

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 15 January 1969



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
15 JANUARY 1969

1. South Vietnam

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2. France -
Middle East

The French are making it clear that De Gaulle's promise of "total support" for Lebanon means almost nothing at all in concrete terms. There is no French commitment to send troops in, and Paris is even unwilling to make any more public or private statements of support. De Gaulle did offer to send the French fleet to Beirut for a visit, but the Lebanese begged off.

President Hilu has passed the word to Ambassador Porter that he now sees the US as Lebanon's only source of real help.

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3. France

Our embassy in Paris has new evidence of De Gaulle's preoccupation with questions of war and peace in general and the Middle East in particular. The embassy's sources report the following:

--De Gaulle is convinced the Israelis are planning more raids against their Arab neighbors. His arms embargo was designed to cause second thoughts in Tel Aviv and to hearten those such as Nasir and Husayn who want to control the terrorists.

--He thinks Israel is still moving toward war, however, and he believes neither the US nor the Soviet Union will apply enough pressure to Israel and the Arabs to ward off hostilities. France, he thinks, has little leverage of its own.

--De Gaulle says he has reason to think the Soviets will respond to his embargo by reducing their own arms shipments to the Middle East. (De Gaulle is talking through his hat. There are currently seven Soviet ships on their way to the Middle East with war materiel, and none shows any sign of turning around.)

Our embassy notes: "De Gaulle seems to be in one of his more frequently recurring moods of despondency. There is an important element of pique at the world's rejection of his wise counsel which enters into this despondency."

4. Communist China

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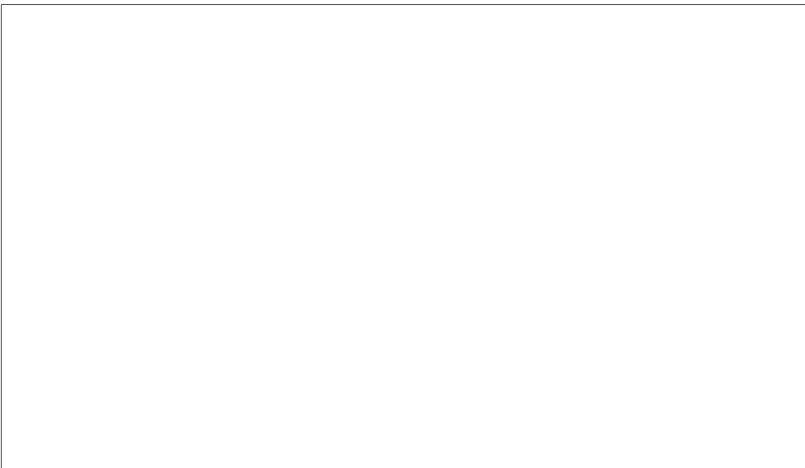
5. Soviet Union

Soyuz 5 lifted off early this morning as expected. [redacted] that it has achieved a rendezvous with Soyuz 4. Docking has not been attempted yet.

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With three men in Soyuz 5 and only one in Soyuz 4, it seems plausible that an attempt will be made to transfer personnel from one spacecraft to the other.

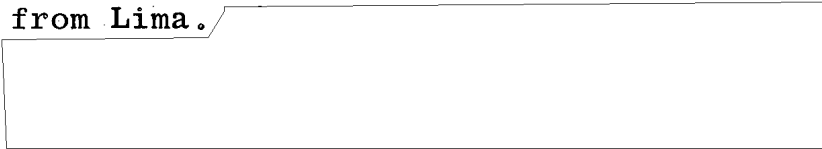
6. Peru



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We do not anticipate Velasco's political demise in the near future, although our embassy believes he is becoming more and more isolated from the mainstream of Peruvian opinion. As long as he is in power, more anti-US sound and fury is likely to be heard from Lima.

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1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

More on Infiltration: Hanoi is continuing to insert infiltration groups into the pipeline [redacted]

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[redacted]
Several of the new packets are headed for central South Vietnam, while most of the others are destined for the III Corps area. The Communists are undoubtedly counting on the new manpower to bolster their position on the battlefield should they decide to mount a new offensive during the next few months.

[redacted] The bulk of these are headed for South Vietnam's northern provinces or the area around Saigon.

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[redacted]

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Ammunition Factories Increasing Production:

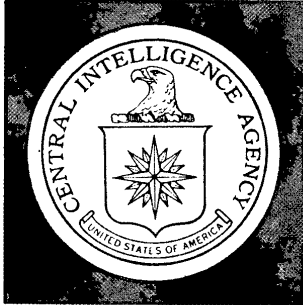
A 12 January Hanoi broadcast claims that North Vietnam's "arms and ammunition factories" overfulfilled the 1968 plan, while reducing costs by ten percent. The January plan is said to call for a still further increase. North Vietnam's armaments industry is not extensive, although it does produce 60-mm. mortars, military radios, grenades, and probably some ammunition.

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Annex

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*Soviet Military Pressure on Rumania
and Yugoslavia*

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Box 67

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III. ANNEX

SOVIET MILITARY PRESSURES ON RUMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA

SIGNIFICANCE: Uncertainty about Soviet military intentions is likely to rise again in Eastern Europe in 1969 when the military forces of the Warsaw Pact conduct a combined exercise in Rumania, something Bucharest had been able to fend off since 1962. The Soviets are using the Warsaw Pact as a lever to exact greater cooperation from the Rumanians and, indirectly, from non-Pact member Yugoslavia. The Rumanians and the Yugoslavs no longer fear, however, that the Soviets are prepared to go as far as outright military intervention. They are probably right. Even so, the anxieties aroused in Eastern Europe will be felt in Western Europe, and there will be renewed concern in NATO about the security of its southern flank.

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Soviet Military Pressures

In the wake of its decision to stamp out reformism in Czechoslovakia, Moscow has set out to force the Rumanians to reduce their awkward defiance of Soviet authority. The Soviets also hope to insulate Eastern Europe from the insidious influence of Yugoslav "revisionism."

As a member of the Warsaw Pact, Rumania is more susceptible to Soviet pressures applied through that organization than is Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, in the aftermath

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of Czechoslovakia, with its demonstration of Soviet readiness to use military force for political purposes in Eastern Europe, and Moscow's declaration concerning the limitations on the sovereignty of members of the "socialist commonwealth," Soviet pressures on Rumania will be felt keenly in Yugoslavia.

Rumanian Participation in the Warsaw Pact

In recent years Rumania has reduced its participation in Pact affairs, coming last spring very nearly to the point of having a "vacant chair" at Pact gatherings.

Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, their own discretion and, no doubt, a good measure of "comradely persuasion" from Moscow have recommended a more accommodating policy to the Rumanians. Top-ranking Rumanian and Soviet military officers have exchanged visits, among these a visit to Bucharest by the Soviet commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact forces. It was not by chance that Bucharest was the site of the annual meeting of the chiefs-of-staff of the Pact countries convened late last year. 50X1

In the offing early this year is a meeting of the Pact's Political Consultative Committee, which will be, in effect, a summit meeting of the party, government and military chiefs of the seven member states. It can be expected that pressure will mount at that time on Rumania to make concessions--potentially damaging to Rumania's claims to national sovereignty--in the name of strengthening the Warsaw Pact vis-a-vis NATO.

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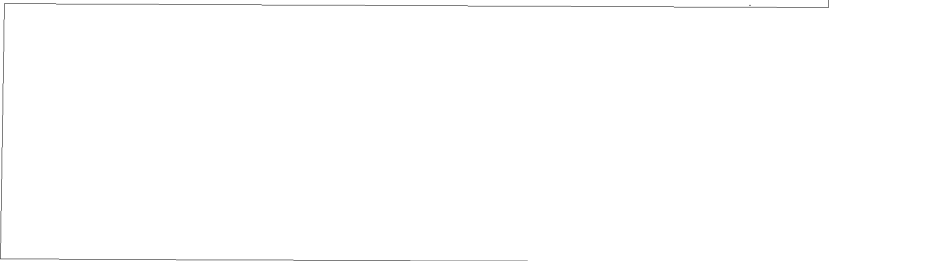
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The Soviets might revert, for example, to earlier demands that Rumania expand its own armed forces or agree to increased standardization of military equipment within the Pact. The Rumanians are also apprehensive about a possible attempt to give the Pact command tighter control over national forces.

The Rumanian Response

The Rumanian position is delicate. Bucharest will have to give some ground--as it already has in agreeing to combined exercises--but will struggle hard against being drawn more tightly into the Warsaw Pact net. In negotiating with the Russians on the timing and scope of the exercises, the Rumanians will seek to obtain hard-and-fast assurances that foreign forces will withdraw at a specific time.

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Soviet Intentions

There is no reason to think that Moscow considers either Rumania or Yugoslavia a real and present danger to its security position. The chances of extreme military action against either are not great. But even while applying lesser pressures, Moscow will arouse sharp new anxieties in Bucharest and Belgrade. If the Pact forces are slow to withdraw from Rumanian soil, as they may be, the atmosphere

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of tension that prevailed last summer will begin to settle again over Eastern Europe. If the Russians were to go a step further and leave their forces in Rumania for a protracted period, there would be real concern within NATO that the Soviets had set out to fasten their hold on all of Eastern Europe including Yugoslavia. A Yugoslav request for economic and military assistance from NATO countries would be sure to follow. The US would be pressed, on the one hand, to issue warnings to Moscow and, on the other, to avoid taking a stance which might seem to challenge the USSR.

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