

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 27 March 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
27 MARCH 1968

1. Panama

Panama City has now calmed down after the rioting last night, but there will probably be more trouble today.

National Guardsmen during the evening prevented "President" Delvalle and his aides from entering the Assembly building. The Guard fired tear gas into the crowd accompanying Delvalle after stones and bottles were thrown. The gas spread into nearby slum areas, forcing hundreds to flee.

Despite orders from General Vallarino, guardsmen continued to use tear gas to break up the crowds. By late evening the Guard had the situation under control in the downtown area, although there were reports of sporadic violence in other parts of the city.

Arias forces are again calling for a general strike, and as a result of last night's trouble, some businesses will likely be closed today. Delvalle and several pro-Arias deputies plan a march through the downtown area this morning, and some of the deputies will again try to enter the Assembly building.

2. Communist China



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3. Communist China

According to foreign newsmen in Peking, massive demonstrations yesterday denounced three senior military officers as "plotters." The three men-- not previously under serious attack-- are Acting Chief of Staff Yang Cheng-wu, the Air Force Political Commissar, and the Peking Garrison Commander. Yang has evidently been a protégé of Defense Minister Lin Piao; his dismissal might be the sign of more weakening of the leadership group around Lin and Mao. The disgrace of these prominent military figures could well be a tip-off that a major power play is under way.

4. France

The French press has given extensive and favorable coverage to the Sargent Shriver nomination.

5. Jordan-Israel

The Jordanian chief of staff has told the embassy in Amman that Israel is moving more troops into the northern section of the border, including an additional battalion of tanks.

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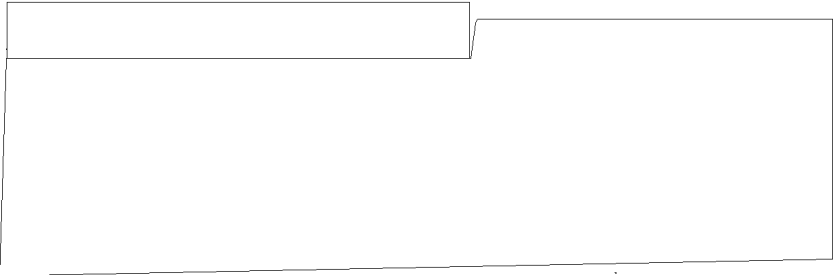
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The Jordanians may be overreacting this time, but another clash is likely sooner or later.

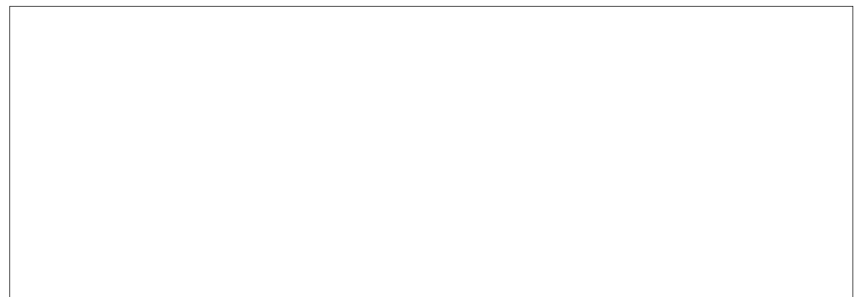
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6. Liberia

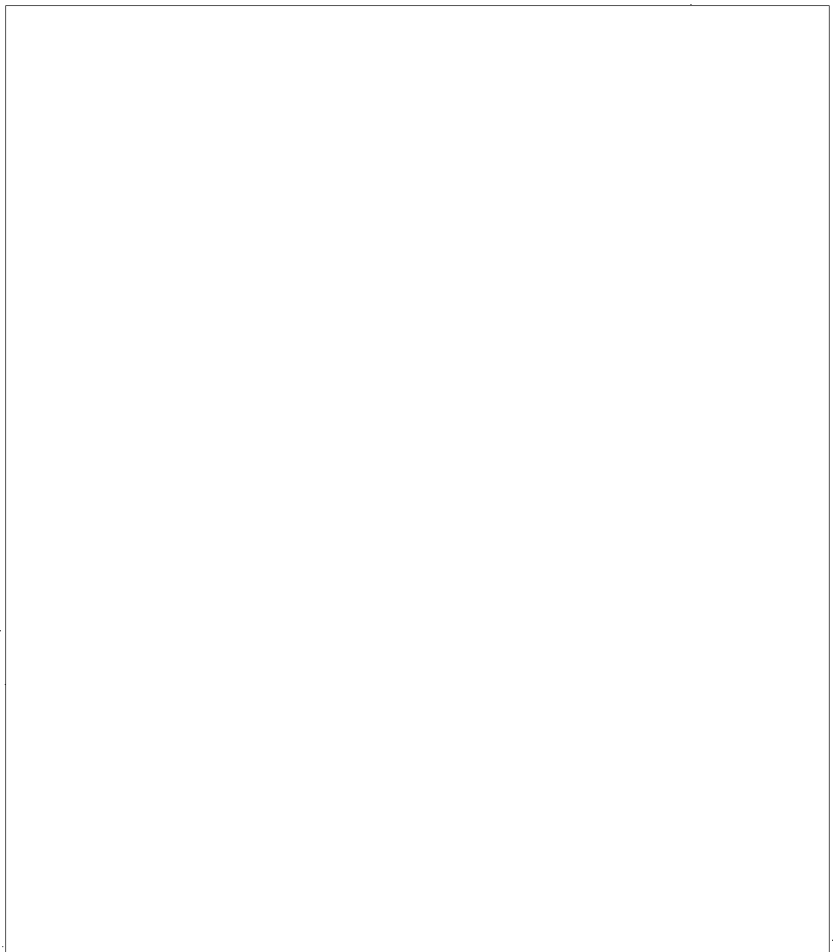


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7. Rhodesia



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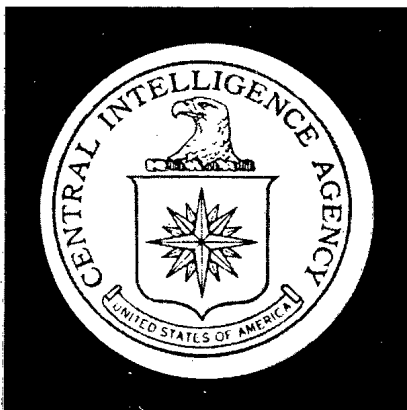
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8. Nigeria

Federal forces now hold almost half of Biafra, including a sizable chunk of the heavily populated Ibo heartland. Vigorous Biafran counterattacks are in progress, however, and these will probably force federal commanders to regroup and resupply before pushing on.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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

Hanoi's Propaganda Line in Stockholm: The chief North Vietnamese delegate to the Stockholm conference on Vietnam, Nguyen Thanh Le, used the meetings in an attempt to convince European audiences that the Communist Tet offensive had virtually destroyed the presence of the Saigon government throughout South Vietnam. He took special pains to enhance the status of the Front by stressing its alleged independence of Hanoi.

[redacted] the Hanoi spokesman claimed he had no idea why the Front changed its military tactics and decided to go after the cities in South Vietnam, and that he was not privy to their plans. He also said he was unaware of any Chinese Communist criticism of this military approach.

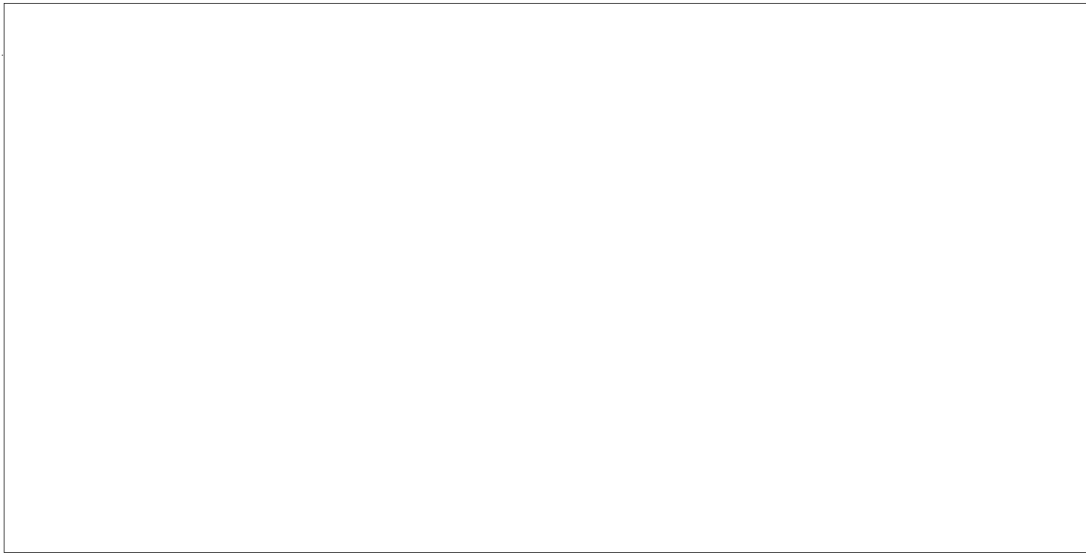
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Le provided the usual Communist optimistic view of the accomplishments of the Tet offensive, using developments in Hue to illustrate his points. He claimed that Saigon's local administrative strength in Hue had been reduced from 3,000 to 150, and that the Communist-sponsored "popular revolutionary committee" was still in existence and functioning there. He was particularly proud of the damage done to the South Vietnamese pacification program, which he described as "ruined." He told his interviewer not to believe the documents which the US claimed to have captured in South Vietnam because many of them were invented by US psychological warfare experts.

Asked if it would not be better to seek negotiations with the Johnson administration now rather than risk having to deal with a more hawkish Republican administration in November, the Hanoi spokesman said that the Communists were confident of winning the military contest in the South and saw no need for negotiations at the present time.

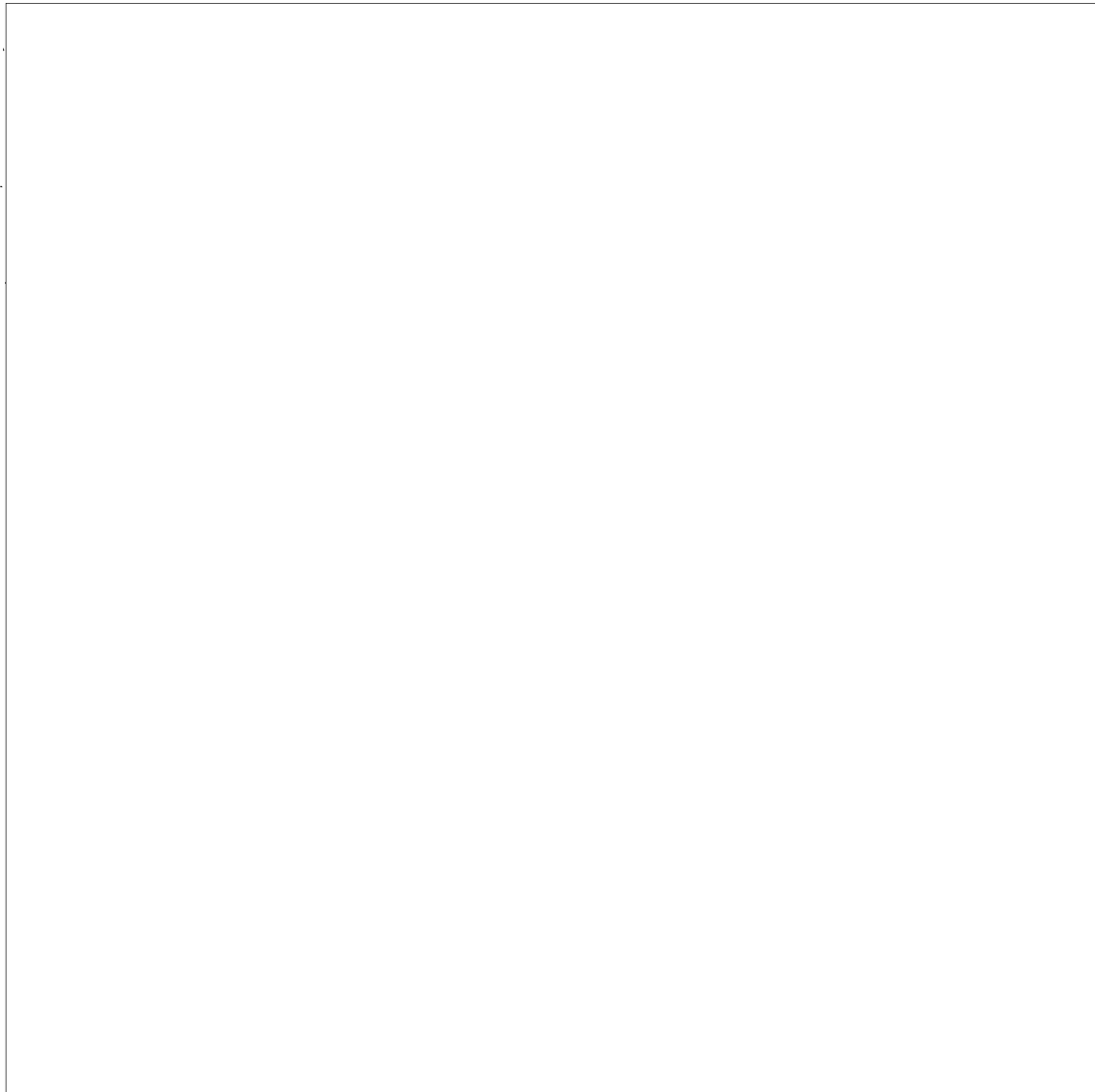
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More Hanoi Observations:

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[redacted] dispersed open storage areas for vehicles and material are used widely to avoid bomb damage. [redacted] fire engines and military vehicles parked under trees in downtown Hanoi, apparently instead of in central garages where they might be easier targets. Vehicle repairs were also being carried out in the open.

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[redacted] piles of construction material, fuel, bridge sections, and food grains along roads leading into the city. Each supply area extends no more than 100 yards along the road, and there is an open space of at least the same distance between each area. Four-man air raid shelters were seen at about 20-yard intervals along the same sections of road.

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[redacted] concluded from the external appearance of the main Hanoi thermal power plant that it was completely undamaged and in normal operation.

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[redacted] the city's power supply seemed reasonably normal, but this can be attributed at least in part to the many small generators used throughout Hanoi, as well as to the fact that foreigners get preferential service.

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[redacted] people in Hanoi are becoming noticeably thinner, but [redacted] no signs of large-scale malnutrition or of epidemics. [redacted] despite privation and loss of efficiency, people's morale was generally high.

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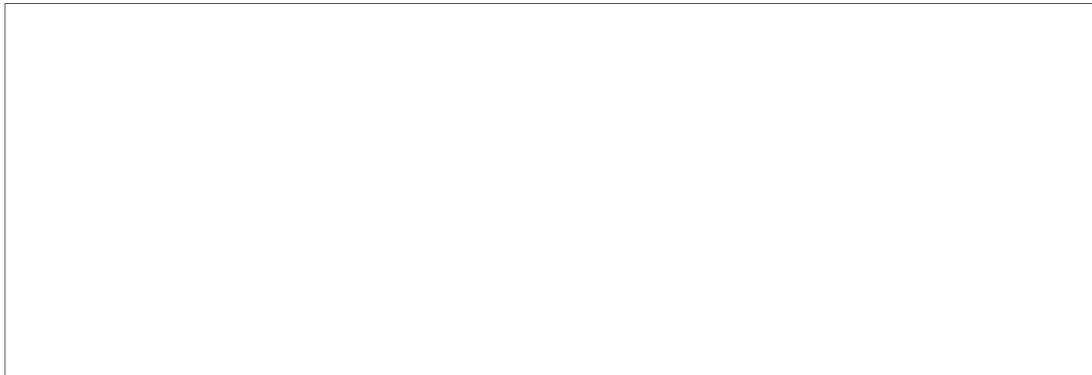
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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Propaganda: Hanoi's international broadcast in English on 26 March featured the Moscow TV appearance of Army deserter James Wright. The broadcast pointed out that Wright formerly served in Vietnam and quoted his comments on the "senseless killing of Vietnamese civilians" and "the aspirations of a small country for independence."

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More on General Westmoreland: Hanoi radio's domestic broadcast on Sunday carried another "analysis" of General Westmoreland's transfer. The theme is that the General's "dismissal" proves the "unavoidable bankruptcy" of US strategy in Vietnam.

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More Hanoi Comment on US: In a broadcast on Monday to South Vietnam, Hanoi radio stated that during the previous four days President Johnson had delivered three speeches "in which he boastfully said that the Americans will win." The broadcast then went on at length quoting contrary opinions from such US magazines as Newsweek, US News and World Report, and the American Daily News.

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