

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 8 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
8 APRIL 1968

1. Vietnam

Communist forces continue to react cautiously to US operations in the Khe Sanh area. They seem to be offering only limited resistance while trying to determine the scope of the allied drive.

Farther south, the North Vietnamese seem to be taking advantage of the last few weeks of dry weather in the central highlands to move very large quantities of combat supplies into Kontum Province.

2. Pakistan

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[Redacted]

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3. Poland

More reports are coming in on high-level government changes expected this week. We do not think Gomulka is on his way out, but the reports do point to a high government post for Edward Gierek, the man who may well take over from Gomulka ultimately.

Gierek, Politburo member with a strong power base in the industrial south, has been speaking more and more like a man who sees a big future for himself.

What looked earlier like a Gierek alliance with the hardliners now seems more like a temporary tactical ploy. He is now making a pitch for support from the party's younger, reform-minded members, and he is omitting the anti-semitic overtones from his speeches.

4. East Germany

The surprising thing about the "referendum" yesterday approving a new constitution was that more than 400,000 people voted against it (out of some 12 million). It took courage to vote no. The authorities were standing by, taking down the names of those who did so.

5. Soviet Union

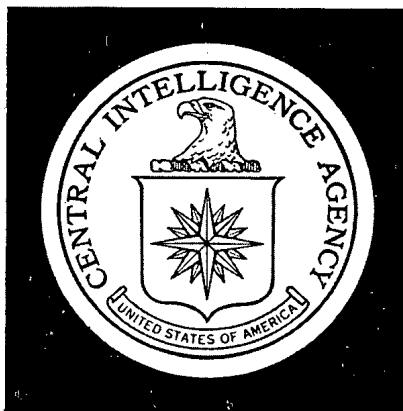
The party's Central Committee is scheduled to meet this Tuesday. We think it will be concerned mainly with domestic affairs.

6. Soviet Union

The lunar probe launched yesterday seems to be operating as planned. It will take about three days to reach the area of the moon. This is the first time in well over a year that a Soviet probe has successfully left earth orbit. Its mission is either to orbit the moon or to land a payload on the surface.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Publicly Silent on Prospective "Contacts" with US: The Vietnamese Communists did not issue any significant new public statements or commentary during the weekend concerning their attitude toward prospective "contacts" with a US representative. Communist media have not reported Foreign Minister Trinh's statement to CBS correspondent Charles Collingwood that Hanoi is ready "to make contact" with a US representative in Phnom Penh "or in another place to be mutually agreed upon."

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Sihanouk Willing to Host Vietnam Peace Talks: On Friday, Sihanouk told [redacted] that he "would be happy" to have Phnom Penh used as the site for initial US - North Vietnamese contacts. He said this in the course of a speculative discussion about various places that might be proposed by Hanoi. He thought Rangoon was another possibility.

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Hanoi Continues to Condemn Bombings: North Vietnam is issuing daily reminders of continued US bombing in an attempt to keep up the pressure for a full bombing cessation. In a broadcast on 7 April, Hanoi radio charged the US with conducting "repeated and very savage bombing raids" against North Vietnamese territory. The broadcast implied these attacks were in violation of President Johnson's statements of 31 March. According to Hanoi, the President said he was stopping the bombing "except in the area north of the Demilitarized Zone," and that this area included "almost 90 percent" of North Vietnam's population. "In reality," said the broadcast, the US has continued to attack "an important part of the territory and population" of North Vietnam. It cited attacks in all four provinces

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south of the 20th parallel, and "even Lai Chau province," in the northwestern part of the country, where the regime claims an attack occurred last week.

North Vietnamese news agency items on 6 and 7 April were blatantly aimed at drumming up international support for Hanoi's case against the US. The agency charged the US with attacks on "many heavily populated areas" and with killing "many people, including old folks and children." The news agency said US attacks in one southern province had increased sharply since the President's speech, and mentioned bombings while "local people were eating dinner" and Catholics were "holding services."

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Hanoi Scores President Johnson's "Stubbornness":
In a commentary broadcast to American troops in South Vietnam on 5 April, Hanoi radio noted both President Johnson's restrictions on bombing and his call for negotiations. It called his concern for casualties on both sides "hypocrisy," however, and said these moves were forced on the President by the military situation in Vietnam and rising pressures against US policy both at home and abroad.

The broadcast condemned the President's moves as inadequate and argued that sending additional US troops to Vietnam and continuing bombings "against populated areas hundreds of miles north of the DMZ" amounted to a "US plot." The broadcast repeated the key paragraph from Hanoi's 3 April statement about being ready to contact the US in order to stop the bombing, but ended by telling US forces they should not be in Vietnam and by accusing the President of "stubbornness."

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Hanoi Claims Action Around Khe Sanh: For the fourth day in a row, Hanoi's international news service on 7 April carried false accounts of "heavy" fighting around Khe Sanh. Claims of "heavy losses" inflicted on US forces by Communist infantry and artillery units in the Khe Sanh area were attributed to Viet Cong press reports. On 7 April the news service claimed that "over 1,400 enemy troops" had been "wiped out" and 16 aircraft shot down in the period 3-6 April. This account, like three earlier ones, is virtually all fiction. Except for one sharp clash on 5 April, Communist forces offered little resistance to allied operations around Khe Sanh during this period, and artillery attacks on the base were relatively light.

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Japanese Correspondent's Report: A Japanese correspondent just back from Hanoi wrote in the 7 April Asahi that he was surprised to find almost no signs of air attacks on Hanoi. He said he expected to see destruction similar to that in Japan during World War II, but the only definite mark of bomb damage he observed was the Paul Doumer Bridge.

In Haiphong, however, he reports the picture was much different, with schools, hospitals, and churches in ruins. Even there, though, he said supplies of food and other daily necessities seemed ample and trucks rolled through the bombed-out areas regularly.

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Traveling Diplomat: Hanoi's vice minister of foreign affairs, Hoang Van Loi, is continuing his junket through Africa. On Saturday he arrived in Guinea; from there he will visit Mali, Congo (Brazzaville), Tanzania, Egypt, and Syria.

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

Hanoi on King Assassination: Hanoi radio's domestic service on 6 April broadcast a commentary on Martin Luther King's murder. This had prompted a "resurgence of the Negro movement" in the US, it said, and then reviewed reports of disorders in US cities. President Johnson, it claimed, "ordered a national funeral for King" in order to "appease the struggle." The commentary charges that King had been "jailed 15 times by President Johnson for his civil rights struggle," and that last year the President used arms to "suppress" Negroes. The broadcast only weakly links the disorders to Vietnam, by saying that while the US is "having headaches with the Vietnam issue," the Negroes' "struggle" is another blow at the administration.

A more vicious line directly connecting the assassination and the war was taken in the party daily, Nhan Dan, on 7 April. North Vietnam, it said, "demanded" that the US stop "all acts of suppression" against black people. The outbreak of new violence in US cities is hailed as a "second front" against "US imperialism right in the heart of the United States." Vietnam is described as the "center and front line" of the "first front" against the US. The paper concludes by quoting words used by Premier Pham Van Dong during Stokely Carmichael's visit last summer praising the "struggle" of American Negroes against the US "common enemy."

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North Vietnamese Radio Notes US Support: Hanoi radio in English on Saturday said that "progressive American opinion" welcomes the North Vietnamese statement of 3 April. It said many prominent personalities are "calling on the American public to

increase its struggle to urge that the US Government stop the war." The American "personalities" mentioned in the broadcast included "Dellinger, editor of the Review Liberation; the Reverend Berningan, well-known peace militant"; the Reverend Coffin; and Joan Baez.

The broadcast also claimed that some 90 American youths in New York last week demonstrated against conscription for Vietnam and decided to return their draft cards. "They called on the American people to redouble their pressure on the government to end its aggression."

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