



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 11 January 1969



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
11 JANUARY 1969

1. France-Israel

We have taken a comprehensive look at the military and political effect De Gaulle's embargo on arms shipments will have on Israel. We conclude that:

--Israel's fighting capabilities will not be materially reduced over the next few months.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] the Israeli aircraft industry can produce almost everything the air force needs except jet engines.

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[Redacted]

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--De Gaulle probably hopes the embargo will force Israel into a more flexible posture. This it will almost certainly not accomplish.

2. Soviet Union

[Redacted] 50X1

[Redacted] the much-publicized flight by the Soviet supersonic transport on 31 December was its second. We do not know why the Soviets did not announce the first flight on 17 December, but we can only speculate that they did not want to compete with the upcoming Apollo 8 flight for media coverage.

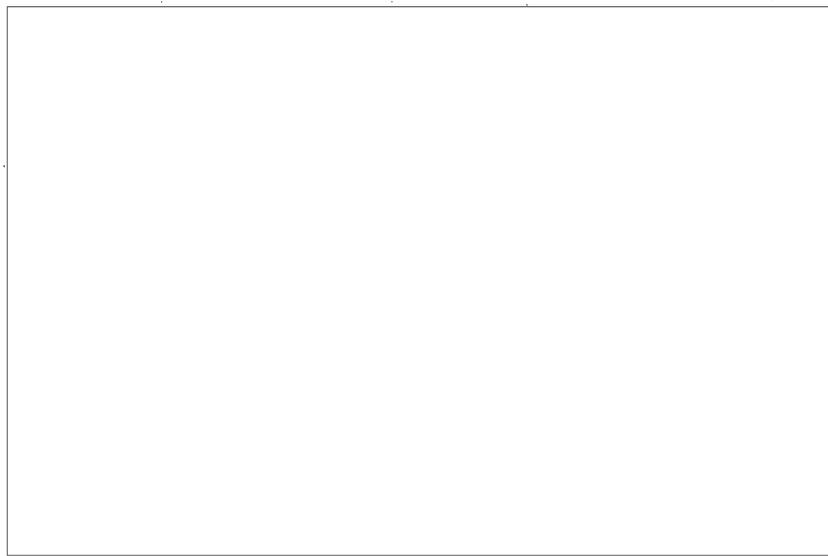
At Annex we discuss the design and performance problems the plane is encountering.

[Redacted]

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3. Middle East -
Soviet Union



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A pro-Nasir newspaper in Beirut has published the full text of the Soviet proposal.

4. Philippines

On 2 January, Marcos sent his police back against the Huks after a two-month standdown. Last Thursday the police killed 17 insurgents who apparently were assembled for a top-level meeting. Among the dead was the third-ranking Huk leader. This could be the worst setback in over a decade for the Huks, who were already suffering from some internal disarray.

Marcos apparently gave the stand-down order in an effort to win the support of politicians who have ties with the Huks, but the recent increase in insurgent depredations left him no choice but to go back into the field.

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5. Dominican Republic

General Wessin, a key leader of the regular military during the 1965 revolt who has been in exile in the US for over three years, is planning to return to the Dominican Republic tomorrow. Although the government has banned any mass demonstration, Wessin's supporters have called for "a large, enthusiastic and orderly welcome." Wessin, who claims he will not engage in conspiratorial activity, will pose no immediate danger to President Balaguer, but some of his backers seem sure to try to involve him in intrigue.

6. Venezuela

Bickering is on the rise in Caracas as the high command hunts for scapegoats for the Guyana insurrection fiasco. Along with the inauguration of a new president in March, this could produce a major shakeup in the military hierarchy.

ANNEX

Soviet SST Has Problems

By getting their supersonic transport into the air first, the Soviets have stolen a propaganda march on the West. We doubt that buyers will be flocking to Moscow, however, and the plane could turn out to be a real lemon.

[redacted] suggests that its range will probably be no greater than 2,500 miles, rather than the 3,500 miles claimed by the Soviets. This means it cannot fly the major transatlantic routes. It could reach European capitals from Moscow, but only if sonic-boom problems are ignored or somehow alleviated. Thus there is a possibility that the plane will be restricted to flights in the Soviet Union and to international routes which do not touch countries that have stringent noise and safety regulations.

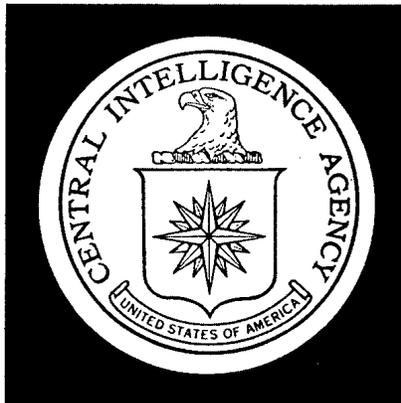
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Like the Anglo-French Concorde, which it resembles, the Soviet aircraft has run into weight and wing-design problems. Because of these and other difficulties, one Soviet scientist recently admitted that it would probably not go into service before 1972 or 1973, notwithstanding Moscow's claim of 1970 or 1971.

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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
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Notes from Hanoi: In a late December summary

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--Ho Chi Minh was looking older when observed by a Frenchman at the 20 December National Liberation Front anniversary meeting. However, he performed his Uncle Ho act, placing his arms around the young fighters from the South who were introduced to the meeting. On Army Day, two days later, he appeared to tire and left the proceedings shortly after presenting two flowers from a bouquet to Giap and the remainder to the conductor of the band.

--Groups of the People's Defense militia paraded in Hanoi on Army Day and, despite a week's marching practice, the results were unimpressive. One section of about 12 persons was armed with rifles or submachine guns; true to Vietnamese feminist tradition, most of this belligerent section were women. The other sections had fairly primitive equipment. The rescuers carried long wooden ladders, the firefighters a red painted tin bathtub, homemade buckets and stirrup pumps, and the first aid persons little but a folding stretcher. According to a local Vietnamese source, these groups are organized in each district and factory, and there are 100 to 200 such groups in Hanoi.

--Plowing for the winter-spring rice crop is behind schedule, according to the local press. A French observer on a recent trip to the western Tonkin Delta was surprised to see no plowing going on. Another problem, according to the press, is that unseasonably warm weather has made the young rice grow too rapidly, thus reaching the optimum size for setting out in the fields before the ground can be prepared.

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--Christmas Eve in Hanoi saw a filled cathedral for the midnight mass; the square in front was thronged with people. The number of people in the streets, which normally would be deserted after 11 p.m., was also striking.

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Views of Vietnamese Communist Representatives:
The two Vietnamese Communist representatives in Algeria--Hanoi's ambassador and the Liberation Front representative--took a hard line on negotiations [redacted]. Both stated categorically that the present Saigon government would have to go before any progress could be made in Paris. They also voiced the hope that the US would move to replace the Thieu government with individuals outside Saigon military circles. Like other Communist spokesmen, the Vietnamese indicated that Hanoi intended to ask for reparations for bomb damage to help rebuild the country.

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Shipping: [redacted]

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[redacted] an East German ship will be loaded in Gdynia and depart for Haiphong in February. It is owned by an East German shipping line reported to be starting a shipping service to the Far East. This will be the first East German merchant ship in the Far East since 1965.

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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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