

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 13 February 1968



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PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF
13 FEBRUARY 1968

LATE ITEM

Korea
(as of 6:00 AM
EST)

Radio Pyongyang has charged that US troops infiltrated across the Demilitarized Zone this morning. There was an exchange of fire in the area mentioned by Pyongyang, but Embassy Seoul has no information concerning any infiltration.

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DAILY BRIEF
13 FEBRUARY 1968

1. South Vietnam
(as of 5:30 AM
EST)

There have been no significant changes in the military situation during the night. Enemy activity throughout the country has, for the last 24 hours, been largely confined to widely scattered attacks against allied positions. The rocket barrage on Bien Hoa Air Base did little damage.

In Hue and Saigon, allied forces are continuing to clean up pockets of enemy resistance. Life is beginning to return to normal in the more secure areas of Saigon.

Yesterday at least two North Vietnamese IL-14 aircraft started on a tactical mission to the south, which was apparently aborted because of poor weather.

2. Laos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a sharp increase in south-bound truck traffic into Laos through the Mu Gia Pass during the first week in February. The number of trucks was almost double the daily average for January. Roadwatch teams in Laos said some of the trucks were carrying troops and towing artillery instead of moving the usual fuel, food, and other supplies.

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The increased traffic could be partly in support of the Communist build-up around Khe Sanh.

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3. Jordan

Fears of a serious Israeli attack in the Jordan valley area are gripping Amman. After almost daily exchanges of fire across the river since last Thursday, the Israelis have moved reinforcements into the area.

[REDACTED] 3.3(h)(2)

[REDACTED] 3.3(h)(2)

4. Rumania

A still suspicious Rumania has decided to send a delegation to the Budapest meeting of Communist parties later this month. The Rumanians decided to show up only after extensive consultations with other parties, including the Chinese. Peking may regard the presence of a Rumanian delegation as a useful check on the Soviets.

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[REDACTED] delegation will oppose criticism of any Communist party as well as attempts to conclude binding agreements. The Rumanians will also try to get a world conference of Communist parties (Moscow's ultimate aim) put off as long as possible.

5. Communist China

[REDACTED] 3.3(h)(2)

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6. Thailand

Ambassador Unger notes that Thai leaders have begun privately to express concern about US ability to win a military victory in South Vietnam. Also, the deputy prime minister has publicly called seizure of the Pueblo a dramatic example of the "fact" that Communists retain the initiative in Asia.

Thai leaders would like both additional US military aid and a mutual defense agreement. They can be expected to speak out loud and clear if their uneasiness increases.

So far, there have been no indications that the Thais are planning to renege on their commitment to supply an additional 10,000 troops to Vietnam. The troops are scheduled to arrive by mid-summer 1968.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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13 February 1968

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

13 February 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Propaganda Roundup: Hanoi propaganda is continuing to hammer away on the theme that the Viet Cong offensive has "broken the backbone of the US war of aggression" and undermined the "puppet army and administration." An editorial in the Hanoi party daily yesterday pointed out that numerous allied installations have been destroyed and that the ability of the US to react to Communist efforts has been seriously hampered. The broadcast also claimed that the "current full-scale offensive" has driven the US into "tighter straits" and promised that such attacks would continue in order to weaken the allied position and prepare them for the "finishing blow."

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Hanoi Reports Messages to the American People: Hanoi on 10 February broadcast the text of a letter to the American people from one of the front organizations it claims has sprung up in South Vietnam in the wake of the current fighting. The letter, from the Front of National Democratic and Peace Alliance in Hue, rehashes the alleged hardships and indignities the Vietnamese people have suffered over the past several years at the hands of the Americans. This is the first effort of this type that the Communists have attributed to the new political organizations; it marks a further effort to give these groups permanence and credibility.

On 11 February, the North Vietnamese broadcast a letter from the Liberation Front's women's organization to American women. The letter asked American women "to demand an early end to this dirty war so that your sons and husbands are not forced to go there and kill South Vietnamese women and children."

Front Group Recruiting: Hanoi may be trying to round up personnel for some of the new political front groups it surfaced in South Vietnam during the Tet offensive. Some of these people may even be slated to participate in a "coalition" government, which the Communists now seem determined to create unilaterally.



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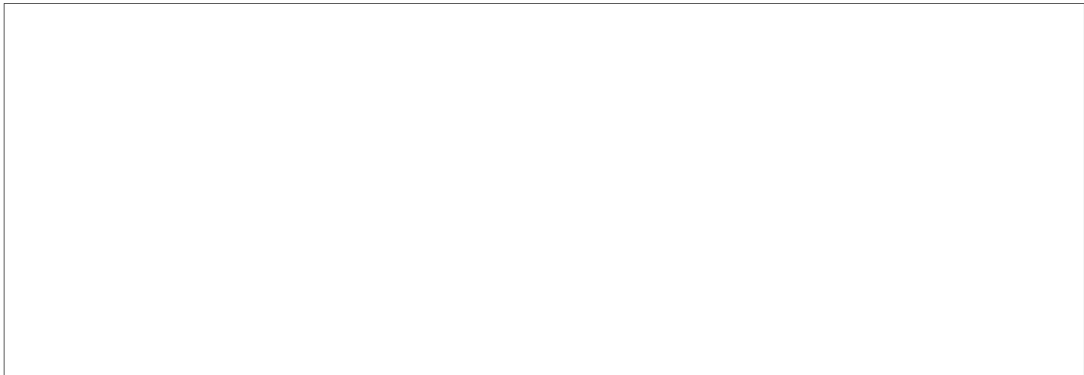
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Hanoi-Haiphong Mail: [redacted]

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[redacted] in mid-January mail was taking an average of 15 days to go between Hanoi and Haiphong. It was taking ten days to get small orders of provisions from a duty-free shop in Haiphong and another 15 days for their delivery to Hanoi.

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No Special Flight for Prisoners: The Canadians have informed Embassy Saigon that their efforts to arrange a special International Control Commission flight to Hanoi for today, to bring out the three US pilots, were unsuccessful. The next ICC flight is expected to go on Friday.

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

Hanoi and Liberation Front on Robert Kennedy Speech: Hanoi's initial references to Senator Robert Kennedy's Chicago speech are contained in two brief Vietnamese and Thai language broadcasts yesterday. Both broadcasts quote Kennedy as criticizing the US for "spending hundreds of millions of dollars to support the corrupt and impotent Saigon government." Neither broadcast contained any comment on the speech, and no English language or international broadcasts on it have yet been monitored.

The Liberation Front, in a 12 February Vietnamese language broadcast, included the same statements Hanoi attributed to Kennedy. It also reported that he said a political settlement is the only way to restore peace, that the Front should take part in all negotiations, and that escalation in Vietnam has reduced US prestige throughout the world. By way of comment, the Front broadcast stated that "although still far from the truth," Kennedy's words represent "the views of US political circles which realize that the US war in Vietnam and escalation have failed."

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