



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 12 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
12 DECEMBER 1968

1. South Vietnam

The enemy appears to be making ready to start some spectacular fireworks, principally in III Corps. His efforts could begin any time between now and a few days before the Christmas truce which begins on 24 December.

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all indications point to offensive actions soon, against military targets outside the capital. Depending on the success of these ventures, another attack on Saigon might follow. A separate memorandum on the situation accompanies today's Brief.

2. Mexico

New student demonstrations are being planned in Mexico City on 13 December. The demonstrators will renew their previous demands for reform but may spice up the affair by adding a denunciation of Diaz Ordaz for "selling out Mexico" at his meeting with President Johnson. We believe the government will take a dim view of any new and prolonged demonstration and is likely to respond with stern measures against the students--even including the closing of schools.

3. Thailand

Communist-led tribal guerrillas are stepping up harassing attacks on police and military units in the north central area of Thailand. Insurgency became a problem in this section of the country only about two months ago. The government's plodding village security program has been seriously set back by the security force's failure to respond to terrorist pressure on the tribesmen. Villages have been abandoned and tribal loyalty to the central government, never strong, has been further weakened.

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4. Egypt-Brazil-Israel

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5. Guyana

Burnham is busy with planning to secure victory for his People's National Congress in the election scheduled for 16 December.

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[Redacted]

6. Jordan

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[Redacted]

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7. Soviet Union

Satellite photography shows that the antiballistic missile launch sites around Moscow will be externally complete by mid-1969 and could be operational by early 1970. No other antiballistic missile complexes have been detected in the Soviet Union although developmental work at the test range continues.



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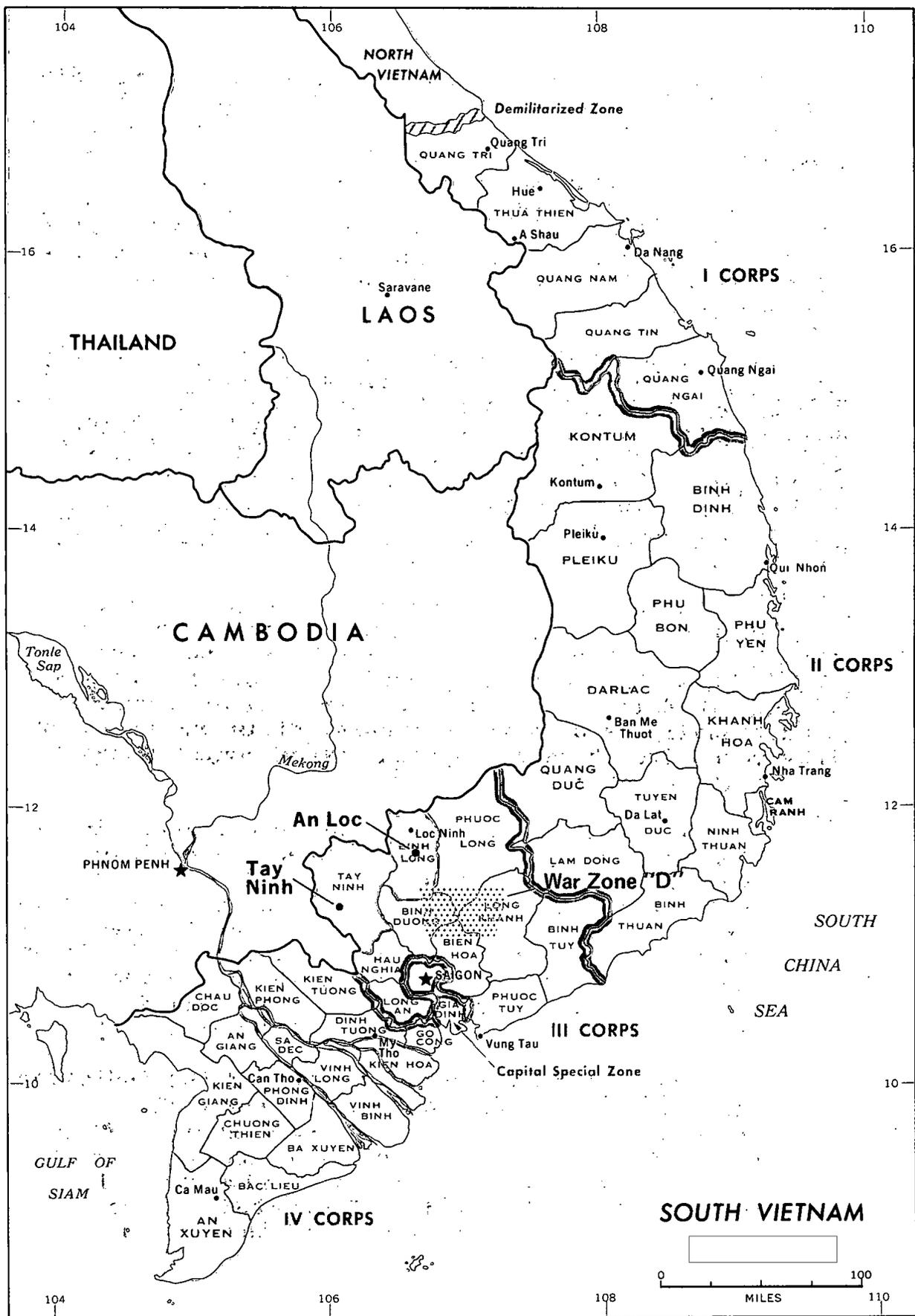
MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Indications of an Impending Communist Offensive
in South Vietnam

SUMMARY

There are numerous indications that the Communists are prepared and positioned to kick off a new wave of intensified military action any time between now and Christmas. Most of the indicators point to III Corps as the focal point for the upcoming attacks, particularly those involving infantry assaults. There are also some (but fewer) indications of preparations for ground probes or assaults at various points in IV Corps. In any event, though III Corps will probably be the primary theater of operations, the enemy may launch numerous mortar, artillery, and recoilless rifle attacks, accompanied by some ground action, on allied outposts and population centers throughout the country. Some sharp upsurge in Communist offensive activity is almost certain to develop within the next week or two, and one reliable agent has reported that attacks in III Corps are scheduled to begin on the night of 12-13 December, i.e., during the late morning and early afternoon of Thursday, 12 December, in Washington.





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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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

12 December 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Again Has Protested US Flights Over North Vietnam: A Foreign Ministry communiqué issued on 11 December charged that US aircraft struck villages in Nghe An and Quang Binh provinces on the 9th. Since 1 November, Hanoi claimed, US aircraft have bombed and strafed "densely populated areas deep inside North Vietnamese territory dozens of times."

The statement was harsher and more threatening than earlier Foreign Ministry complaints. It demanded an end "forever" to US acts of war against North Vietnam and indicated that the Vietnamese would "appropriately punish the US...for their new adventurous steps." Previous statements have not included this kind of retaliatory threat.

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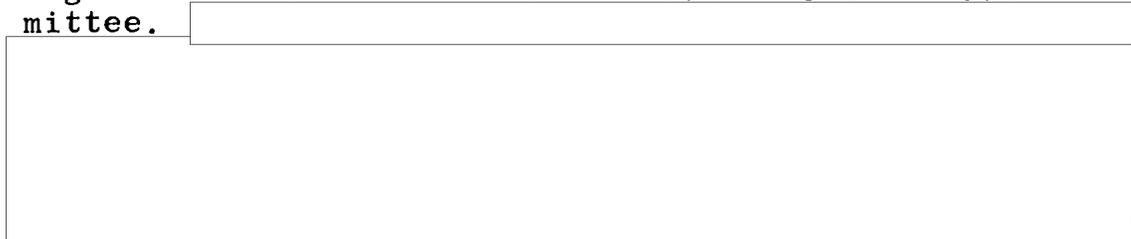
New Liberation Front Negotiating Team: The Liberation Front has appointed a new delegation to attend the Paris talks.

The announcement did not specify when the delegation would be sent to Paris. The Front's representatives now there apparently are empowered only to discuss preliminary procedural problems. There have been several indications that once these matters are resolved, a new, higher-level team will arrive. The announcement of a new delegation hints that the Communists anticipate moving beyond procedural wrangling into substantive talks relatively soon.

The new delegation is headed by four members of the Front's central committee and includes experienced diplomats. It also includes a Front political cadre from the Saigon area and a military officer. Two members of the Front's group now in Paris are also included.

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The delegation will be headed by Tran Buu Kiem, a member of the presidium and chairman of the foreign affairs commission of the Front's central committee.



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Madame Binh, who heads the delegation in Paris, and Tran Hoai Nam, the chief Front representative in Algeria, are the deputy heads of the team. Nam has been a prominent foreign representative of the Front. The fourth-ranking member, Nguyen Van Tien, heads the Front's mission in Hanoi.

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Schools Will Remain Dispersed Outside of Hanoi:

The government has ordered schools to remain dispersed in the countryside despite the US bombing halt. In a directive sent to all provinces as well as Hanoi and Haiphong city education offices on 2 November, the education ministry instructed that the facilities which have been evacuated are to remain in place and continue security and air defense tasks "...in order to defend against resumed enemy bombing."

According to a Western traveler who was in Hanoi in late November and early December, the city's residents have been advised that they may bring their families back at their own risk. Elementary and secondary schools, however, will not be opened.

This directive probably stems partly from real concern in Hanoi that the US might resume the bombing, but it also reflects efforts to jolt the populace out of their tendency to relax their efforts in support of the war.

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Hog Cholera Epidemic in North Vietnam: An epidemic of hog cholera has developed in several provinces of North Vietnam, according to an intercepted message. The vice minister of agriculture, in a 5 December order, directed personnel in North Vietnamese provinces where hog cholera had broken out to discover it quickly and to inoculate and quarantine infected animals as well as inspect all animals prior to butchering.

A cholera epidemic was responsible for the death of a number of cattle in the northern province of Lao Cai and Yen Bai in May of this year. At the beginning of 1968, cholera was reported in three other North Vietnamese provinces.

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

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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