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The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 5 February 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
5 FEBRUARY 1968

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

The Khe Sanh area has been quiet since the attack on Hill 861 this morning. Seven Americans and 100 North Vietnamese were killed in the four-hour assault.

Sharp fighting continues in Hue, as well as in sections of Saigon and in several other cities and towns. There are signs that the enemy intends to conduct a prolonged offensive against the major population centers.

President Thieu held weekend meetings with top South Vietnamese military and civilian officials and with senior US officials, and has agreed to the formation of an emergency joint task force under Vice President Ky. It will be concerned with determining priority needs throughout the country, the movement of food and other essential relief activities, and the strengthening of information and psychological warfare services.

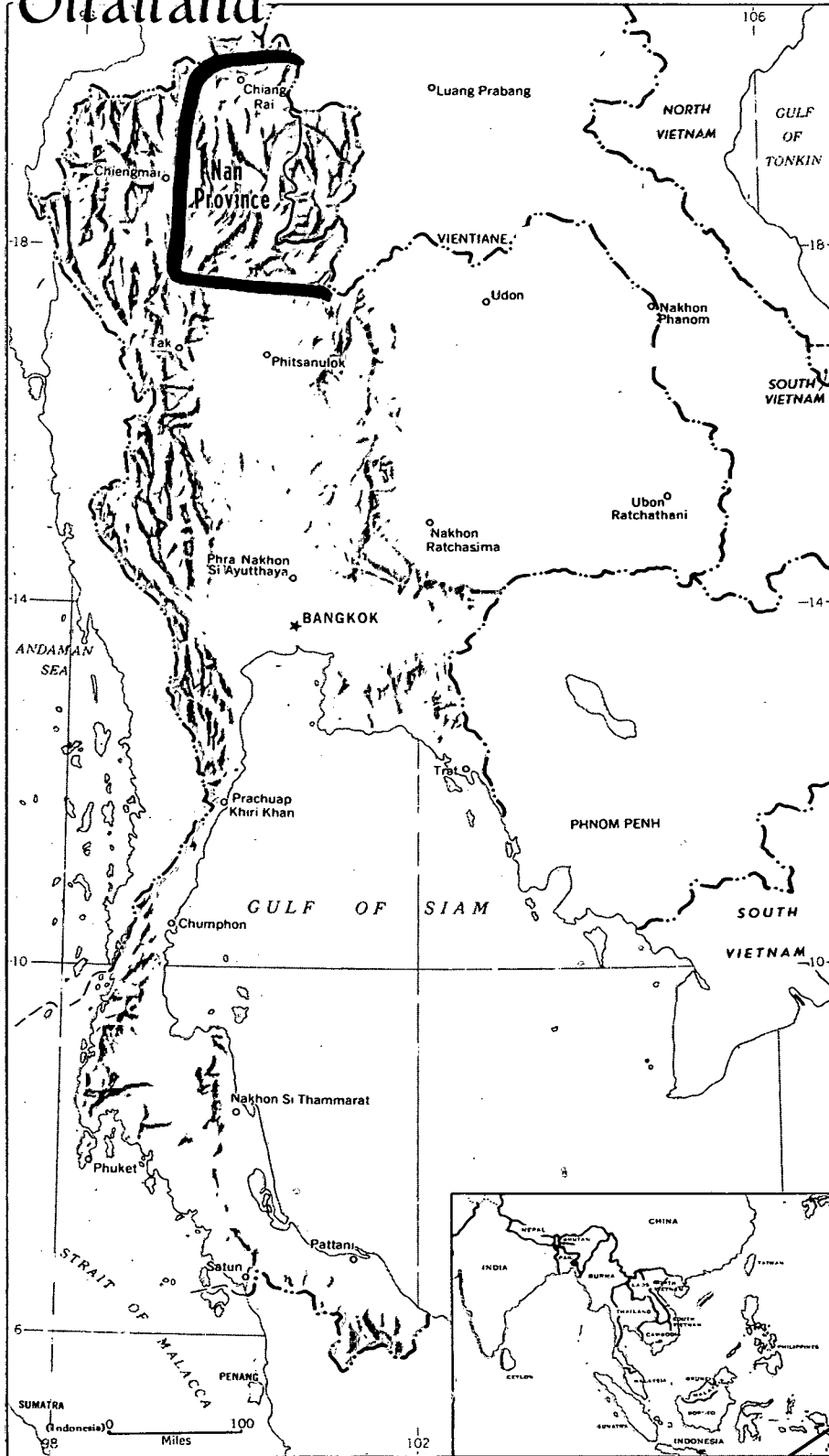
2. North Korea

Pyongyang radio is still giving priority attention to the Pueblo incident, but is making only perfunctory reference to the talks. The radio yesterday merely said that the senior North Korean representative at Panmunjom had met with the senior member of the US side on 2 and 4 February.

The third and fourth "confessions" (by Lts. Shumacher and Murphy), which were broadcast over the weekend, contained extensive and detailed allegations concerning the Pueblo's mission and course.

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Thailand



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3. Thailand

Government troops continue to meet strong resistance in northern Nan Province. The estimated 200 Communist-led tribesmen in the area are showing considerable tactical skill in harassing and evading the government forces. Recent government losses have been high.

The Thai Communists have been working with these tribal people for several years and have succeeded in extending their influence over a number of villages. Several hundred Thai tribesmen have received military training in Laos and North Vietnam, and are apparently getting important support from Communist elements across the border in Laos.

4. Soviet Union

Ambassador Dobrynin told Ambassador Thompson a couple of weeks ago that he expected a decision within about a month on the consular convention and cultural exchange agreement. Dobrynin now claims that the Pueblo affair and Vietnam have set back the progress he had hoped to make on bilateral questions. He believes, however, that if the Korean problem were settled, the Soviet Government would give its go-ahead.

5. Saudi Arabia - Yemen

King Faysal told Ambassador Eilts on Friday that he has decided to resume arms aid to the Yemeni royalists. Faysal says it will continue until "the Soviets and their Syrian, Algerian, and Iraqi puppets" stop helping the republicans. The ambassador tried to dissuade the King, but evidently without success.

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6. Cyprus

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Turkish newspapers are saying that Turkish Foreign Ministry officials are somewhere in Europe and are speculating about secret talks with the Greeks. The next move will probably be a blast from Makarios; he has been working overtime to sabotage any bilateral efforts between the two countries to arrive at a solution.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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5 February 1968

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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi on the Current Offensive: The Communist military offensive is still being portrayed by Hanoi and the Liberation Front as a spontaneous popular uprising of "revolutionary forces" aiming at overthrowing and replacing the Saigon government. The political and military role of the Liberation Front seems to be downplayed deliberately. The "revolution," as the Communists call the offensive, is said to have generated new, broadly based organizations which, in conjunction with the Front, will eventually establish a coalition government for South Vietnam. These new organizations, the propaganda insists, are winning popular support, but there is an urgent note in Vietnamese Communist statements stressing the benefits of joining in the struggle or of at least supporting it.

On the political side, the Communists claim the military offensive has brought about the formation of political "alliances" throughout the country which are supported by such noncombatant groups as students, intellectuals, women, and businessmen, but whose actual composition and organization have not been spelled out. These alliances, the propaganda implies, will have a key role in setting up a coalition government. An appeal from the alliance in Hue, broadcast by the Viet Cong radio on 2 February, stated this objective most clearly. For the first time, it claimed that one of the alliance's goals was the establishment of a "national coalition administration" in the South and the setting up of normal relations with the North in order to effect reunification. Previous appeals by Saigon and Hue "alliances" as well as by a so-called "National Leadership" of the "Alliance" have called for negotiations with the Front, but not for the formation of a coalition government or the reunification of Vietnam.

The military struggle is also being portrayed as based on popular support. Most recent statements by Hanoi and the Front avoid singling out the Viet Cong ("Liberation Armed Forces") as the focal point of the Communist military effort and imply that the offensive has spawned new "revolutionary" military forces. A Front broadcast on 3 February, carrying an appeal from the Viet Cong command, praised the "revolutionary people" for "simultaneously" rising up. It also hailed the "insurrectionary troops" and patriotic armed forces in the "revolutionary army" for rising up and "coordinating" their struggle with the Viet Cong, and called for united action against the common foe. In a broadcast the same day, Hanoi also praised the "revolutionary forces." It claimed such forces in Saigon were responsible for the "armed uprising" and that they had created an "insurrection committee" that eventually would establish a "revolutionary administration" in the city. A similar revolutionary group has been formed in the Tri-Thien-Hue area (Quang Tri, Thua Thien provinces), according to another Hanoi broadcast. These groups, like the "alliances," have made strong appeals to the people for support or cooperation, and have promised position, rewards, and safety in return.

There is virtually no evidence of any substance to these Communist claims. Even the existence of the "revolutionary organizations" and "alliances" is unproved and there is nothing to suggest they have any popular support or following. The Communists' purpose in creating such an organizational facade remains unclear. They may have intended to use it to help set up a "coalition government" if their offensive won popular support, and they may still intend to do so even though this has not happened. They could also use these organizations as scapegoats for a failure of their "uprising" if their current efforts peter out.

Several Hanoi commentaries have suggested that the current military offensive is but one battle in a more prolonged struggle. The Hanoi party paper on 3 February said the current fighting was creating conditions for additional military victories. The North Vietnamese Army journal the previous day called for the southern forces to maintain and develop their victories, enlarge their fronts, and develop their revolution.

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Trade Mission to Singapore: Lee Kuan Yew has told Ambassador Galbraith that a North Vietnamese trade mission will be coming to Singapore "imminently." Lee believes that the North Vietnamese coming at this time is part of a coordinated effort, related to the current offensive in the South, to embarrass the US and to try to discourage those who support the US in Vietnam.

Lee concluded his talk with the ambassador by saying, "Do not worry. There will be no trade."

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

Effects of Tet Offensive: Hanoi, in a broadcast beamed in Vietnamese to South Vietnam on 2 February, offered its analysis of the effects the Communist Tet offensive was having on the US political scene. It reported that both Saigon and Washington were in a "fever" and that the first person to lose grace was "old US Ambassador Bunker." The broadcast played up alleged consternation in US Government circles over the Viet Cong penetration of the "impenetrable" US Embassy and claimed that hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded in that attack alone. Continuing in this vein, the broadcast reported that the person with the biggest headache in Saigon was General Westmoreland whose "boastful nature" has been truly exposed by the events of the past three days. As a result of Westmoreland's boasting, the broadcast contends, President Johnson could not eat and sleep properly. He was confused "as the man in the moon."

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