



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 15 February 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
15 FEBRUARY 1968

1. South Vietnam

Menacing Communist troop movements continue in the central and eastern sectors of Quang Tri Province. The effect on popular morale in the province capital (Quang Tri city) has been severe. The people expect new attacks momentarily; the sudden departure of the Filipino nationals employed by the US provincial mission has not helped.



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The relative lull in the enemy's offensive against urban areas continued overnight. There were no significant ground probes in the Khe Sanh area.

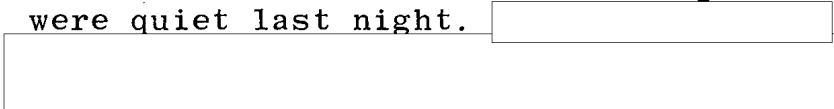
2. Laos

Government forces were driven from two positions west of Saravane yesterday, thus virtually closing the Communist ring around the city. It is unlikely that the two government battalions there can successfully resist a concerted enemy thrust.

The loss of Saravane would secure Communist control of infiltration routes in the southern panhandle and would deal a severe psychological blow to an already uneasy leadership in Vientiane.

3. Dominican Republic

All districts of Santo Domingo were quiet last night.



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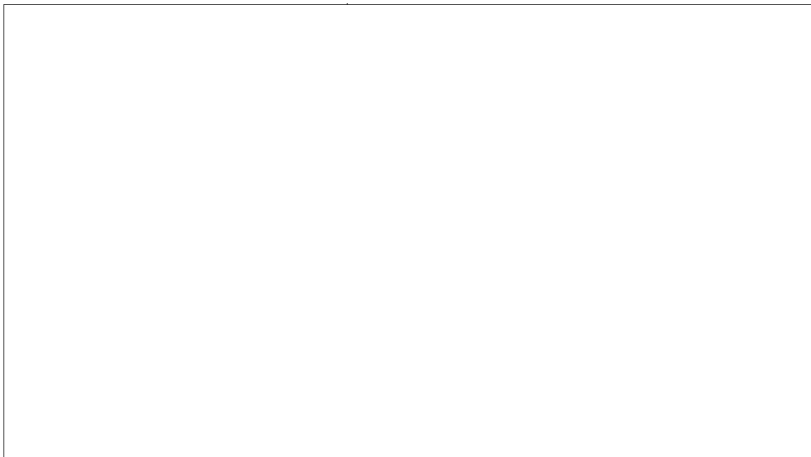
4. Cambodia

Another package of material documenting North Vietnamese and Viet Cong use of Cambodia was sent to Phnom Penh yesterday. The Australian ambassador in Cambodia believes that the first batch of information was a real eye-opener for Sihanouk. He said that Sihanouk appreciates the restraint the President has applied and the care he has taken to avoid border violations. Sihanouk put the same thought in his own words last week when he told Look editor Attwood that the President was a "hawk about Vietnam, but a dove about Cambodia."



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5. Bolivia



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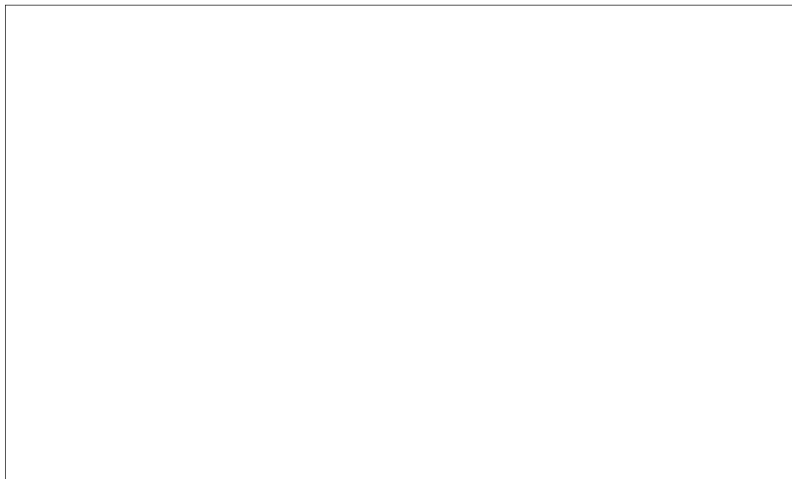


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6. West Germany -
France

Kiesinger arrives in Paris today at the head of a 50-man delegation, but the Germans are doubtful that even with that strength of number they will get far with De Gaulle. Differences over British entry into the Common Market and Willy Brandt's recent criticism of De Gaulle's policies have chilled the atmosphere. Public irritation with De Gaulle in West Germany now requires that Kiesinger avoid any sign of knuckling under as he searches for positive aspects of Franco-German relations to play up.

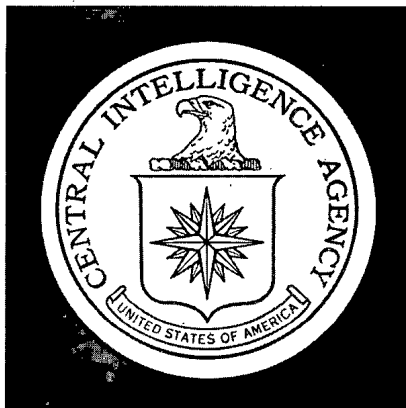
7. Canada



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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16
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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Background on Trinh's Latest Interview:

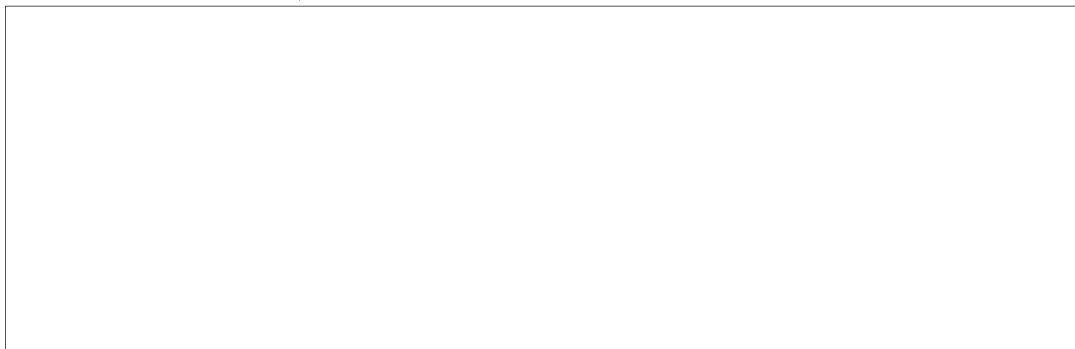
[redacted] the
 interview [redacted] obtained on 8
 February with Foreign Minister Trinh came in re-
 sponse to a two-week-old request. This was the
 interview in which Trinh said talks with the US
 would begin "as soon as" the US had proven that it
 had stopped bombing and that the talks could cover
 a wide variety of subjects, including the war in
 the South. The French correspondent had submitted
 his questions in writing well ahead of the inter-
 view. Hanoi broadcast the interview even before
 the copy had reached the Paris office. In comment-
 ing on the interview, the correspondent said Trinh's
 new language meant that the talks could concern
 "the heart of the problem and the very solution of
 the war." The Foreign Ministry in Hanoi specifi-
 cally approved this language in the correspondent's
 dispatch.

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This explanation of the circumstances of the
interview leaves little doubt that this was another
attempt by Hanoi to keep the "will-talk" offer of
late December alive in the world press and to make
it seem as reasonable and forthcoming as possible.

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North Vietnamese Comment on Site for Talks with US: North Vietnam is not bothering to think about a possible site for preliminary talks with the US, according to a North Vietnamese press

official in Vientiane. In a discussion on 5 February about Communist successes in the recent Tet offensive, the official was asked if Laos was a possible site for the preliminary talks which the North Vietnamese had proposed. The location of such talks is no problem, said the press official; they could be held anywhere. The problem, he claimed, was the willingness of the Americans to negotiate.

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North Vietnamese Shipping Trends: A review of data on foreign shipping to North Vietnam during 1967 shows a striking change in the country's trade pattern as compared with 1966. Seaborne exports declined 51 percent in 1967, and imports rose 46 percent. This, of course, is attributable largely to the bombings.

Hanoi's growing dependence on foreign assistance was reflected last year in a 66 percent increase in seaborne imports from the Soviet Union and China. These two countries accounted for 79 percent of total seaborne imports.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Propaganda: Yesterday's English language international broadcast from Hanoi described a four-day fast by "more than 400 students" at Harvard, Radcliffe, and Boston University. It quoted a Harvard chaplain's description of the movement as "an expression to end the Vietnam war."

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The same broadcast reported briefly a "recent" resolution by the National Council of Americans for Democratic Action "demanding that the Johnson ruling circles stop immediately the bombing of North Vietnam and put an end to all military acts in South Vietnam." The resolution, said Hanoi, pointed out that "one cannot tolerate further bloodshed" to keep the "military junta" in power in Saigon.

On another subject, the broadcast quoted a recent New York Times article giving the names of five soldiers who are allegedly seeking asylum in France "to protest the US dirty war in Vietnam."

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