launched the heaviest artillery and mortar barrage yesterday since June, apparently to discourage the government's attempts to stiffen its defenses in the area. (Page 2)

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India [redacted]

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(Page 3)

The Indian Navy, with Soviet assistance, has almost completed the construction of a major training complex. (Page 4)

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CAMBODIA

Sihanouk took a less confident line on insurgent prospects on August 17, when he was interviewed by an AFP correspondent in Peking, than he has in other recent statements. The correspondent quoted him as saying that an insurgent strategy based on either capturing or isolating Phnom Penh runs the risk of renewed US bombing, and that another insurgent option--the capture of outlying provincial capitals--hazards Thai or South Vietnamese military intervention. He insisted, however, that the insurgents will continue their military pressure against the government.

Sihanouk also claimed that North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong told him on August 16 that the DRV could no longer provide direct arms shipments to the insurgents since "it is no longer at war." Dong said, however, the insurgents would be permitted to enter South Vietnam and carry back supplies from Communist-controlled territory.

Sihanouk's comments may reflect the heavy casualties suffered in late July and early August by insurgent units around Phnom Penh as well as the flooding that will hamper military action around the capital for the next several months.

His remarks on North Vietnamese assistance are consistent with statements he made earlier this year that North Vietnamese and Chinese material support was drying up. Pham Van Dong's comments, as reported by Sihanouk, may indeed indicate that there are limitations on Hanoi's willingness to provide the insurgents further military aid, but also suggest that some assistance will continue through the PRG.

According to recent insurgent messages, renewed attacks against Phnom Penh may begin this week. Should the Cambodian Government weather these assaults, its survival beyond the flood season and prospects for a negotiated settlement will depend in part on whether Hanoi and Peking are prepared to curtail or withhold material from the insurgents.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

West and south of Hue the Communists launched the heaviest artillery and mortar barrage yesterday since June, apparently to discourage the government's attempts to stiffen its defenses in the area. South Vietnamese troops have been attempting to secure mountaintop observation posts overlooking Communist infiltration routes, and engineering units have been trying to build all-weather roads to them before the monsoon rains start in October.

The Communists have been harassing the operations, but they may now feel that the roadbuilding has moved far enough and should be stopped. The South Vietnamese [redacted] does not anticipate any major Communist attack in the area.

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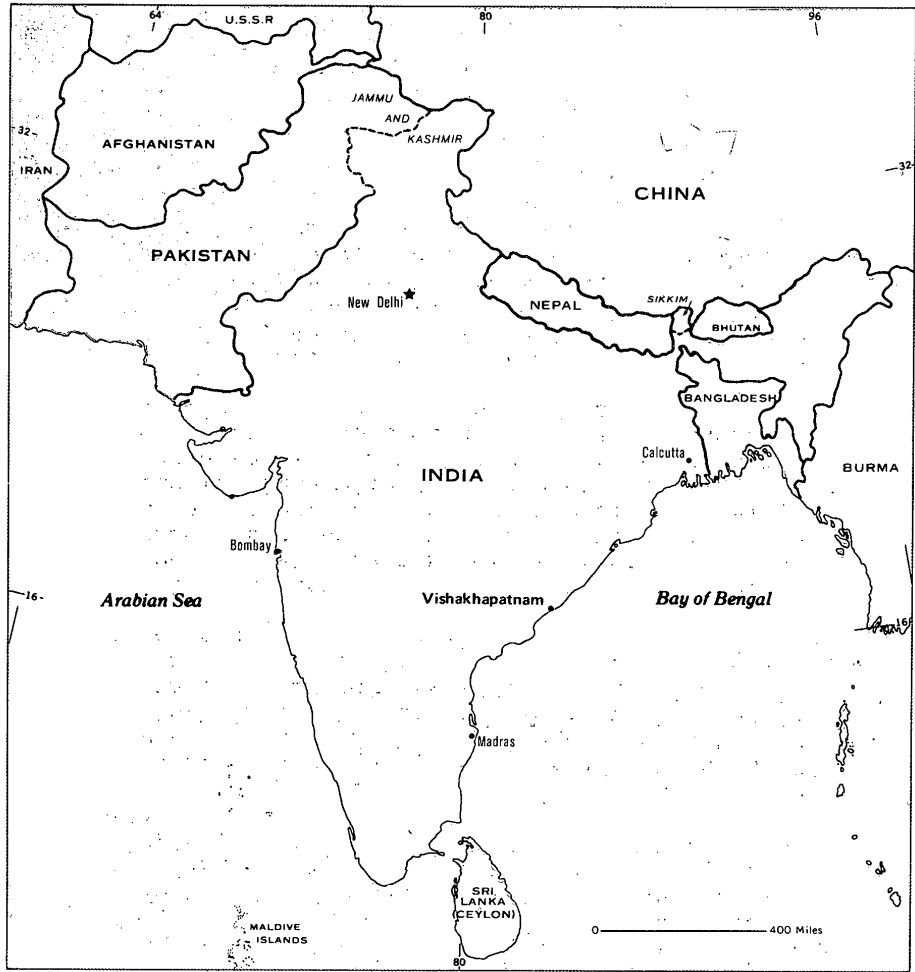
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INDIA-USSR

The Indian Navy, with Soviet assistance, has almost completed the construction of a major training complex for crews of Petya-class escorts and F-class submarines. The new facility, at Vishakhapatnam will end the need to send naval personnel to the Soviet Union for instruction on these ships. When finally completed, the project will consist of a naval base and a dockyard as well as the training facility.

When the naval base and dockyard are ready for use, the Soviets may again press for increased access to Indian naval facilities for service and repair. New Delhi would probably remain unwilling, however, to allow permanent basing of Soviet ships in Indian ports.

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CHINA

The three-day meeting held in Peking last week was not a major party gathering, and could have been a national congress of the Young Communist League.

The meeting coincided with the anniversary on August 18 of the Red Guards, the youth group that came to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, but has since been shunted aside by the YCL. The YCL is the only mass organization that has so far been reconstructed in all of China's 29 provinces since the Cultural Revolution, and thus would be ready for a national congress to complete its rebuilding process.

Last week's meeting was both too large and too brief to be a party congress, and a number of provincial leaders who would normally attend a major party meeting--including one member of the Politburo--were absent. Preparations for a Central Committee plenum and a party congress are apparently continuing, however, in small nightly planning sessions in Peking.

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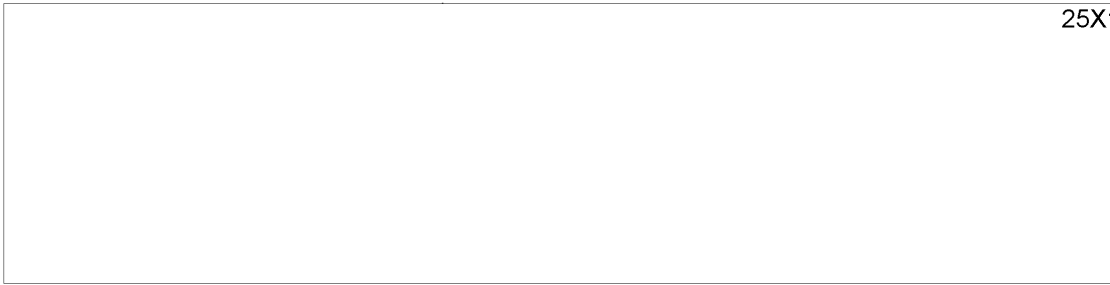
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