

The President's Daily Brief

Top Secret 25 March 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
25 MARCH 1968

1. Vietnam

Still more evidence that Hanoi is embarked on a major new infiltration effort into South Vietnam has appeared in communications intelligence over the weekend. The first units in the new wave--ones that apparently set out from North Vietnam in late January--already seem to be turning up in an enemy base area in South Vietnam's Quang Tri Province.

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2. Panama

Arnulfo Arias proclaimed a general strike late last night after General Vallarino announced his refusal to recognize Robles' impeachment until the Supreme Court has ruled on the Assembly's action.

Events took an ugly turn shortly after midnight when the National Guard stormed into Arias' party headquarters with tear gas and made a number of arrests. This could set the stage for wider violence today.

Vallarino's forces are heavily deployed at key points in the capital and will probably be able to contain serious violence there. They will be hard pressed, however, if trouble spreads to other cities.

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3. Eastern Europe

Brezhnev and Kosygin worked hard in Dresden over the weekend to head off further deterioration in bloc solidarity. It was hard going at times, and the results are sure to be less than they had hoped for.

Difficulty in reaching a consensus, especially on economic matters, is evident in several portions of the communiqué where it says simply that "views were exchanged" on certain questions.

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The communiqué does say that the participants agreed to take "immediate" measures to "consolidate the Warsaw Pact and its armed forces," and that agreement was reached to hold a top-level economic conference in the near future.

What these plans may come to in a practical way remains to be seen. The Rumanians have already set the precedent that attendance is no longer mandatory at these meetings.

4. Poland

The Catholic hierarchy has jumped into the fray with a statement condemning the government's "brutal use of force" against student demonstrators. The statement, signed by Cardinal Wyszynski and all the other Polish archbishops, was read during Sunday services throughout the country.

This will further stimulate public support for the student cause, but it came too late to help the Warsaw students who had already been forced into abandoning their sit-ins.

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[Redacted]

5. Arab States -
Israel

[Redacted]

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6. South Yemen

Aden has been in turmoil most of the past week as army leaders stepped up their drive to eliminate extremists from the ruling National Liberation Front. The government apparently refuses to back up the army effort

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7. Malaysia-
Philippines

[Redacted]

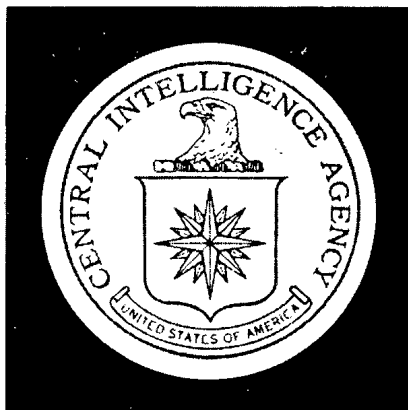
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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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Conditions in Hanoi:

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] morale still appeared to be high
among the inhabitants of Hanoi. [redacted] the people

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going about their work cheerfully and their attitude toward controls as "disciplined." The Doumer bridge was still down, with no work in progress, but 20 kilometers south, a new pontoon bridge permitted a limited amount of alternating traffic to flow in both directions.

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

Communist Commentary on General Westmoreland's Transfer: Hanoi, with considerably more speed than usual, has already commented on the transfer of General Westmoreland. A Nhan Dan editorial on 24 March claimed--predictably--that the change in command was another indication of the over-all failure of US policy in Vietnam. Westmoreland's removal, said Nhan Dan, had nothing to do with his ability to command. The main thrust of the editorial was an attempt to discredit over-all US policy in Vietnam and the US President in particular.

* * *

Hanoi Notes Student Harassment of Secretary Freeman: Hanoi propaganda has picked up Western press reports of the student harassment of Secretary Freeman in Wisconsin last week. In a broadcast in English on 24 March, it described the students as "angrily protesting" and frequently interrupting the speaker. The same broadcast also cited several other expressions of antiwar feeling in the US: a letter protesting the war in the New York Times written by a "former director of the economic aid program in Vietnam, Gardner"; a New York Times interview with "four businessmen connected with the Home Trade for Peace in Vietnam Organization"; and a speech by "well-known American writer (James) Michener in Caracas"--all denouncing the US role in Vietnam.

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