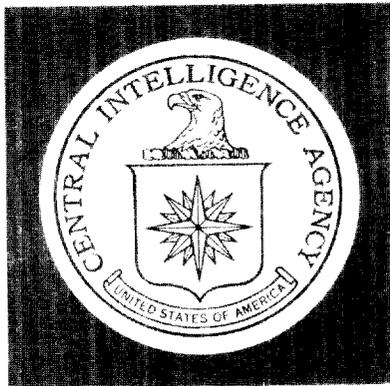


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*FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY*

# Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

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16 February 1968

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi on Bombing Halt: Hanoi has been in touch with a number of Western governments recently to present its case and to underscore its readiness to talk if the US stops the bombings. The Italian Foreign Office announced on 14 February that North Vietnamese representatives had contacted Rome early this month with such a message.

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The Swiss Government announced yesterday that its ambassador in Peking was en route to Hanoi to offer his country's good offices for a peaceful settlement. Although press reports say this was entirely a Swiss initiative, Hanoi doubtless chose the time by giving permission for the visit.

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French Press Report from Hanoi: French Press Agency correspondents in Hanoi took note of North Vietnamese current tactics in a story on 14 February. If the story was not actually inspired by the North Vietnamese, they probably at least approved of its contents. The story says that the Communists are trying to demonstrate simultaneously their military strength and their desire for a peaceful settlement. It claims the Communists, although "very satisfied" with the results of the offensive in the South, are stressing that it is not over yet and new attacks are likely if the US fails to stop the bombing and begin negotiations.

The story stresses the moves made by Hanoi to make its position appear more forthcoming. It concludes, however, that Hanoi does not intend to compromise on its demand for an unconditional bombing halt. If Washington insists on any form of reciprocity, even the "modified" version of President Johnson's San Antonio formula, the war will continue.

\* \* \*

U Thant's Comments on his Contacts with North Vietnamese: Don Cook of the Los Angeles Times informed the US Embassy in Paris that one of his colleagues had managed to see U Thant in Paris yesterday. The following were said to be the secretary general's impressions:

--He could see no movement in Hanoi's position;

--Hanoi nevertheless appears very interested in getting talks started on the condition that the US stops bombing;

--U Thant thinks Hanoi would open talks within two weeks of a bombing halt;

--His conversations in Moscow forced him to the conclusion that there is no "give" in Russia's position, which continues to support Hanoi 100 percent;

--He cannot agree with Prime Minister Wilson's conclusion that differences between Hanoi and Washington are "very narrow";

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--He is therefore returning to New York "not optimistic";

--A one-hour conversation with De Gaulle produced nothing of interest.

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Hanoi Denies US Sent Envoy: Another French Press Agency item broadcast by Paris yesterday says that an "informed North Vietnamese source" in Hanoi has "categorically denied" reports that the US sent a special envoy to North Vietnam to explore prospects for peace. The story notes that Canadian ICC Commissioner Dier had been in Hanoi recently, but that he was not acting for the US.

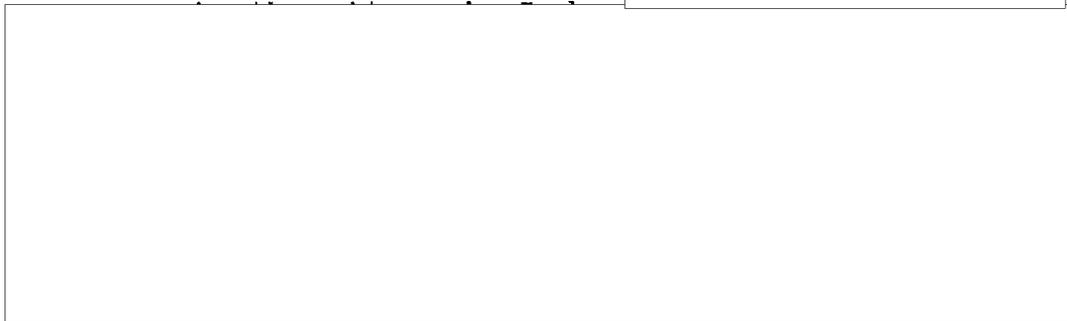
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Bomb Damage in Haiphong: Bomb damage in the port is limited to certain sections of the city and is less serious than has been generally assumed, according to Robert Eaton, a member of the crew of the yacht Phoenix which was in Haiphong during late January. Eaton, who gave his views to a French correspondent in Hong Kong, also claimed that much of the city was deserted and that on a tour of the port he was shown civilian areas which had been damaged. Eaton claimed bombing effects were not evident in most sections, and that life was being conducted in a normal fashion in many areas.

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Hanoi Prepares for Intensified Air Raids: Hanoi is making more extensive civil defense preparations in anticipation of retaliatory air raids for the Communist offensive in the South, 

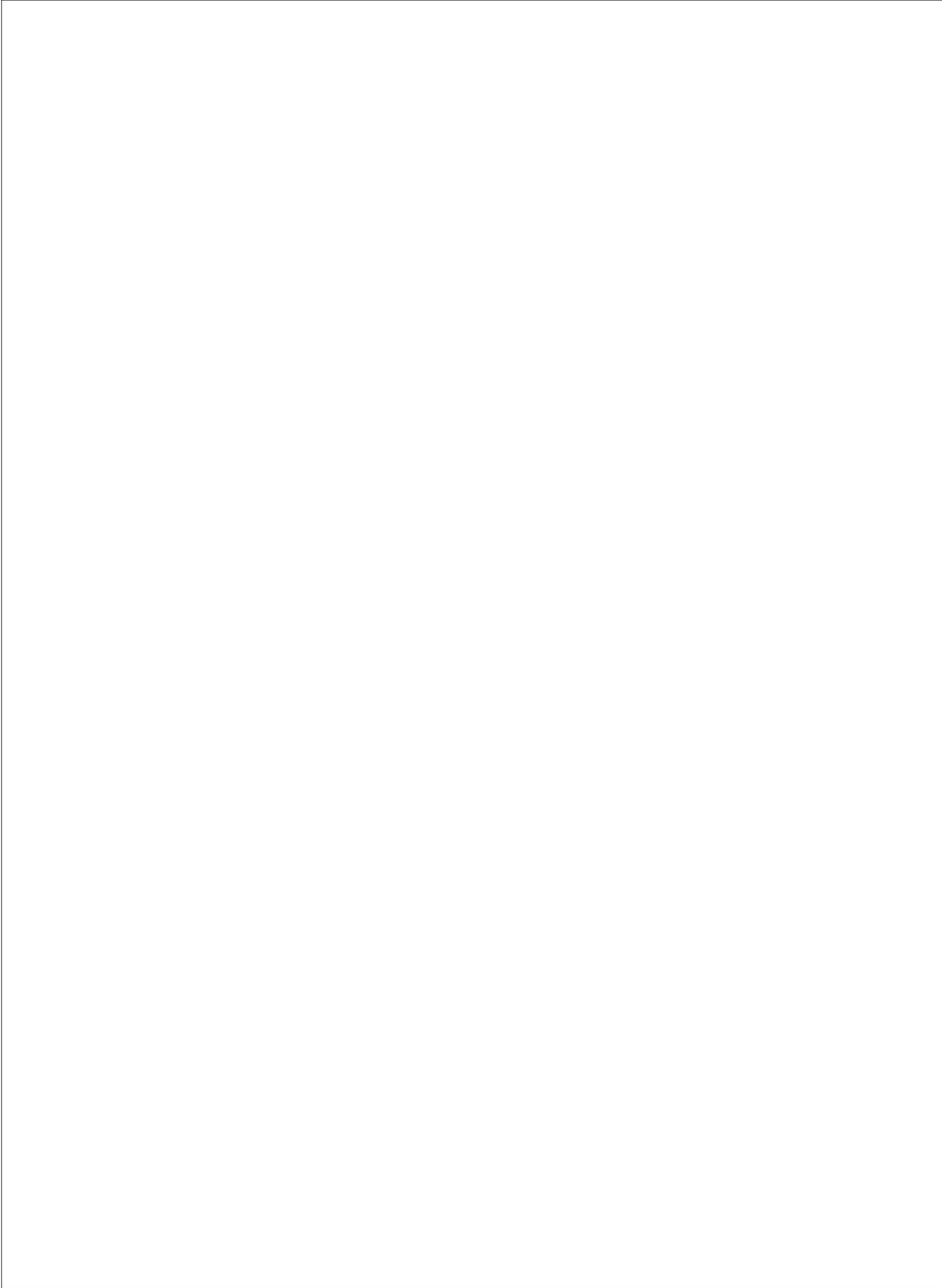
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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Propaganda: Yesterday's English language broadcast by radio Hanoi contained a section devoted to quotes from recent statements on Vietnam by several members of the US Congress.

Senator Robert Kennedy's speech of 8 February came in for some more attention. He was quoted as saying that the Vietnam war could lead the US to national tragedy. Senator Mike Mansfield is quoted as saying last Sunday that the recent Viet Cong offensive had demonstrated that the Saigon political structure is no stronger today than it was three years ago. "Indeed," Mansfield is quoted, "its very survival appears more dependent on US military power than at any time in the past."

Senator Thruston Morton is quoted by Hanoi as saying that the tragedy of the US commitment in Vietnam is that most of the people of South Vietnam couldn't care less. Morton, Hanoi claimed, "again accused the Johnson administration of hoodwinking the American people about the war." Representative Margaret Heckler of Massachusetts is said by Hanoi to have accused General Westmoreland of "deluding" members of Congress.

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