★ THE PDB SERIES: REDEFINING THE CRAFT ★

# The President's Daily Brief

## DELIVERING INTELLIGENCE TO NIXON AND FORD

## VIEW THE DOCUMENT COLLECTION

The collection consists of the President's Daily Briefs (PDBs) prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency for Presidents Nixon and Ford. With the release of President's Intelligence Checklists and PDBs from the Kennedy and Johnson presidential administrations last year and this current release, the entire collection consists of more than 4,000 documents spanning June 1961 to January 1977. The supporting articles in this booklet highlight the significance of these high-level products in providing the most up-to-the-minute, all-source intelligence on current and future national security issues to Presidents Nixon and Ford. Former DCI George Tenet has called the PDB the Agency's "most important product."

This Collection of PDBs are posted to https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/presidents-daily-briefs

Our Historical Collections are posted to https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/historical-collections

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This booklet was edited by Celia Mansfield, CIA's Historical Programs Coordinator. Ms. Mansfield would like to acknowledge and offer her special gratitude to the Intelligence Community officers responsible for reviewing the PDB documents, so that she could share this collection and the articles presented in this booklet. These dedicated officers share in what credit attaches to this booklet and the release of these documents.



All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this booklet are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US Government entity, past or present. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US Government endorsement of an article's factual statements and interpretations.

# The President's Daily Brief

## DELIVERING INTELLIGENCE TO NIXON AND FORD

# First Release of Declassified Presidential Briefing Products

16 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT THE LBJ LIBRARY

On Wednesday, 16 September, CIA and the Intelligence Community released an unprecedented number of President's Daily Briefs (PDBs), and its predecessor, the President's Intelligence Checklists (PICLs) [an acronym pronounced "pickles"] to the public—almost 2,500 documents totaling about 19,000 pages. More than 600 people, including scholars, historians, academics, students, and locals from Austin attended the event at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin.

In his keynote address, CIA Director John Brennan said, "The PDB is amongst the most highly sensitive and classified documents. For students of history, these documents will help them understand why one president picks one path over another. Whenever we can shed light on our government without harming national security, we shall do so."

The CIA Director described how the PDB started, including its tailoring to each President and its objective analysis, while never prescribing policy. President Kennedy received an intelligence product from a briefer. The document was seven pages long, contained two maps, a few written notes, and 14 intelligence briefs, with most no more than two sentences in length and ranging in topics. Kennedy, apparently, was "pleased with the content," according to one staffer. The White House contacted CIA the following day to say, "so far, so good." This was the first PICL, which preceded the publication of the PDB under President Johnson.

"Today's PDB is unrecognizable from the Kennedy and Johnson years," the Director said. "Back then, the articles were full of colorful language. It has evolved in countless ways since those early years." He added, "Today, the PDB is so vital to the White House, one wonders how they could operate without it." ■

*"Today, the PDB is so vital to the White House, one wonders how they could operate without it." – D/CIA Brennan*

# PARTNERS

## HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

CIA's Information Management Services of the Agency Data Office is responsible for executing the Agency's Historical Review Program (HRP). This program seeks to identify and declassify collections of documents that detail the Agency's analysis and activities relating to historically significant topics and events. The HRP's goals include increasing the usability and accessibility of historical collections. To do that, IRRG works with partner organizations to organize release events to highlight each collection and make it available to the broadest audience possible.

The mission of the HRP is to:

- Promote an accurate, objective understanding of the intelligence information that has helped shape major US foreign policy decisions.
- Broaden access to lessons-learned, presenting historical material that gives greater understanding to the scope and context of past actions.
- Improve current decision-making and analysis by facilitating reflection on the impacts and effects arising from past foreign policy decisions.
- Showcase CIA's contributions to national security and provide the American public with valuable insight into the workings of its government.
- Demonstrate the CIA's commitment to the Open Government Initiative and its three core values: Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration.

## CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

The History Staff in the CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence fosters understanding of the Agency's history and its relationship to today's intelligence challenges by communicating instructive historical insights to the CIA workforce, other US Government agencies, and the public. CIA historians research topics on all aspects of Agency activities and disseminate their knowledge though publications, courses, briefings and Web-based products. They also work with other Intelligence Community historians on publication and education projects that highlight interagency approaches to intelligence issues. Lastly, the CIA History Staff conducts an ambitious program of oral history interviews that is invaluable for preserving institutional memories that are not captured in the documentary record. ■

IMS Information Management Services

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

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"As every President since World War II, I depend on you as one of America's first lines of defense. Every morning, as a result of your efforts, an intelligence report is delivered to my desk which is complete, concise, perceptive, and responsible.

As a result, I am fully aware of the tremendous effort, the tremendous teamwork that goes into it and all of the intelligence reports that I receive that are so vital to the making of sound policy decisions on national security. And let me express my gratitude for this fine work."

President Gerald R. Ford
Swearing-in ceremony of George H. W. Bush as DCI,
30 January 1976

# STRATEGIC WARNING IN THE EARLY DÉTENTE ERA

## DECLASSIFYING THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEFS DELIVERED TO NIXON AND FORD

CELIA MANSFIELD, CIA/HISTORICAL PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

The declassified President's Daily Briefs (PDBs) from the Nixon and Ford presidential administrations in this collection include about 2,500 documents and 28,000 pages. This declassification effort follows on the heels of the President's Intelligence Checklists (or PICLs, pronounced "pickles") and PDBs delivered to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson—some 2,500 documents and 19,000 pages—released in September 2015. The two collections show that the product was tailored—both in content and format—to the requirements of each president. These documents were the primary vehicle for summarizing the day-to-day sensitive intelligence and analysis, as well as late-breaking reports, for the White House on current and future national security issues. President Richard Nixon, as a once practicing attorney, preferred to review the PDBs on longer legal size paper, and this format was carried into the Ford administration.

At the beginning of the Nixon administration from 21 January to 28 April 1969, the CIA delivered morning and afternoon PDBs to accommodate National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who requested the most current intelligence as fast-breaking events were unfolding. These afternoon PDBs for Kissinger were referred to as "Late Notes." By the close of 1969, the PDB had become quite lengthy—generally 10 pages or more—and its format included a table of contents to manage the increasing breadth of intelligence issues. President Gerald Ford requested more detailed reporting and analysis, and these PDBs were often close to 20 pages with lengthy Annexes.

Publishing the PDB every day except Sunday was a 24-hour process, and the PDB staff managed the final product from identifying topics for articles in the product until "it went to bed" to be published in the early hours the following morning. Specific criteria for the PDB articles generally reflected what the Agency inferred about the interests of the president, as well as what the writers and reviewers—the Director of the PDB Staff, the Deputy Director for Intelligence (or DDI, now called the Deputy Director of Analysis) and the Director of CIA—believed should be brought to the attention of the president on any given day. The goal was to have delivery to the White House or desired location at a time each president preferred. According to former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI)[1] Richard M. Helms, "Neither Jack Smith[2] nor I were ever sure how often Nixon ever glanced at the PDB." By the time Nixon was president, the staff worked in three eight-hour shifts, with the end of the night shift occurring at 7 AM after the PDB was delivered.

FIGURE 1: INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTS FOR THE PRESIDENT

**21 JAN 1969 – 20 JAN 1977**

**The President's Daily Brief (PDB)**

Nixon received the first PDB as president on 21 January 1969 and Ford on 9 August 1974.

**21 JAN – 28 APR 1969**

**Afternoon Briefs**

CIA delivered afternoon PDBs to NSA Kissinger, who requested these "Late Notes."

With Kissinger as Nixon's gatekeeper, each CIA director—Richard M. Helms, James R. Schlesinger, and William E. Colby—was distanced from President Nixon with the National Security Council taking the lead in providing the daily intelligence briefing to the president. Under the direction of Kissinger, the lengthened, detailed PDB delivered beginning on 21 January 1969 had three sections: "Major Problems," "Other Important Developments" and a final section, an "Annex," which captured longer analytic products on specific topics. Often times, the content of the Annexes were from Directorate of Intelligence (DI) finished products and Intelligence Community (IC) assessments, such as National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs)—analytic products coordinated across the IC for a more unified assessment or to offer alternative views on future outcomes—on specific topics or regions.

1 Until 21 April 2005, the CIA director was known as the Director of Central Intelligence, nominally the director of the Intelligence Community. With the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on 22 April 2005, the DCI became the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DCIA).

2 Russell Jack Smith was the Deputy Director for Intelligence from 1966 to 1971.

*President Nixon visits the CIA building, 7 March 1969.*

Richard Lehman[3] commented that "[the CIA] was taking too much for granted, that we sort of grew up with the satellite business and therefore took the things that were known about Soviet weapon systems and so on as given, and went on from there. Kissinger felt that we were assuming things that we shouldn't assume, and there was a great deal of wasted motion as a result of that." The Agency was asked to distinguish between what was known as fact and what was analysis in their products to the president.

President Nixon was not directly briefed by CIA, and it was not until the Ford administration that the Agency would directly brief a president on the topics presented in the PDB. Ford came to the vice-presidency an informed consumer of IC products as a former member of the House of Representatives Intelligence Subcommittee on Appropriations and later in other roles, including House Minority Leader. William Colby, who had been appointed CIA director in September 1973, saw an opportunity to help the newly appointed Vice President Ford, which would later afford CIA unprecedented daily access to him as president. Ford visited the CIA on 12 June 1974 and was given briefings on a wide-range of intelligence topics. In response to Ford's request, he was sent the PDB with an Agency briefer who stayed with him when he became president. According to Richard Lehman:

> When it came to [President] Ford, we had a briefing officer, Dave Peterson, assigned to Ford when he was Vice President, and we had worked out a comfortable relationship with him through Peterson. When Ford became President, that just continued, and we did not try to change a thing.

Ford's daily briefings, which began on 1 July 1974, ended in November 1975 when Brent Scowcroft replaced Kissinger as the national security advisor. President Ford, as other later presidents who maintained a PDB briefer, depended on the working relationship with his briefer to convey his interests and areas of concern to the Agency.

The current PDB is managed by the staff located under the Director of National Intelligence. The production process is similar to that followed in the PDB's early years; however, other IC organizations also have the responsibility to take the lead on writing articles, and the PDB is now delivered using a secure mobile device. With the use of mobile devices, the current PDB includes interactive links to in-depth information and features video and other sophisticated visual and multimedia techniques to quickly tell the story or amplify the message without adding excessive content that might overtake the intended intelligence reporting. President Barack Obama, on his request, has been receiving the PDB on a tablet since February 2014. Producing the PDB each day still is a 24-hour process.

3 Richard Lehman was the director of CIA's Office of Current Intelligence (OCI) from 1970 to 1975. OCI was the Agency's analytic shop tasked with providing current assessments to policymakers.

*President Barack Obama receives the PDB in tablet form.*

## WHAT THE PRESIDENTS KNEW, AND WHEN

Each president has come to rely on the intelligence in the PDBs with corroborating information collected by multiple sources across the Intelligence Community. The "all-source" PDBs contained intelligence reporting collected by various means or sources,[4] such as intelligence derived by human or clandestine sources (HUMINT), photographic imagery (IMINT), communication and electronic signals intelligence (SIGINT), and open sources (OSINT).

In the Nixon and Ford presidential administrations, intelligence collection was derived from HUMINT, SIGINT and IMINT from our reconnaissance satellites and aircraft, such as the U-2, as well as media and other publicly available sources. Whereas photographic imagery of key places provided hard data on what was happening on the ground at a specific date and time, human or clandestine reporting and signal intercepts could provide more strategic intelligence, such as the intentions of foreign governments. As a result of effectively incorporating many sources from multiple intelligence community organizations into the PDB, the CIA could provide more accurate assessments and projections on international events and future issues that required White House attention. Under Nixon and Ford, the PDB reported on the results of détente related to actions taken by the Soviet Union and China; conflicts in the Third World, as in Angola's continued crisis leading up to its independence in 1975; continued fighting in Vietnam after the signing of the peace agreement on 27 January 1973 and the final end of the Vietnam war on 30 April 1975; the 1973 military coup in Chile resulting in President Salvador Allende's death and the start of General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship; the PDB's account of the September 1972 terrorist attack at the Munich Olympic Games, often described as the first modern international terrorist attack; and details on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, in which the United States and the Soviet Union clashed to the point that Washington placed its missile forces on high alert.

## COLD WAR THAW BEGINS WITH DÉTENTE

A thawing of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union increased discussion of arms control, which led to formal agreements on the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons, arms control initiatives, and the security of Europe. When Nixon took office in 1969, the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee sent an offer to hold a summit on "security and cooperation in Europe," which began talks towards limiting nuclear capabilities of the US and USSR and the signing of the SALT I treaty in 1972. In the same year, the Biological Weapons Convention was opened for signature and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was concluded. Talks on SALT II also began at the end of 1972. In May 1972, the PDB reported on Soviet media broadcasts anticipating President Nixon's visit to Moscow the following week:

> On the Moscow evening television news on 16 May, the commentator, V. Sharagin, declared that "despite the stormy course of events," the USSR seeks the solution of international problems at the negotiating table. In noting that the president will begin his visit next week, he explained that the talks will review all outstanding questions with the aim of improving bilateral relations and strengthening the outlook for peace.

On the other hand, reporting in the PDB during this time frame also showed that expectation of the warming of relations in the era of détente would not be realized in the US-USSR competition and interventions around the world, including support to opposing sides in Vietnam. On 7 June 1972, the PDB reported that the Soviets publically expressed their support to North Vietnam:

4 All the intelligence information arriving at CIA was managed by the Operations Center, which was established in 1963, initially under the Directorate for Intelligence. As technology to deliver information improved, the PDB staff received a heavy dose of cables and other documents to ensure that the president received the latest intelligence on significant issues.

*President Nixon meets with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin (right) at the White House.*

> The third anniversary this week of the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government has given the Soviets their first opportunity since the summit to express their support to the Vietnamese Communists publicly. At the Viet Cong ambassador's reception on 5 June and in a message to the PRG leaders, the Soviets condemned "US aggression" in Indochina and affirmed that the USSR would fulfill its "internationalist duty" to support Vietnam.

In the summer of 1975, Ford traveled to Helsinki, Finland, joining British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, French President Giscard d'Estaing, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, and the leaders of 30 other nations to sign the Helsinki Accords. Drafted by these 35 nations, the accords, or Final Act, were the result of two years of negotiations. The work done, and agreements reached, at Helsinki are widely credited as the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union's tight grip on Eastern Europe. The 23 July 1975 PDB carried the following summary of the analytic assessment on the Helsinki Accords:

> The summit of Conference on the Security and Cooperation in Europe is the culmination of negotiations that were frustrating as well as educational for all participants. For the Soviets the route to the summit was longer and bumpier than they anticipated. Nevertheless, they can, with some justification, view the successful conclusion of the conference as a triumph for their diplomacy.… Constant exposure to the negotiating tactics of the Soviets was a useful reminder to the Europeans of the limits of détente diplomacy. The maintenance of solidarity throughout the negotiations was a major Western achievement.

The Agency's analysis foreshadowed what would occur less than 15 years later with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Poland's declaration of independence from Soviet rule.

## UNSETTLED WEATHER DESPITE THAW: COLD WAR REGIONAL CONFLICTS CONTINUE

As bilateral relations thawed, the United States and the Soviet Union continued to back their surrogates in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Neither side trusted the other, and the potential for talks to break down and for nuclear war remained constant. Intelligence collection remained a high priority as each side used information from defectors, signal intercepts and reconnaissance satellites to determine possible intentions and attempt to gain the strategic advantage over its opponents.

## THE MIDDLE EAST: WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW FACE-OFF IN THE 1973 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab nations led by Egypt and Syria from 6 to 25 October. The war began on Yom Kippur with a surprise invasion of Sinai and the Golan Heights—regions Israel captured during the 1967 Six-Day War—by Egypt and Syria, respectively. By the second week, the Syrians had been pushed out of the Golan Heights, and Israel had struck Egyptian Army reinforcements advancing on Sinai. The Soviets supplied Egypt with weapons, and by 14 October, US weapons were delivered to Israel. When the United Nations (UN)-proposed ceasefire resolutions were at an impasse, Brezhnev sent Nixon a hotline message suggesting that the United States and the Soviet Union send troops to Egypt to "implement" the ceasefire. If Nixon chose not to do so, Brezhnev threatened, "we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally." The United States responded by putting its nuclear forces on worldwide alert on 25 October. During that Thursday's Politburo's meeting in Moscow, Soviet leaders discussed whether the Soviet Union was prepared for a large-scale war with the US. "It is not reasonable to become engaged in war with the United States because of Egypt and Syria," said Premier Alexei Kosygin, while KGB Chief Yuri Andropov added that "we shall not unleash the Third World War." The 26 October PDB mentioned that there was "no public Soviet reaction to the announcement that US forces are on alert."

As reported in the 26 October PDB, the UN Security Council adoption of Resolution 340—which called for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of all forces to their 22 October positions, and UN observers and peacekeepers to monitor the ceasefire—probably reduced the threat of Soviet unilateral intervention. In that same issue of the PDB, analysis indicated that Moscow intended to play an active role in Middle East peacekeeping, given the following evidentiary reporting:

> During the [UN] Security Council debate, Soviet Ambassador Malik indicated that he expected troops from Communist and nonaligned countries to participate in the new peacekeeping force. Seventy Soviet soldiers arrived in Cairo yesterday, ready to join the UN observers on the scene; Secretary General Waldheim denied them permission to do so.

Though the war did not scuttle détente, it brought the United States closer to a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union than at any point since the Cuban missile crisis.

## LATIN AMERICA: COVERING EVENTS IN CHILE

US-Chile relations were frosty during Salvador Gossens Allende's presidency. On 11 September 1973, Allende died during the military coup launched by Army Commander-in-Chief Augusto Pinochet, who then became president. A striking aspect of the world reaction to the military coup that overthrew Allende has been the widespread assumption that the ultimate responsibility for this overthrow lay with the United States, including US participation in the coup. The reporting in the PDBs highlighted a different perspective. From the time Allende assumed the presidency in 1970 to his death in 1973, the PDBs described a broken Chilean economy and a disenfranchised population that no longer supported his reforms. In the 18 January 1972 PDB Annex, an article entitled, "Chile: Allende Loses Momentum," clearly described the difficulties facing Allende since late 1971. The analytic review of trends and the future of Allende's government in this article was bleak:

> [Allende's] objective, the establishment of a Marxist-socialist state in Chile, is being frustrated by an increasingly confident political opposition. But economic problems now seem to be the most intractable and to these there are no easy answers….The opposition has begun to make more effective use of its legislative majority and the influence it retains with many Chileans.

With the situation in Chile worsening, the 17 October 1972 PDB reported on strikes and the dynamiting of a railroad from the main port serving Santiago on the previous day, providing analysis that if these disruptions continued they "will also accelerate Chile's economic deterioration—Allende's gravest problem."

Reporting on Chile headlined in the PDB almost daily, leading up to the report of Allende's death in the 12 September 1973 PDB:

> The armed forces, with the help of the national police, have assumed control of Chile. A four-man junta, composed of the chiefs of the armed services and the carabineros intends to govern with advice from civilians. The junta's plans for political reform indicate that such civilians will be businessmen and professional guild leaders responsible for recent anti-government shutdowns, rather than political leaders who had opposed Allende. The new rulers have declared Congress to be in recess.

The same article reported on the death of Allende and the military junta distancing itself from Cuba:

> President Allende is dead, but reports that he committed suicide have not been confirmed…. The only strong reaction from among Latin American governments has come from Cuba. The Castro government has charged that its embassy was attacked by Chilean forces and has complained because the Chileans tried to stop by force a Cuban ship hastily leaving Valparaiso yesterday. The junta has announced it will break relations with Havana.

In the days that followed, the PDBs showed evidence that Pinochet's government sought to improve relations with Washington.

## AFRICA: COLD WAR ADVERSARIES CONVERGE IN ANGOLA

In Portugal, a leftist military coup overthrew the Caetano government in the 1974 Carnation Revolution, and the new government, the National Salvation Junta, quickly granted Portugal's colonies independence. After years of fighting for independence from Portugal, what ensued in Angola was a civil war that created a Cold War battleground for the Soviet Union, Cuban mercenaries fighting

*Colby sworn in as DCI, 4 September 1973.*

on the ground, China, and the United States as they delivered military assistance to their preferred Angolan military clients. Three main military movements had been fighting for Angolan independence since the 1960s. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was a Marxist organization centered in the capital, Luanda, and led by Agostinho Neto. The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, was based in the northern part of the country and had strong ties to a US ally, Mobutu Sese Seko, in neighboring Zaire. Finally, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), an FNLA offshoot, was led by Jonas Savimbi and supported by the country's largest ethnic group, the Ovimbundu.

Following the Portuguese coup, these three Angolan revolutionaries met with representatives of the new Portuguese Government in January 1975 and signed the Alvor Agreement that granted Angolan independence and provided for a three-way power sharing government; however, as the PDBs reported in early 1975, trust quickly broke down, and the country descended into civil war as each Angolan revolutionary vied for sole power. The United States supplied aid and training to both the FNLA and UNITA, while troops from Zaire assisted Holden Roberto and his fighters. China sent military instructors to train the FNLA. By 7 June 1975, the PDBs were reporting over renewed fighting in Angola and a divided Lisbon on how to deal with its African colony. During the summer of 1975, the Soviet-supported MPLA was able to consolidate power in Luanda and oust the US-supported FNLA from the capital, but the FNLA continued to attack. The analytic summary of the Annex article in the 10 June 1975 PDB foreshadowed a country in chaos as the Portuguese troops were preparing to withdraw on 11 November 1975, Angola's Independence Day:

> Angola is likely to lurch toward independence next November plagued by intermittent clashes among contending liberation groups. If one of the two principal groups perceives that it has gained a clear military advantage, it may initiate all-out war against the other before independence is achieved.

On 25 October 1975, with Lisbon turning over authority of the country to the three warring Angolan liberation groups in less than three weeks, the PDB noted that fighting had intensified significantly over the past several days, with little to no chance of reconciliation. After 11 November, neighboring African countries sent fighters, which only furthered the spread of intensified fighting.

The Soviet Union provided military training and equipment to the MPLA and, as reported in the PDB on 15 November 1975, the Soviets were "using Cubans to support the Popular Movement in the field in order to avoid direct Soviet involvement." PDB reporting in the following months described a Soviet Union unwilling to back off on its military support to the MPLA, regardless of whether it complicated détente efforts with Washington. CIA's view of the future of Soviet commitment in Angola was described in the 24 December 1975 PDB:

> Moscow's performance in Angola over the past several months bespeaks a rather tough and unyielding cast of mind regarding its support for the MPLA. The Soviets have been unflinching in the face of the countervailing pressures that have arisen, both in Africa and the US, during those months. Moscow seems to be saying, both on the ground in Angola and in its public utterances, that it is willing to go a significant distance to support an MPLA victory....Moscow cannot afford another highly visible defeat, particularly between now and the Party Congress, and particularly in a situation like Angola where the "victor" would seem to be the US. If this contingency threatened, we would expect the Soviets to send in more arms, more Cubans, and more of their own advisors.

From the US point of view, one of the aims of détente was to draw the Soviet Union further into the international system so that Washington could induce Moscow to show restraint in its dealings around the world. With Cuba having intervened in Angola as a Soviet proxy, the general view in Washington was that Moscow was breaking the

rules of détente. The appearance of a Soviet success and a US loss in Angola on the heels of a victory by Soviet-supported North Vietnam over US-supported South Vietnam continued to erode US faith in détente as an effective Cold War foreign policy.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA: ENDING THE VIETNAM WAR

Although a peace agreement was signed on 27 January 1973, neither of the Vietnamese parties abided by the settlement, and the war continued. The peace settlement, however, enabled the United States to withdraw from the war and welcome American prisoners of war back home. Without US troops in the country, Washington's bombing efforts did not stop the North Vietnamese forces and the Viet Cong guerrillas from regrouping and upgrading their logistics system to infiltrate and take control of the south. They resumed offensive operations when the dry season began and by early 1975, they quickly recaptured previously lost territory in South Vietnam, which as reflected in the PDBs caught Saigon and the West by surprise. The 1 March 1975 PDB reported that the North Vietnamese had heavily infiltrated South Vietnam during the past month, noting that "Hanoi's infiltration effort is running about a third higher than a year ago….concentrated on moving manpower to the provinces around Saigon and to the highlands." By 6 March, the PDB noted an upsurge in fighting in the highlands, suggesting that the North Vietnamese spring campaign had begun and on 8 March, the PDB assessed that intensified combat would break out elsewhere in the south.

Almost daily analysis of the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, as city after city fell under the control of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, was carried in the PDB, frequently as the leading article. The 28 March PDB noted:

> Saigon is hurriedly formulating plans to redeploy the four South Vietnamese divisions that are besieged in the northern provinces. General Vien, the chairman of the Joint General Staff, does not believe Da Nang can be held and expects to move the Marines and one division to the Saigon area and relocate two other divisions to the central coast….The collapse of the government's forces in the northern two thirds of South Vietnam has occurred with such speed that the full magnitude of the disaster has not yet registered in Saigon.

In a six-page Annex in the 28 March PDB analyzing the bleak situation in South Vietnam, CIA incorrectly estimated that the date of the eventual taking of Saigon would likely occur by early 1976, projecting that the North Vietnamese "will keep up their military pressure to topple the South Vietnamese government by outright defeat, unless there have been political changes in Saigon that open the way to a new settlement on near-surrender terms." By 29 March, the PDB reported that Da Nang had fallen, and one month later the US began an emergency evacuation of Americans from Saigon. On 30 April 1975, North Vietnamese Army tanks rolled through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon, effectively ending the war. The 30 April PDB noted, "The flag of the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government was hoisted over the presidential palace at 12:15 today Saigon time, marking the end of over 30 years of war in Vietnam."

## THE DAWN OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

An upswing in international nationalist, religious, and ethnically motivated terrorist attacks occurred during the Nixon and Ford administrations, and the PDBs during this time frame provided analytic assessments of these acts of terrorism. Palestinian terrorist groups started operating in the West for the first time—this included the televised bloody attack at the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany.

On 5 September 1972, Black September, a Palestinian terrorist organization founded in 1970, kidnapped and killed a group of Israeli Olympic athletes. Black September's political goal was to negotiate for the release of Palestinian prisoners. The group used spectacular tactics to bring international attention to its national cause and the tragic events were covered live by most of the world's TV networks that were gathered in Munich to cover the games. The PDB reported the attack on 5 September as a "Late Item" and described the following:

> Early this morning Arab guerrillas entered the quarters of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich, killed at least one occupant, and are holding as many as 20 Israeli athletes hostage within the building. Press reports indicate the guerrillas are demanding the release of Arab prisoners in Israeli jails in return for the lives of their hostages. Prime Minister Golda Meir is holding an emergency meeting of her cabinet to discuss Israel's response.

The following day, the PDB article entitled "Israel-Fedayeen" noted that Israel would avenge the murder of the Israeli Olympic participants and "[a]ny reprisal action could be severe, especially since Tel Aviv refrained from retaliation following the Lod airport massacre last May." The threats of additional terrorist attacks were peppered throughout the PDBs during September, with some Middle Eastern countries enforcing restrictions on the Fedayeen operating in their countries.

The tragedy in Munich drew international attention, and as such, the Nixon administration began working through the UN to combat the threat of terrorism and establish international counterterrorist measures. When Secretary of State William P. Rogers spoke to the UN General Assembly one month after the Munich Olympic incident, he noted that in the past five years, 27 diplomats from 11 countries had been kidnapped, and three had been killed. The terrorist attack in Munich radically changed the United States' handling of terrorism, and the world awoke to the need to counter this increasing new threat—organizing to research it, increasing security and passing new laws. Treaties were signed to enhance international cooperation to combat terrorism. The term counterterrorism now formally entered the US political lexicon.

*President Ford and then Republican National Committee Chairman George H. W. Bush in the Oval Office, 11 August 1974.*

## THE PDB COMES OF AGE IN ITS EARLY YEARS

Each president has come to rely on the intelligence in the President's Daily Briefs with corroborating information collected by multiple sources across the Intelligence Community. In some cases, PDBs published for Nixon and Ford contained Annexes with previously published NIEs and lengthy analyses on international crises and key issues. As a result of incorporating sources collected by multiple IC organizations into their analysis, the CIA was well-positioned to provide the most accurate assessments on international events and issues in regions that the US may not have had access.

For the authors of the PDB, a president who read the articles and thoughtfully commented on the content made the day-to-day long hours of preparation endurable. PDB authors were enthusiastic to adjust and provide more detail when a president indicated what he knew or did not know and what a president liked or did not like. When one examines the declassified PDBs, one is struck by the breadth of intelligence topics that were brought to the president's attention each day and what security issues might keep him awake at night. In reviewing these documents over time, one is also struck by the greater detail of the intelligence collected, which contributed to the richness of the content in the PDBs without taking away from the intelligence message or analytic line. Improved collection techniques and advancements in technical capabilities were the main contributing factors that improved the breadth of coverage and sophisticated analysis. Finally, in reviewing the PDBs, one is struck by the similarities of yesterday's intelligence issues with those that we in the Intelligence Community deal with today—including, but not limited to, regional discord resulting in UN peacekeeping interventions, crises in the Middle East, tense treaty negotiations and challenges of monitoring agreements, conflicts in Africa, and acts of terrorism.

Former DCI George Tenet has called the PDB the CIA's "most important product." It was, and still is, the most tightly held intelligence product and arguably the most influential on a daily basis because the content is derived from the most up-to-the-minute sources. In most instances, the presidents, the Agency's first customers, concurred and often expressed their satisfaction and gratitude. ■

# THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF
# SAMPLING OF INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO NIXON AND FORD

FIGURE 2: TIMELINE OF EVENTS AND INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO NIXON AND FORD

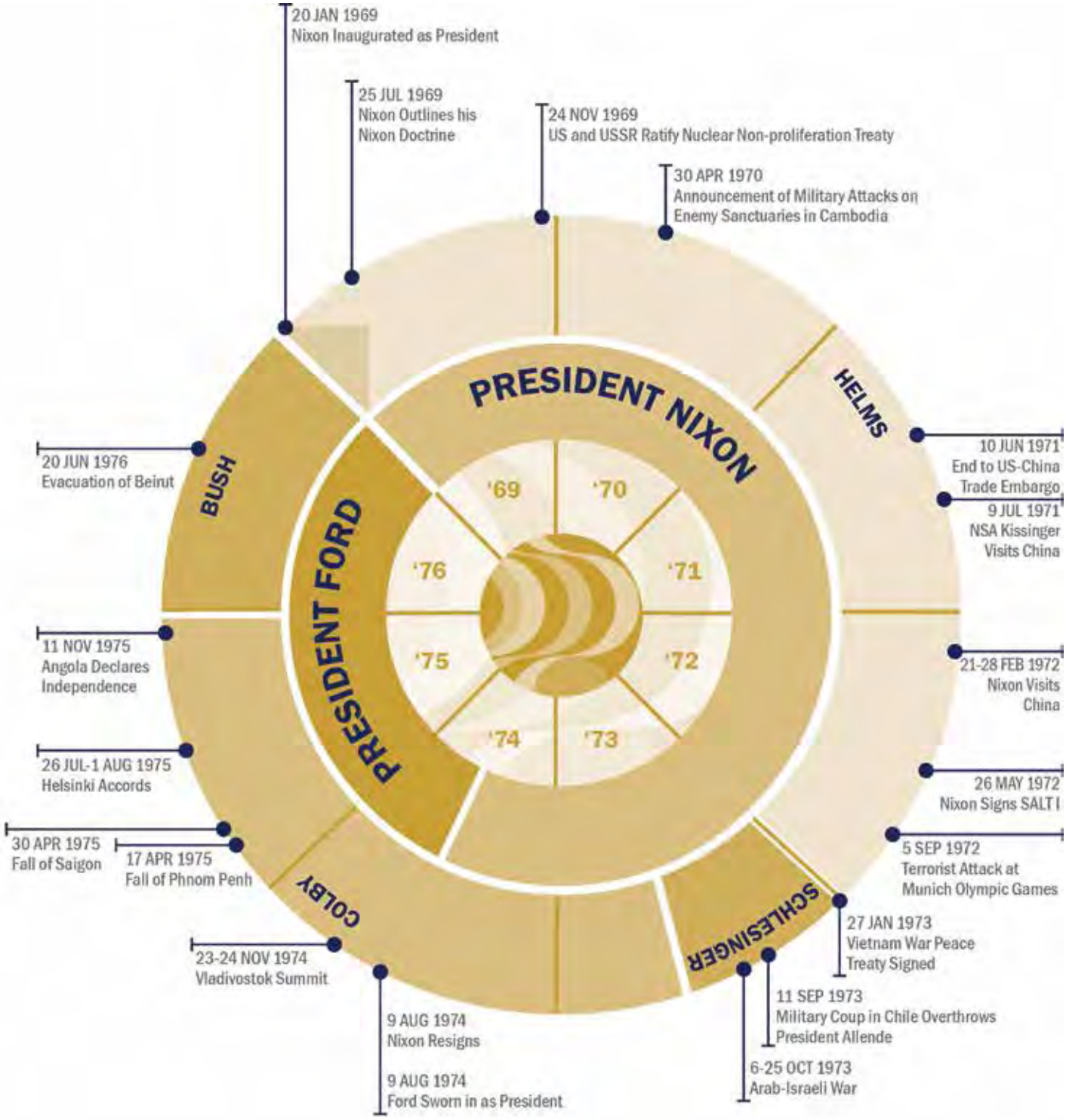

FIGURE 3: PRIMARY REGIONS AND COUNTRIES REPORTED IN THE PDBs FROM 1969 TO 1977 (percentages show frequency of reporting on these regions and countries)

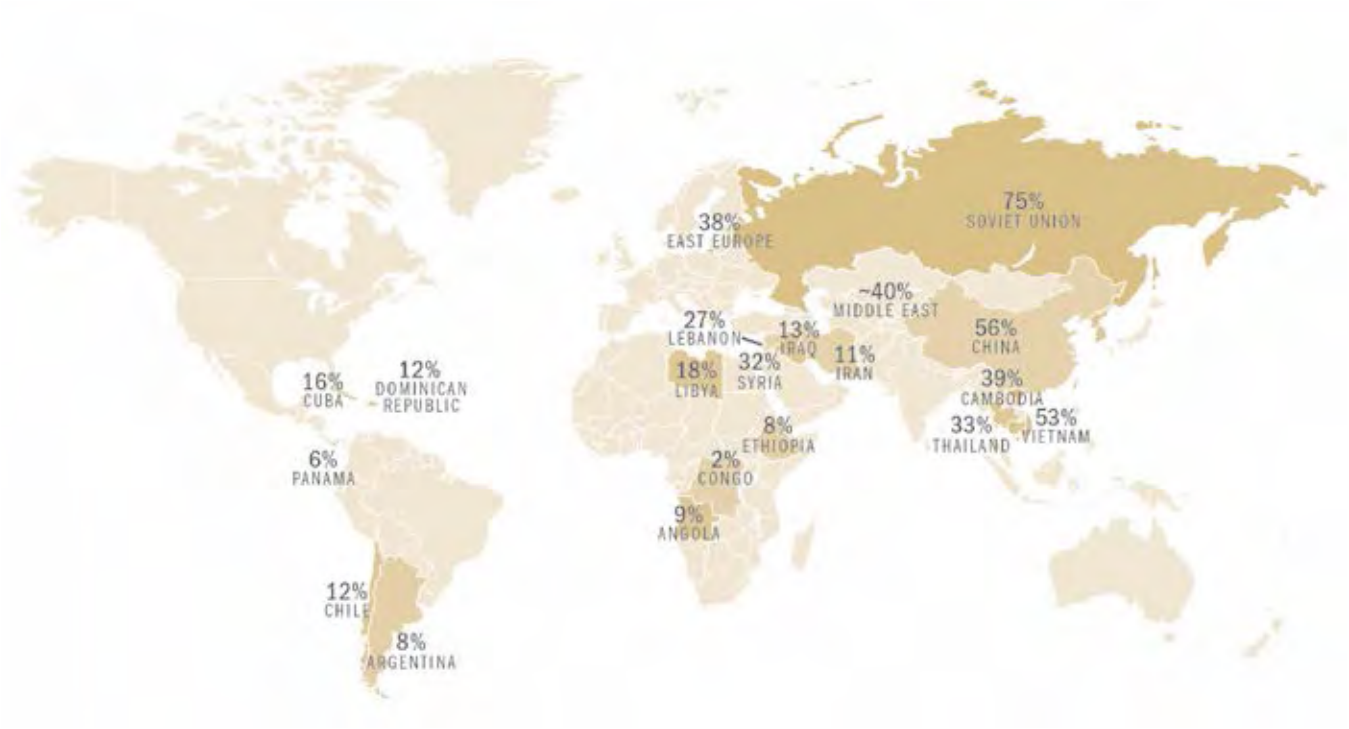


FIGURE 4: GETTING THE PDBs TO NIXON AND FORD

**RICHARD M. NIXON**

DCI:
HELMS | SCHLESINGER | COLBY
Received PDB:
Henry Kissinger, NSA

The DCIs had access to President Nixon through the NSC meetings that he attended; Nixon read the PDB during the day with other products when time permitted.

**GERALD R. FORD**

DCI:
COLBY | BUSH
Received PDB:
Brent Scowcroft, NSA

Ford was the first president to receive verbal briefings, which were discontinued as the Congressional Watergate investigation picked up momentum.

| RICHARD M. HELMS | JAMES R. SCHLESINGER | WILLIAM E. COLBY | GEORGE H. W. BUSH |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30 JUN 1966 - 2 FEB 1973 | 2 FEB - 2 JUL 1973 | 4 SEP 1973 - 30 JAN 1976 | 30 JAN 1976 - 20 JAN 1977 |

# RELATED ARTICLES AND RELEASED DOCUMENTS

SOUTH
VIETNA

# Intelligence Support for Richard M. Nixon (U)

*John Helgerson*

*Editor's Note: This article is drawn from* "Getting To Know the President: CIA Briefings of Presidential Candidates, 1952-1992," *which has been published by CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence.*

> **"Nixon's familiarity with the Intelligence Community's capabilities and practices made him willing, at the outset of his new campaign for the presidency in 1968, to accept briefings from CIA Director Richard Helms."**

During his eight years as Vice President in the 1950s, Richard Nixon had broad exposure to the activities of the civilian US Intelligence Community. He was aware that the CIA had briefed the presidential candidates in every election since 1952 and undoubtedly harbored mixed feelings about the way the process had worked in 1960. Nixon believed that his narrow defeat by John Kennedy had been caused, in part, by the actions and inactions of the intelligence agencies. This familiarity with the Intelligence Community's capabilities and practices made him willing, at the outset of his new campaign for the presidency in 1968, to accept briefings from CIA Director Richard Helms. It also led him to decline to receive routine briefings from lower-level officers, opening the way for Henry Kissinger, his National Security Adviser, to play a central and expanding role.

Nixon won the Republican Party nomination on 8 August 1968. Two days later the nominee and his running mate, Governor Spiro Agnew of Maryland, flew to Texas to hear a "general review of the international situation" from outgoing President Lyndon Johnson and his key foreign policy advisers. In addition to the President, the group included Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Cyrus Vance (the number-two negotiator in the Vietnam peace talks in Paris), and DCI Helms. The President welcomed the Republican candidates with a tour of his ranch in an open convertible, but, when the time came for the substantive briefing, he made only a few introductory remarks and then gave the floor to the CIA Director.

Helms's memorandum for the record indicates that he focused on the handful of international developments that were at a critical stage during the late summer of 1968, including the confrontation between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, events in the Middle East, and the military situation in Vietnam.[1] The Director also discussed Cuba, including Castro's support for revolutionary efforts in Latin America, and events in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Following Helms's briefing, Vance continued with a review of developments in the Paris peace negotiations that included details of the private talks under way between the United States and North Vietnam.

Helms recorded that Nixon and Agnew were interested, in particular, in the effects of the Soviet-Czechoslovak confrontation on Poland and Yugoslavia. He also noted that they were surprised to hear that the North Vietnamese were demanding that the Saigon government negotiate directly with the Communist shadow administration in South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front. During the course of the briefing, Nixon directed a number of policy questions to Rusk. The Republican candidate made clear he had no intention of saying or doing

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anything that would complicate the job of the United States negotiators in Paris.

Looking back on his first briefing of candidate Nixon 25 years after the fact, Helms recalled that, in his view, it was not a particularly well organized or useful session.[2] After his own 15-minute overview of key worldwide developments, he recalled, the politicians' instincts took over for the balance of the discussion in the sitting room at the LBJ ranch and during the one-hour lunch that followed. Johnson was on a liquid diet, recovering from a bout of diverticulitis, so he was free to do all the talking while the others enjoyed a meal of steak and corn on the cob. Helms recalled with some amusement that the President of five years and the candidate, with his eight years of vice-presidential experience, each wanted to demonstrate to the other his mastery of foreign affairs.

Nixon appears to have been pleased with the session; he later wrote positively in his memoirs about the "full-scale intelligence briefings ordered by Johnson for each of the nominees."[3] The session concluded with the President's assurance to Nixon that he could call on Rusk or Helms for any additional information he might require.

As it happened, the discussion in Texas on 10 August was the only briefing Nixon was to receive in the pre-election period. That session had focused entirely on the facts of developments abroad and the status of negotiations in which the United States was involved. Unlike the situation that had developed in 1960, there was in the August briefing—and in the whole campaign in

**"Helms was aided in his determination to avoid any politicization of intelligence in 1968 by the fact that there were no presidential debates that year."**

1968—no effort by anyone to make a political issue of the Intelligence Community's programs or analyses. A key factor that helped ensure that did not happen was Helms's strict constructionist view of the CIA Director's job. He was determined to stick to the facts and avoid involvement in policy discussions, unlike his predecessors Allen Dulles and John McCone.

Helms was aided in his determination to avoid any politicization of intelligence in 1968 by the fact that there were no presidential debates that year. Although there had been one debate during the primaries (between Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy), once the nominations were final Nixon concluded that he could avoid debating his opponent, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, just as Johnson had declined to debate Goldwater in 1964. Nixon's judgment was buttressed by the results of polls showing, as early as the first week in September, that he was leading Humphrey by a substantial margin, which he was able to retain throughout the campaign.

After a postelection vacation in Key Biscayne, Florida, President-elect Nixon and his wife returned to New York City on Monday, 11 November, stopping en route in Washington for lunch with the President and an impromptu afternoon of discussions with the President and his foreign affairs aides. In addition to the President, Rusk, and Helms, this time the group included Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Earl Wheeler, and National Security Adviser Walt Rostow. Helms remembers that the afternoon meeting in the Cabinet room suffered from the short notice and complete lack of preparation. There was only a desultory exchange on substantive issues, inasmuch as "nobody knew what was wanted or expected."

Invigorated by his election and vacation, the President-elect was struck by the very different mood of the other participants as they concentrated on Vietnam.[4] He recalled that those assembled seemed very nearly worn out from dealing with the prolonged crisis and "had no new approaches to recommend to me." Nixon said he saw the war etched on the faces around him and found them relieved to be able to turn the morass over to someone else. He recorded that they emphasized to him that the United States must see the war through to a successful conclusion and that a negotiated settlement that looked like a defeat would have a devastating impact on US allies and friends in Asia and around the world.

From Helms's point of view, the meeting on 11 November was significant for a reason unrelated to the discussion of Vietnam. Helms remembers that Johnson asked him to stay on for a private talk after the session adjourned. At that time, Johnson told Helms that Nixon had twice asked about him (Helms). Johnson said he told Nixon that he

"had no idea how Helms had voted, but that his was a merit appointment."

Johnson's kindness in recommending Helms to the Nixon administration may have resulted from a lingering embarrassment over the way he had treated Helms at an earlier point. In 1965, Johnson had passed over Helms to appoint VAdm. William Raborn, Jr., as DCI. At the time, Johnson informed Helms that, although he had heard good things about him, "you are not well enough known in this town," meaning Capitol Hill. But Johnson went on to tell Helms that he "should attend every meeting Raborn did."

The Director's only other meeting with Nixon during the transition period occurred later the same week when he was summoned to New York City on Friday, 15 November. Helms entered the Nixon suite on the 39th floor of the Pierre Hotel at 1:30 p.m. to find the President-elect conversing with adviser John Mitchell, who was to become Attorney General. With virtually no preliminaries, Nixon indicated that he would like Helms to stay on as DCI. The public announcement would come some time later.

**Supporting Nixon's Team in New York City**[5]

Discussions between Johnson and Helms resulted in a decision that CIA should make available to the President-elect in New York City the same daily intelligence information being provided to the outgoing President in Washington. Helms assigned the task of providing this assistance to R. J. Smith, the Agency's Deputy Director for Intelligence. As a first step, he asked Smith to confer with Nixon's chief aide, former advertising executive Robert Haldeman.

Joined by Howard Osborn, CIA's Director of Security, and Richard Lehman, Deputy Chief of the Office of Current Intelligence, Smith went to New York on the morning of 12 November.[6] Smith showed Haldeman a sample of the intelligence publications the Agency proposed to make available to Nixon—*The President's Daily Brief* (PDB), the *Central Intelligence Bulletin* (CIB), the daily *Situation in Vietnam*, the *Weekly Review*, and selected memorandums. In turn, Haldeman asked that the Agency initiate special intelligence security clearances for a number of staff members, including Richard Allen and Martin Anderson. They had been the President-elect's advisers on foreign affairs during the campaign and were to continue to advise him during the transition period.

It was agreed that CIA should establish in a secure area a reading room to which members of the Nixon staff could come for security indoctrination and to read classified documents. Space was not available in the Pierre, so it was decided to locate the Agency's outpost, dubbed "DDI–New York," in the basement of the Nixon Campaign Headquarters at 450 Park Avenue, six blocks from the office of the President-elect. This site, formerly the world headquarters of the North American Missionary Alliance and soon to be demolished, was chosen because it seemed unlikely to attract attention from the press and the public. Allen's office was also in the building. Paul Corscadden, an 11-year veteran of the Agency's Office of Current Intelligence, was designated officer in charge. Kenneth Rosen, an intelligence officer who had served in the White House Situation Room under President Johnson and worked a year as a special assistant to McGeorge Bundy, was second in command. Corscadden and Rosen moved into the Statler-Hilton Hotel at 7th Avenue and 33rd Street for the duration of the transition period. Because of the expense of living in New York and the representational nature of the assignment, the Executive Director of CIA waived the standard per diem limitation and allowed each of them up to $30 per day.

The area selected to house the Agency's facility required extensive renovation, which, magically, was accomplished by CIA's Office of Logistics in 72 hours, including one weekend. The construction activity did not go unnoticed by other occupants of the building. Reports soon circulated that the Secret Service, the FBI, or some other sensitive, top secret government agency had moved in and would, among other things, assume responsibility for the physical security of all the President-elect's staff offices and the protection of his family. The CIA Office of Security had decided not to identify the operation as Agency-sponsored but, rather, to allow anyone who learned of its existence to draw whatever conclusions they chose. This decision, reasonable on the face of things, led to unexpected consequences. Before long, Nixon staff secretaries were calling to ask that someone "behind the Black Door" investigate the disappearance of office supplies or solve the mystery of a purloined television set. On another occasion, the supervisor of

the staff mailroom demanded that one of the Agency communicators "taste" and immediately remove from the mailroom a crate of canned hams sent to the President-elect as a Christmas gift.

Those who were curious about what was housed behind that Black Door enjoyed the unwitting support of the municipal health authorities. Occupants of nearby buildings along Park Avenue had complained of an infestation of black rats that had established colonies in the ground around the brightly lighted Christmas trees festooning the avenue from 59th Street to Grand Central Station. Within hours, health inspectors poured through all the nearby buildings. A team came to the door of the Agency facility, demanding admission. They were turned away with the assurance that there were no rats inside.

Beginning on 19 November, intelligence publications were wired to New York on a daily basis. The *Situation in Vietnam* report arrived the evening of its publication in Washington; the PDB came soon after 5:00 a.m. each morning. Nixon staff members who had access to the intelligence publications came to the facility at their convenience. A reading table contained all of each day's publications, along with appropriate National Intelligence Estimates, special memorandums, intelligence handbooks, and various graphic aids. Of the key staffers, Allen and Anderson visited most often.

Corscadden and Rosen delivered each day a complete set of publications in a sealed envelope marked "Eyes Only—The President-elect" to Rose Mary Woods in Nixon's office. Woods had been granted the proper clearances, and the Agency had installed a safe in her office for the secure storage of classified materials. Initially it was thought that she probably would return the publications after two or three days, during which time the President-elect would have had the opportunity to read at least a current issue of the PDB.

For the first 10 days of the operation, only intelligence analyses prepared for the outgoing administration were made available to the President-elect's staff. It soon became apparent, however, that the needs of the incoming administration did not coincide in every detail with those of the Johnson administration. To meet the emerging special needs of the new team, the Office of Current Intelligence on 29 November compiled the first "Nixon Special," an "Eyes Only" intelligence memorandum based upon sensitive intelligence information that the Agency knew would be of interest to Nixon. The Foreign Broadcast Information Service soon afterward provided an additional service by transmitting directly to New York from its field bureaus foreign press and radio articles pertaining to the incoming administration.

### The Key Player: Henry Kissinger

The appointment of Harvard Professor Henry Kissinger as Assistant for National Security Affairs was announced by the President-elect at a news conference on 2 December. By prior arrangement with DDI Smith, who had telephoned him from Washington the morning of Nixon's announcement, Kissinger came to the Agency facility on Park Avenue for a briefing that same afternoon.[7] He was shown current issues of all the intelligence publications available in the facility and was told what had been delivered to the Pierre for the President-elect since the Agency support operation began. Kissinger was assured that the CIA was prepared to provide full support to him and the rest of the incoming administration.

During that first session, Kissinger expressed appreciation for the Agency's willingness to assist him and for the support it had so far provided the incoming administration. He promised to arrange his schedule to allow 15 minutes per day to read the intelligence publications. He also accepted a proposal that Corscadden and Rosen undertake during off-duty hours to advise him of any critical world developments requiring the attention of the President-elect. This precautionary arrangement had earlier been accepted by Allen and Anderson as well as Haldeman.

Kissinger asked for time to become familiar with Nixon's reading habits and daily routine before advising the Agency of any recommendations he might have for changes. He did say—in what foreshadowed Nixon's style and his own, in the White House—that it had been made clear to him that the President-elect had no intention of reading anything that had not first been perused and perhaps summarized by one of his senior staff. Kissinger said he did not know what had happened to issues of the PDB already entrusted to Rose Mary Woods but that, without his prior approval, future deliveries would not reach the President-elect. Two days later, Kissinger underscored that the Agency should not provide intelligence support to anyone at the Pierre other than the President-elect and himself; Mr. Haldeman and others from the campaign might have access

to classified publications after they had arrived in Washington, but they would have no need for them before that time.

Kissinger reacted none too favorably to the first few issues of the PDB that he read. At one time, he expressed a preference for the CIB with its more complete text and greater detail. He complained that the prose in the PDB was too often elliptical and that the selection of topics was too random and lacked the continuity necessary for the uninitiated reader. Kissinger's points were well taken. The PDB was uniquely tailored to the needs of the outgoing administration–just as its predecessor had been shaped to the reading preferences of President Kennedy. Moreover, its authors could assume that President Johnson and his advisers were familiar with the background of the subjects covered each day. Nixon and Kissinger, however deep their background and however well read, lacked detailed familiarity with many of the ongoing, current issues addressed in the PDB.

This situation had been anticipated by the Agency, because it had come up in all prior transitions. The Office of Current Intelligence had already begun to devise a new version of the PDB for Nixon and his aides. Considerably expanded in length, the new brief had been circulated for comment to the DCI, DDI, and others of the Agency's principal officers. With their concurrence, it was decided to send the new PDB to New York. Kissinger approved its format and style at a meeting on the evening of 6 December. Thus, the Agency began to publish, in effect, two PDBs. The substance was the same, but the publication given to

**"Kissinger complained that the prose in the PDB was too often elliptical and that the selection of topics was too random and lacked the continuity necessary for the uninitiated reader."**

Johnson was significantly more concise than that given Nixon.

To no one's surprise, it proved impossible to schedule briefings with Kissinger on a daily basis; he was seen frequently but unpredictably. His assistant, Lawrence Eagleburger of the Department of State, was seen every day and was notably more appreciative of the assistance he was provided.

On 9 December, Kissinger told Corscadden that he had been asked to brief the President-elect's "senior staff" and would need inputs for a 30-minute session on the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the state of US-Chinese relations, the US-USSR strategic arms balance, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. He asked especially for "tidbits, local color ... things which will make these people think they're getting the inside story but which, if leaked, will not compromise or embarrass me or the President-elect or the United States Government." He promised to come to Park Avenue soon to review the drafts.

On the afternoon of 11 December, Kissinger paid his second visit to the basement suite on Park Avenue, arriving with Eagleburger. It was evident that the two had discussed the format Kissinger preferred even before he had seen the materials prepared by the Agency. Eagleburger's assignment was to redraft CIA's contribution. After scanning the briefing book and posing one or two questions about de Gaulle's nuclear program, Kissinger asked for still more material on Berlin, the problem of Nigeria's breakaway state of Biafra, the strategic arms balance, NATO, the Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia, and the prospects for a meeting in Warsaw of Chinese and American representatives. Kissinger delegated to Eagleburger responsibility for preparing "drafts" for his consideration the next evening in Washington, when the President-elect proposed to unveil his Cabinet during a nationwide television broadcast from the Shoreham Hotel in Washington. Eagleburger worked in the basement at Park Avenue until 3:00 a.m., returned to the Pierre for a brief rest, and then assumed the job of redrafting and editing the briefing Kissinger was to give.

Eagleburger's task was complicated by the fact that, except for Woods, none of the Nixon clerical staff, including Kissinger's secretary, had yet been granted special intelligence security clearances. Corscadden arranged to have Eagleburger's preliminary text typed by the Agency secretary assigned to DDI–NY and to have it taken to the Pierre. Eagleburger was then driven to LaGuardia Airport for his flight to Washington. CIA officers met Eagleburger at National Airport and took him to an improvised two-room office at the Shoreham Hotel. They remained with Eagleburger for much of the night of 12 December, calling on the Agency's analytic resources to provide substantive backup through the Duty Officer in the Operations Center.[8]

During his late-evening television appearance, the President-elect disclosed that he and his Cabinet-to-be and top advisers would spend the following day, Friday, 13 December, in conference. One of the highlights of their all-day session would be an intelligence briefing by Kissinger. Agency officers received no direct feedback on the substantive discussions held on 13 December. They were interested that Kissinger, in their next meeting, directed that Attorney General–designate Mitchell receive the PDB and all other reports in which he expressed any interest. Before long, Mitchell was being briefed on a daily basis and proved to be "very helpful as a window into what Nixon wanted."[9]

In mid-December, Kissinger also directed that no National Intelligence Estimates were to go to the President-elect. Somewhat sharply, he explained that no one department or agency of the government would be permitted to present its views directly to Nixon to the disadvantage of any other. Corscadden pointed out that a National Intelligence Estimate was the product of the Intelligence Community as a whole, that it was issued in the name of the United States Intelligence Board, and could not be considered "parochial." This rejoinder had no appreciable effect.

Toward the end of December, Kissinger began to meet more regularly with Corscadden and Rosen. By then, Kissinger was able to read only the PDB with any regularity; DDI–NY was responsible for calling to his attention "critical items" in other publications. The balance of the 15-minute "daily" session was devoted to a capsule review of crucial international situations the new administration was likely to face during its first few months in office—"stressing the significance, not the facts"—and to discussion of whatever papers Kissinger had requested of the Agency. He directed that memorandums prepared for Nixon should contain a "statement of the problem and an assessment of its significance," as well as a summary.

Kissinger's reading of an estimate on Soviet strategic attack forces led him to ask for an oral briefing on the US-Soviet strategic balance. After consulting with his military aide, Gen. Andrew Goodpaster, and with Eagleburger, Kissinger decided that the J-3 section of the Joint Chiefs should take the lead. CIA's Deputy Director for Science and Technology and Director of Strategic Research were also invited to participate in the briefing, which was held on Saturday, 21 December. In addition to Kissinger, Mitchell, Eagleburger, and Goodpaster were present.

This was the most formal briefing Kissinger received during the transition; unfortunately, it did not go well. The J-3 team that had traveled from Washington to conduct the briefing used only the "high side" numbers regarding Soviet capabilities in preparing their text and graphics. This prompted the CIA experts present to try to supplement the briefing and question some of its conclusions. In the discussion that followed, Kissinger, Goodpaster, and, finally, Mitchell asked evermore probing questions, to the obvious chagrin of the briefers. Kissinger and Mitchell both made clear after the fact that they were not satisfied.

The issue of possible direct State Department involvement in the support process in New York arose as a result of a PDB item on coup reports in a certain country. Kissinger asked about US contingency plans if a coup occurred. When the Agency officers replied that they were not normally privy to such contingency planning, Kissinger turned to Eagleburger and insisted that a representative of the Department of State attend the morning briefing sessions. Eagleburger discussed the idea with CIA, but nothing came of it. Years later, describing how the system worked, Eagleburger recalled that he "occasionally called on the State Department to send specific written materials—I was from State, after all—but the Agency team was all we needed right there."[10]

As Kissinger became more and more active toward the end of December, his probing questions and his insatiable demands for assessments of the significance of isolated developments—even those in the low order of probability—meant that far more speculative, estimative analysis was required. This led CIA to the strategy of having its substantive officers prepare detailed backup pieces to complement the topics covered each day in the PDB. These reports provided the generalists who briefed Kissinger with additional information with which to field his queries.

Mindful of Kissinger's repeated requests for "problem papers," special briefings on emergent crises likely to confront the new administration during its first months in office, and "must reading" before Inauguration Day, the Agency in late December began appending to the PDB a series of special papers focused on critical issues. For more than 18 months, the PDB, at President Johnson's request, had carried special annexes on Vietnam and on

North Vietnamese reflections on the US political scene. Kissinger decided that the annexes need not be sent to the President-elect and should not be published after Inauguration Day. The new "problem papers" were designed in part, therefore, to replace the Vietnam annexes in the New York edition of the PDB, which was by now being tailored for the incoming administration.

In the remaining days of the operation, Kissinger read the "problem papers" on such subjects as access to Berlin, the Communist troop buildup in South Vietnam, the military balance between the two Koreas, and the French economic situation. For each of these subjects, CIA analysts with the appropriate expertise traveled to New York to accompany the regular briefers. Especially in the cases of Vietnam and Korea, Kissinger had numerous questions. He wanted to know the Agency's past track record in estimates on the subject at hand and pressed the analysts for "your personal opinions."

On 6 January, Kissinger, who initially became Nixon's National Security Adviser, turned to the question of intelligence support on Inauguration Day and thereafter. By this time, Nixon had expressed his intention to hold regular staff meetings with his key advisers at 9:00 a.m. or 9:30 a.m. each morning. Kissinger surmised that he would brief the President for 30 minutes each morning, immediately following these staff conferences. He did not want to give Nixon anything he and his National Security Council staff had not had time to mull over and was anxious to "preview" intelligence reporting each evening, with an eye to meeting the Chief Executive early the next day.

> **"The support operation mounted in New York constituted the most elaborate system yet designed to provide intelligence to a President-elect."**

Kissinger proposed that the DCI change the publication time for the PDB from early morning to late afternoon, releasing the publication to him in the evening and to the President the following morning. This change, Kissinger admitted, would introduce a lag of 12 hours in the reporting time, but he was not disturbed that the PDB would be less current; he was more concerned that he have time to prepare his own comments on anything the President would see.

With Inauguration Day less than a week away, the Agency proposed to introduce to the President-elect and Kissinger an entirely new PDB—redesigned to meet Kissinger's specifications for a briefing paper tailored to Nixon's preferences. This new publication was to consist of three sections—Major Developments, Other Important Developments, and occasional annexes—all double-spaced and printed on legal-size paper bound at the top.

The first section, Major Developments, was to be subdivided into sections on Vietnam, the Middle East, Soviet Affairs, and Europe. This was not a static listing. As developments warranted, some areas could be dropped, others added. The second section, Other Important Developments, was intended to highlight problems which—though not yet critical—could in time engage US policy interests. The annexes were to fulfill the same role as the "problem papers" that were appended to the PDB sent to New York during the early part of January. Kissinger approved the new format on 15 January.

**Nixon Remains Aloof**

The support operation mounted in New York constituted the most elaborate system yet designed to provide intelligence to a President-elect. Ironically, Nixon's aloof style resulted in a situation where the Agency had no direct contact with him. Until mid-December, for example, Agency officers were uncertain whether he had been reading the PDB or the other publications deposited each morning with his secretary. On 18 December, Eagleburger confided that Nixon had informed Kissinger that Woods had been "stockpiling" the unopened envelopes containing the PDB, CIB, and memorandums on Vietnam. Nixon had asked Kissinger to send someone upstairs to retrieve these envelopes so that Kissinger could review the collection and decide whether there was anything in it that the President-elect should read. The question had been answered: Mr. Nixon had read no Agency publications during the first month of the New York operation.

Eagleburger observes that Nixon's handling of the intelligence material was a result of his management style rather than any disinterest in foreign developments. In fact, he says, "Nixon was very interested—but it was just him and Henry. That's why you didn't brief him directly." Eagleburger did not see Nixon either—

briefings of the President-elect were the prerogative of Kissinger alone.

Other accounts, however, confirm more directly that Nixon's refusal to receive intelligence briefings personally stemmed from negative attitudes about the CIA that went well beyond an aloof and formal management style. Goodpaster, who worked with the transition staff to help organize the national security apparatus, remembers discussing with Nixon how the Eisenhower team had handled intelligence support. Goodpaster says Nixon "acknowledged the importance of intelligence, but also commented that when you needed it, it often wasn't there."[11]

Discouraging as it was to CIA officers not to have personal contact with Nixon, a great deal of Agency material did reach the President-elect through Kissinger's daily briefings. According to Eagleburger, "Henry made heavy use of the CIA material. I remember especially Korea and other Asian issues. Henry would go in and go over the material with Nixon; documents would be left behind that Nixon would read." Rosen remembers how pleased the Agency team was when it would occasionally receive back from Kissinger copies of the PDB initialed by Nixon, confirming that at least some of the material was being read.[12]

Throughout the two months of the operation in New York, there was some uneasiness among Agency managers because Kissinger levied heavy demands for analytic work in the President's name, and Eagleburger levied similarly heavy demands in Kissinger's name. Without direct access to the principal consumer, it was always unclear how much of this material was really wanted or read by Nixon himself. For the most part, however, it did not matter. CIA took pride in serving those who clearly would be the key foreign policy aides to the new president.

On one occasion the ambiguity about who was really speaking for whom was especially worrisome. A few days before the inauguration, Kissinger called Helms in Washington with a discouraging message. He said that the CIA Director, following the inauguration, should brief the National Security Council on intelligence matters at the opening of its meetings but should then leave the meetings before the policy discussions. This scenario was represented by Kissinger as Nixon's, but Helms knew it was a ridiculous idea. Long experience had shown him that policymakers, during the course of their deliberations, frequently needed to turn to the representative of the Intelligence Community for factual updates.

Two days following the inauguration, the first NSC meeting was held. At the outset, Nixon invited the attendees to stay for lunch following the meeting. With this encouragement, Helms stayed through the meeting and lunch. And with the precedent established, he simply stayed throughout all subsequent NSC meetings. The scenario earlier raised by Kissinger never surfaced again.

CIA's direct access to Nixon was limited to the briefings by the Agency's directors—Richard Helms, James Schlesinger, and, finally, William Colby—at meetings of the National Security Council. In an interview in 1982, Helms offered a graphic account of how difficult those meetings could be, especially during the early period of the Nixon presidency:

> *From the very beginning of the Nixon administration, Nixon was criticizing Agency estimates, estimates done back when he was Vice President. What he knew about estimates in the intervening years I don't know. But he would constantly, in National Security Council meetings, pick on the Agency for not having properly judged what the Soviets were going to do with various kinds of weaponry. And obviously, he was being selective, but he would make remarks about this and say this obviously had to be sharpened up. The Agency had to understand it was to do a better job and so on. And I haven't the slightest doubt that Nixon's carping affected Kissinger, who after all was his national security adviser.*
>
> *Despite this challenge to the estimates, the analysis and so forth of the Agency, the fundamental fact remains that if the things had not been read, if people were not paying attention to them there never would have been the challenge. So I don't think anybody needs to feel bad about a rocky period in the Agency's history. It was bound to be a rocky period with Richard Nixon as President, given the fact that he held the Agency responsible for his defeat in 1960. And he never forgot that, and he had a barb out for the Agency all the time because he really believed, and I think he believes to this day, that that "missile gap" question was*

*the responsibility of the Agency and that it did him in.*[13]

When he was elected President in 1968, Nixon could hardly have imagined how the collection capabilities of the US Intelligence Community had improved since the end of his term as Vice President eight years before. At the time he had left that office, several years of U-2 flights had given the United States an invaluable look at the Soviet Union. But the flights had been intermittent and covered only a portion of Soviet territory. As a result, the United States in 1960 was still dealing in conjecture about possible deployed Soviet strategic systems, albeit informed conjecture. In 1968, it was dealing in facts. It was never clear that the cynical President appreciated what had changed.

As the years passed, the NSC forum was less and less fruitful. Colby remembers that "Nixon didn't operate well in meetings—he liked to make decisions on the basis of written material. When you did brief him on something, he looked like his mind was on other things—he may have been thinking about Watergate, I guess."[14] Colby wrote in his memoirs that none of Nixon's three DCIs saw him outside formal or ceremonial meetings. "I remember only one private conversation with him; it occurred when he phoned to ask what was happening in China, and I provided a quick summary off the top of my head."[15]

Throughout the Nixon presidency, the PDB was delivered by courier to Kissinger's office. Kissinger each day delivered to the President a package of material that included the PDB along with material from the State Department, the White House Situation Room, the Joint Chiefs, and others. Nixon would keep the material on his desk, reading it at his convenience throughout the day. Feedback to the Agency typically was provided by Kissinger directly to the DCI.

**"Colby's initiative was to afford CIA unprecedented direct and daily access to the President when Ford moved into the Oval Office."**

### A Closer Relationship With Ford[16]

In the late spring of 1974, when it was becoming apparent that Nixon would not survive the Watergate scandal, the DCI saw a responsibility and an opportunity.[17] William Colby, who had been appointed Director in September 1973, decided that CIA should help the new Vice President, Gerald Ford, prepare for his likely elevation to the Presidency. Colby's initiative was to afford CIA unprecedented direct and daily access to the President when Ford moved into the Oval Office.

Colby modestly recounts that his decision to provide full intelligence support to Ford "had as much to do with good preparation in case something happened to the President—any president—as it did with Nixon's problems with Watergate." Colby remembers his belief at the time that "we should get the PDB to the Vice President so that he would know everything the President knew. We didn't want another situation like when Truman was unaware of the Manhattan Project."

Whatever his mix of motives, Colby invited the Vice President to visit CIA Headquarters. Ford came, on 12 June 1974, and was given wide-ranging briefings on intelligence operations and assessments. In response to Ford's request, Colby agreed to send him the PDB, in addition to the *National Intelligence Daily* he had been receiving. An Agency current intelligence specialist, David Peterson, was assigned to provide continuing intelligence support to the Vice President.

Ford accepted a suggestion that the PDB be brought to him directly, acknowledging that this would be the most secure way to receive the sensitive document. He specified that he would like to see it early each morning, preferably as his first appointment. Beginning 1 July, that became the regular routing, one that was altered only occasionally by such diversions as a Vice Presidential breakfast with the President or a speaking engagement out of town. On a few occasions, Ford was seen at his Alexandria home before he flew off to keep such an engagement. Always a gracious host, he brewed and served instant coffee.

Ford came to the vice-presidency an informed consumer of the products of the Intelligence Community. He notes that he "had become familiar with CIA first as a member of the Intelligence Subcommittee on Appropriations and later in other roles, including Minority Leader. I knew Colby from my days in Congress."[18] This familiarity, particularly with Colby personally, was to provide the Agency at least a temporary buffer in some difficult times to come.

When Nixon resigned and Ford was sworn in as President on 9 August

1974, Agency officers were uncertain whether the briefings would continue. It seemed probable that Kissinger would intervene and terminate the sessions, substituting some other arrangement. (He was described later as "furious" when he learned of the CIA briefing routine, of which he had not been informed.) The uncertainty was short-lived; that evening Ford passed the word that he wanted his usual briefing the next morning at the White House.

## NOTES

1. Richard Helms, Memorandum for the Record, "Briefing of Former Vice President Nixon and Governor Agnew," 12 August 1968.

2. Interview of Richard Helms by the author in Washington, DC, 16 March 1993. Subsequent comments of Helms come also from this interview.

3. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York; Grosset and Dunlap; 1978), p. 316. Nixon's Democratic opponent in 1968, Hubert Humphrey, routinely received intelligence reports by virtue of being the incumbent Vice President. Two other candidates also received intelligence briefings in that unusual year: former Alabama Governor George Wallace on 26 July; and Georgia Governor Lester Maddox on 21 August. Helms and others briefed each of these candidates in Rusk's office, generally on the same array of subjects they had covered with Nixon. Very brief accounts of these sessions can be found in Helms's Memorandums for the Record: "Briefing of Former Governor George C. Wallace," 26 July 1968; and "Briefing of Governor Lester Maddox," 22 August 1968.

4. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p. 336.

5. The material that follows regarding the Agency's activities in New York City draws very heavily on the classified writings of the late Paul H. Corscadden; he is in effect the author of this section.

6. They had planned to fly, but a heavy snowfall intervened, and the three men traveled by train instead, arriving at Pennsylvania Station in the storm-struck metropolis at the onset of the evening rush hour. They were provided a police escort to take them through the badly snarled traffic to the Central Park area and the Pierre Hotel.

7. A more detailed discussion of Smith's exchange with Kissinger can be found in his memoirs, *The Unknown CIA: My Three Decades with the Agency* (Washington; Pergamon-Brassey's; 1980), pp. 201-203.

8. The CIA officers involved in this exercise were delighted later in the month when Kissinger sent Helms a letter of thanks for their extraordinary efforts.

9. Interview of Richard Lehman by the author in McLean, Virginia, 10 March 1993.

10. Telephone interview of Lawrence Eagleburger by the author, 1 November 1993. Other comments by Eagleburger come also from this interview.

11. Telephone interview of Andrew Goodpaster by the author, 17 November 1993.

12. Interview of Kenneth Rosen by the author in McLean, Virginia, 22 March 1993.

13. Interview of Richard Helms by R. Jack Smith, Washington, DC, 21 April 1982.

14. Interview of William Colby by the author in Washington, DC, 7 April 1993. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent comments by Colby also come from this interview.

15. William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York; Simon and Schuster; 1978), p. 373.

16. The material that follows regarding the Agency's support of President Ford was in large part drafted by David A. Peterson.

17. In the election campaign of 1972, there had been no special intelligence briefings. Nixon, as the incumbent president, continued to receive the PDB. His Democratic opponent, Senator George McGovern, at one point had agreed (against the counsel of his advisers) to receive an intelligence briefing from Kissinger. The CIA was to follow up with regular briefings. Unfortunately, the political crisis involving McGovern's running mate, Senator Thomas Eagleton, forced the cancellation of the Kissinger briefing, and it proved impossible to reschedule either that briefing or the others that were to follow.

18. Interview of Gerald Ford by the author in Beaver Creek, Colorado, 8 September 1993.

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*There is no substitute for access to the President.*

# GERALD FORD AND THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

**David A. Peterson**

In the late spring of 1974, when it became apparent that President Richard Nixon would not survive the Watergate scandal, the Director of Central Intelligence saw both a responsibility and an opportunity. Director William Colby decided that CIA should help Vice President Gerald Ford prepare for his elevation to the Presidency. Colby's initiative later afforded CIA unprecedented direct and daily access to the President when Mr. Ford moved into the Oval Office.

Colby invited the Vice President to visit CIA Headquarters. Mr. Ford came, on June 12, 1974, and was given wide-ranging briefings on intelligence operations and assessments. In response to his request, Colby agreed to send him *The President's Daily Brief* (PDB), in addition to *The National Intelligence Daily* (NID) he had been receiving. I was assigned to facilitate intelligence support to the Vice President.

Mr. Ford accepted my suggestion that the PDB be brought to him directly, acknowledging that this would be the most secure way to receive the sensitive document. He specified that he would like to see it early each morning, preferably as his first appointment. Beginning on July 1, that became the regular routine.

It was altered only occasionally by such diversions as a Vice Presidential breakfast with Mr. Nixon or by a speaking engagement out of town. On a few occasions I saw Mr. Ford at his Alexandria home before he flew off to keep such an engagement. Always a gracious host, he, himself, brewed and served instant coffee.

## THE OVAL OFFICE

When Mr. Nixon resigned and Mr. Ford was sworn in as President on August 9, 1974, we were uncertain whether the briefings would continue. It seemed probable that Dr. Kissinger would intervene and terminate the sessions, substituting some other arrangement. (He was described to me later as "furious" when he learned of the CIA briefing routine, of which he hadn't been informed.) The uncertainty was short-lived; that evening Mr. Ford passed the word that he wanted his usual briefing the next morning at the White House.

That Saturday morning Mr. Ford seemed as awed as I was when he entered the Oval Office to begin his first full day as Chief Executive. With us was General Haig, who was to carry on as principal assistant to the President. The walls and furniture in the Office were bare—thanks to the removal of Mr. Nixon's pictures and possessions. The famous desk had only a telephone console on it, promoting the new President to tell Haig that he would rely on him to help keep the desk uncluttered.

Somewhat to my surprise in view of General Haig's presence, the President first asked for his intelligence briefing. I gave him a status report on a sensitive operation that interested him, after which he read the PDB, punctuating his perusal with a couple of questions.

He asked Haig for his views on how the intelligence briefing should fit into the daily Presidential schedule. Haig replied that President Nixon had received the PDB along with several other reports, cables, and overnight summaries to read as time permitted during the day. The General went on to say, however, that an early daily intelligence briefing was a better idea. Mr. Ford agreed, expressing satisfaction with the routine that had been established and observing that such an arrangement would help prepare him for a subsequent daily meeting with Mr. Kissinger. The new President evidently felt at some disadvantage in discussing foreign affairs with his Secretary of State and wanted as much advance support as he could get. Accordingly, I would continue to be the President's first appointment each morning.

That initial session in the Oval Office ended on a mildly embarrassing note for me. I exited the Office through the nearest door—only to find myself at a dead end. A second door, which I later learned led to a smaller, more private office for the President, was locked, trapping me in the passageway. The Presidential lavatory was on one side opposite a pullman kitchen where stewards prepared refreshments. It was obvious that unless I was prepared to stay indefinitely I would have to reenter the Oval Office, where the President and General Haig were still conferring. I knocked, opened the door with apologies and sheepishly explained my predicament. Mr. Ford laughed and professed that he didn't yet know his way around the West Wing very well, either. He directed me out another door to the hallway. I observed that this door had no frame and was papered to blend with the wall.

## A SECURE CHANNEL

For two days during that first week of the Ford Presidency I met alone with the President each morning. On the third morning General Brent Scowcroft, then Kissinger's assistant as National Security Adviser, informed me that henceforth he would accompany me. While this arrangement probably was prompted in part by Kissinger's desire to know what CIA was telling the President, Scowcroft's presence undoubtedly enhanced the value of the intelligence briefing for Mr. Ford. The President would raise questions about the policy implications of the intelligence we were providing, and Scowcroft either would provide the answers or undertake to obtain an early assessment. It soon became evident that no previous President had derived such prompt benefit from the Agency's current intelligence reports.

The daily contact with Mr. Ford facilitated CIA's ability to respond to his intelligence needs. Immediately after each briefing session, I would report via secure telephone to my immediate boss, the Director of the Office of Current Intelligence, who would relay any Presidential queries, messages or comments to the DCI's daily staff meeting at 9:00 a.m. With that kind of communication, the Director and his senior aides could get rapid feedback, and the President's needs could promptly be served.

A further advantage of the direct contact with the President involved the security of the PDB. By carrying it away after he read it, we were able to maintain complete control of his copy of the publication. Coupled with the more stringent controls that were applied to a second copy I handed to General Scowcroft, which he later showed to Dr. Kissinger and we subsequently retrieved, we were able to terminate the wide exposure that the PDB had among members of the White House and National Security Council staffs under Mr. Nixon.



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Thus, we enjoyed to Mr. Ford a secure and expeditious channel for sensitive compartmented information, some of which would have been sent to him by less direct means, but with no assurance that he would actually see it. The advantage of having direct access was not lost on the Director and others at CIA. The Director and the Deputy Director for Operations soon granted us permission to publish in the PDB articles based on the Agency's most protected sources. Occasionally even operational activities were reported. Highly sensitive SIGINT material was also used for the first time. To limit access to such material even within the Agency, it was typed on loose pages that I stapled into the copies for the President and Secretary Kissinger.

## THE GLOMAR EXPLORER

One tightly-held operation was not covered in the PDB, but Mr. Ford received an oral account of its status each morning while it was in progress. It was, in fact, the first thing he wanted to hear about. He had been briefed in detail on the *Glomar Explorer* project during his visit to CIA headquarters and was fascinated with the intricate plan to raise a Soviet ballistic missile submarine that had exploded and sunk in the Pacific to a depth of 16,000 feet. Before I went to the White House each morning, the project's operations center would give me a progress report, which I then relayed to the President.

There is no doubt that the drama associated with that imaginative endeavor and Mr. Ford's keen interest in it helped to certify for him the utility of those daily briefing sessions. Eventually, however, it was my unhappy lot to inform him that an accident during the lifting operation had caused the fragile hulk to break apart, resulting in the loss of a critical portion of the submarine.

An ancillary benefit from these daily meetings with President Ford was the closer cooperation that developed between the PDB staff and the White House Situation Room, which provides round-the-clock support to the President on foreign developments and national security affairs. At General Scowcroft's request, after each briefing session I would give an account of the meeting to Situation Room personnel so they could get a better insight on the President's interests and concerns. In addition, our PDB staff began to inform them each evening of the topics to be covered in the PDB the following morning so they would not duplicate coverage of any current development in the Situation Room's morning summary for the President.

One morning Mr. Ford's dog, Liberty, was in the Oval Office. While the President read the PDB, the friendly and handsome Golden Retriever padded back and forth between General Scowcroft and me until I calmed her by patting and scratching her neck. All was quiet and peaceful until her wagging tail struck the President's nearby pipe rack. The clatter of pipes and other smoking paraphernalia brought swift Presidential retribution; Liberty was banished, never to appear again during a PDB meeting.

## A BEARER OF BAD NEWS

The President soon became acutely conscious that our reporting was problem-oriented. After I told him once that we didn't have much to tell him that day, he replied that he wasn't disappointed because "when there is more to report that usually means you have more bad news."

On one occasion the bad news preceded me into the Oval Office. It was in March 1975, the day after Bill Colby had testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the situation in Cambodia, where the Lon Nol regime was under heavy attack by Khmer Rouge forces. The President's first words to me that morning were



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that he was unhappy about "what your boss said on the Hill yesterday." He had read an account of the Director's testimony in the *Washington Post*, which quoted Colby as saying the Lon Nol regime would have little chance to survive even with the supplemental U.S. aid the President had requested from Congress.

General Scowcroft pointed out that the advance text of the Director's statement did not include any such remark. Scowcroft offered to find out what had happened. After the session I called to forewarn the DCI. As we had speculated, his reponse to a question from the Committee had been quoted out of context.

The eventual success of the Khmer Rouge soon led to the *Mayaquez* affair. The seizure of the US-owned container ship by the communist forces occurred in the early hours (Washington time) of May 12, 1975. Before I left for the White House, the CIA armed me with a map and the latest information on the incident, still in progress,

The President was distressed to receive this news, but by the time Secretary Kissinger got to him on the telephone during our PDB session Mr. Ford had absorbed what we knew and had given some thought to the implications. Plans for the subsequent rescue operation began to formulate during that conversation with Kissinger.

The South Vietnamese collapse in the spring of 1975 was heralded by a report that President Thieu had ordered his troops in the Central Highlands to withdraw. Incomprehensible as the report seemed (it later proved to be a distortion), the conversation in the Oval Office that morning moved quickly to a consideration of the grave consequences if it were true. Within a short time, the possible began to become actuality. Later, in the final days of the American withdrawal, the PDB described the military debacle and General Scowcroft gave an account each morning of preparations for the evacuation.

## VLADIVOSTOK

The PDB was not confined solely to current intelligence. Selected National Intelligence Estimates and memoranda occasionally were summarized in annexes to the *Brief*. The most timely and effective example of this occurred shortly before President Ford's meeting with Leonid Brezhnev at Vladivostok in November 1975. The day before the President's departure, the PDB carried the key judgments of NIE 11-3/8, the annual estimate of Soviet strategic forces.

The President thus had the benefit of the Intelligence Community's latest judgments on the current and projected strengths of Soviet strategic forces before he negotiated the Vladivostok accords with Brezhnev.



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## THE BRIEFINGS END

President Ford gave every indication that he liked the briefing sessions, but this did not save them from becoming an incidental victim of the shake-up he instituted on November 3, 1975, among his senior National Security advisers. Director Colby and Secretary of Defense Schlesinger were replaced, respectively, by George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, until then the President's White House Chief of Staff. General Scowcroft was elevated to Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the position Secretary Kissinger had retained, with Scowcroft as his deputy, after assuming stewardship of the Department of State.

As part of the new arrangement, Scowcroft gave up his early morning meetings with the President during the PDB sessions. With his absence from that session, the CIA presence ended too. The fact that our briefings had originated under Colby's aegis probably contributed to their expendability. Thereafter, President Ford read his PDB in private, without either Scowcroft or me in attendance.

What we at CIA lost was the President's immediate reaction to each PDB. Thereafter, I delivered it to General Scowcroft, who immediately would take it to the Presidential receptionist for delivery to Mr. Ford. It was also retrieved from her. Because he was not present when the President read the PDB, although he saw him on other occasions, Scowcroft had little to pass on in the way of the President's views and questions relating to the intelligence we were giving him. As a consequence the PDB could no longer be tailored as well to suit Mr. Ford's personal needs.

There was no indication that President Ford felt seriously deprived after the daily PDB sessions ended. The appointment of George Bush as DCI soon put the Agency and the Intelligence Community in regular weekly contact with the President regarding the whole gamut of intelligence activities, and Mr. Bush provided feedback that was helpful to the PDB staff. Bill Colby had met Mr. Ford less frequently. (On several occasions he had me convey personal messages to the President.)

The experience of 14 months of daily meetings with President Ford, and the succeeding months without those meetings, suggest that CIA and the Intelligence Community as a whole can serve a President best if at least one or two means of access to the Oval Office exist. First and foremost is regular and personal contact with the President by the DCI. This ensures that the Intelligence Community viewpoint on all relevant issues is presented directly to the Chief Executive by the Community's authoritive voice. These contacts, moreover, can be an invaluable aid to producers of the PDB when the DCI in turn regularly advises them on its preparation. This kind of guidance is provided by Admiral Turner.

The second existed during the original arrangement with Mr. Ford: a CIA representative in attendance when the President receives the PDB each day. This facilitates immediate responses to his current intelligence needs and makes it possible to produce a *Brief* that is more relevant and useful.

There is, in short, no substitute for direct access. Indirect feedback, filtered and interpreted by others, leaves us ill-informed and unsure. At times in the past that is all we've had.



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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/CODEWORD March 18, 1970
(Only red Tab A codeword)

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: A. W. Marshall

SUBJECT: Transmittal of memorandum on President's reading package

Attached (Tab A) you will find a report evaluating the process of producing the President's morning intelligence reading package. It contains an assessment of the current product (giving it good marks) and surfaces some problems and possible improvements. I think we ought to discuss these. I have tried not to bother you so far, but some of the problems and improvements may look different from where you sit. My view, so far, has been how the process looks from several levels below up to just below you.

Problems discussed are:

1. The current anomalous position of the CIA PDB.

2. The general weakness of feedback and guidance in the process for those providing inputs and preparing portions of the package, both at CIA and in the NSC staff.

Improvements suggested for consideration are:

1. Changes in the format of the Situation Room product and perhaps the total package in order to reduce the President's reading load. Some changes might be part of a solution to the CIA PDB problem through its closer integration with the Situation Room product.

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/CODEWORD

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.5 6.2(c)
NLN 00-25/2 per sec. 3.3(b)(1) 9/21/05
By SD NARA, Date 7/12/06
32 pages

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2. Measures to improve feedback and guidance, especially to the NSC staff.

3. Provision of a limited number of secure, green telephones for the NSC staff to improve their interaction with analysts in the intelligence community and State and Defense Departments.

4. A tentative proposal is surfaced for a radical change in the way intelligence and other information materials are presented to you, and perhaps could be presented to the President at a later date. It is a flexible on-line reading program, available on a TV screen at all times, with controls allowing the reader to pick subjects he wants to read at several levels of detail. Such a system could give you and/or the President more control over what you read and increase feedback to the organizations supplying inputs to the program. Your reactions are required.

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EO 12958

16 January 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Production of the PDB

1. The President's Daily Brief is an all-source daily intelligence publication tailored specifically to the needs of its principal reader. As a result of efforts to achieve maximum comprehensiveness, flexibility, and timeliness, it differs from other daily publications such as the Black CIB in several noteworthy respects:

--It makes use of sources too sensitive even for the Black CIB;

--It is not formally coordinated in the intelligence community (although every effort is of course made to assure that its articles are not at variance with the community's views);

--Its articles are produced by a small staff of highly skilled writers rather than by the OCI desks, and one of the PDB staffers keeps tab on each issue up to the time of publication.

2. Specific criteria for PDB articles have always been hard to define, but they generally reflect what we know and infer about the general interests of the President, as well as what the writers and reviewers (the D/OCI, the DDI, and the DCI) think should be brought to his attention on a given day. They also reflect the feedback we get directly from the NSC staff and from the Director and others in frequent contact with the White House.

3. The four-man PDB staff operates on a four-day work cycle, with each staffer in turn seeing one issue

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through the production process. The book which he and the other staffer on duty put together during the day is a blend of articles taken from the CIB; cullings from other DDI publications; writeups of reports too sensitive to be used elsewhere; responses to the requests of PDB reviewers for coverage of a topic; and self-initiated articles based on the voluminous traffic monitored by the staff itself. The issue begins to take shape in the early afternoon. The drafts are reviewed by the D/OCI or DD/OCI, the DDI, and the DCI beginning at about 1600, and are LDX'd to the White House for information at about 1800. The staffer who "owns" that day's issue comes back in at 0100, updates the drafts and writes new articles as necessary, and oversees the typing and printing of the final version. This is sent at 0600 by courier to the White House and other addressees outside CIA.

4. The following account traces in detail the production process for one hypothetical issue of the PDB. In order to illustrate the variety of ways PDB articles come into being, the hypothetical process involves more items and would-be items than would appear on a typical day. Otherwise the model is fairly representative.

5. The day's two writers arrive between 0830 and 0900, note any messages from the previous night's writer (who went home at about 0700), field any questions from the D/OCI on the morning's issue, and begin to work on the morning's cable take. They start with the overnight traffic left by the night man and then go through the contents of the various PDB boxes in the Watch Office. There they find, in addition to a great deal of raw traffic*, processed intelligence of various kinds

[redacted]

*The PDB staff receives advance copies of all State Department cables coming to CIA, all diplomatic Comint, all TDCSs as well as all of the operational DDP cables that are released to the DDI, most of the military attache traffic and a heavy dose of other military cables, and copies of all items selected by the Watch Office or the News Analysis Officer for the DCI. It also receives especially sensitive clandestine reports via the D/OCI, and it has access to most of the NODIS traffic that comes to the Agency.



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~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

including the Watch Office Night Journal, the CIB, the NSA Sigint Summary, uncoordinated "house organs" issued by various OCI and DDI components, and formal memoranda from all DDI substantive components. (On Fridays the PDB staff also receives the Current Intelligence Weekly, but this is rarely a fruitful source of articles since weekly drafts are routinely made available to the PDB during the week.)

6. By mid-morning the following topics have appeared as candidates for PDB articles:

[redacted]

In addition, it quickly becomes apparent that there will probably be an article on the [redacted] military situation, and one staffer begins to accumulate bits and pieces of press, comint, and embassy reporting for it.

7. At 1000 one of the writers attends Western Hemisphere Division's regular morning meeting. There he learns that [redacted] was pretty ordinary boilerplate but that the division is writing a CIB on the possibility of increased urban terrorism in The information on this topic is fairly extensive and seems to need broader treatment; the division therefore agrees to expand its CIB into an annex for the PDB, to be published later in the week.

8. Similarly, at European Division's morning meeting at 1030 the PDB writer learns that the report [redacted] was already being considered for the CIB. The division offers to submit a paragraph of slightly speculative interpretation for the PDB version of the item.

9. At this point the D/OCI brings in a highly sensitive clandestine cable on [redacted]



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~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

noting that the Director wants it covered in the PDB. OCI's [redacted] is asked to provide some comment on the report.

10. At 1100 a PDB staffer sits in on the meeting to block out the day's CIB. In addition to items on [redacted] he learns that:

--OSR will do an item on [redacted]

--a brief will be written on the military situation in [redacted]

--OER will submit an article on [redacted]

--the latest [redacted] statistics will be covered in a brief. [redacted]

These articles, in addition to the clandestine report on [redacted] become the prime candidates for PDB treatment.

11. CIB drafts begin to come in shortly after lunch. The PDB writers prune some articles of excess verbiage, add a paragraph or two of interpretation to some, and rewrite a few others to make the message more pointed. (Some CIB articles, of course, are printed virtually without change.) All changes of any substance are checked out with the OCI desks. In addition, a sensitive clandestine report is received [redacted] which cannot be used in the CIB but which sheds useful light on the general military situation. This is melded with the CIB draft.

12. At 1600 the drafts are submitted to the D/OCI, who provides substantive and editorial suggestions which necessitate further rewriting and consultation with the OCI desks. After these revisions, the drafts are retyped and sent to the DDI and the DCI, who request still further revisions. The drafts are then LDX'd to the White House to give the NSC Staff advance notice of what will be in the book in the morning. The PDB writers leave at about 1800. On this occasion the primary writer knows of two assignments he will have when he comes back in:

--The DCI has asked that one paragraph in the [redacted] CIB be changed, and this will obviously have to be reflected in the PDB as well;



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~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

--A late cable has arrived from [redacted] reporting a conversation with [redacted] on the subject of [redacted] The D/OCI has asked for both a CIB and a PDB article on the cable.

The White House Situation Room is informed that these changes and additions will be forthcoming.

13. When the primary writer comes back to work, he scans the new traffic, doublechecks that there are no discrepancies between the CIB and PDB drafts, updates the [redacted] article, and writes an article on [redacted] meeting. The White House Situation Room duty officer has called in the meantime to suggest that the article on [redacted] be deleted, since the President has been fully briefed on the topic; that item is therefore pulled. The drafts are given to the typists at 0330, are proofread at 0430, and are printed by 0530, when the PDB writer checks them once again for typos or errors in layout. The couriers leave at 0600, and the writer remains until 0700 to answer any questions raised by the White House.



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# The President's Daily Brief

*April 30, 1975*

~~*Top Secret*~~

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SOUTH VIETNAM

*The flag of the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government was hoisted over the presidential palace at 12:15 today Saigon time, marking the end of over 30 years of war in Vietnam.*

North Vietnamese troops and tanks entered the heart of Saigon less than two hours after President Duong Van Minh announced the unconditional surrender of his government. Minh asked that Viet Cong representatives meet him to arrange an orderly transfer of power, stating that "I am waiting to hand over full administrative power to you." At last report, Minh was seen leaving the palace accompanied by communist troops.

President Minh's brief address to the nation over Saigon radio was followed by an order from the South Vietnamese joint general staff telling all members of the armed forces to observe the President's order and "be ready to make contacts with PRG forces to carry out a bloodless cease-fire." South Vietnamese troops were pulled out of defensive positions in and around the city and marched to central points to turn in their weapons.

Immediately after the US evacuation was completed in the morning, the US embassy and consular office were looted by South Vietnamese mobs. Following the occupation of the city by North Vietnamese troops, order has largely been restored. Sporadic shooting was reported in parts of Saigon during the day, but there are no indications of any significant resistance from government forces.

There is no news from the southern delta. As of this morning, South Vietnamese units in that area were still intact.



*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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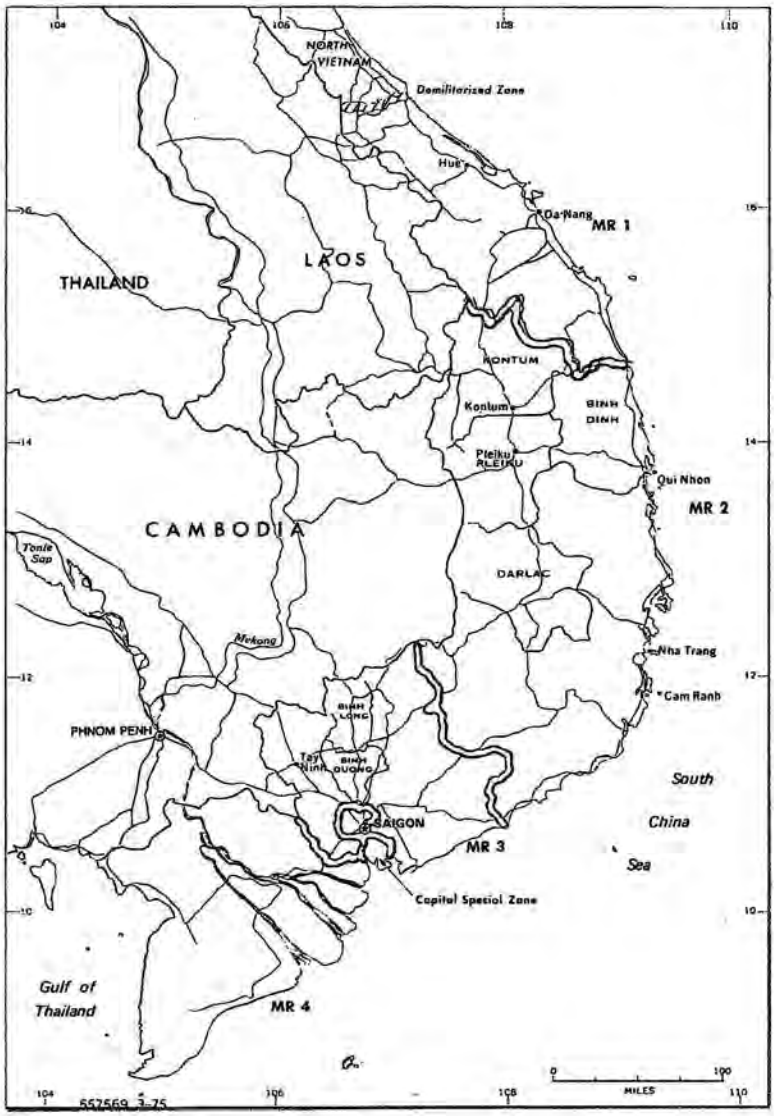

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# NOTES

HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

The Historical Review Program—part of CIA's Information Management Services—identifies, collects, and produces historically significant collections of declassified documents. These collections, centered on a theme or event, are supplemented with supporting analysis, essays, and photographs, showcased in this booklet.

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