



The President's Daily Brief

~~*Top Secret 14 January 1969*~~



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
14 JANUARY 1969

1. Middle East -
Israel

A high-ranking [redacted]

[redacted] that his country has no intention of attacking any of its neighbors. He asked that the US pass this information to the Arabs in the hope that tensions will subside. Israel's ambassador in Washington has said that the Lebanese military have been given similar assurances by his government.

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Despite these Israeli promises, Iraq has placed its armed forces on alert. [redacted]

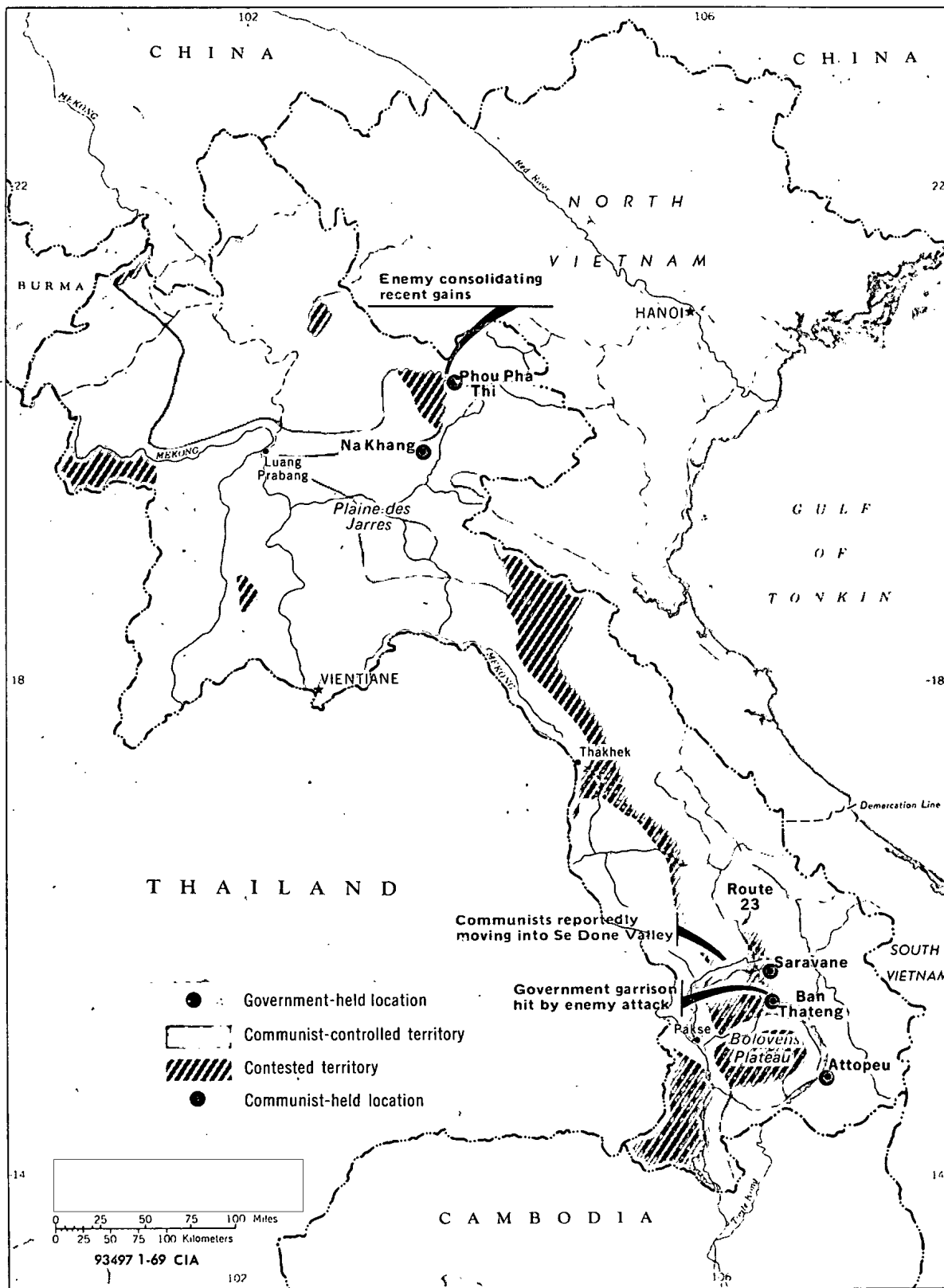
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Lebanon is heading toward an even deeper political crisis. The new prime minister has been unable to form a cabinet because of Christian-Muslim wrangling.

We think President Hilu could become so disgusted that he may submit his resignation again, as he did in a similar crisis last October. At that time, the army's readiness to take over the government brought the politicians back together. Now, however, the after-shock of the Israeli raid on Lebanon airport is so great, there is a distinct possibility that political factions will not be able to compromise. The army might then step in.

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Communist Pressure Returns to Southern Laos



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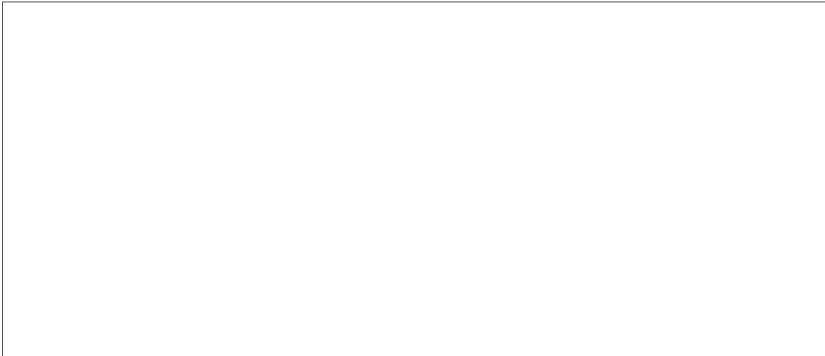
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2. South Vietnam

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Top South Vietnamese leaders are aware that pressure could develop soon in the US for American troop withdrawals from Vietnam.



Both Thieu and his knowledgeable emissary in the US, Bui Diem, see a South Vietnamese initiative along these lines as dampening criticism in the US of Saigon's intransigent attitude toward political concessions to the Communists.

3. Laos

Renewed North Vietnamese attacks on Ban Thateng appear to be part of a wider Communist effort to dislodge the government from the Bolovens Plateau. Harassment of Saravane, the provincial capital, has increased. Government positions in the Se Done Valley are threatened.

In the north, the North Vietnamese are consolidating their hold on the area around Phou Pha Thi. We expect Na Khang, in the northeast, to come under attack soon.

4. Turkey

A new wave of student violence and labor unrest is under way. There is an election scheduled for October, and this could generate additional tensions. In the meantime, the Turkish Government will probably get tough in an effort to keep the unrest from snowballing.

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5. Soviet Union

The Soviets launched another manned space flight early this morning. It was dubbed Soyuz 4 by TASS, which announced that a one-man crew was aboard. One objective of this mission could well be to perfect the docking procedure, something the Soviets failed to accomplish during the flights of Soyuz 2 and 3 last October. If docking is an objective, a second space vehicle probably will be launched early tomorrow.

6. Czechoslovakia

The government's new commissioner for relations with Soviet troops stationed in Czechoslovakia has told a press conference that contrary to rumors, no new Soviet troops have entered the country in response to NATO maneuvers in West Germany. 50X1

He appears to be right. [redacted]

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[redacted]

We expect to see the Soviet forces stationed in Czechoslovakia begin exercises after they are more settled. The continuation of incidents between the populace and the Soviet forces, however, could mean that such exercises will be rather restricted and out of the public's view.

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7. Italy

The Rumor government is intrigued with the possibility of being the first to have a successful "two-China policy."

This is the pitch the Italian Foreign Ministry is taking to sell the idea of simultaneous recognition of Communist China and "Taiwan." The scenario is terribly complicated, assuming as it does that Peking will buy the idea willingly and that Taiwan can be forced into accepting it. Neither is at all likely.

This elaborate scheme is probably no more than window dressing, however.

[redacted] Exploratory talks could begin in February or March.

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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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18

14 January 1969

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

14 January 1969

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Reaction to Swedish Recognition: A Hanoi International Service item in English on 12 January quotes from a Nhan Dan commentary of the same date "acclaiming the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Kingdom of Sweden." Nhan Dan states that the event "constitutes a new political success of the Vietnamese people who are struggling resolutely for independence and freedom." The paper cited three other manifestations of the Swedish Government's friendship:

--the permission it gave the Russell Tribunal in 1967 to meet in Stockholm;

--the statement in March 1968 which "condemned the US aggression in Vietnam, voiced support for the political program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and demanded an unconditional halt to the US bombardment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam"; and

--the permission given the Liberation Front to set up an information office in Stockholm.

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Achievements in Local and Central Light Industry:

A Hanoi International Service broadcast of 10 January claimed that "nearly as many" local industrial establishments went into operation in 1968 as during the previous two years, including "a dozen" new plants in the three southernmost provinces. According to a domestic broadcast of 8 January, total value of consumer goods produced by local industry in 1968 was 8.2 percent higher than in 1967 but fell short of the plan. Central-level light industry reportedly "overfulfilled the entire 1968 plan by 9 percent," an increase of 15.5 percent over 1967. The 1969 plan is said to call for a 20 percent increase in the total value of output by both central and local light industry and a 2 percent reduction in prices.

The base against which these improvements are measured is unknown but is doubtless very low indeed. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the indices have risen since the US restricted its air attacks last March.

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North Vietnam's Draft Policy Since 1965: The steadily increasing demand in North Vietnam for military manpower has been met since 1965 by the progressive broadening of the scope of compulsory service. In 1965 an estimated 800,000 males were eligible for military service, according to age and physical criteria then in use. Changes in draft regulations by mid-1967 had extended the length of service in the army from a tour of three years to the duration of the war, had raised the maximum draft age from 25 to 30 years, and had subjected to recall former servicemen up to the age of 35 and officers up to age 45. The criteria for exemptions from service also were restricted, permitting additional call-ups within the eligible age groups. By 1967 these measures had added more than 600,000 to the number of males that were eligible for military service.

Draft regulations in North Vietnam are promulgated at the national level but executed by administrators at the local levels. Exceptions apparently are made at the discretion of district and village authorities who are responsible for filling allotted quotas. This probably accounts for the occasional reported drafting of the unusually young and those in poor physical condition.

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

Hanoi Flays Alsop: In an unusual display of sensitivity about US press treatment of the war, North Vietnam's party daily on 10 January accused US newspapers of "distorting the truth" about the military situation and "openly opposing" a peaceful settlement. It singled out Joseph Alsop, presumably for his recent series from Vietnam, as a "warlike, blockheaded scribbler who dares call himself a journalist." It refuted charges that the Communist position is deteriorating by citing all the usual statistics and claims about Communist "victories" in the past year. The article concluded that because of these alleged successes, the pressure on the US to end the war is becoming irresistible.

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