



The President's Daily Brief

12 March 1969

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Top Secret~~





13 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
12 MARCH 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Intercepts indicate that a minimum of eleven North Vietnamese MIGs flew to Communist China on 13 March. [REDACTED]

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EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Reports from the US Embassies in Warsaw and Budapest indicate that a Warsaw Pact summit is to be held, apparently in Budapest, before the end of March. One source says the meeting will convene next Monday. [REDACTED]

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MIDDLE EAST

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

PAKISTAN

Ayub announced today that Pakistan's round table conference has reached "broad agreement" that direct adult suffrage should be introduced and that the country should have a parliamentary system of government. He indicated that several issues, including the extent to which East and West Pakistan should be autonomous, were still unresolved. (FBIS 24, 13 Mar 69)

JAMAICA

Violence against foreigners (as well as prominent Jamaicans) has been building up. Two Americans have been shot by unknown

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assailants in the past few weeks, and a telephone caller recently threatened Ambassador Tobriner. The Jamaican Government has stepped up police and military raids in an effort to halt the violence, and the US Embassy is taking precautions.



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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Military action throughout South Vietnam was relatively light during the past 24 hours.

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Recently intercepted North Vietnamese air defense communications suggest that Hanoi has fully examined the possibility of US military responses to its offensive in the South. Conversations intercepted on 7 and 8 March reflected an urgent concern with preparations for anticipated US retaliatory strikes, even as far north as the airfields near Hanoi. There was some indication that communication procedures were being established so that, if necessary, North Vietnamese jets could be flown to Chinese airfields. This occurred following US bombing of Phuc Yen Airfield near Hanoi in December 1967.

Some of this concern over retaliation no doubt stems from the recent northward deployment of US naval units in the Gulf of Tonkin and their taking station just outside Hanoi's territorial waters. On 9 and 10 March, North Vietnamese naval radar stations maintained unusually close surveillance of two US destroyers, reporting their locations at two to four minute intervals.

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The North Vietnamese are not sitting back to await the outcome of new or anticipated military actions in the field. Their interest in getting down to private talks came through loud and clear in language used by Xuan Thuy, by the Soviets, and by the Poles in the past few days. All three parties made a special effort to convince US officials that the talks ought to begin soon, and they left plenty of room for including Saigon.

In Xuan Thuy's first private meeting with Ambassador Lodge, he strongly implied that four-way talks to discuss de-escalation should be the first step, and he confirmed that the Communists wanted to focus on troop withdrawal as the initial major substantive issue.

Soviet diplomat Oberemko told a Paris Embassy officer that the US should begin talks with the Front. Like a few others pressing Hanoi's case, he left a strong impression that the Communists were eventually going to accept a change in the Saigon government's "attitude" rather than a change in its composition as a condition for progress in the talks.

Polish diplomat Lewandowski, in his conversation with Ambassador Lodge, also urged that the US should quickly move into private talks. Lewandowski's line that the US cannot expect to achieve a "position of strength" while the talks are under way is becoming a more and more prominent Communist theme. Hanoi is steadily hitting hard on this subject and doubtless will carry it on at the formal talks tomorrow.

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[redacted] a story in the US press. [redacted] quotes Ambassador Harriman as saying that the Communist offensive was a response to allied military operations rather than a deliberate attempt to torpedo the talks. Hanoi radio used the quote in a broadcast on 12 March about Secretary Laird's trip, and it is a safe bet that it will be heard again in Paris tomorrow.

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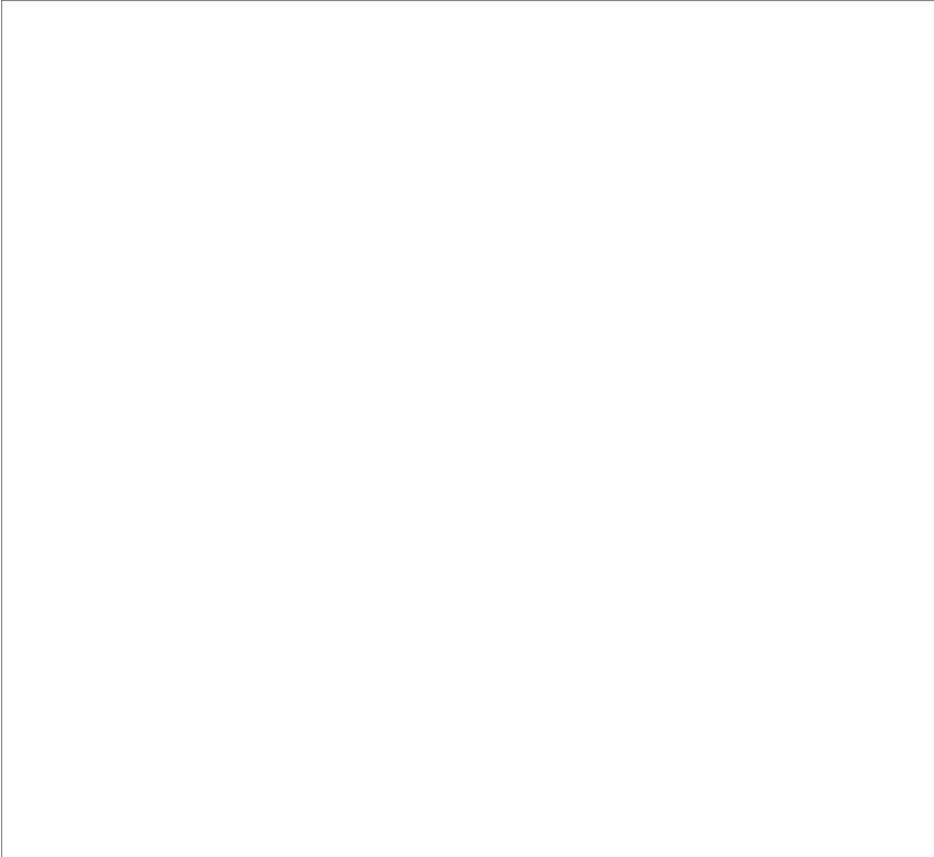
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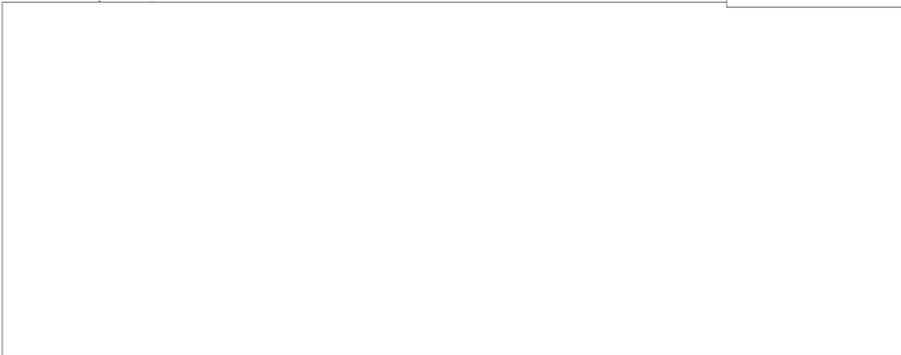
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EUROPE

Chancellor Kiesinger and President De Gaulle will hold their semiannual summit meeting in Paris tomorrow and Friday, with no significant results expected.



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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

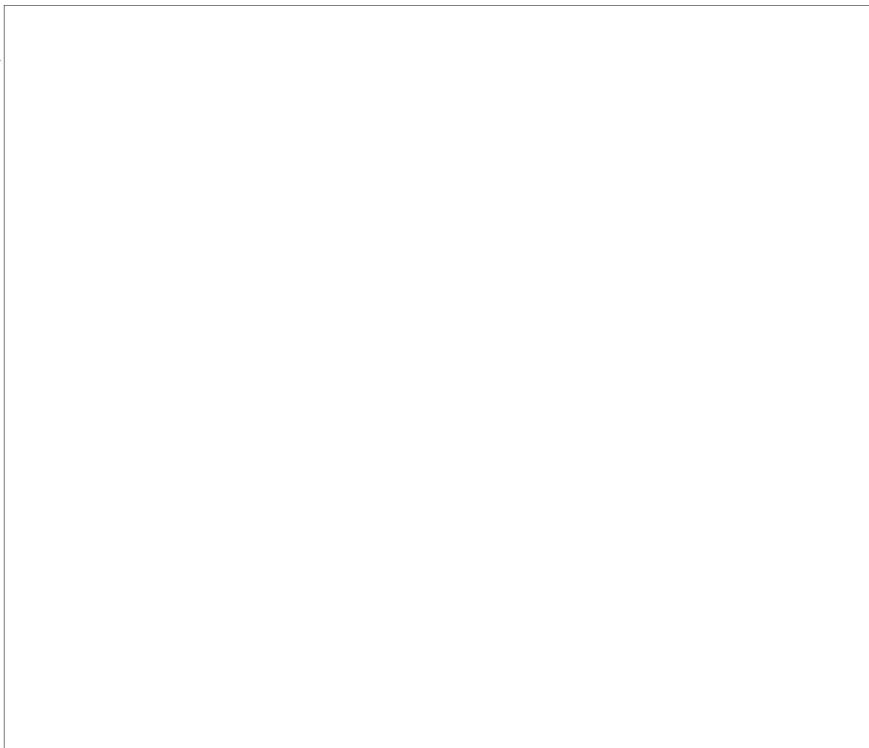
LAOS

While there is a good deal of military activity, we still see no firm evidence of a major attempt by the Communists to expand into areas traditionally controlled by the government. North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops are pressuring some of the remaining government positions in Samneua Province, but they have failed to drive friendly guerrillas from any important base since capturing Houei Hinsa on 3 March. A Communist attack against Houei Thong Ko, a transit point for thousands of Meo refugees fleeing southward, was recently repulsed with the help of tactical air support. The Meo guerrillas have for tactical reasons evacuated a number of smaller positions west and north of Na Khang.

The enemy's raid against Luang Prabang Airfield early today was the third in as many years. The Communists also increased pressure in the vicinity of the Mekong River town of Pak Beng. In addition, the Communists are moving fresh troops and supplies into the Thateng area in southern Laos, possibly signaling a new assault against the base there. These moves will add to Vientiane's apprehensions. In fact, the most immediate danger is one of some ill-advised move by a rattled government leadership.

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PAKISTAN



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CHILE

Last week's legislative elections have depressed President Frei. He regards the results, which showed both left and right increasing their vote totals at the expense of his Christian Democrats, as a grave defeat for both his party and himself. He does not believe the Christian Democrats can win the presidential election in 1970 without allies, and he thinks the party is so isolated after last week's vote that it has no hope of linking up with any other party. Nor does he see any attractive presidential candidates among his Christian Democratic colleagues. Even though the Chilean right made the most noteworthy gains last week, Frei thinks a candidate backed by the Communists and Socialists will have a better than even chance of winning the three-way presidential race which most observers believe will develop in 1970.

Frei's analysis on the whole does not differ too drastically from our own conclusions. In a sense the Christian Democrats had nowhere to go but down from the unprecedented majorities they rolled up in recent years. The vote they received last week--30 percent of the total--probably is close to a fair measure of their basic strength, and we do not expect it to drop much further.

We suspect that Frei will recover from his depression before long and will continue to push his legislative programs. He may be less interested in involving himself in partisan political affairs, however, believing that his party is on the road to disaster and hoping to keep clear.

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