



The President's Daily Brief

March 13, 1975



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~~*Top Secret*~~

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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Table of Contents

South Vietnam: Government forces are moving to counter the spreading communist military campaign. (Page 1)

Syria-Israel: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
(Page 2)

25X1
25X1

Portugal: The Armed Forces Movement has announced steps it will take in response to Tuesday's abortive coup. (Page 3)

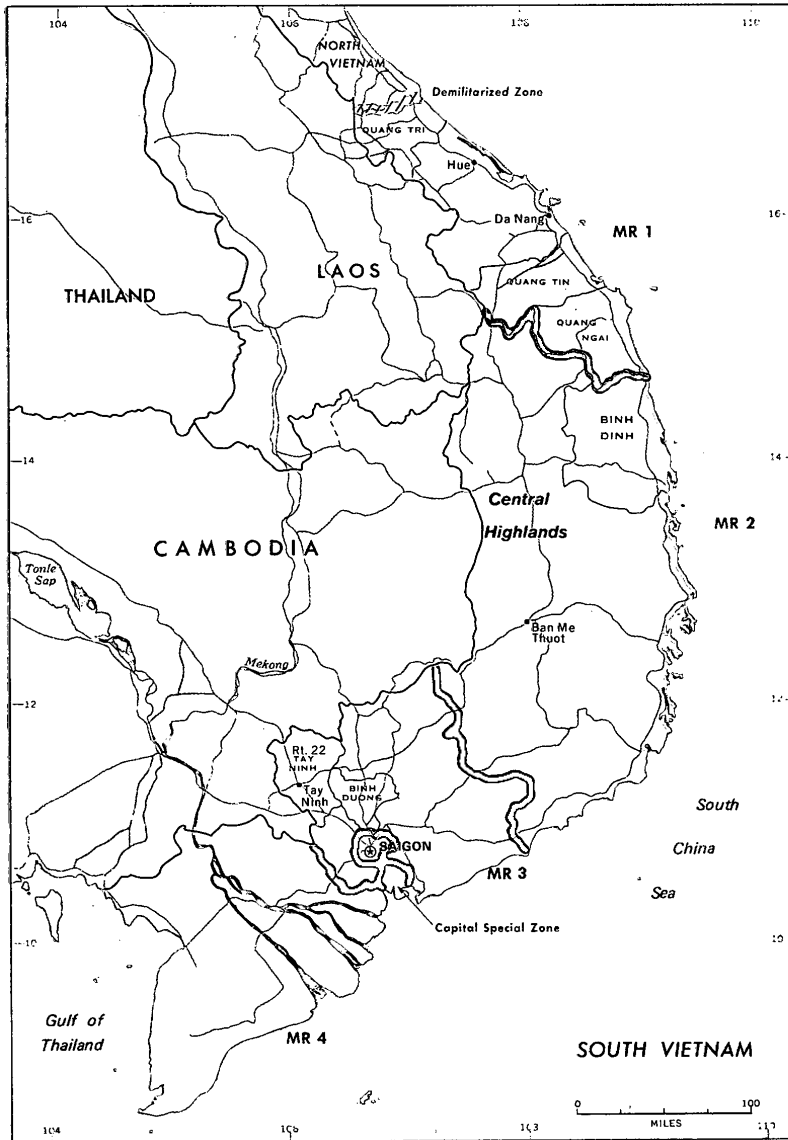
Iran-Iraq: Kurdish rebel leaders have asked the Shah to arrange a cease-fire. (Page 4)

South Korea: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted] (Page 5)

25X1
25X1

Notes: Cambodia; Cyprus; Turkey; Ethiopia
(Pages 6 and 7)

25X1



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SOUTH VIETNAM

The South Vietnamese are moving to counter the communist military campaign.

The government has counterattacked west of Hue and regained most of the ground lost during the past few days. Heavy fighting has developed in coastal Binh Dinh Province as a result of similar government attacks.

Ban Me Thuot has been reinforced, more troops have been promised, and President Thieu has issued orders to the regional commander to hold the town "at all costs." Saigon has directed the air force to provide "maximum support" to the highland battlefront.

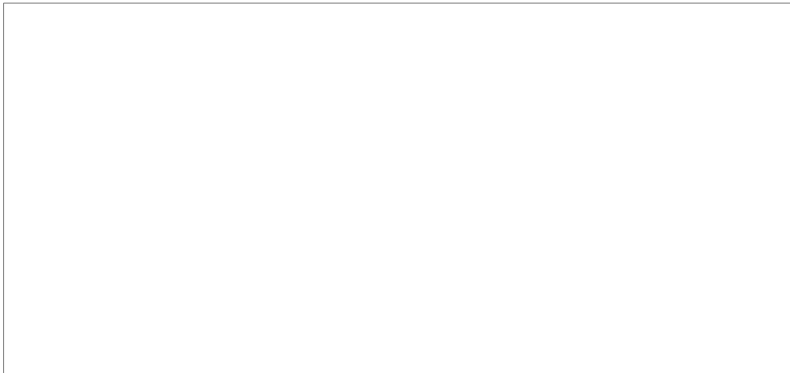
The commander of Military Region 3, meanwhile, is moving his forces to block communist advances in southern Tay Ninh and western Binh Duong provinces. He is also consolidating units of the division responsible for the defense of Tay Ninh City and is moving other units to reopen Route 22, the route linking Saigon and Tay Ninh that has been cut for several days.

Faced with mounting and widespread communist military pressure, President Thieu has ordered the return of the airborne division from the northern provinces to Saigon, presumably as a reserve that could be deployed to critical areas around the capital. If such a move takes place, the balance of forces in Military Region 1 will shift to the communists' favor. If the airborne division returns to Saigon, the northern regional commander plans to concentrate his remaining forces for the defense of Hue and Da Nang, leaving Quang Tri, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai provinces vulnerable.

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SYRIA-ISRAEL



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PORTUGAL

The Armed Forces Movement, apparently now under firm leftist control, yesterday announced the steps it will take in response to Tuesday's abortive coup.

The decisions announced by the Movement include:

--Formal announcement of Movement control over Portuguese politics. This probably spells an end to any serious negotiations between the military and political parties toward sharing power.

--Assignment of the Movement's political role to a new executive body, to be called the Council of Revolution.

--Confirmation that the national election will be held as scheduled on April 12.

--Support for Prime Minister Goncalves' reshuffle of the cabinet so that the government can take a "firmer and better defined line in keeping with the program of the Armed Forces Movement."

The Movement has also drawn up lists of command changes and of persons to be arrested in connection with the coup attempt. Several of Spinoza's intimates have been added to the list of 26 officers already charged with conspiratorial activity by President Costa Gomes. Spinoza and other officers who fled to Spain have been dismissed from the service.

A commission has been set up to investigate the coup attempt, and the Movement campaign to "educate the public" about the Movement's goals is to be intensified. The military service councils, in which moderates had assumed control after elections last week, have been abolished.

The election on April 12 will probably be less significant than if the coup attempt had not taken place. The military now has no intention of giving up any political power. In addition, the offices of the moderate parties suffered heavy damage from roving mobs of extreme leftists Tuesday night.

A few demonstrations continued in Lisbon yesterday, including one at the US embassy. The government, however, has repudiated a suggestion by General Otelo Carvalho, commander of the Lisbon military region, that Ambassador Carlucci go home. Portuguese marines are now stationed outside the embassy.

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IRAN-IRAQ

Kurdish rebel leaders have asked the Shah of Iran to intercede with Iraq to arrange a cease-fire.

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The Kurds are said to have offered to stop fighting [Redacted] if Iraqi forces would do the same. The collapse of Kurdish military resistance was a matter of time once the Shah agreed in the Iraqi-Iranian accord signed on March 6 to end Iranian military support.

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Baghdad may not agree to an immediate cease-fire; it may insist on unconditional surrender of the rebels now that Iraqi forces have the upper hand. The situation may be further complicated by the decision of some rebels to fight on even without the authority of the Kurdish leadership.

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SOUTH KOREA

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NOTES

Airlift operations in Cambodia were halted this morning after communist rockets set off a fire in an ammunition holding area at Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport.

Only a few artillery rounds landed near the airfield yesterday. The government operation to retake the town of Tuol Leap--six miles northwest of Pochentong--made slight gains yesterday. Command problems still hinder its execution.

* * *

Greeks and Turks on Cyprus have agreed to return to the bargaining table after the UN Security Council yesterday adopted by consensus a resolution acceptable to both sides.

The resolution finessed the long impasse over the role to be played by Secretary General Waldheim by, in effect, leaving the determination of the scope of his role up to the Cypriots. The site for the resumed talks is still in question. The Security Council president noted that the consensus of the Council favored New York, but Turkish resistance probably will mean that any negotiations will be conducted in Nicosia.

* * *

During his second round of talks with party leaders, Sadi Irmak ran into the same difficulties that stymied his effort to form a new Turkish government last week.

Party leaders continue to reject a coalition of Turkey's two major parties--the Justice Party and the Republican People's Party--or a right-wing coalition. There is a slim chance that Irmak may be able to put together a coalition by grouping Bulent Ecevit's Republican People's Party and the conservative Democratic Party. Military leaders continue to exert pressure on the government to end the political stalemate, now in its sixth month. A "precautionary" alert is still in effect, although the military appears willing to give Irmak every chance to form a government.

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Ethiopian government forces yesterday reportedly captured Tadessa Biru, the leader of an anti-government group of Galla--the country's largest tribe.

Tadessa and his followers have been organizing insurrections in the provinces and have recently attacked police stations to obtain weapons. The arrest of Tadessa, the dissidents' most important and able leader, will set back Galla efforts to oust the ruling military council. At the same time, however, numerous other tribal groups also are sponsoring uprisings in the countryside.

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