

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 26 November 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
26 NOVEMBER 1968

1. France

French officials and editorial writers have responded warmly to President Johnson's message supporting De Gaulle's efforts to save the franc. Even Yankee-baiting Michel Debré is said to have called the President's move a brilliant one which will make it harder for the French to be intransigent in their relations with the United States.

2. Soviet Union

Rumors out of Moscow notwithstanding, it now looks as if the Soviets will not attempt a flight around the moon in December. Movements and activities of key space support and recovery ships, [redacted] make early 1969 a more likely period. Soviet announcements on the achievements of the Zond-5 and Zond-6 flights suggest that the next circumlunar capsule may well be manned.

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3. Philippines

Marcos, perhaps concerned that he has gone too far in abusing his friends, has lately made some private moves to assure US officials of his friendship. He has also dropped public references to his deliberately engineered dispute with Malaysia over Sabah, and has softened or clarified statements he made to the Manila Overseas Press Club November 20 about strengthening ties with "socialist countries."

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4. Asia-Pacific

South Korea's foreign minister called in Ambassador Porter Saturday to raise again his government's long-standing desire for a NATO-like regional defense organization. He did not touch on the essential--and unlikely--factor of Japanese participation, though he did acknowledge that a "Pacific-Asia Treaty Organization" would require US sea and air support. The South Koreans, and perhaps other non-Communist Asian governments, probably intend to press the idea with the next US administration, if only to guarantee a post-Vietnam American presence in the Pacific.

5. South Vietnam

Retail prices in Saigon continue the decline that has been evident since the high peak just after the Tet offensive. Prices jumped 70 percent in the single month between January and February, but have now gotten down to only 25 percent above the January level.

Recent declines are apparently a reflection of larger deliveries of food from the provinces because of better road conditions and the relatively low level of military activity in the delta and around Saigon.

6. Rumania

Bucharest's newspapers and radio-broadcasts this morning announced the opening "according to plan" of a Warsaw Pact staff officers' conference in the city under the direction of pact commander Yakubovsky. Though billed as an annual consultation on "problems related to combat training," the conference underscores Rumania's obligations to the pact. The military situation on Rumania's borders remains normal.

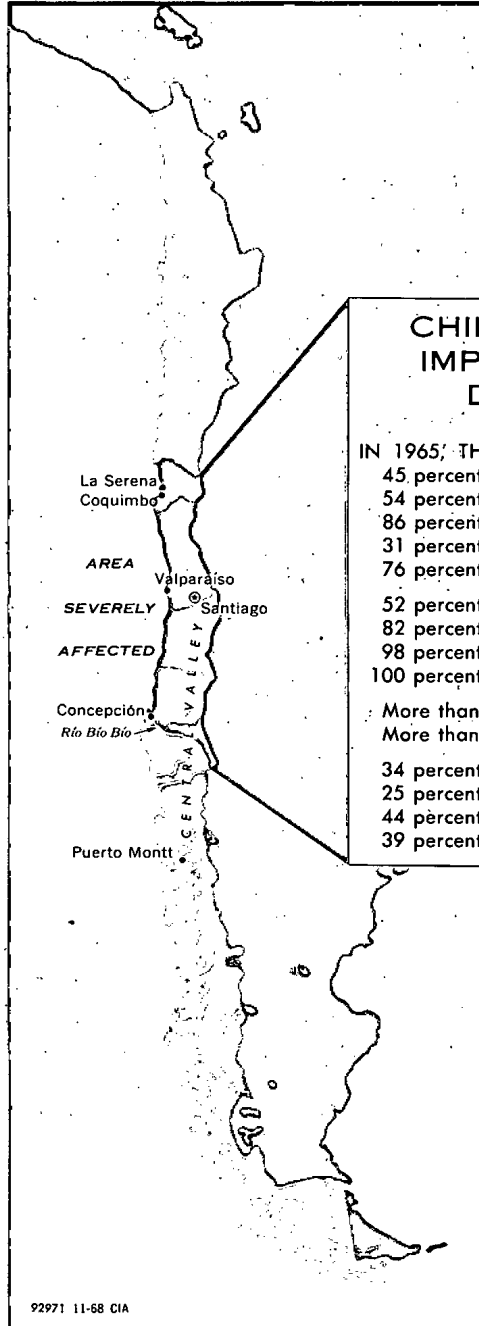
7. Egypt

Student dissatisfaction has again boiled over into the streets, requiring massive and forceful containment measures by security forces. Nasir cooled similar outbursts last February with promises of political and social reforms, but these have proved to be hollow. He is not likely to have any better ideas for soothing the present blow-up, when and if he gets the lid back on. The discontent afflicting Egypt's urban society is in fact incurable under present circumstances.

Unhappily for everyone, these domestic ills make it even less feasible for Egyptian leaders to attempt any bold initiatives or risky concessions in foreign affairs, particularly in regard to a settlement with Israel.

8. Peru

Moderates in the cabinet have grown increasingly dissatisfied with Velasco's performance and are particularly opposed to further nationalization measures against US companies. Velasco's radical advisers, however, want him to take over the rest of the International Petroleum Company's assets and cut deeper into the profits from other US firms. Velasco's scheduled retirement from the army in January could be the occasion for a move by the moderates to replace him as president.



CHILE: LOCATION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DROUGHT AREA

IN 1965, THIS AREA ACCOUNTED FOR:

- 45 percent of the cultivated and fallow land
- 54 percent of the sown area
- 86 percent of the irrigated area
- 31 percent of the improved pasture
- 76 percent of the orchards and vineyards
- 52 percent of production of wheat
- 82 percent of production of barley
- 98 percent of production of corn
- 100 percent of production of rice
- More than 50 percent of production of vegetables
- More than 75 percent of production of fruit
- 34 percent of the cattle
- 25 percent of the sheep
- 44 percent of the hogs
- 39 percent of production of dairy products

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9. Chile

Chile's worst drought in 44 years is going to complicate the country's chronic economic, social, and political problems. In Santiago, the center of the drought area, rainfall this year has been little more than one-fifth the normal average, and less-than-normal snowfalls in the Andes mean there will be little water available during the rainless summer now approaching. The area affected accounts for the bulk of the country's agriculture, industry, and population.

President Frei's Christian Democratic government is counting heavily on assistance from the United States and other countries to mitigate the immediate consequences of the disaster, but a multiplier effect will be felt in virtually every aspect of Chilean national life for months and years to come.

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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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

North Vietnam Opens a New Round of Aid Talks

With its Communist Allies: Hanoi's chief foreign aid negotiator, Le Thanh Nghi, left Hanoi for Moscow, according to Hanoi Radio on 25 November. He makes a tour of Communist capitals about twice a year and his last trip was in June-July. This time he is scheduled to negotiate military and economic assistance for 1969, probably with heavy emphasis on economic aid. Hanoi is already seriously considering many of the problems of postwar reconstruction, but cannot move very far in this direction without extensive foreign assistance. The North Vietnamese are probably anxious to get commitments from their major allies on priority projects as soon as possible.

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Hanoi's Reaction to Loss of US Aircraft: Hanoi's charges about continuing US "acts of force" against North Vietnam are likely to become harsher and more specific in the wake of the loss of three US aircraft over North Vietnam since Friday.

So far, North Vietnamese broadcasts have crowed about the shootdowns and the capture of US airmen

[Redacted]

A broadcast in English to Southeast Asia on Monday, however, claimed that US aircraft had been dropping leaflets and "demolition bombs" in the southern part of North Vietnam.

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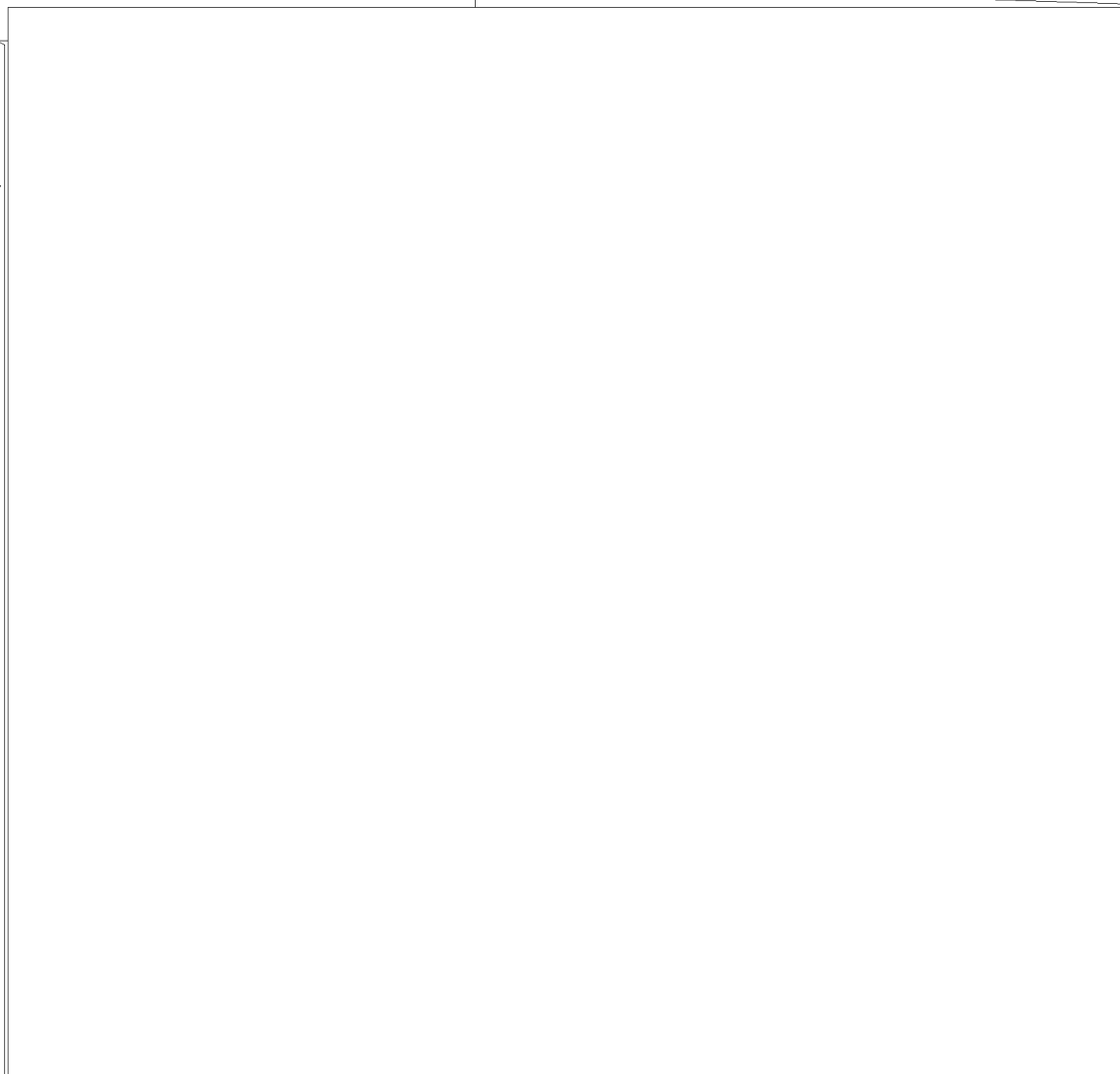
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Hanoi Has Problems With Younger Generation: The chief political officer in Hanoi's army has unveiled some new and unusual disciplinary problems among North Vietnamese young people. In a long speech addressed to youth in the military establishment, General Song Hao recently admitted that young North Vietnamese, apparently in significant numbers, are aping some of the mod fashions, manners, and ideas of youth in other parts of the world. He sounded a note of alarm about the extent to which these attitudes might be infecting the general population.

The sternness of Song Hao's lecture, the puritanical tone of his sermonizing, and the implied extent of youthful dilettantism suggest a genuine concern that

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significant popular attention has been diverted from the war effort in recent months and is perhaps related to general relaxation of tensions in the wake of the bombing restrictions last spring. Song Hao accused some young Vietnamese of falling down in their public duty--"admiring and fearing" Americans, doubting party leadership, and losing their "revolutionary zeal and fighting spirit." Equally dangerous, he said, is their private conduct which has become "decadent and reactionary" and includes "debauchery, robbery, cowboy rowdiness and queer dress."

Since early summer there have been isolated reports of modishly dressed young men appearing on the streets of the capital city. The local press acknowledged the problem and special disciplinary measures have been taken against anyone caught in such attire. The impression conveyed by these reports, however, was that the problem was minor and probably involved a few Thai repatriates or other small groups having recent contact with Western customs. Song Hao's speech put the problem in different perspective. He is addressing regular armed forces units which presumably have little opportunity to escape strict military discipline. Even making allowances for North Vietnam's frequent use of criticism as a device to exhort troops to better performance, Song Hao's speech is unusual. He did not describe the problems with the usual cliches about "bourgeois tendencies"; his charges and his recommendations were specific and forthright, and his target clearly labeled. Hanoi seems to be experiencing a new and relatively serious problem with its young people.

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Cambodia Releases North Vietnamese Prisoners:
A semiofficial Cambodian publication has announced that the government recently turned over six North Vietnamese prisoners to the Viet Cong representative in Cambodia. This is the first time Cambodia has publicly described Communist intruders as North Vietnamese. It underlines growing Cambodian annoyance at Communist incursions.

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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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