



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 28 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
28 DECEMBER 1968

1. Vietnam

Early this morning, Washington time, Radio Liberation broadcast a Viet Cong proposal for another meeting on 1 January between US and Viet Cong officers to discuss "preparatory procedures" for the release of the three American prisoners. The broadcast called for the meeting to be held at Tay Ninh--site of the unproductive encounter on 25 December. One of the conditions imposed for meeting with the American representatives is acceptance by the US and South Vietnam of the cease-fire ordered by the National Liberation Front for New Year's Day.

2. West Germany

Bonn says it wants in, if the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference is to be enlarged. The West Germans appear to recognize that they will have to pay a price for membership and are willing to discuss possible concessions--probably up to but not including East German membership--with Moscow.

This is the latest indication of Bonn's intention to expand its activities in the field of international security. The West Germans were prime movers in the recent Non-nuclear Nations Conference and have sought to be included on the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The whole issue of membership on an expanded disarmament conference is a sensitive one in West Germany as in other West European countries where considerable resentment has arisen over the recent US move to add six members from regions of the world other than Western Europe. The West Germans, the Dutch, and others feel their region is already under-represented on that body.

3. Venezuela-Guyana

The Venezuelan foreign minister has assured our ambassador that Venezuela's armed forces will not become involved in internal problems in Guyana. The foreign minister, however, indicated that Caracas would not be surprised if troubles do break out among the Indians in the disputed western region of Guyana.

Although Caracas may not stop all covert efforts to stimulate an internal revolt against Burnham, the assurances we have received from the foreign minister should take much of the heat out of the crisis. It greatly reduces the probability that Venezuelan troops will be used in open support of any rebellion.

4. Peru

The government is seeking to exploit nationalist sentiment throughout Latin America in its continuing controversy with Washington over refusal to pay for expropriated holdings of the International Petroleum Company. The obvious aim of efforts by Lima to secure public and official support is to put pressure on the US to prevent imposition of economic sanctions. While we would expect most Latin American governments to try to steer clear of the dispute, some may find it politically expedient to give at least nominal support to Peru.

5. Pakistan

Ayub could be in for serious new disturbances following the shooting death of a student demonstrator in Rawalpindi on 25 December. The nationwide demonstrations of the past seven weeks were set off originally by the police killing of a student during a protest meeting in the same city.

6. Communist China

On the basis of preliminary analysis, we believe China's eighth nuclear test, conducted at Lop Nor on 27 December, was an airdropped thermonuclear device with a yield of about three megatons. This is the fifth time that a thermonuclear device has been tested, evidence of the primary emphasis Peking has placed on thermonuclear technology in its nuclear weapons program. This is also the first test to take place since China's only failure in the series on 24 December 1967.

7. Okinawa

The recently elected Okinawan legislature has unanimously passed resolutions protesting the continued presence of B-52s and visits to the island by nuclear submarines. Since the B-52 crash in November, all Okinawan political parties have been careful not to be left behind on such popular emotional issues. The conservatives, however, have frequently acted as a brake on the other parties and were responsible for moderating the substance of the resolution on the B-52s.

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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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50X1

16

28 December 1968

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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

On US Warnings in Paris: The Front's initial comments on Ambassador Vance's 19 December admonition to Ha Van Lau regarding Communist attacks against cities were similar to an earlier North Vietnamese dispatch and contained several standard Communist retorts. In a Liberation Radio broadcast on 25 December, the Front insisted on the right to unrestricted military activity in the South in response to continued allied tactical operations. It added it had the "right" to resist "aggression" until the "aggressors" are driven out of Vietnam. The Front charged that Vance's statements were motivated by an allied fear of Communist military power. Serious talks in Paris can be carried out best, the broadcast repeated, when the current Saigon government is overthrown.

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More on Prisoners: The Communists probably intend to step up pressure on the US regarding the transfer of three US prisoners back to US control. A Liberation Radio broadcast on 27 December claimed that the meeting on Christmas Day between US and Viet Cong representatives was unproductive because US representatives refused to discuss "procedural matters." The Communists are well aware that the issue of prisoners is an emotional one for the US and they hope this factor will lead the US to accept otherwise unpalatable dealings with the Liberation Front.

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Bo to Bern: [redacted] Hanoi's representative in Paris, Mai Van Bo, is conferring with Swiss Government officials. [redacted]

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It is doubtful that the North Vietnamese are actively considering enlarging the peace talks at this time. Hanoi spokesmen have been consistently and reliably reported as opposed to bringing in either Peking or Moscow at this stage of negotiations. There have been reports that the North Vietnamese might be interested in a full-blown international conference as a sort of guarantor of an agreement which had been worked out directly with the US, but this is pretty far down the road, and it seems unlikely that Mai Van Bo is working on arrangements of this type at this time.

Bo has been sent to Bern in the past, however, to promote Swiss diplomatic recognition of North Vietnam, and he may well be on a similar mission now. Hanoi is currently putting special emphasis on increasing its diplomatic ties especially in Western Europe.

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Hon Gai-Kep Rail Line Progresses: Photography of 13 December reveals that since 30 September the Communists have laid about 15 miles of new track and finished a five-span rail bridge on the eastern section of the new rail line being built from Hon Gai to Kep. Only a five-mile gap and one multispan bridge need to be finished to open the eastern half of the line to traffic. Construction on the entire 66-mile line was resumed in October after a three-month lull probably caused by the extensive flooding of last summer.

When completed, the line will connect North Vietnam's major industrial centers with the primary coal producing and secondary port area of Hon Gai. In a recent speech, Vice Premier Le Ghan Nghi mentioned that North Vietnamese ports other than Haiphong will be built or expanded. He probably had Hon Gai in mind.

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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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