

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 12 January 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
12 JANUARY 1968

1. Communist China



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2. South Vietnam

The arrest of six labor leaders may prevent early settlement of the electrical workers' strike in Saigon.

The strike began yesterday morning over demands for additional wage benefits. Union negotiators are said to have made major concessions and to have been at the "half-way mark" toward settlement when the police made their arrests.

Other unions in Saigon, including port and transport workers, had earlier threatened sympathy walkouts if any arrests were made in connection with the strike.

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3. Vietnam

Sihanouk's remarks to Ambassador Bowles seem to discredit [redacted] that the Vietnamese Communists had asked about using Phnom Penh as a site for negotiations. Sihanouk said he had been in touch with the North Vietnamese representative in Phnom Penh and had suggested his capital as a site for talks, but the North Vietnamese had shown no interest.

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4. Dominican Republic

With Balaguer now in office almost 18 months, Ambassador Crimmins has sent in a long assessment of the Dominican political scene. These are some of his points:

--The relative stability achieved by Balaguer is coming under heavy pressure. Both the hard-core "Constitutionalists" on the left and the hard-core "Wessinistas" on the right are now trying hard to undermine [redacted] the President.

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--The situation at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo is definitely heating up again. [redacted]

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--General Wessin's significance lies not so much in his vote-getting potential as in the fairly substantial sympathies he retains in the military, and in his potential for increased attractiveness to the military and business communities.

--With continuing US support, Balaguer should be able to weather at least through the spring.

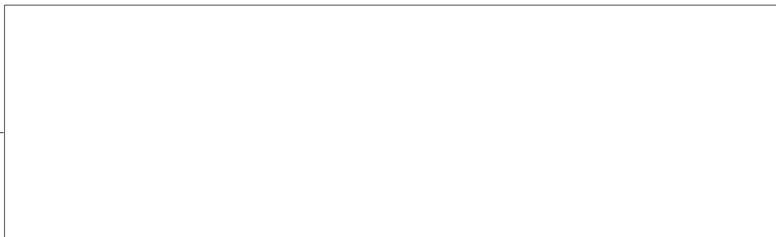
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5. Brazil

Foreign Minister Magalhaes Pinto is still denying the US support on Vietnam. Magalhaes Pinto told Senator Jack Miller of Iowa on Tuesday that public opinion in Brazil is influenced by "disunity" among the allies in Vietnam, and news reports that Americans themselves are not supporting the war. The foreign minister concluded that conditions for an understanding between the US and Brazil on Vietnam have not yet developed.

6. France -
Israel



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7. France -
Belgium

Heavy pressure from Paris to induce Belgium to buy the Mirage instead of the F-5 seems to be paying off. Ambassador Knight in Brussels now believes the Mirage will be the choice.

8. Poland

Rumors of top-drawer personnel shifts have flared up again. The rumors began about a year ago and have become more insistent recently following the turmoil next door in the Czech party hierarchy.



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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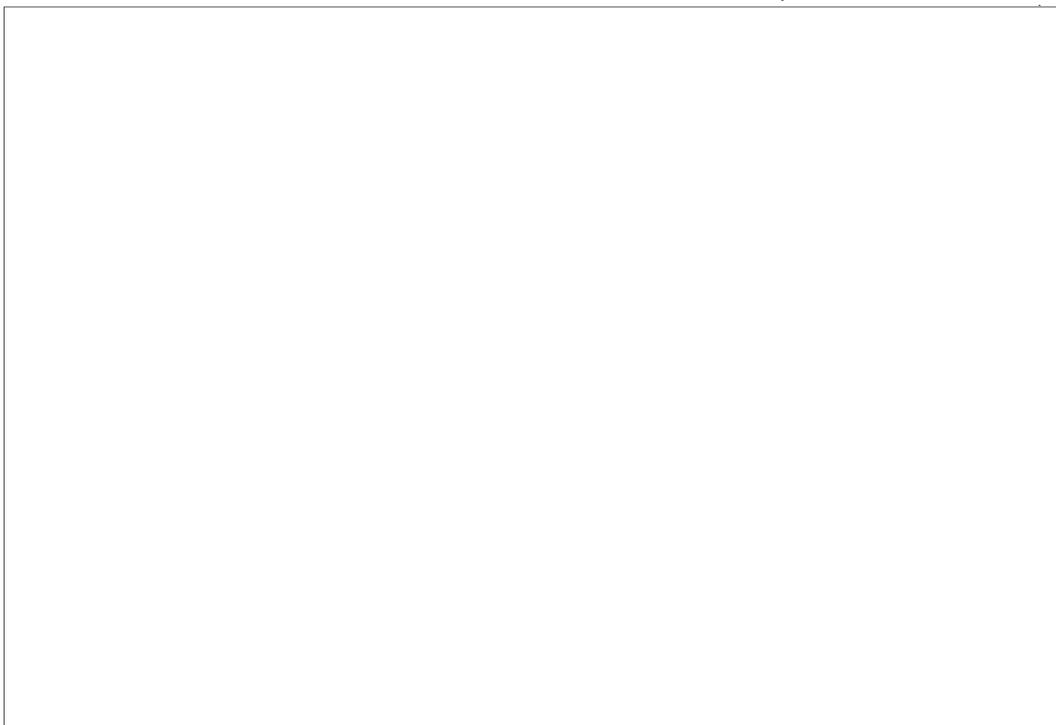
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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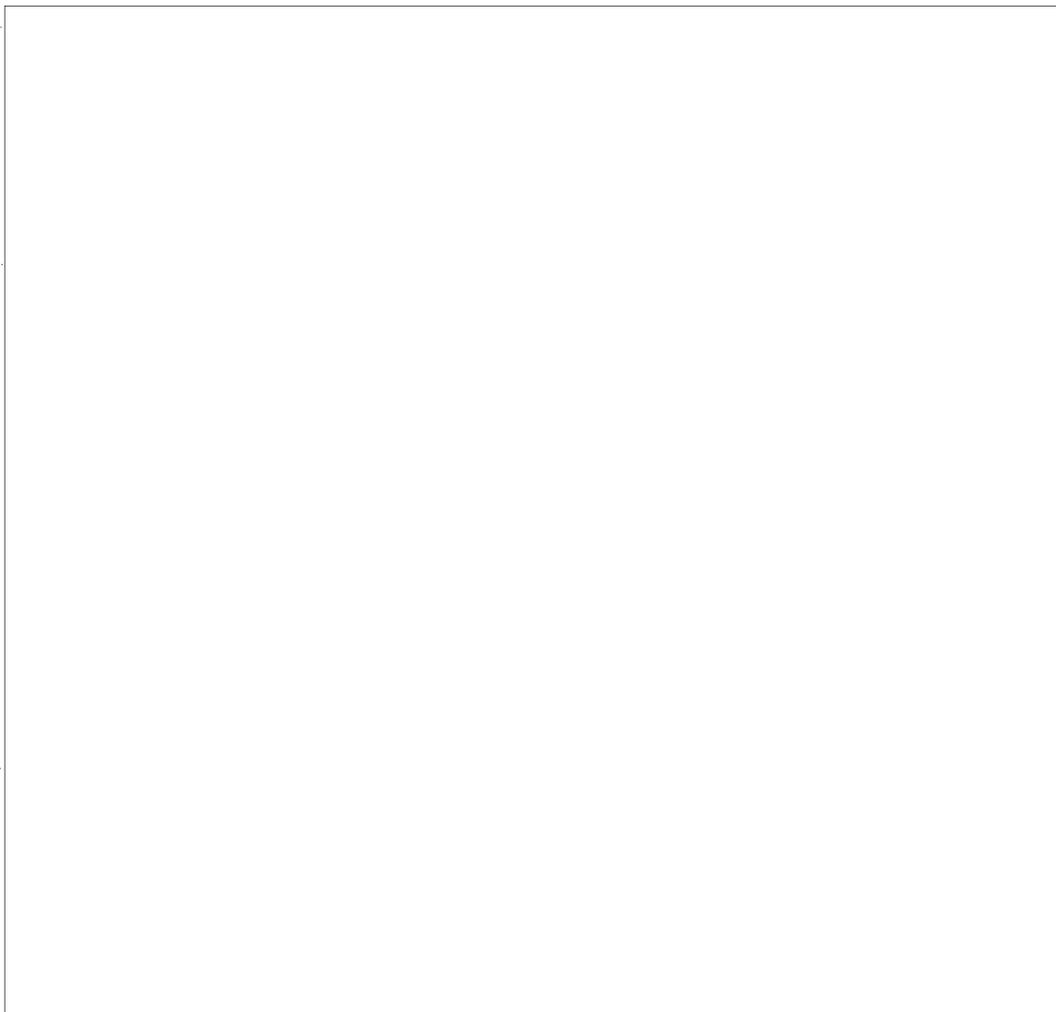
Hanoi Reaffirms Trinh's Statement: In an unusual but not unprecedented move, Hanoi has confirmed for an American newspaper the accuracy of Foreign Minister Trinh's statement on the willingness of his government to talk with the US. According to press reports from Hong Kong, a correspondent for the Boston-based Christian Science Monitor cabled Hanoi asking about the accuracy of Trinh's statement. He received in reply a cable from the head of Hanoi's press and information service quoting Trinh's remarks as they were broadcast on 30 December. In keeping with Hanoi's current silence on the foreign minister's remarks, the cable to the Monitor correspondent contained no comment on the new formulation.

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Moscow Comments on US Reaction to Trinh Statement: In one of its limited comments thus far on the US reaction to the Trinh statement, Moscow radio in a commentary on 11 January claimed that the announcement of increased US appropriations for the Vietnam war undercut statements by American officials that they are "studying" the foreign minister's statement. The commentary pointed out that the increase in appropriations would seem to end President Johnson's "hesitation" in answering the North Vietnamese minister's step, and concluded by declaring that the US "just cannot obliterate the thought of continuing and consequently expanding the war."

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Worker Morale:

[redacted] formerly worked at a coal mine in an area northwest of Hanoi claims that the workers at the mine were demoralized by the war, the demands on their physical energy, the weight of political supervision, and the scarcity of proper food. Only hard-line party members seemed to be enthusiastic about the regime's war effort. Party and government control in the area was reportedly extremely tight. Workers with bad records were immediately sent to "re-education centers."

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[redacted] about one percent of the people refused to be molded by the party, openly defied the regime, and refused to work. These persons were subsequently deprived of their rice ration and all other rights of citizens, and became outcasts of society.

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[redacted] figure of one percent probably represents only isolated cases that came to his attention.

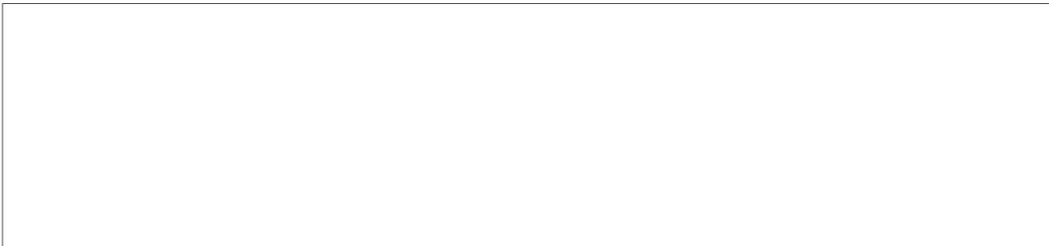
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Canadians May Send Envoy to Hanoi: According to a French Press Agency report from Ottawa, Canadian Minister of External Affairs Paul Martin stated recently that Canada hopes to be able to send an envoy to Hanoi shortly. Martin named Ormond Dier, former head of the Canadian mission to the International Control Commission, as the likely choice for such a mission, although he indicated that former ambassador Chester Ronning (who has twice previously journeyed to Hanoi) might be an alternate choice. Martin did not suggest that any Canadian mission to Hanoi was imminent but stated that Canada is actively engaged in consultations with other countries on the subject of Vietnam and is "most desirous of making a useful contribution to this cause."

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[Redacted]

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Hanoi and Western Correspondents:

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Hanoi has not allowed any Western correspondents into the country since at least last November, and there has been some indication that the North Vietnamese have ruled out such visits for the time being. Wilfred Burchett, the Australian Communist apologist for Hanoi, stated as much in mid-December.

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Hanoi Press Officer in Paris Recalled for Consultations: Tran Ngoc Kha, head of the North Vietnamese press office in Paris, has been called back to Hanoi to report on his activities during 1967.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] The urgent note in Kha's recall cannot be readily explained, although it may be connected with providing guidelines for handling Hanoi's latest statement on its willingness to hold talks with the US in return for an end to the bombings.

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

More on Dr. Spock: Hanoi radio in an 11 January broadcast in English announced that the Liberation Front Committee for Solidarity with the American People recently sent a message to Dr. Spock voicing high indignation at the "Johnson administration's prosecution against him and four other American intellectuals." The message "warmly hailed the patriotic activities of these and other progressive Americans" in their strong support for the antidraft movement among American youth and their "active defense of the peace and justice-loving tradition of the American people."

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[Redacted]

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