

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 6 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
6 DECEMBER 1968

1. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

Both Dubcek and his conservative rivals are concentrating at the moment on drumming up support among party and government workers, while the Soviets work quietly to bolster the conservatives and "realists." Their maneuvering is taking place against a backdrop of continuing demands from the media and the populace at large to end the erosion of pre-invasion liberties.

2. Israel -
Arab States

The Israelis have placed an order with a US firm for equipment to convert some of their helicopters into gunships. They may in fact have used an armed helicopter in their reprisal raids in Jordan this week.

The Israeli helicopter fleet has grown from 46 to over 75 aircraft since the June 1967 war, and more helicopters are on order.

3. Cuba

Havana has given considerable propaganda support to the Black Power Movement in the US.

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4. Cambodia

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5. Thailand

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[redacted]

Thai military leaders are getting more and more nervous about the durability of the US commitment in Southeast Asia. What passes for strategic planning in Bangkok is being done on the assumption that a Vietnam settlement may not protect Thai interests, that SEATO is no longer dependable, and that the US itself may withdraw from the area. Some Thai leaders are even talking about a detente with Peking.

All this worry seems unlikely to produce much change in Thai policy, however. The alternatives to the links with the US are either unrealistic or unpalatable, and in any case the Thai are usually able to avoid facing up to difficult questions such as these.

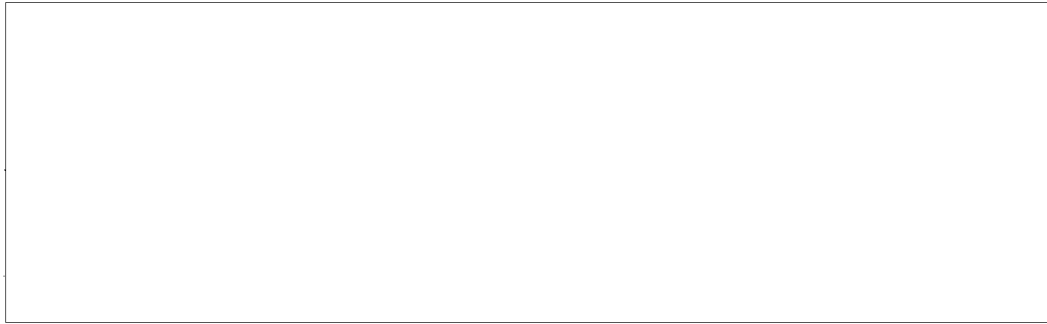
6. Iran -
Soviet Union

The Shah treated Governor Scranton to some of his trademarked Soviet-menace rhetoric in their conversation this week. Recent Soviet naval visits in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean have heightened his anxieties, and he told the Governor that both he and the Saudis are on the alert for more radical noises from Kuwait, which is currently interested in acquiring Soviet arms.

The Shah also said his visit to Moscow in late September left him with the impression that Kosygin (whom he likes) has dropped from number two in the Soviet hierarchy, having been replaced by Podgorny (whom he distrusts). This worries the Shah, who evidently places more weight on apparent shifts in the Kremlin's pecking order than we are able to do as long as the top Soviet leadership remains collegial.

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[Redacted] Cuba [Redacted]

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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
for the President's Eyes Only

6 December 1968

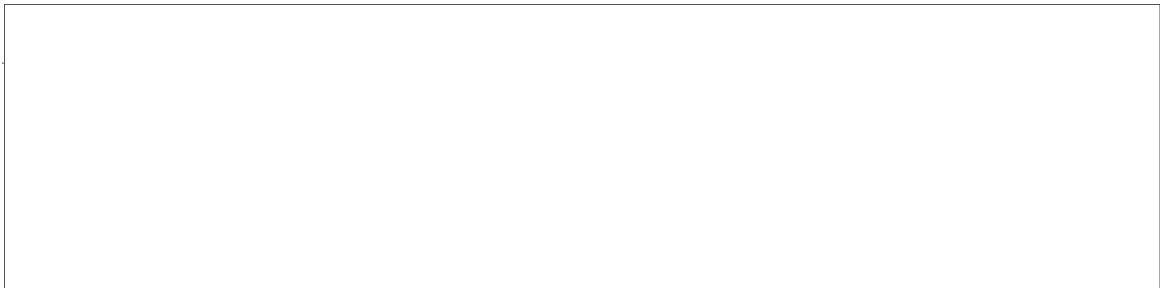
I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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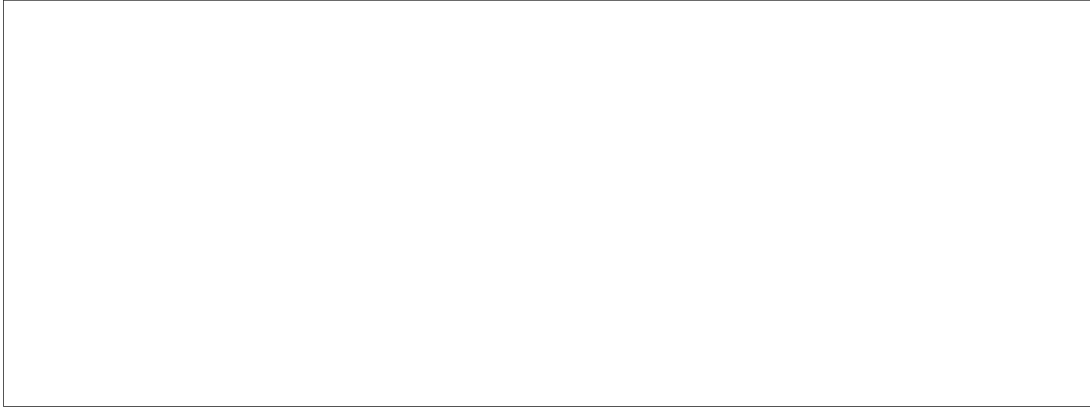
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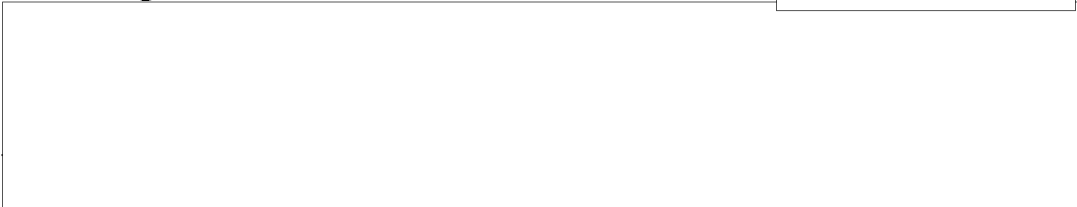
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More Protests on Demilitarized Zone: Hanoi has issued another strong protest over allied military operations in the Demilitarized Zone and north of the 17th Parallel. On 5 December a foreign ministry statement was broadcast on Radio Hanoi's domestic service claiming that US aircraft struck villages in southern North Vietnam on 3 December. Although the statement used language similar to that in protests earlier this month, it claimed for the first time that the battleship New Jersey had shelled the northern half of the Demilitarized Zone.

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Burchett Activities: The peripatetic Australian journalist and self-proclaimed explainer of Hanoi's views is a much sought after man in the UN, where he holds temporary press accreditation. A good many newsmen are trying to get his help in obtaining invitations to North Vietnam.

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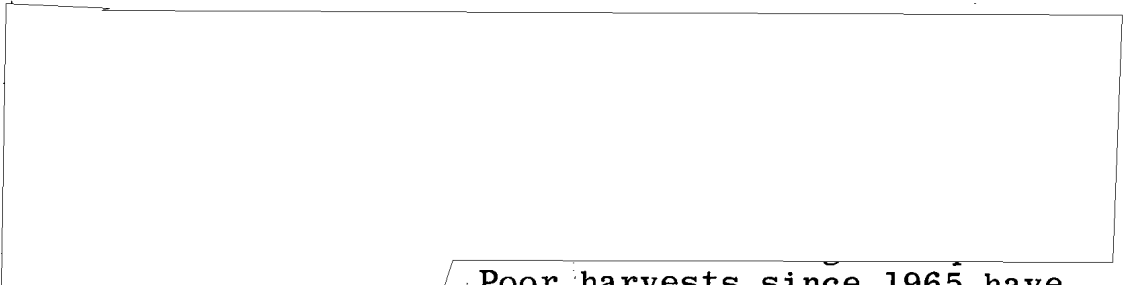


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Food Problems: Distribution problems are continuing to make North Vietnam's food situation difficult, although imports from other Communist countries probably have offset shortages.

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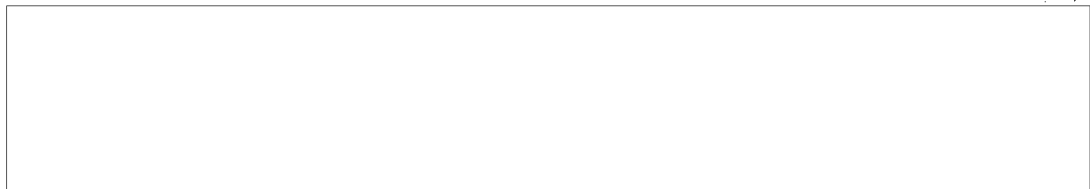
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Poor harvests since 1965 have intensified shortages in traditionally food-deficit areas, and the regime has attempted to assure minimum levels of consumption. The ration system has been inhibited to some extent by diversion of food to the black market.

Imports of food during the first eleven months of 1968 amounted to 681,300 tons--an increase of about 50 percent over the eleven-month total last year.

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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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