

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 6 January 1969



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
6 JANUARY 1969

1. Middle East -
Israel

Danger of another major military clash is still high, even though there has been a decrease in armed conflict along Israel's borders during the past few days.

The Lebanese Government is convinced that Israel will attack Lebanon, and perhaps Jordan too, prior to 20 January. Many Lebanese believe the Israelis are deliberately stirring up Arab terrorists in order to create a pretext for an invasion.

Lebanese authorities are discouraged. They know they cannot defeat the Israelis and they cannot guarantee complete control of the terrorists. Jordanian authorities, nevertheless, managed to head off a terrorist shelling of the Israeli port of Eilat which had been planned for early January.

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General De Gaulle yesterday offered France's "total support" for Lebanon,

[Redacted]

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but De Gaulle has enough problems at home to preclude any French military commitment as part of an offer to sell arms and to give psychological support.

The Lebanese foreign minister has again appealed for a gesture of support from the US.

2. Middle East

The Soviet "timetable" proposal for an Arab-Israeli settlement has generated considerable diplomatic activity.

In Cairo yesterday, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry briefed all Arab ambassadors on it and on world reaction to it.

At the same time, in Moscow, United Nations mediator Gunnar Jarring told Ambassador Thompson that after conferring with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov, he is convinced that the proposal is a serious one. He said that the Soviet Union intends to inform other governments about its proposition in an effort to mobilize worldwide support.

The French plan to have their position on the paper ready by this coming weekend. Foreign Minister Debré will discuss it with Soviet Deputy Premier Kirillin this week.

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3. Soviet Union

The first Soviet interplanetary probe toward Venus during this current favorable launching period is apparently designed to descend gently onto the planet in mid-May. Unlike Venus-4, which in October 1967 was the first Soviet shot to hit the planet, this probe probably has improved instruments to insure transmission of Venusian atmospheric data during its descent.

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4. Czechoslovakia

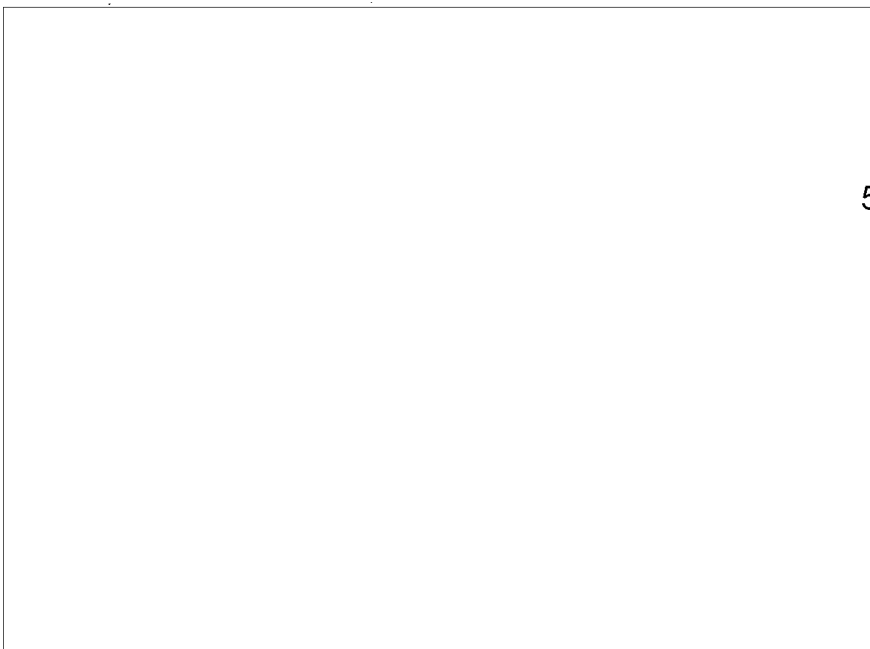
The army will probably maintain the combat alert begun yesterday until 11 January.

During this period the political future of Josef Smrkovsky, the popular President of the National Assembly, will be decided. Smrkovsky's retention as chief of the parliament is opposed by the party's conservatives and by the Soviets. Both object to his liberal politics.

On 5 January, Smrkovsky hinted in a nationwide televised speech that he might be downgraded. He said he would abide by the results of discussions by ranking party leaders in the next few days, which could mean that a formal announcement of his removal is close at hand.

The military alert is almost certainly a precautionary move, in view of well publicized threats of strikes and demonstrations by workers and young people if Smrkovsky should be forced out. So far there have been no reports of trouble. Today we expect to see a mushrooming of popular support for Smrkovsky.

5. Nigeria



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6. Guyana

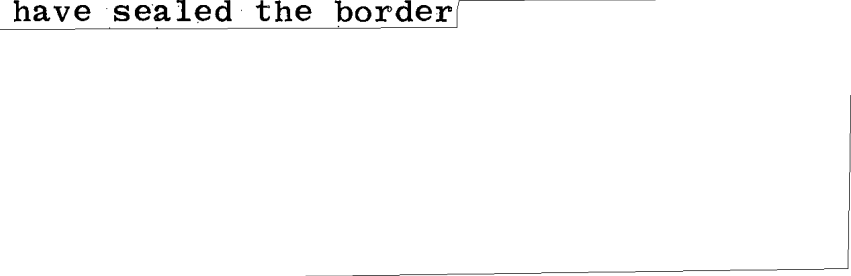
The revolt in the backwoods has turned into a fiasco, leaving in its wake ten dead, a number of rebel ring-leaders arrested in Guyana and in Brazil, and the Venezuelans proclaiming their innocence.

Despite a plethora of conflicting information, it seems clear that the rebellion was directed from Caracas, and that the original scenario called for the rebels to seize some key towns and request Venezuelan troops to move in and occupy the territory. Venezuela has laid claim to over half of Guyana for many years and has been trying to manufacture an excuse for taking it over for some time.



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Brazil also has territorial claims on Guyana, but has not made any move to press them. Instead, the Brazilians have sealed the border



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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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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War Mentality Wanes: The North Vietnamese regime is continuing to have trouble maintaining the population on a war footing. Despite the official policy forbidding the return of evacuated adults and children to the city except for visits, recent travelers to Hanoi have reported encountering growing numbers of people of all ages on the streets. A Westerner who visited Hanoi in late December observed a group of school children carrying school books coming out of a girls' school in Hanoi. The same observer reported that the authorities are continuing the production and distribution of one-man concrete air raid shelters--an attempt to remind the people that the country is still at war. The source also observed an increase in the supply of consumer goods available to the public--bicycle parts, clothing, and fabric.

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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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