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The President's Daily Brief

~~*Top Secret*~~ *29 January 1968*

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2. North Vietnam

Hanoi may intend to use the jet airfield it is trying to re-establish at Vinh for operations against US B-52 bombers around the Demilitarized Zone. Communications between Hanoi and Vinh have recently included messages pertinent to B-52 strike operations. Moreover, the North Vietnamese recently used two of their top pilots for MIG-21 flights to the Vinh area.

Communist attempts to shoot down B-52s near the zone with surface-to-air missiles have so far been unsuccessful.

3. South Vietnam

Enemy military activity has not been reduced significantly since the beginning of the Viet Cong - announced cease-fire period three days ago. North Vietnamese main force units in the western highlands of Pleiku and Kontum provinces are completing battle preparations.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

French Press Agency on Hanoi Reaction to the Pueblo Incident: Yesterday Paris broadcast in English a dispatch from the French correspondent in Hanoi. According to this piece, North Vietnam regards the Pueblo incident as part of widespread hostile American action against Asian countries, "dominated by the Vietnamese conflict." Hanoi, it said, lumps the American ship's operations off North Korea with violation of the Cambodian frontier, the bombing of Laos, violation of Chinese air space, and increasing American air and advisory activities against the Pathet Lao.

The French dispatch goes on to quote the North Vietnamese army journal as saying that the seizure of the Pueblo "is a legitimate action that absolutely no one can distort. But the Americans do not know how to be contrite. They fall back on gangsters' remarks and, while trying to resolve their crises, they resort to cunning." The army journal concludes by saying that "elbow to elbow with our Korean brothers there is the powerful socialist camp and the whole of progressive humanity."

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Hanoi on "Deceptive" US Peace Posture: Hanoi continues to place full responsibility for prolongation of the war on the US. An authoritative "Commentator" article in the 28 January Hanoi daily Nhan Dan asserts that US "ruling circles" continued to "maintain a stubborn attitude" even after Foreign Minister Trinh's recent statement that talks between Hanoi and the US "would" begin after the US unconditionally stopped the bombing of North Vietnam. The article noted that many people and governments and even some "American political circles" have demanded that the US stop the bombing.

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President Johnson's remarks on Vietnam in his State of the Union address were merely a repetition of earlier US statements, according to the "Commentator" article. Hanoi claims that the call for reciprocity in exchange for an end to the bombing is a "trick to confuse right and wrong" and that the US is seeking a pretext to expand the war. The article closed with a standard North Vietnamese assertion that they are determined to fight "till final victory" to defeat the US.

* * *

Hanoi Protests Barrier in Laos: Hanoi international service in English on 26 January quotes the Nhan Dan issue of the same date as denouncing "the US scheme to establish a mechanical warning system in Laos as a most cynical violation of the 1962 Geneva agreements." Nhan Dan goes on to state that "this barrier is designed as a supplement to the barbed wire and structural barriers to be built along the Demilitarized Zone in Vietnam and will consist of elaborate mechanical gadgets."

The newspaper further charged that "the mechanical warning system project in Laos constitutes a new step-up in the US plan to send ground forces to central and lower Laos." The broadcast concluded by saying that "the system, just as any other adventurous plan of the Pentagon, will certainly be frustrated by the Laotian people," led, of course, by the Pathet Lao. Hanoi did not state, however, that it will assist the Lao patriots, as it almost always does when speaking of Cambodia.

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North Vietnamese Television Studio: Hanoi has announced that it has set up a television film studio, according to a French Press Agency report from the North Vietnamese capital. Films will be produced for showing abroad and will depict the fight against the US and the "building of socialism." According to the French report, Hanoi hopes the studio will hasten the introduction of television generally in North Vietnam.

* * *

Release of US Prisoners: Hanoi's announced decision to release three captured US airmen held in North Vietnam appears designed for propaganda purposes. In a 27 January broadcast, the North Vietnamese stated that the men would be released in honor of Tet, due to Hanoi's "humanitarian and lenient" policy. The broadcast also noted that the three have displayed a "repentant attitude." North Vietnam has not yet stated when or where they will be freed, but has identified them as Major Morris Overly, Captain Jon Black, and Ensign Paul Metheny. All three were captured during September and October last year.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi on US Antiwar Protests: A 27 January Hanoi International Service broadcast in English quoted Western reports of demonstrations in front of two New York hotels on 24 January, when Vice President Humphrey and other "warmongers" were due to appear. The broadcast noted that many demonstrators were dressed in Vietnamese peasant costumes to express support for "the Vietnamese people's struggle."

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