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The President's Daily Brief

March 26, 1974

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exemption category 5B(1)(2)(3)
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

March 26, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Yugoslavia is expanding its quarrel with Italy over Trieste. (Page 1)

Loyal Ethiopian troops have put down a mutiny by radical airmen at a base south of Addis Ababa. (Page 2)

The South Vietnamese Air Force has begun daily air strikes against Loc Ninh in Binh Long Province and targets in northern Tay Ninh Province. (Page 3)

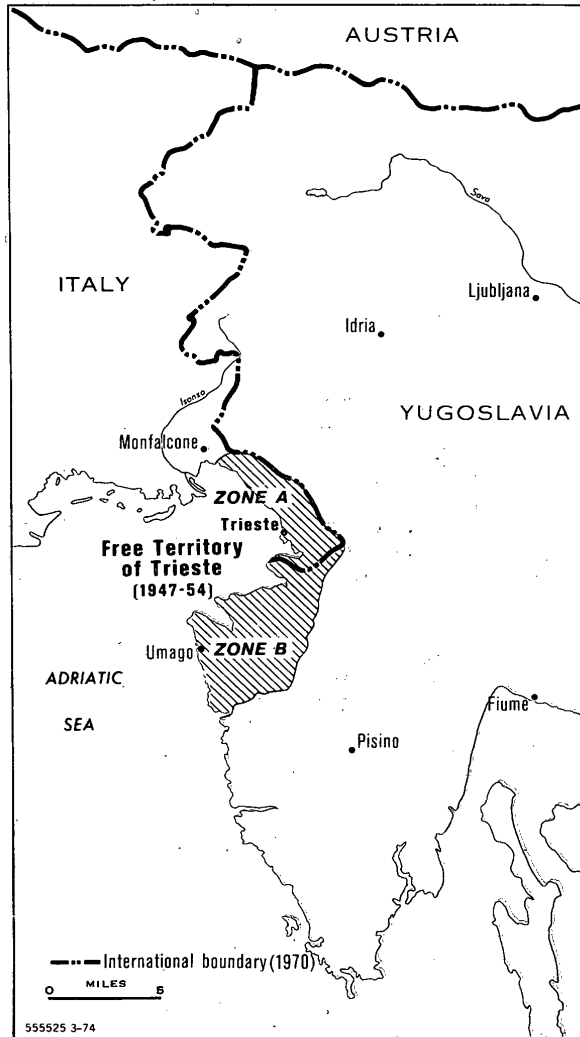
Hanoi has announced that a high-level Khmer Communist delegation will make an official visit to North Vietnam soon. (Page 4)

Pathet Lao representative Phoumi Vongvichit will meet with Prime Minister Souvanna in Vientiane to discuss a list of coalition cabinet and political council members. (Page 5)

North Korea's proposal for direct negotiations with the US is a basic bargaining position in the North-South talks, which resume tomorrow. (Page 6)

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YUGOSLAVIA-ITALY

Yugoslavia is expanding the quarrel with Italy over Trieste. A high-level Yugoslav Foreign Ministry official said yesterday that Belgrade "would now be forced" to reopen its claim to Zone A, an area the Italians have held without challenge since 1954. The official also threatened that Yugoslavia might reveal the contents of secret talks with Italy, a move that could prove embarrassing to the Italian Government.

Yugoslavia is also making a show of military preparedness against the alleged threat of an Italian invasion of Zone B. Belgrade's actions are a flat rejection of Rome's efforts last week to back away from the fuss created when it renewed its claim to Zone B, which the Yugoslavs have administered since 1954.

Tito probably intends no more than a demonstration of determination, but he may keep the heat on for some time. It gives him a chance to generate patriotism that could help obscure domestic problems during the national election in April and the party congress in May. Tito would not hesitate to use a NATO exercise scheduled for the northern Adriatic this week to inflame matters further.

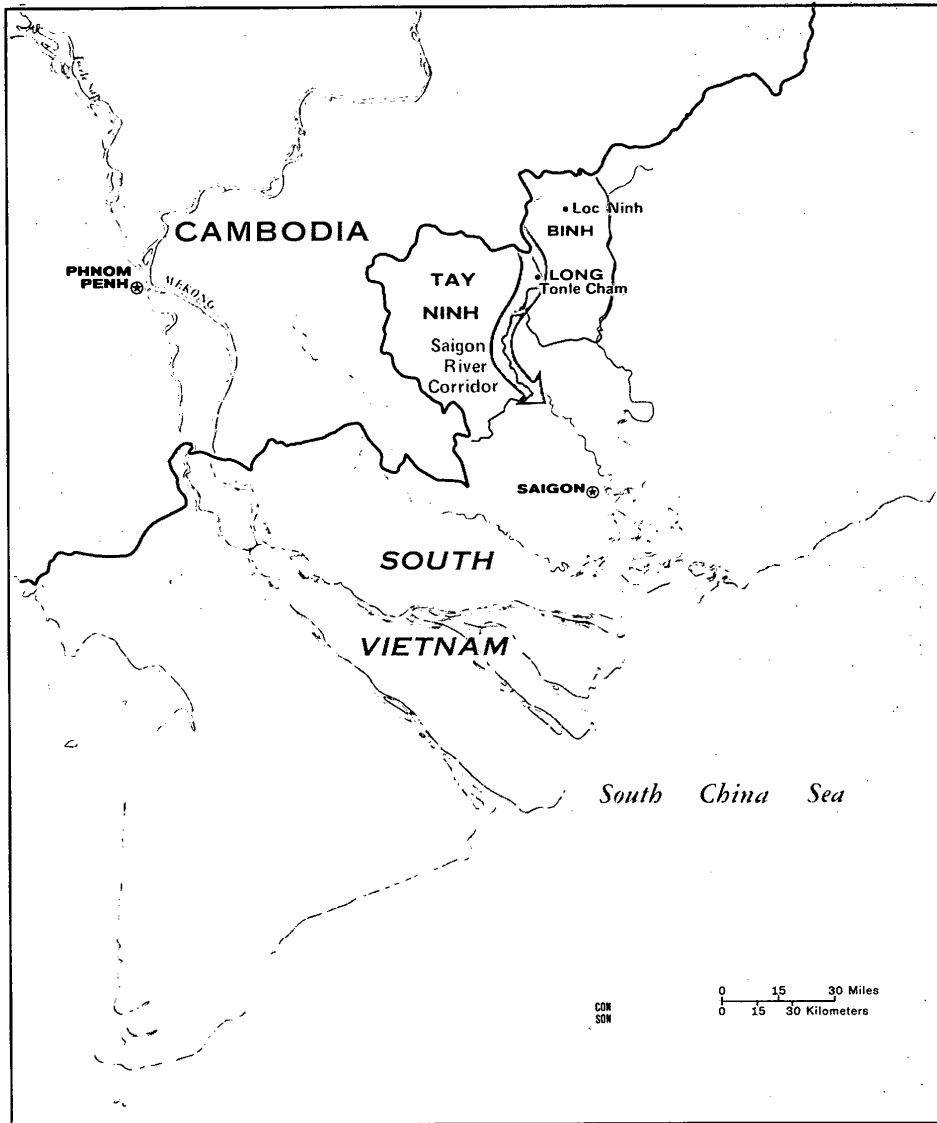
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ETHIOPIA

Loyal troops yesterday put down a mutiny by radical air force personnel at the air base at Debre Zeit, south of Addis Ababa. The capital is calm; troops are guarding radio stations and the ordnance depot.

Tensions between moderates and militants in the military and between the military and the civilian government are likely to persist. The air force mutineers reportedly are the hard core of the military dissidents who ousted the last government and wrested major concessions from the Emperor.

They are impatient with the government's failure to come through with promised pay raises and with the lack of progress toward economic and political change. They are also angry at the government's failure to try former cabinet members suspected of corruption. The militants believe continued agitation is the only way to maintain the momentum of last month's rebellion.



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SOUTH VIETNAM

On March 22, the South Vietnamese Air Force began daily air strikes against Loc Ninh in Binh Long Province and other targets in Communist-controlled areas of northern Tay Ninh Province.

The strikes are in reaction to increased Communist shelling and ground probes against the Tonle Cham Ranger base on the border between Binh Long and Tay Ninh. The base is the only remaining government position along a Communist corridor leading to Saigon, and has been under pressure for over a year.

The government's chief delegate to the Two Party Joint Military Commission has been instructed to denounce the attacks against Tonle Cham and warn that the air strikes will increase if the Communists do not agree to a truce in the area. The Communists will protest sharply against the air strikes, and may well retaliate by increasing attacks elsewhere.

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CAMBODIA - NORTH VIETNAM

A Khmer Communist delegation headed by "deputy premier" and "defense minister" Khieu Samphan will make an official visit to North Vietnam in the near future, according to Radio Hanoi. Since the insurgents' dry season offensive is falling considerably short of the Khmer Communists' expectations, future strategy and tactics as well as the Khmer Communists' tough attitude toward negotiations seem certain topics for discussion. Samphan may also request additional military aid from the North Vietnamese.

There has been no indication that Sihanouk will participate in Samphan's talks with North Vietnamese leaders. Even though Sihanouk has been to Hanoi twice this year, he probably would like an opportunity to confer with Samphan. The two last met a year ago during Sihanouk's visit to Khmer Communist - controlled areas of Cambodia.

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LAOS

Pathet Lao chairman Prince Souphanouvong is sending his plenipotentiary representative, Phoumi Vongvichit, to Vientiane to resume talks with Prime Minister Souvanna. [redacted]

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Phoumi is scheduled to arrive tomorrow [redacted]

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Souvanna and Phoumi hope to draw up a final list of coalition cabinet and political council members. They will probably also try to resolve the few procedural difficulties still impeding the neutralization of the twin capitals of Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Souvanna believes that Phoumi's visit will facilitate a meeting between himself, Souphanouvong, and the King in Luang Prabang to "consecrate" the new coalition sometime before the Lao New Year in mid-April.

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KOREA

North Korea's proposal for direct negotiations with the US for a peace treaty to replace the 1953 Armistice is in the first instance a basic bargaining position in the North-South talks, which resume tomorrow.

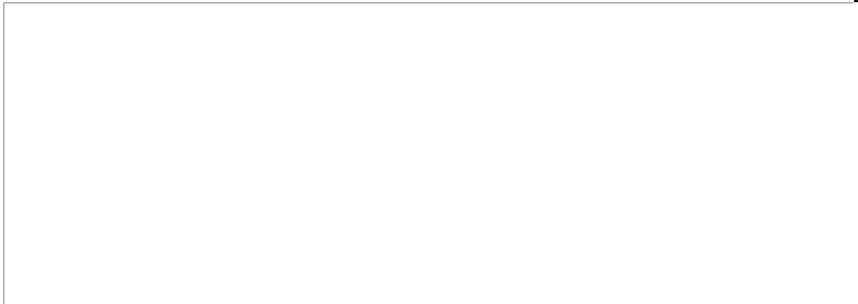
In making the offer, Pyongyang in effect is stating that it will not accept any arrangement, short of a peace treaty, for continuing the Military Armistice Commission once the UN Command is dissolved. The North Koreans are particularly opposed to any formula that would lead to an all-Korean armistice commission unless, at the same time, US troops are withdrawn from South Korea.

Pyongyang is also attempting to focus international attention on the continued US military role in the South. Part of the proposal calls for the US to cease sending arms to the South, to remove its troops "at the earliest possible date," and to cease maintaining any bases in the South once the troops have left. Pyongyang does not, however, demand US troop withdrawal prior to completion of a peace agreement.

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