



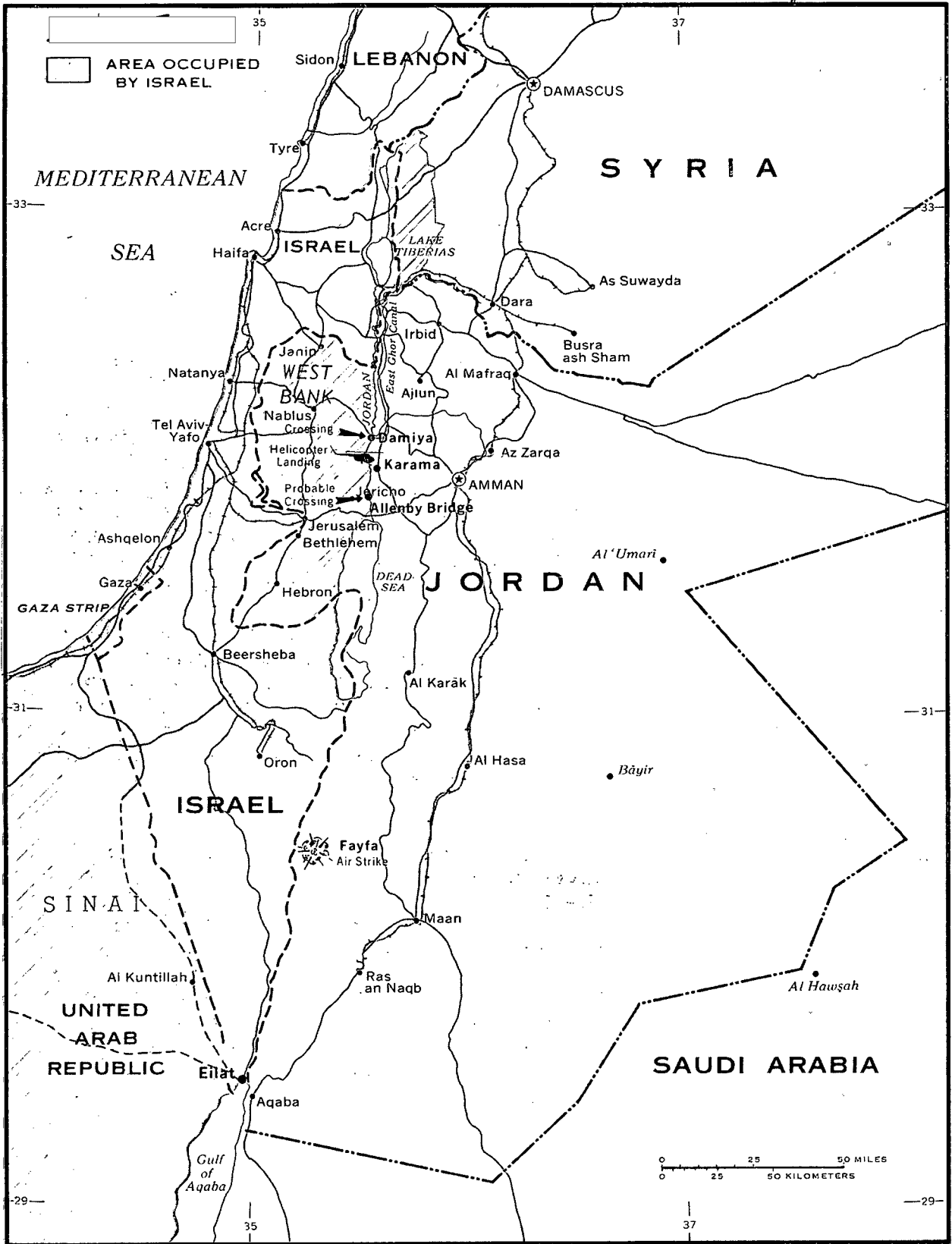
The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 21 March 1968



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PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF
21 MARCH 1968

LATE ITEM

Israel-Jordan

Information as of 0400 EST indicates that fighting is still going on north of the Dead Sea, where the Jordanians apparently are resisting strongly.



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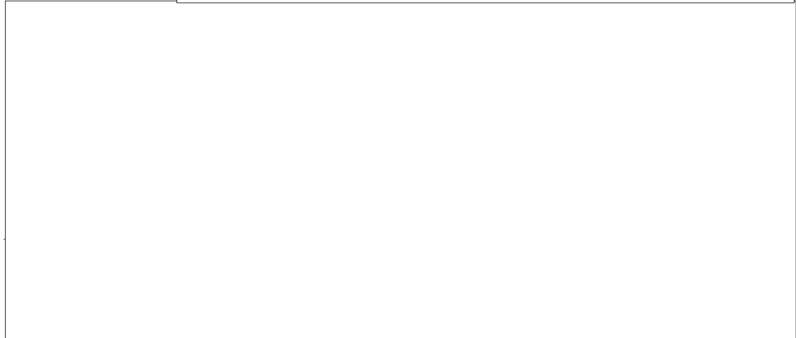
DAILY BRIEF
21 MARCH 1968

1. Jordan-Israel

The Israelis moved into Jordan early today. Their troops, supported by tanks, crossed the cease-fire line at several points. There were at least two helicopter-borne incursions, and Israeli fighters have been flying supporting missions.

Tel Aviv claims its aim is to wipe out terrorist bases near the cease-fire line, and it says that once this has been accomplished, its troops will return home. Even if they do, the Israeli action has made King Husayn's position even more tenuous than it was before.

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2. Vietnam

The Communists apparently have moved some of their forces back from the Khe Sanh area into Laos, possibly as a result of recent intense B-52 strikes. At the same time, however, there are indications that a major new North Vietnamese infiltration effort is under way.

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3. Poland

We have some more on the atmospherics surrounding Gomulka's speech to party functionaries on Tuesday. They provide a good index of the cross-currents now operating in Poland.

The audience was in a light-hearted mood to begin with, but Gomulka was very serious and finally told his listeners to pay attention. His attack on "Zionists" got loud applause--so loud that Gomulka had trouble restoring order. By contrast, his hour-long hymn of praise for Polish-Soviet ties met with stony silence. He did get a good reaction when he implied that some of the leaders of the demonstrations would be punished.

Gomulka tried to gloss over the depth of student opposition--a ploy which does not seem to be attracting many students back to the fold. He was harsh with the university faculty and with several liberal writers. Interestingly, although he flailed away hard at antiregime Poles abroad, he played down his attack on Radio Free Europe. This probably reflects RFE's current popularity inside Poland.

4. North Korea -
South Korea

Yesterday's blast that North Korea had been attacked by "imperialist aggressor troops" may have been stimulated by an actual incursion on 19 March by a South Korean raiding party. Pyongyang, which would probably be stepping up the southward infiltration of agents anyway at this time of year, may use the raid as an excuse for even greater activity.

5. Guatemala

The archbishop who was kidnaped last Saturday--apparently by army right-ists--turned up safe and sound yesterday in an outlying Guatemalan city. There is still no information on what the kidnapers were trying to accomplish.

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6. Cuba

In a series of austerity measures last week, Castro decreed the expropriation of all remaining private businesses (mostly lunch counters and the like), closed all bars and cabarets, and suspended the national lottery. The impetus for these moves seems to have come as much from Castro's peculiar brand of puritanism as from Cuba's current economic problems. Castro said, for instance, that the lottery was an example of "material incentives" which "stimulate greed." He even mused about banishing money--"that instrument of evil."

The bar closures may also be an effort to shut off criticism of the government. Castro earlier inveighed against "coffee house pundits," and he apparently doesn't like barroom philosophers either.

7. India

Another state government in northern India collapsed on 18 March, and still another is in the midst of a debilitating parliamentary crisis. Direct rule from New Delhi may be the only answer for both of them. If this happened, it would mean that a total of five of India's most populous states had fallen into political paralysis.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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21 March 1968

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

21 March 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Again Rejects San Antonio Formula: North Vietnam has issued another point-by-point rejection of the US position on a bombing halt and negotiations. An article in the 11 March issue of the Hanoi weekly Vietnam Courier entitled "True Nature of Johnsonism" again sums up what is now the stock North Vietnamese response to President Johnson's San Antonio formula. The article asserts that despite repeated protestations of good intentions by the President and Secretary Rusk, US sincerity is "seriously questioned" both at home and abroad. It underscores once again that North Vietnam categorically rejects the principle of reciprocity no matter how US spokesmen choose to phrase it. The San Antonio formula, according to the Communists, is simply "diplomatic jargon" designed to "ward off criticisms and cover up fresh escalations."

Like other recent North Vietnamese pronouncements on this subject, the new Courier article describes the series of statements by Foreign Minister Trinh and Paris representative Mai Van Bo as steps intended to answer US objections to a bombing halt. As Hanoi did at the time each of these statements was issued, the article tries to convey the impression that the DRV has modified its position and that the next step is for the US to halt the bombing without asking for additional "concessions."

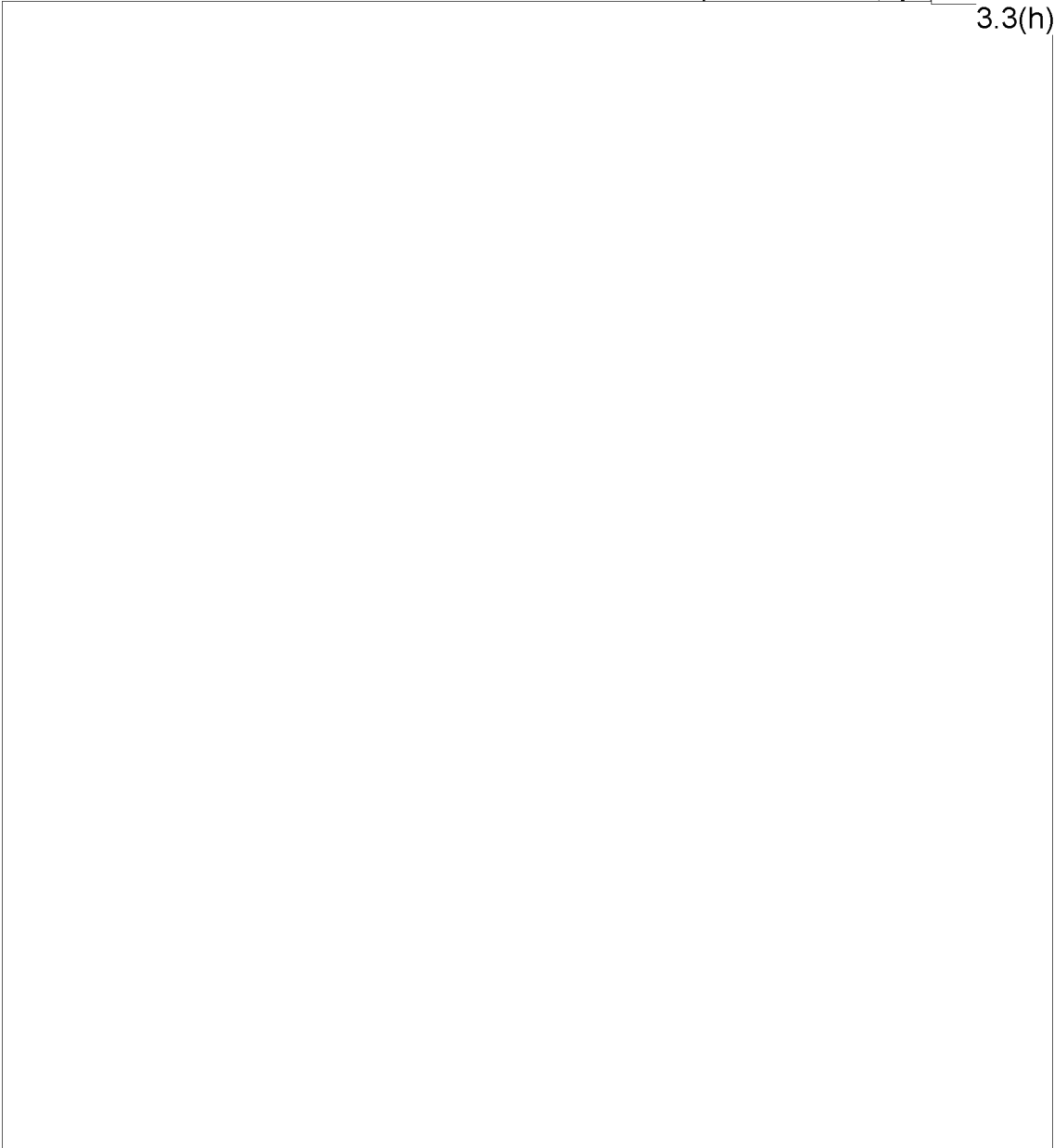
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Hanoi on Khe Sanh: Hanoi is continuing to grind out propaganda commentaries characterizing the US position at Khe Sanh as all but hopeless. In a broadcast of 20 March, the "critical situation" at Khe Sanh was held up as a reflection of the over-all position of "defense and failure of the US in South Vietnam." The broadcast listed a long series of strategic factors favorable to the Communist forces in the area and noted that "like a punctured balloon" US officials have stopped "clamoring for defending Khe Sanh at all costs and have begun talking of withdrawal."

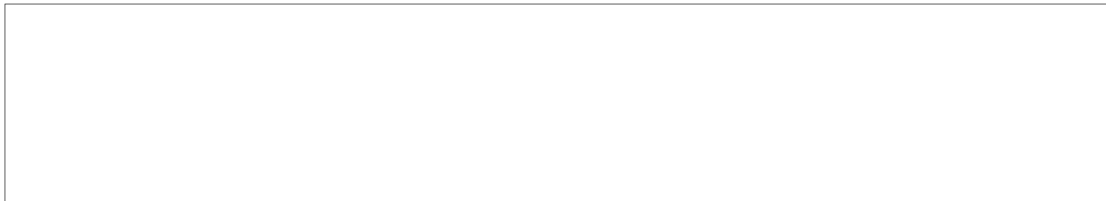
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Hanoi Objectives in Tet Offensive: Hanoi is said to have offered sober explanations of the Communist Tet offensive to some of its East European allies.

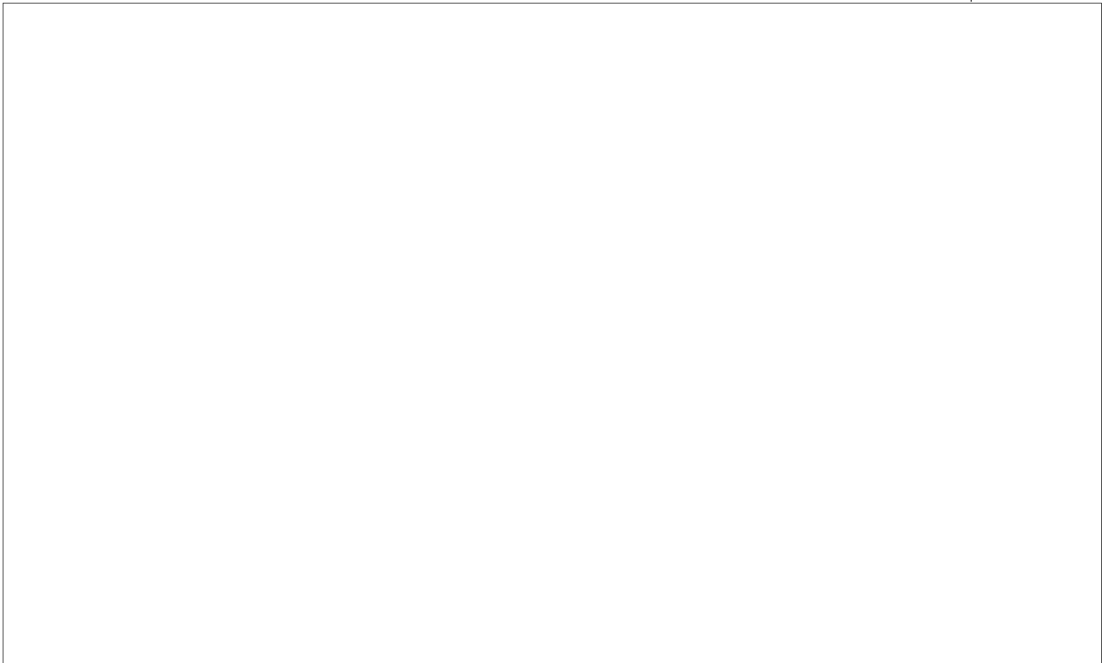
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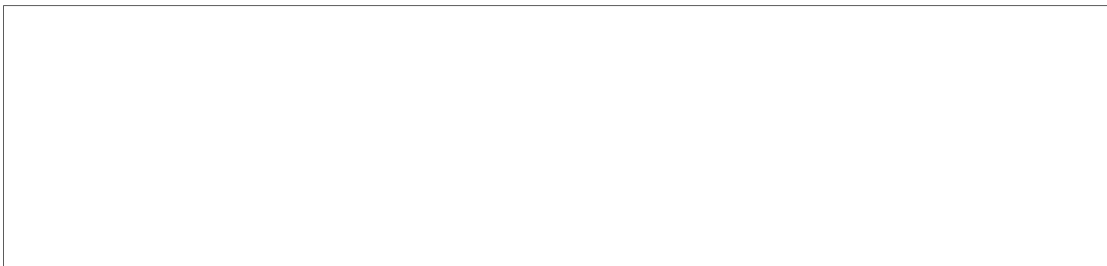
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Next ICC Flight from Vientiane Delayed: The ICC flight scheduled to make its normal run from Vientiane to Hanoi on 22 March has been cancelled. The next flight is now set for the 29th. The delay will give the US Embassy in Vientiane time to try to straighten out bureaucratic difficulties with the ICC over the release of the three North Vietnamese rural POWs. As the case stands now, the ICC is still bogging on the issue of allowing the POWs to ride on the ICC flight without official assurances from Hanoi that they will be accepted. The commission has reportedly requested authorization from Hanoi but has not yet received a reply.

[redacted] Walter Cronkite had also been invited to make this flight.

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

Hanoi on US Elections: North Vietnamese propaganda coverage of the US elections is picking up, but the regime is still feeling its way on the issue.

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In the past week, there was one mild commentary on the New Hampshire primaries but the treatment was studiously restrained. On 20 March, however, the party daily, Nhan Dan, for the first time took note of Senator Robert Kennedy's candidacy, which it said has "really rendered the race...wonderfully hard and fierce." New Hampshire showed that "the majority" of Americans are "very disgusted with the war" and that because of its costs in men and material wealth, the Johnson administration's "influence has seriously decreased among common US people." The New Hampshire election, said Nhan Dan, is a "severe warning" to the President about his "maneuver of intensifying and extending the war."

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More on Senate Hearings: Hanoi continued its coverage of Secretary Rusk's appearances before the Fulbright committee with a radio commentary on 16 March in which the two-day session was said to have produced "unprecedentedly acute wranglings." Rusk's testimony, said the radio, showed that despite "defeats" on the Vietnamese battlefield, the US is "still persevering in its aggressive will." It attributed the vigor of the debates to the "heavy setback" the US has recently received in Vietnam, and claimed that developments since the Tet offensive have pushed the US military into a "perilous predicament." Because of this, the antiwar movement in the US is "mounting every day."

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