



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 15 March 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
15 MARCH 1968

1. North Vietnam



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2. South Vietnam

[redacted] Commu-
nist forces may be preparing for an-
other round of coordinated attacks in
various areas of the country in the
near future.

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3. Japan

The local Communists are taking
dead aim at all US activities in Japan
and Okinawa related to the war in Viet-
nam. The prospect is for more demon-
strations, perhaps violent ones. Sato,
who faces upper house elections early
this summer, is in a cautious mood and
will try to avoid doing anything that
might further stir up this hornet's
nest.

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4. Panama

Last night the assembly finally voted to impeach President Robles. The trial is set for 24 March. The President was not suspended from office last night, as he legally could have been. His removal is likely to await the expected guilty verdict, probably on 27 or 28 March.

General Vallarino's day of decision could thus be nearly two weeks away, but the chances of a compromise solution now seem remote indeed.

5. Eastern Europe

New street demonstrations took place in Poznan and Lodz yesterday. Warsaw students have not yet been brought to heel. The party continues its heavy-handed efforts to discredit the student "agitators," but there is some evidence that it is now groping for ways to open a dialogue with them.

In Czechoslovakia there was more bad news yesterday for the beleaguered Novotny. The suicide of Deputy Defense Minister Janko dramatizes the desperation and isolation of those who tried to save Novotny last January. Janko was in command of the armored forces and was probably partly responsible for the ill-fated effort to bring out tanks in Novotny's behalf.

In Moscow, the press and radio are silent on recent Polish and Czech developments.

[REDACTED] We have no doubt, however, that the men in the Kremlin are watching these events intently, even anxiously.

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6. Thailand

Bangkok is making a long-overdue reappraisal of its efforts to suppress Communist-led guerrillas in the north. Senior army leaders now admit [redacted] that they have made little progress against the guerrillas, that their forces are suffering increasing casualties, and that the government's harsh tactics against the local tribesmen have only worsened the situation.

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The government is now seeking new approaches. There is no sign yet, however, that it realizes that its best hope for a lasting solution is to win over the people in the affected areas.

7. Sweden

Leaders of the principal opposition parties have publicly closed ranks behind the government on the matter of Ambassador Heath's recall. This was perhaps to be expected. Now the Swedish press is beginning to take a healthy look at the basic issues, especially the damage to Sweden's neutrality brought about by the antics of Education Minister Palme.

The ambassador's recall is also getting a lot of attention elsewhere in Scandinavia, but editorial opinion is mixed. Some papers--and most of those in Denmark--are blasting the US for trying to "intimidate" Sweden. Others are critical of Sweden for moving beyond neutrality toward the Communist position on Vietnam.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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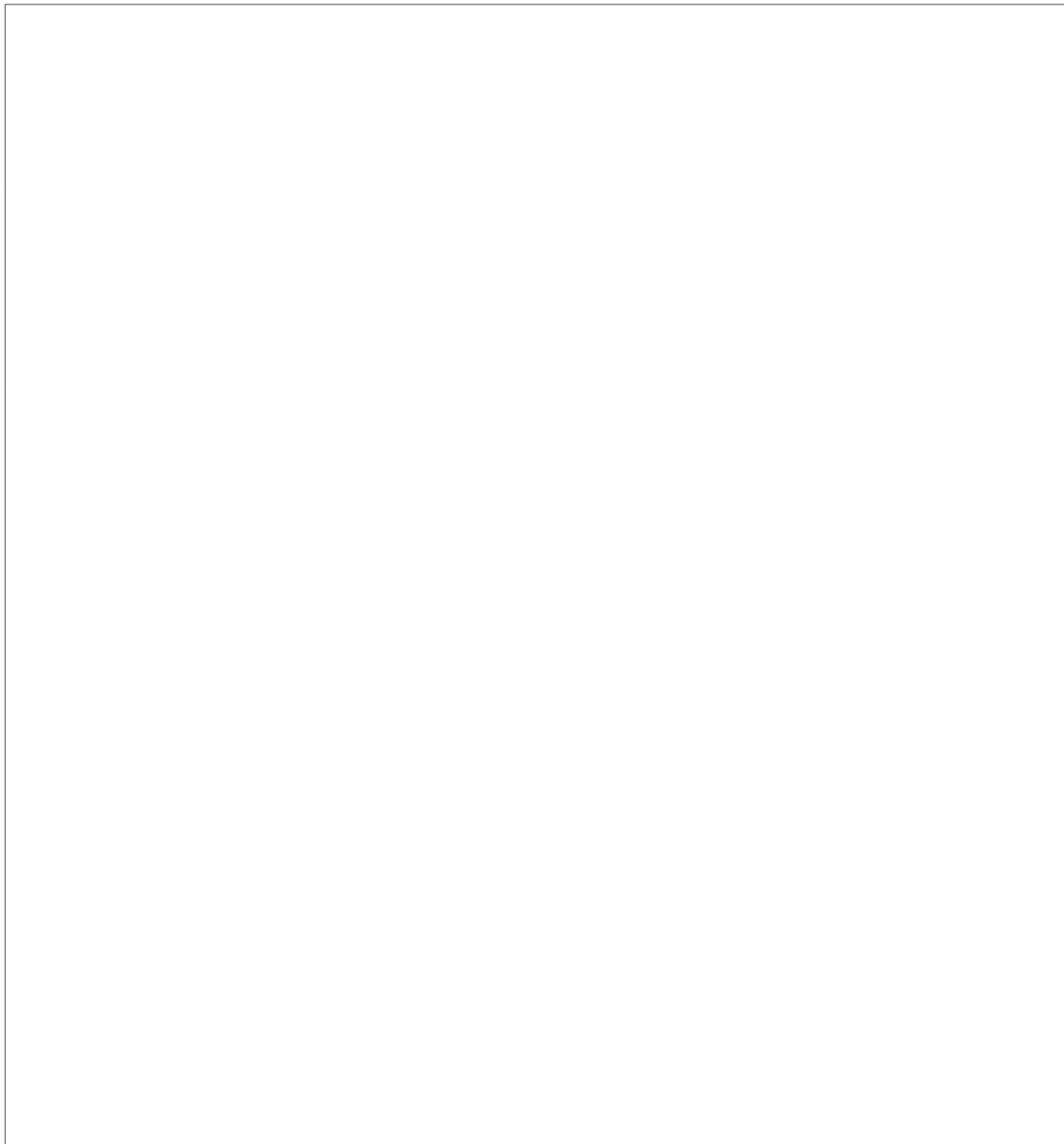
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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[Redacted]

* * *

North Vietnam Continues Postwar Reconstruction

Plans: [Redacted]

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Hanoi has never dropped its reconstruction plans. Although some major aid projects were suspended in 1965 and 1966, projects like the Thac Ba hydropower plant have been receiving periodic maintenance to prevent their deterioration, [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Another index of Hanoi's continuing investment for the future is the large number of North Vietnamese students that have been sent abroad for long periods of study in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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

Comments on Foreign Relations Committee Hearings: Initial Hanoi commentary on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings has centered on the statements on the Gulf of Tonkin incident. A Hanoi domestic broadcast on 13 March noted that Secretary Rusk was "strongly criticized" at the hearing when he "pleaded for the US aggressive policy in Vietnam." According to this account, Rusk

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was "forced" to give a clear explanation about the "fabrication" of the Tonkin incident. The broadcast also said that severe questioning of Rusk on this point reflected the "great worries" of a number of US senators about the consequences of differing views on Vietnam policy in the US. Statements critical of US policy by Senators Morse, Fulbright, and Mansfield were offered to support that contention.

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The Hanoi party daily, Nhan Dan, in an article broadcast on 14 March, also offered a detailed discussion of the Tonkin debate both prior to and during the Senate hearings. It alleged that the administration's claims concerning the incident were "deceitful and slanderous maneuvers" and that American public opinion was finally seeing through "Johnson's facade." Nhan Dan claimed that the reason the incident was being discussed now was primarily because of recent US "failures" in Vietnam.

Summing up its view of the Senate debate, Nhan Dan claimed that never has the US been criticized and condemned so strongly and isolated so seriously as it is now. Never has it been confronted with so many difficulties and such grave internal strife as now. Antiwar opposition, the paper contended, will grow as Communist successes in Vietnam mount.

* * *

Antiwar Activity: Hanoi, in its English language broadcast on 13 March, noted that some 1,000 New York University students and faculty members had recently demonstrated against Dow Chemical Company recruiting on the campus. The broadcast also reported that a political party called "For Peace and Freedom" has come into being in Pennsylvania. One of the points in its program, according to the Hanoi statement, is to demand an end to the "dirty war pursued by the US in Vietnam."

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