



# The President's Daily Brief

*April 5, 1975*

6

~~*Top Secret 25X1*~~



Exempt from general  
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652  
exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)  
declassified only on approval of  
the Director of Central Intelligence

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

April 5, 1975

Table of Contents

South Vietnam: President Thieu has blamed recent government setbacks on the lack of US political and economic support, the undisciplined actions of military commanders, panicky civilians, and Viet Cong infiltrators among the refugees. (Page 1)

Cambodia: Acting president Saukham Koy is deeply concerned about developments in Battambang. (Page 3)

Greece: The Greeks have informed our embassy in Athens that they are lodging a strong protest in Ankara against unauthorized Turkish overflights of Greek islands. (Page 5)

Portugal: Prime Minister Goncalves has stated in an interview that Portugal will not permit the US base in the Azores to be used against Arab countries. (Page 6)

USSR - Southeast Asia: Moscow is still treating communist successes in South Vietnam in a way intended to mitigate any possible backlash on relations with the US. (Page 8)

Notes: Ethiopia; Saudi Arabia (Page 9)

At Annex we present an assessment of the military situation in South Vietnam.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

## FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

### SOUTH VIETNAM

*President Thieu, in a public address yesterday, blamed recent government setbacks on a variety of causes-- the lack of US political and economic support, the undisciplined actions of military commanders, panicky civilians, and Viet Cong infiltrators among the refugees. He faulted everyone but himself.*

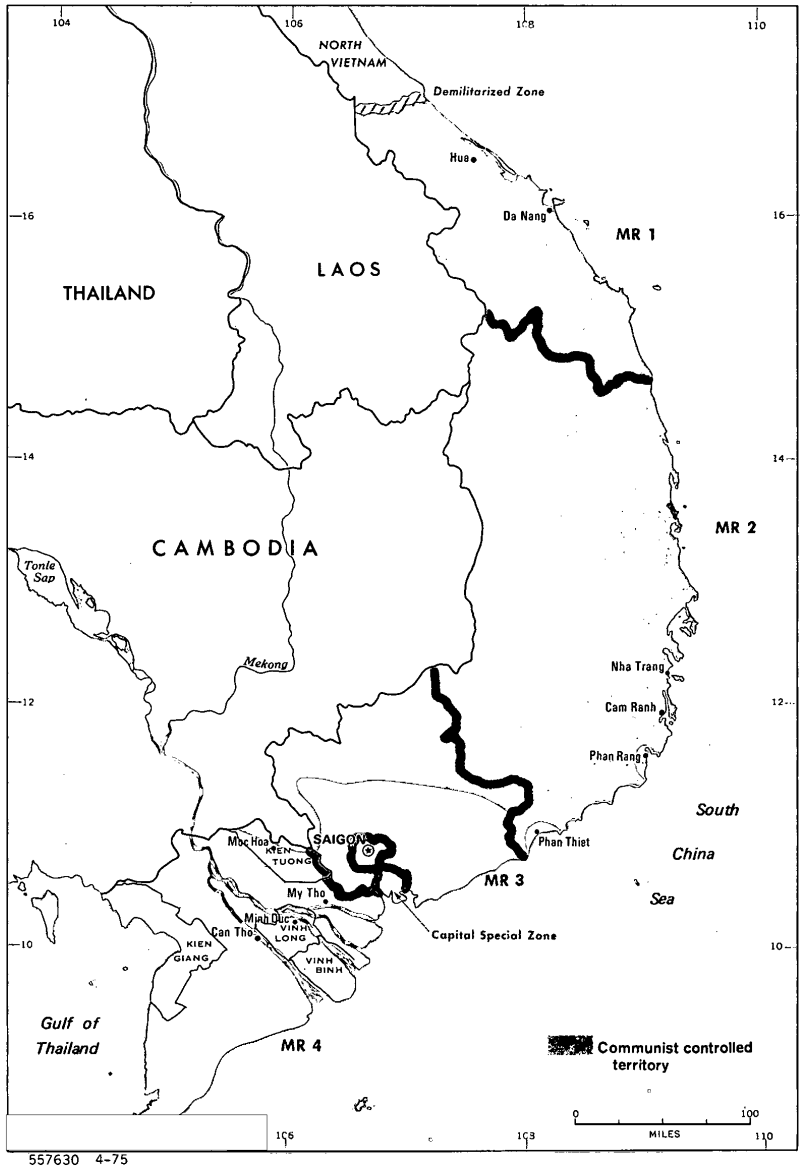
Thieu maintained he had not made any secret deal with the communists and, to push this point home, claimed he would not agree to a coalition government. He did say, however, that his new government would be willing to resume discussions in Paris as called for in the cease-fire agreement.

Thieu appealed to the people to rally behind the government and maintained he would soon be meting out stiff punishment to those army commanders who abandoned their posts. He warned that additional communist attacks could be expected soon and that the government must be prepared to defend its remaining territory.

His speech did not have the ring of a man who intends to resign. Moreover, it comes in the wake of additional arrests yesterday morning of individuals charged with coup plotting. The only person of any prominence among the nine or ten people arrested was Nguyen Van Ngan, Thieu's former political adviser and organizer. Ngan is believed to have been associated with efforts by Senate president Tran Van Lam and General Nguyen Cao Ky to force Thieu from office. The arrests were quickly announced over Saigon radio, probably as a warning to others who might be entertaining similar ideas.

Thieu also announced during his speech that Prime Minister Khiem had resigned and that lower house leader Nguyen Ba Can had been appointed to form a new government. Thieu did not provide any details on who is to be in the new cabinet.

(continued)



25X1

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

\* \* \*

The North Vietnamese are rapidly deploying major command and combat units to take advantage of the new situation in the south. The North Vietnamese 1st Corps, for example, appears to be moving south from its normal garrison area in Thanh Hoa Province, and the 2nd Corps, which has been active in South Vietnam's two northern provinces for more than a year, has also begun shifting farther south. Several North Vietnamese SA-2 surface-to-air missile units and antiaircraft artillery units are moving south.

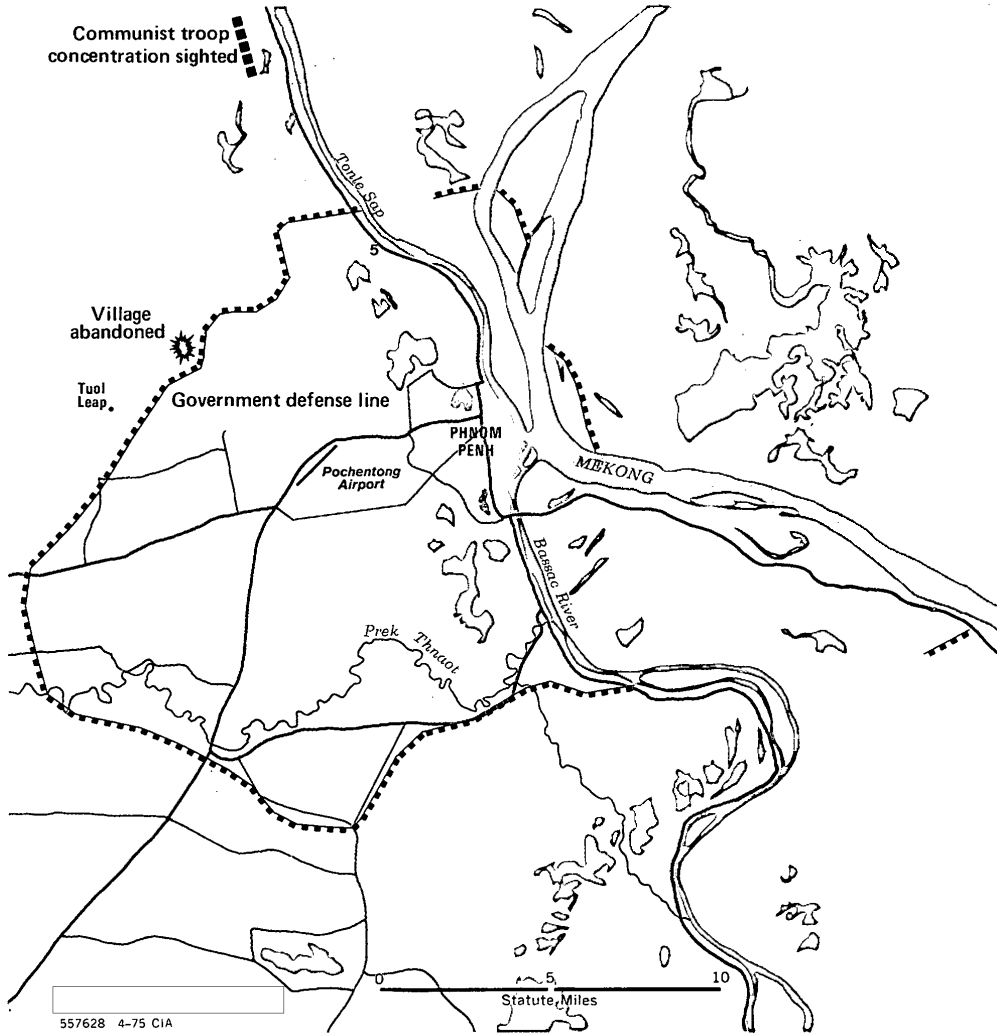
The level of communist military action continues to rise in the delta provinces. For the first time in several years, the communists fired four rockets into Can Tho City. Sharp fighting erupted in Vinh Long Province early on April 4, and communist units have penetrated the defenses of Minh Duc district town.

Military Region 4 officials are becoming increasingly concerned about the communist threat to Can Tho City. Commanders are now less confident that their forces will be able to contain strong communist attacks because they suspect that morale may be unsteady and that their forces could fall apart under heavy communist pressure. They fear that, if any one of their seven regular battalions facing the North Vietnamese 4th Division should break, panic will set in and the entire city defense would collapse within hours.

In addition to the current threats to Can Tho and My Tho cities, regional commanders are now anticipating a major attack against Moc Hoa, the capital of Kien Tuong Province. Three regiments of the North Vietnamese 5th Division may be in place to attack the city. Regional officials feel there is good reason to believe that government forces defending Moc Hoa will hold, but they quickly point out that, if they do not, the 9th Division which is defending the town could become ineffective as a fighting unit. A defeat of this division could seriously undermine the confidence of other government units in the delta.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

# Phnom Penh



25X1

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

CAMBODIA

*Ambassador Dean called on acting president Saukham Koy yesterday and found him deeply concerned about recent developments in the northwestern provincial capital of Battambang-- Cambodia's second largest city.*

Communist forces have been closing in on Battambang for the past few weeks, and Koy reported that students there have issued a resolution calling for the surrender of the city and the return of Prince Sihanouk. If Battambang surrenders, Koy fears that government forces in other areas of the country will rapidly follow suit.

Koy also said that Lon Nol had delayed his departure too long and that it was impossible to reverse the current trend of events. In response to Ambassador Dean's questions about possible contingency plans, Koy said that, if a "solution" is not found soon, the remaining leaders in Phnom Penh may have to flee the country. Prime Minister Long Boret and Foreign Minister Keuky Lim are planning to return to Phnom Penh over the weekend, but their arrival will probably do little to boost morale. By that time, many Cambodians will presumably know of the partial US withdrawal from Phnom Penh.

\* \* \*

Government troops yesterday abandoned a village four miles northwest of Pochentong Airport, giving the communists another foothold within easy rocket and artillery range of the airfield. Nearby, other army units also pulled back from a position on the dike forming part of Phnom Penh's northern defenses, but repulsed insurgent efforts to push closer to the city.

[redacted]  
about 1,000 communist troops near Route 5 some ten miles north of Phnom Penh. These may have been

25X1

(continued)



*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

some of the troops recently called in from the provinces to participate in increased attacks against Phnom Penh. Only six tactical aircraft were available to strike this troop concentration. In addition to the two aircraft destroyed by rocket fire against Pochentong on Thursday, four others suffered shrapnel damage.

Intercepted messages continue to reflect communist preparations for increased artillery attacks in the Phnom Penh area. Artillery emplacements are being constructed and howitzer ammunition--including some captured at Banam and Neak Luong--is being moved toward the capital.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

GREECE

*The Greek government has informed our embassy in Athens that it is lodging a strong protest in Ankara against the unauthorized Turkish overflights of Greek islands on Thursday.*

The protest may go beyond an earlier Greek warning to the Turks that in the event of further overflights Athens would take "all legitimate measures" allowed under international law. The Greeks are considering including in the demarche a warning that Greek aircraft will intercept Turkish aircraft if there are any further incidents. Athens will make parallel demarches in a number of other capitals.

The Turks, meanwhile, continue to deny any violation of Greek airspace. The press in Ankara announced yesterday that the Turkish air force will continue to fly in international airspace over the Aegean. It said Athens would be responsible for "serious consequences" if it attacked Turkish aircraft.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

PORTUGAL

*Portuguese press and radio are replaying a story from a Beirut magazine in which Prime Minister Goncalves is quoted as stating that Portugal will not permit the US base in the Azores to be used against the Arab countries. In the same interview, Goncalves also hedged for the first time on Portugal's continued participation in NATO.*

Goncalves said that Portugal would never adopt a hostile attitude toward the Arab people and would never consent to such an attitude being adopted "from or through our territory." He probably emphasized this issue for his Arab audience, but his statement was the most explicit yet made by the Portuguese leadership on this subject. Goncalves' remarks also are in tune with the Third-World approach to foreign policy that is expected to get increasing play under newly appointed Foreign Minister Melo Antunes.

On Portugal's commitment to NATO, Goncalves reiterated the standard line of respecting treaty obligations, but added a qualifying phrase that NATO membership could not be imposed on the Portuguese people. "The people" are to make the decision through a parliament which Goncalves said would be elected soon.

Up to this time, Portuguese leaders have confined themselves to unqualified assurances that Portugal would continue to adhere to its NATO commitments. There has nevertheless been some irritation [redacted] over NATO's attitude toward Portuguese policies and Portugal's exclusion from the NATO Nuclear Planning Group.

25X1

\* \* \*

Press reports from Lisbon indicate that Portugal's political parties yesterday refused to endorse the guidelines presented to them two days ago by the Armed Forces Movement for a transitional constitution. The guidelines provide, among other things, that:

(continued)

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

--Most of the legislation of a future parliament will have to be approved by the all-military Revolutionary Council.

--The Revolutionary Council will define and enforce domestic and foreign policy and rule on the constitutionality of laws.

--The armed forces will approve candidates for prime minister and for the ministers of defense, economy, and internal administration.

Members of the center-left Popular Democratic Party claim they are supported by the Socialists, the center-right Social Democratic Center, and the center-left Popular Monarchist Party in opposing restrictions on the future parliament. One extreme left-wing group refused to sign because it does not recognize the authority of the Armed Forces Movement.

If the parties do not agree to the guidelines, they risk being criticized as opponents of the Movement. If they sign, they will have agreed to military domination of the government for the next three to five years.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

USSR - SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Moscow is still treating communist successes in South Vietnam as justified retaliation for Saigon's violation of the peace accord, no doubt to mitigate any possible backlash on US-USSR relations.*

In a recent conversation with a [redacted] diplomat, the deputy chief of the Southeast Asia division of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Y. Kuznetsov, argued that recent events were more the result of South Vietnamese collapse than of a major North Vietnamese offensive. Kuznetsov avoided criticizing the US role in Indochina and [redacted] that Moscow would welcome any US initiative on negotiating a settlement.

25X1

25X1

Kuznetsov acknowledged, however, that Moscow backed the Provisional Revolutionary Government's position on negotiations, including the requirement for President Thieu's removal. Kuznetsov said that Moscow still favored a political rather than a military solution in South Vietnam, but he gave no indication that the Soviets were making such an argument in Hanoi.

The Soviets are also still talking about negotiations in Cambodia, although they clearly view them as nothing more than a means to transfer power to the communists. Kuznetsov said that Moscow recognizes that Prince Sihanouk will probably play some role in Phnom Penh after a communist victory. He denigrated Sihanouk's importance over the long haul, however, and repeated long-standing Soviet complaints of Sihanouk's unreliability.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTES

*The Ethiopian government's military situation in Eritrea Province has improved in recent weeks as fighting has dropped off sharply from the high level that prevailed in February.*

Government forces now control Asmara and as much of the countryside as they choose to occupy in force at any given time. Army operations have denied the rebels sanctuaries and food supplies near Asmara. Nevertheless, the rebels continue to enjoy overwhelming popular support and remain a formidable guerrilla force. Elsewhere in the country, the overextended army and police are encountering new security problems. Intercepted Ethiopian messages show that a number of relatively small groups are active, and they are probably gaining strength as a result of the opposition to the ruling military council's land-reform program.

\* \* \*

Saudi Arabia	[redacted]	25X1
	[redacted] Crown	25X1
Prince	[redacted]	25X1
	[redacted]	25X1
	[redacted]	25X1

Fahd told Ambassador Akins on April 1 that he wanted Khalid to retain the title of prime minister because it would look bad if Khalid were to lose all of Faysal's titles and powers and become a mere figurehead. Fahd claimed he will be the person who will review all governmental decisions and be the final arbiter. There is no indication as yet that Fahd will be seriously hampered in the exercise of power by the necessity to defer to Khalid in some respects, but the situation is potentially disruptive. At best, there will be a period of maneuvering before a new balance of relationships emerges.

**FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**

## VIETNAM

We present below an intelligence community assessment of The Military Situation and Prospects for South Vietnam.

South Vietnam's military fortunes continue to decline. Its armed forces have relinquished well over half the country, lost nearly half of their regular combat forces, and suffered extremely heavy equipment and supply losses. The military leadership is demoralized, and the morale and discipline of remaining government forces are open to serious question. Taking all factors into account, the only question over the defeat of the Republic of Vietnam is timing--whether it will collapse or be militarily overwhelmed in a period of weeks or months.

The Current Situation

The North Vietnamese have recognized South Vietnam's vulnerability and appear determined to take rapid advantage of it.

At present, there are eight well-equipped and well-supplied North Vietnamese army infantry divisions in Military Regions 3 and 4 and an additional ten divisions farther north in South Vietnam. Moreover, Hanoi is committing the bulk of its remaining reserve forces to South Vietnam. The communists could deploy a decisive force to the battle area in about a month, if a crash move were ordered. Their logistic capabilities are sufficient to support such forces.

South Vietnam has seven infantry divisions, rangers, territorial forces, and the remnants of three divisions extracted from the north. Additional combat units will be formed from South Vietnamese forces evacuated from MRs 1 and 2, but their combat effectiveness, except perhaps for the marines, will be doubtful. Some territorial forces are now being integrated into regular Vietnamese army units. Finally, South Vietnam still retains a sizable air force.

We now see two general communist courses of military action.

(continued)

A1

**FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**A  
Z  
Z  
E  
X

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

--The application of massive force to inflict final defeat.

--Envelop Saigon, cut off its supplies, and thereby bring the government of South Vietnam to its knees.

The communists would have two options within the first course of action. In one, the North Vietnamese army could choose to exploit to the maximum their current military momentum and the weaknesses of South Vietnamese forces. This would involve the rapid, albeit piecemeal, reinforcement of MR 3 and continuous large-scale attacks beginning at any time. This would entail risks for the communists because it would not confront the government of Vietnam with overwhelming force at the outset. Moreover, communist losses might be high, thereby weakening their military punch.

As a second option, the communists could delay an assault on the capital for a month or so, while consolidating their gains in the northern half of the country, deploying additional infantry divisions south, and preparing the battlefield. This would give Saigon time to rally its forces and population and to reconstitute some of the units evacuated from the north. With their backs to the wall, many South Vietnamese units would fight well. South Vietnamese confidence would be bolstered by accelerated US assistance and by evidence that the US will send more. Correspondingly, the deterioration and ultimate collapse of the Saigon government would be accelerated by a negative response on the part of the US.

Considering Hanoi's ability to mass greatly superior forces, however, we believe that under either of these options, the South Vietnamese government would collapse or be defeated by the end of June, if not considerably sooner.

The other major course open to the communists would be to envelop Saigon with augmented forces, cut off its supplies, and simultaneously attrite defending forces. The recent movement of elements of two North Vietnamese divisions from Tay Ninh Province to the northern delta is in line with such a strategy. At present, these units and others already in MR 4 are threatening major cities and the important rice distribution route from the delta to Saigon. This would add to the already formidable pressures on the city. We believe that this limited course of action might alone be successful so that the South Vietnamese government would fall by the end of June.

(continued)

A2

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*



*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

Hanoi recognizes that political and military factors will continue to interact. Governmental changes in Saigon, South Vietnam's military performance, and the evolving state of public and South Vietnamese army morale will condition its final planning. The fact that there is little room for retreat may stiffen the resolve of Saigon's forces. Nonetheless, a sudden psychological unraveling along the lines that occurred in the northern half of the country is distinctly possible. In such an event, a communist victory would follow in short order.

In this regard, Hanoi probably hopes that a combination of the above factors will make unnecessary a final direct assault on Saigon. This would spare the communists the problems of feeding and housing the population of a city destroyed by a pitched battle. And it would minimize damage to vital facilities and resources which Hanoi would prefer to capture intact. These interests seem reflected by recent communist propaganda and by the 10-point policy toward "liberated areas" broadcast by the communists on April 3. Although primarily designed to bring order and stability to newly conquered regions as fast as possible, these pronouncements were probably also designed to increase pressures in Saigon for a "negotiated" settlement and to hasten the political crumbling that is already in train. Furthermore, the political advantages gained by South Vietnam's collapse without a major battle for Saigon would be substantial.

In sum, Hanoi is in good position to take whatever action it considers necessary to win the war. While a quick, decisive military stroke may be in the works, we believe that Hanoi will opt for a less costly and politically more expedient alternative, calculating that a South Vietnamese collapse from within is near at hand. At the same time, however, communist units will position themselves for a final attack should their preferred course fail. Whatever the case, South Vietnam's fate appears to be sealed. Taking all factors into account, the only question is timing--whether weeks or months.

*Top Secret*