



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 18 December 1968



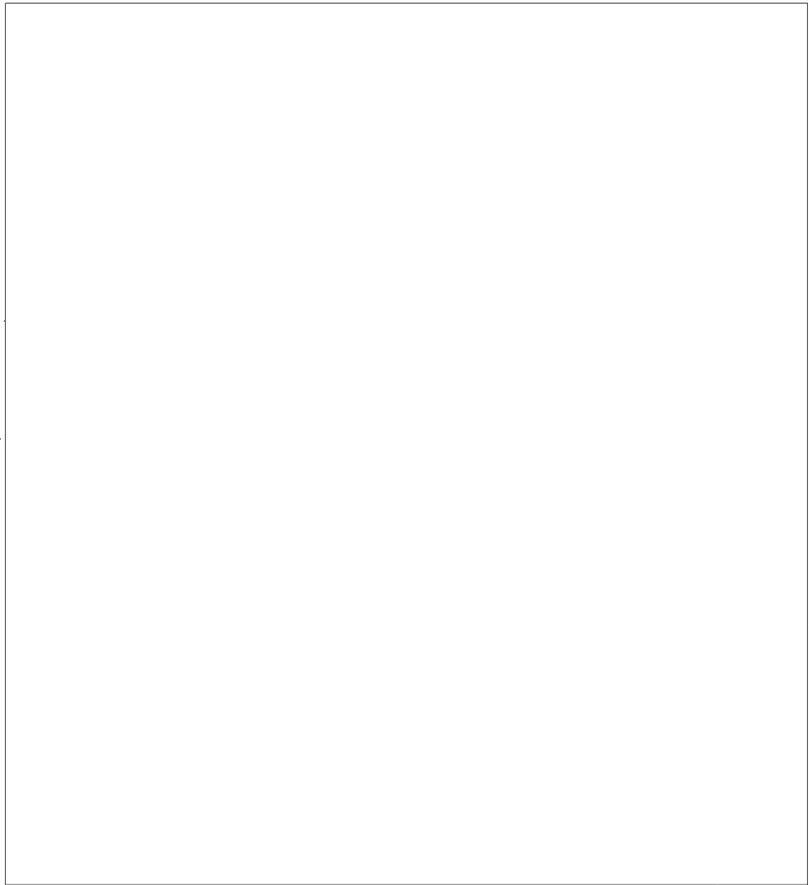
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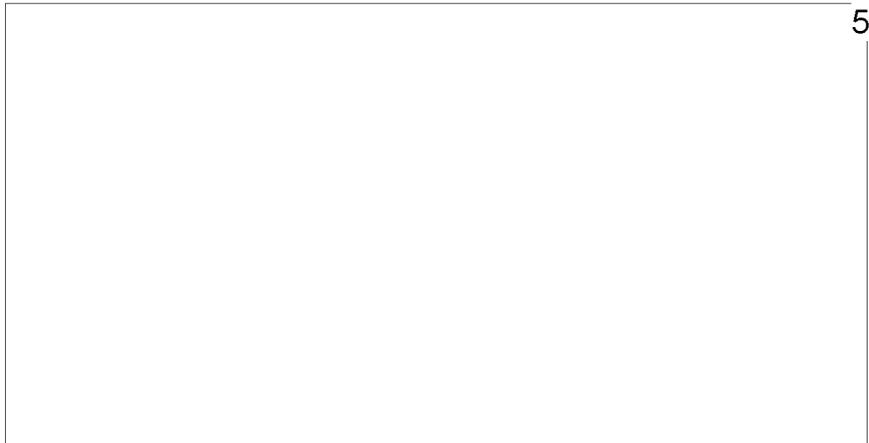
**THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
18 DECEMBER 1968**

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1. South Vietnam



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2. France

We continue to see signs of a growing lack of confidence in the Gaullist regime. Many Frenchmen are skeptical of the country's economic future, especially since the financial crisis. The Czechoslovak affair is widely regarded as a setback for De Gaulle's detente effort. Students are still disorderly, and labor restive.

The government, however, has made clear it will deal harshly with any students who get really out of line. Labor leaders have called no strikes since early December--but may be harder to deal with this spring as rising prices and unemployment begin to pinch.

Another eruption is of course possible, but we think it more likely that antagonisms will simply continue to fester below the surface.

3. Brazil

An air of uncertainty prevails. Press censorship is keeping the public in the dark as to who has been arrested, and why.

The church is encouraging one of its liberal archbishops to speak out against the government, even if he lands in jail. The bishop in fact made a speech highly critical of the government on Sunday. An open challenge by the church might stir up the now intimidated students and labor--and probably goad the military into taking even more repressive measures.

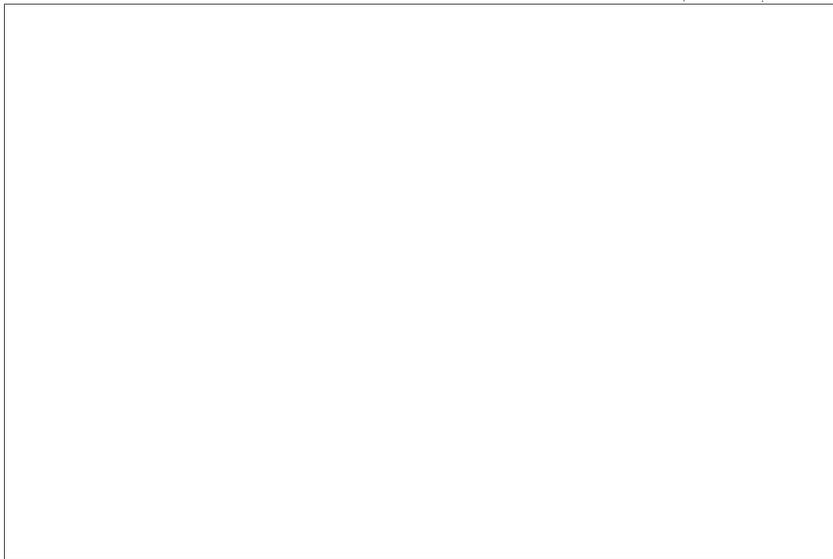
4. Laos

Ban Thateng is still in government hands despite new enemy assaults. Around-the-clock air strikes were instrumental in beating off yesterday's attack by a North Vietnamese force that may have included two fresh battalions.

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5. Israel

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6. Soviet Union

The Soviets' first solid propellant intercontinental ballistic missile--the SS-13--probably will be operational in about six months. There are indications that testing is entering an advanced stage, and satellite photography shows that the first of the new single silos being built for it will be complete by early 1969. Only 31 of the new silos have been detected since construction began in mid-1967--a much slower deployment rate than noted in earlier Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile programs.

7. Guyana

Burnham appears to have won a clear majority in Monday's election and now, for the first time, can govern without the millstone of a coalition. The public, caught up in the traditional holiday revelries, is unlikely to care much about the charges of rigging from the opposition.

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8. North Korea



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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

18 December 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Infiltration: Intercepted messages so far for December continue to show that about one new infiltrating group a day is entering the pipeline from North Vietnam.

Eight new groups have appeared in rear services messages since 10 December, bringing the total groups noted so far this month to 16. The average strength for each of these groups is about 570, bringing the month's total so far to at least 9,000 men. The majority of groups detected since late November is believed to be headed for the III Corps area of South Vietnam.

Travel of infiltration groups by truck and train in North Vietnam has resulted in a streamlining of the system of commo-liaison stations along the way. In the past, stations were strung out about a day's march from each other. Rear services communications for 15 December show that the number of way stations has been reduced.

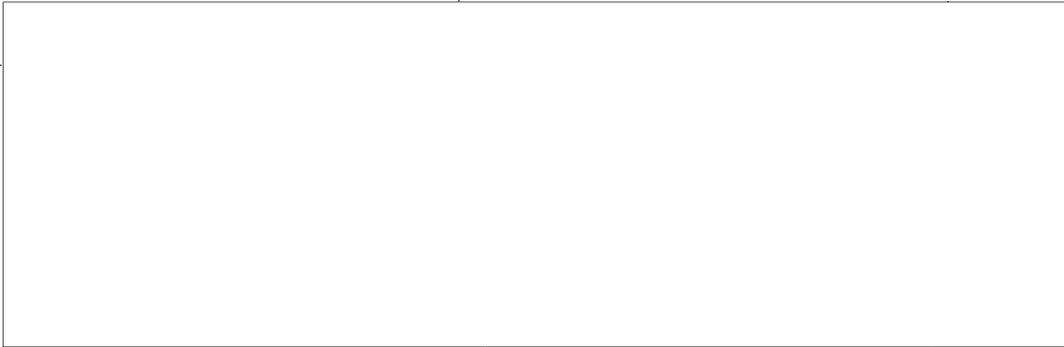
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On Prisoners: The North Vietnamese have not announced the Christmas release of some US pilots as reported earlier in broadcasts from Japan and Moscow. On 16 December, Radio Hanoi rebroadcast a statement first issued on the 13th that captured US pilots would be permitted to receive Christmas gifts. There was no mention of an impending pilot release. If such a gesture had been announced, Hanoi almost certainly would have repeated it during its broadcast on the 16th.

Hanoi still may release some of the pilots at a later date for propaganda advantage and as a gesture in connection with the Paris talks. The Communists probably believe, however, that general repatriation of prisoners will have to await agreement on the broader issues of a Vietnam settlement.

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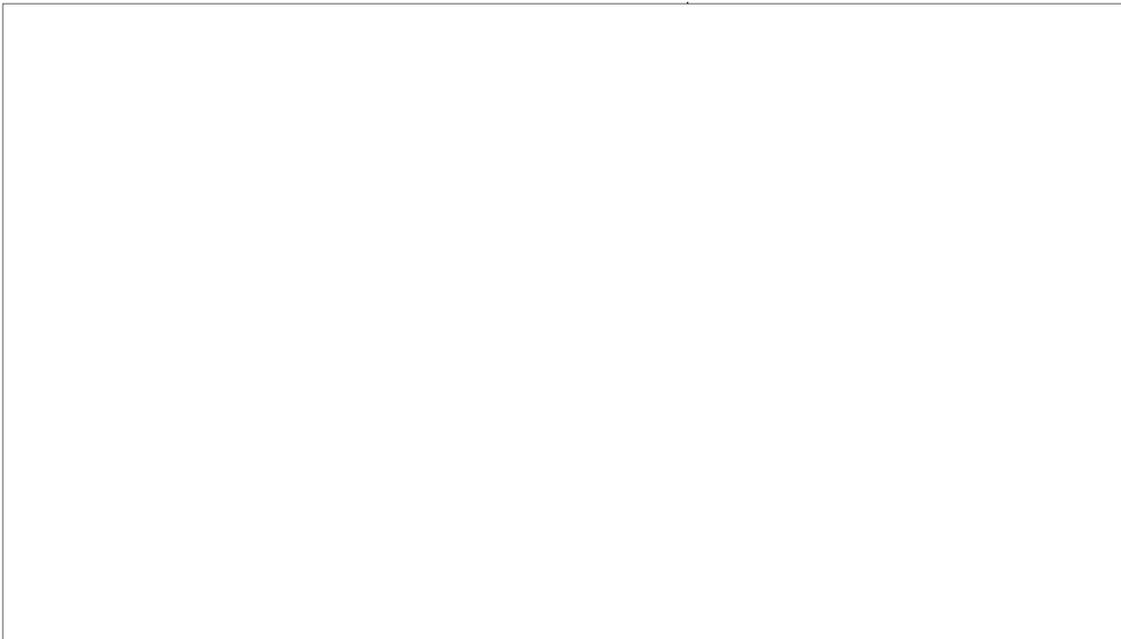
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Hanoi Hippies: Last week a North Vietnamese diplomat in Laos showed considerable--if confused--interest in the hippy phenomenon. He was talking to an American diplomat, and among the questions asked were the location of US "central hippy headquarters," who were the "top officers" in the American hippy movement, and through what channels they transmitted their commands. The North Vietnamese diplomat clearly did not believe the American when he explained that such organization was about the last thing hippies wanted.

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

There is nothing of significance to report to-
day.

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