



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 29 November 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
29 NOVEMBER 1968

1. Pakistan

Assessing the political situation,

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[redacted] the turmoil of the past two weeks suggests a more widespread opposition than anyone--including Ayub--had suspected.

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There is little doubt that Ayub can keep control, using the police and, if necessary, the army. But rough methods themselves will tend to cement the opposition, perhaps around the popular ex - air force chief Asghar Khan who stepped onto the political stage last week. The forecast is for a real test of strength between Ayub and his opponents before the national elections in September 1969.

2. Cambodia

Terror as a technique for controlling the population of isolated villages is becoming more prevalent as Cambodian guerrillas seek to secure base areas in widely separated parts of the country. Assassination, kidnaping, and forced propaganda meetings are all on the upswing despite the government's greater effort to root out the insurgents.

Cambodia's dissidents run a wide range from disaffected tribesmen to Communists, but officials in Phnom Penh suspect the Viet Cong may be aiding and abetting some of the trouble. There is growing evidence to suggest these fears are well founded.

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3. South Vietnam

The resignation of information minister Thien could be the first of several cabinet changes. The next may be the foreign minister, Tran Chanh Thanh. Both men have turned in less than sparkling performances and Thieu has lost confidence in them.

4. France

Cancellation of the 1969 nuclear tests for austerity reasons is not likely to affect development and deployment of strategic missile systems using fission warheads.

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The cancellation, however, will delay development of thermo-nuclear hardware.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US Political Attitudes



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

Logistical Developments Since the Bombing Halt:
The North Vietnamese have been quick to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the bombing halt since 1 November.

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As yet there is no firm evidence that the North Vietnamese are undertaking a major logistical resupply effort in Laos that would jeopardize allied forces in the I or II Corps areas. More evidence is needed before the significance of the resupply effort north of the Demilitarized Zone can be fully evaluated.

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Large North Vietnamese coastal ships of up to 2,500 tons have been observed in southern waters for the first time since the bombing began in 1965. By using such coasters, the North Vietnamese are employing the most direct and effective method of moving large amounts of materiel from Haiphong to the southern Panhandle. Communications indicate that North Vietnamese coastal tracking stations since 1 November have tracked an average of 90 "supply vessels" a day south of the 20th Parallel, compared with about ten a day before the bombing halt.

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Status of US Airmen Downed in North Vietnam: The North Vietnamese captured two US pilots from the two aircraft shot down last Monday and a third airman was found dead, according to intercepted messages. In a conversation on 26 November, one speaker said that a US "spy" plane had been shot down by a missile; one of the pilots had been picked up and the other had died. The speaker also said that another aircraft had been shot down and the pilot had been picked up. The speakers discussed bringing the prisoners back to Hanoi, perhaps in an AN-2 transport. Other intercepts showed an AN-2 making a trip down to Vinh on 26 November, possibly in connection with the prisoners.

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Army Paper on "Acts of War": Hanoi's army daily on 28 November denounced the US for continuing its "encroachments on the sovereignty and security" of North Vietnam. The article singled out alleged US rocketing and bombing of areas in the North after two aircraft were shot down on 25 November. It details the "dark schemes" of the US by pointing to continued reconnaissance "over various parts of North Vietnam including Hanoi and Haiphong," to artillery and naval gunfire against the northern part of the DMZ, and to bombings and strafings in southern North Vietnam on 25 and 26 November. The article concludes by promising that these "acts of war" will received "due punishment." Like other North Vietnamese statements, it avoids saying these actions will prevent opening of the next stage of talks in Paris.

Allied Statements Called "Unacceptable" Basis for Talks: US and South Vietnamese statements issued on 26 November are an "unacceptable" basis for the Paris talks and "must be rejected," according to a hard-line story filed by a Soviet correspondent in Hanoi and carried by TASS yesterday. The report repeatedly cites "Hanoi circles" and "Hanoi observers" and almost certainly was approved by North Vietnamese authorities. It says that the US statement shows that Washington is not yet ready to "renounce its aggressive schemes in Vietnam and is not yet prepared for a correct solution of the Vietnamese problem." The story probably is North Vietnamese-inspired rhetoric of a kind that will be heard frequently in the days immediately ahead.

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North Vietnamese Propaganda: Hanoi's propagandists seem more comfortable now that Saigon has agreed to go to Paris. They had trouble earlier grappling with the idea of a "puppet regime" balking at US wishes. Now, true to form, a Hanoi Radio commentary on 28 November says that Saigon has finally "complied with its master's order to attend the conference." In Hanoi's words: "A tail remains a tail. It cannot wag the dog's body." The rest of the commentary is the predictable line denigrating the South Vietnamese Government and rejecting the concept of "two-sided" talks.

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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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