



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 1 March 1968



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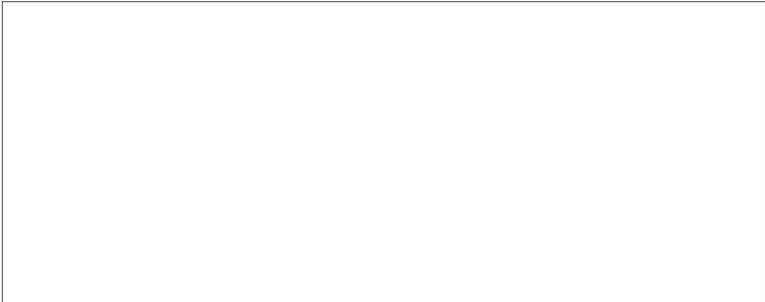
DAILY BRIEF
1 MARCH 1968

1. South Vietnam

Scattered allied military positions yesterday suffered relatively light rocket, artillery, and mortar attacks. There are plenty of signs, however, of Communist preparations for further military action, both in the western highlands and around Saigon.

At Khe Sanh, the Communists are continuing to work on a trench network and weapons positions. Extensive construction is also going on at the enemy's A Shau Valley base complex. This activity includes clearing operations, possibly for drop zones or a helicopter pad.

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2. Panama



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Robles, however, will continue to use the government machinery to rig the May elections in favor of Samudio, and Arias' patience could wear thin. Some pro-Arias types are still making noises about calling a special session of the National Assembly next week to hear impeachment charges against Robles.

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3. Greece

The junta is furious over Swedish Prime Minister Erlander's announcement that his party will make a donation to Andreas Papandreou's antiregime war chest. Diplomatic relations with Sweden will probably be broken, apparently as a warning to other nations against "interference" in Greek affairs.

Papandreou is due in Washington on 9 March.

4. Argentina

The government is said to have signed an agreement to buy [REDACTED] light tanks from a French consortium. The ultimate idea is to build these tanks, under license, in Argentina.

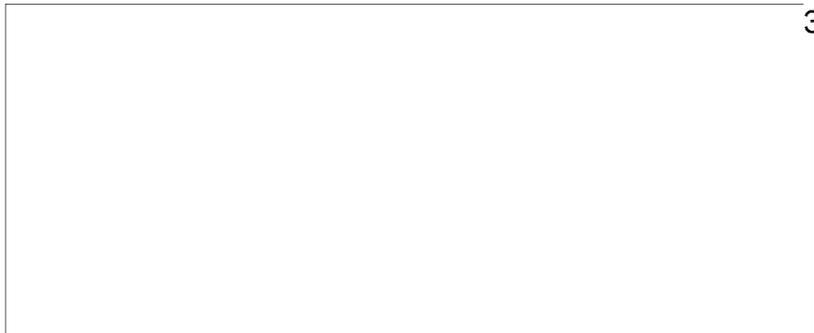
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5. Cambodia

Guerrilla activity in western Cambodia is increasing and spreading. Over the weekend there were coordinated raids, with executions and kidnappings of government officials in at least 15 villages. Phnom Penh claims these raids are Communist led; the relatively sophisticated tactics of the guerrillas, as well as some of the propaganda they distributed, lend credence to these claims.

This is no immediate threat to Sihanouk, but it could further poison his relations with Hanoi and Peking. Yesterday he publicly threatened to ask for US assistance if this dissidence continues.

6. Indonesia



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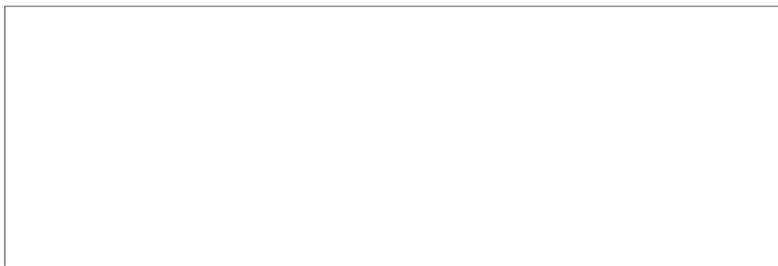
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7. India

During the question period in parliament on Wednesday, Mrs. Gandhi denied that her government was under pressure from any quarter to sign the nonproliferation treaty. When asked for assurance that India would not sign the treaty under any circumstances, the prime minister said she refused to look into the "remote future." Later, however, she commented that the draft treaty in its present form is not acceptable and India does not propose to sign it.



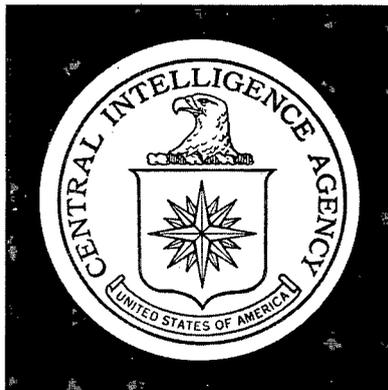
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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

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

Hanoi on Talks: Hanoi has forcefully restated its willingness to talk about a settlement in Vietnam, but has insisted again that the US must make the first move. The new statement has been broadened to include more specific references to the timing and content of such discussions. As broadcast by Hanoi radio yesterday, the commentary said that an unconditional cessation of the bombing would be followed by talks "as soon as this unconditional stop has been proved." Both sides would then discuss questions related to "a settlement of the Vietnam problem on the basis of the 1954 Geneva agreements and other questions which would be raised by either side." Both these elements had been introduced into the North Vietnamese position earlier this year.

The broadcast claimed that many prominent figures in the US (including Senators R. Kennedy, Cooper, Mansfield, and McCarthy), as well as U Thant and officials of other countries, had recently demanded an end to the bombing.

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More on Hanoi's Attitude Toward Reciprocity:
Recent assertions by two French observers that Hanoi would do "something tangible" to scale down the war after a bombing halt have been undercut even more than indicated [REDACTED] Jean Sainteny told a US Embassy official in Paris that his remarks to this effect on French television were not based on anything new from North Vietnam. He said his views were private ones based on his intimate knowledge of the North Vietnamese and his conversations with Pham Van Dong in 1966.

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The point on reciprocity in the story by French journalist Olivier Todd, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has now been specifically disavowed by the North Vietnamese. The publication which carried Todd's story has now published a brief statement by Mai Van Bo saying that Hanoi's position is fully expressed in a series of public statements and that all other interpretations are without foundation.

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View of Former Reporter in Hanoi: Bernard Cabanes, who recently returned to France after seven months' reporting from Hanoi for the French press service, gave his views of the situation in North Vietnam in a radio interview on Monday. Cabanes' reports from Hanoi frequently suggested that they were inspired by the North Vietnamese. Once home, his views on the situation appear to be slightly more objective.

--Cabanes claimed he observed no appreciable change in the morale of the people in Hanoi during his tour, except for the fact that there was an air of satisfaction at the results of the "victories" of the Tet offensive.

--Hanoi is not meeting any insurmountable difficulties in continuing the war. Some supplies for the general populace are short--but the people are used to such shortages. Military supplies from the bloc appear adequate.

--Cabanes emphatically denied reports of a split in the Hanoi leadership over the prosecution

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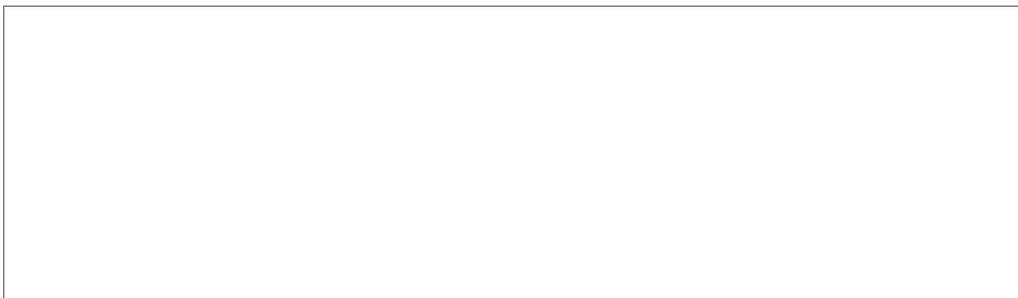
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of the war. He claimed all are united in continuing the fight and are preparing for a long war, which will end not by a military victory but by a political solution on Communist terms. In this regard, Cabanes pointed out that the regime is anticipating more extensive US bombings and is constructing larger and more secure civil defense facilities in the city.

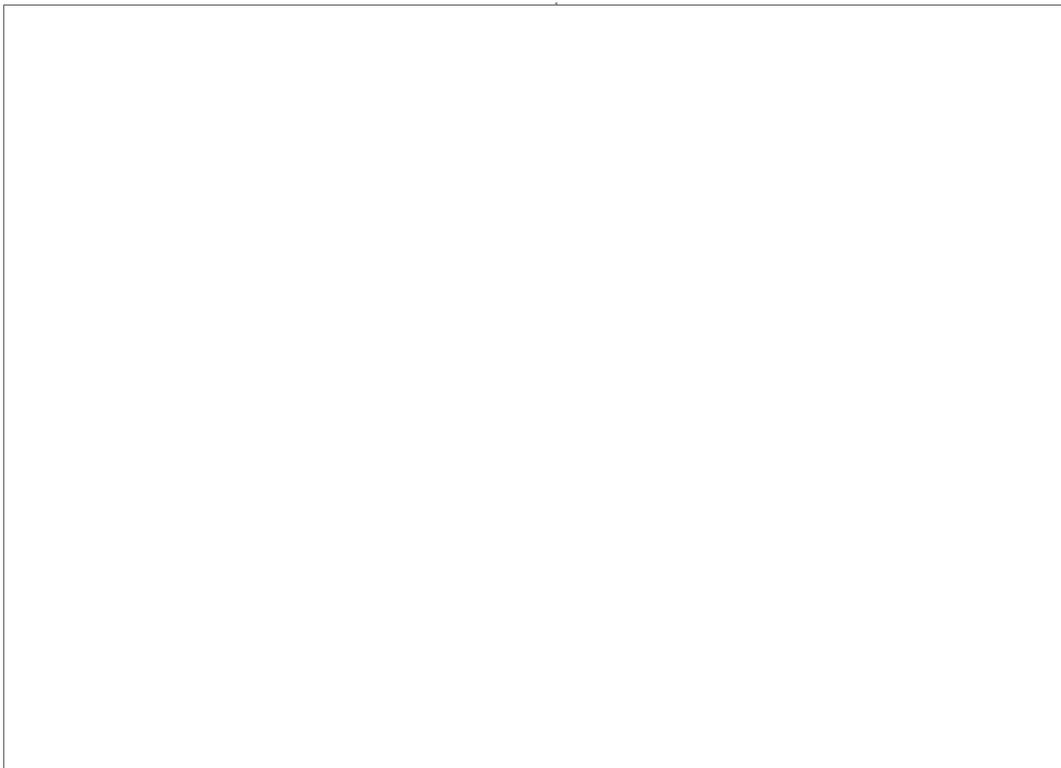
--On negotiations, Cabanes claimed that Hanoi will offer no reciprocity for talks with the US.

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Optimism in Hanoi: An ICC officer who was in Hanoi recently has remarked about the optimism that seems to pervade the atmosphere there. He noted ample propaganda about the success of the Tet offensive in the South and saw crowds cheering soldiers. One North Vietnamese officer said, "we shall continue attacking from the countryside."

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

Hanoi Reports Antiwar Protests: A statement by student representatives of several Ivy League colleges protesting US involvement in Vietnam was reported by Hanoi in its 28 February English language broadcast. According to the broadcast, the students would rather go to jail or give up their American citizenship than serve with the US Army in Vietnam. The same broadcast also recounted statements against the war by a group of US businessmen.

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