

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 24 October 1968



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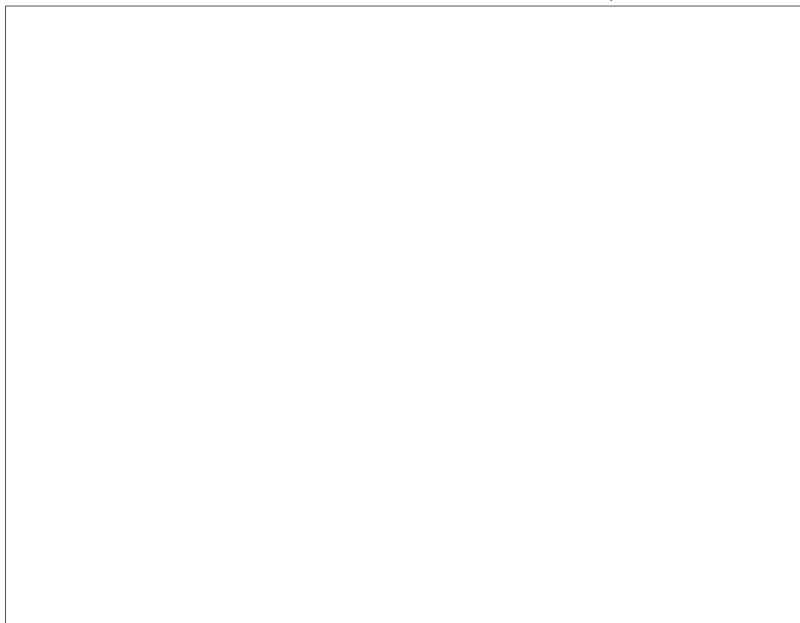
THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
24 OCTOBER 1968

1. South Vietnam

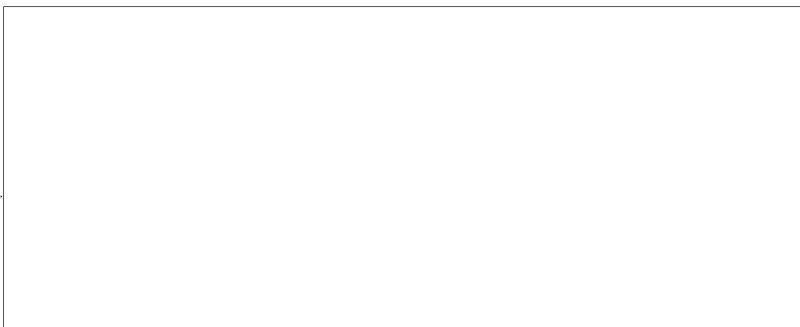
While major enemy forces remain relatively inactive, the unusual volume of Communist communications in several parts of the country suggests preparations for a new round of attacks. The areas involved are III Corps - Saigon; the northern provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh; and western Pleiku Province.

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2. South Korea



3. Guatemala



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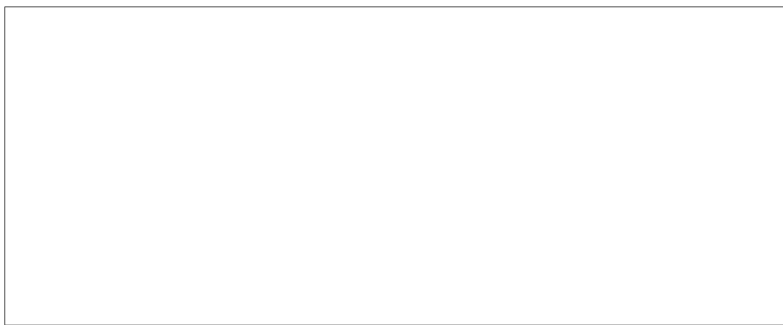
At Annex today we examine another dimension of the Latin American problem--the prospects for military coups in five countries. One of these is Guatemala, where some elements of the military are unhappy with Mendez.

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4. Soviet Union



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An improved weather satellite is under development.

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5. Western Europe

The five Common Market members favoring closer ties with Britain have again retreated with tattered colors from an encounter with the French. The friendly Five had hoped to use the framework of the Western European Union as a means for expanding cooperation with the British. When the meeting of the Union's council ended in Rome on Tuesday, however, a French veto was stamped on that scheme. Despite some earlier talk about getting tough with the French, the Five, as usual, put up no fight.

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ANNEX

Latin America: The Prospects For
More Military Coups

The recent coups in Peru and Panama resemble those in Brazil in 1964 and Argentina in 1966. Some common threads run through all of them. In each case, military leaders moved in the belief that the civilian government was threatening, or was about to threaten, military influence and prestige. In all but Panama, the economy was deteriorating rapidly. Seeing themselves as the ultimate protectors of the nation, military leaders felt they had to act to rescue the country from inept civilians.

The military establishments in some other Latin American countries probably would react the same way to similar conditions. At present there are five that stand out as the most vulnerable.

--Bolivia: The Barrientos administration is closely linked with the military. General Ovando, armed forces commander, expects to succeed Barrientos and will not stand around idly waiting for the elections scheduled for 1970 if Barrientos appears to be losing his grip before then. The government often seems to be teetering on the brink of collapse and a series of bad breaks for Barrientos could touch off a coup in fairly quick order.

--Brazil: Costa e Silva is the military's man, and, for that reason, anything he does is generally viewed as reflecting to the credit or discredit of the armed forces.

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--Ecuador: When Velasco was inaugurated last month, he inherited a near-catastrophic fiscal situation and a high level of social and political instability throughout the country. Velasco brought with

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him a mercurial and abrasive temperament and no proven talent for administrative leadership. To top it off, he almost immediately made it clear that his policies will be directed against the vested interests of the powerful oligarchy. Velasco will be hard pressed to keep the country on even keel and a real or seriously threatened breakdown in public order would invite a military coup.

--Guatemala: Since last March, President Mendez has been moving cautiously to cut down the power of the military officers behind the right-wing vigilante groups that had been carrying on a heavy-handed counter guerrilla campaign. This month, civilian vigilantes were made to turn back the weapons they had been issued. Some rightists, military and civilian, look on this as an unwarranted relaxation of pressure against the Communists. A new wave of Communist-led violence could prompt a military coup.

--Venezuela: Venezuelan military officers have in recent years proclaimed themselves to be fervent advocates of the democratic way, but [redacted] they may change their minds. Specifically, they might well move to prevent a government elected with Communist support from coming to power. Presidential hopeful Prieto, a leading candidate in the elections scheduled for 1 December, might fill that bill in the minds of many military officers.

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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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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Possible Propaganda Shift: North Vietnam may be taking some limited steps to prepare its Communist friends for a rapid shift in propaganda emphasis in case a bombing halt should occur soon.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] the next few months would be critical and [Redacted] Communist propaganda slogans might change quickly to meet new situations.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] It suggests at least some belief in Vietnamese Communist circles that some progress in the Paris talks is likely before long and that key sympathizers had better be tipped off to expect a change of pace.

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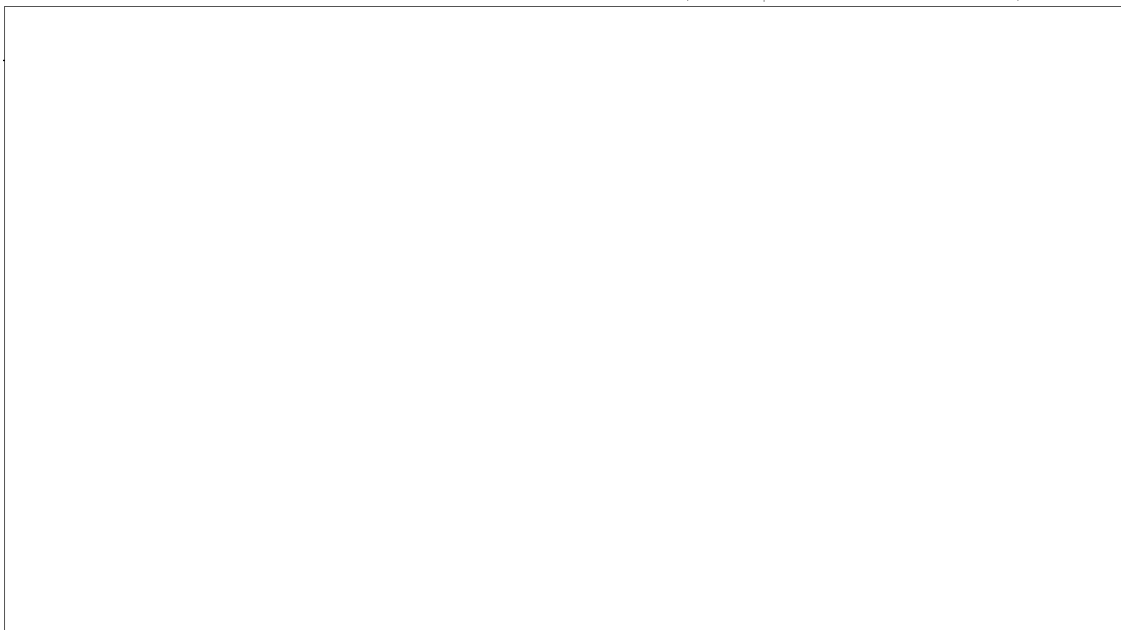
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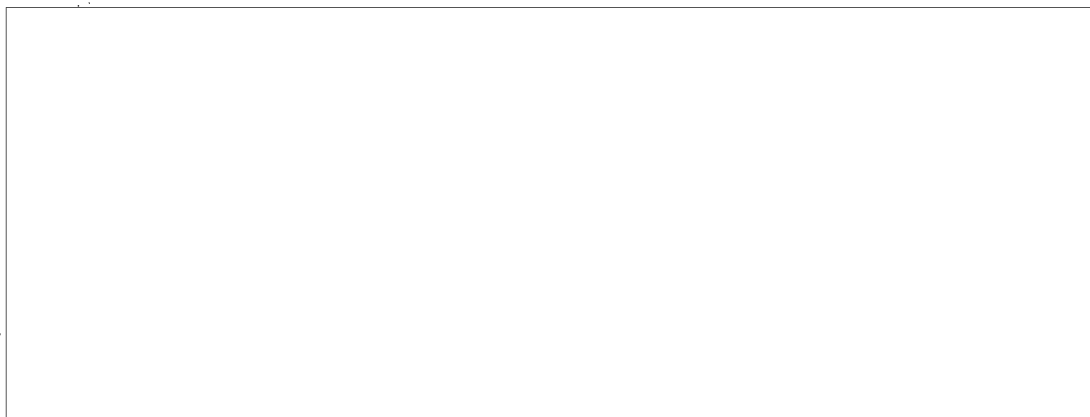
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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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