



The President's Daily Brief

~~*Top Secret*~~ 12 February 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
12 FEBRUARY 1968

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

Communist pressures eased over the weekend around cities and towns in some parts of the country, but new attacks took place against two provincial capitals and two allied airfields in the delta. In the north, the Communists in Hue continue putting up stubborn resistance.

Life in Saigon is gradually returning to normal despite continuing Communist resistance to clearing operations in Cholon. Persistent low-level reports, however, are still predicting new "large-scale attacks" on the capital within the next few days. Elements of three Communist divisions remain within striking distance.

The Khe Sanh situation is unchanged.

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2. Korea

Mr. Vance had his first meeting with President Pak today to the accompaniment of a steady drumbeat in the Seoul press insisting that the South Koreans want a fuller US commitment, not just more US military aid. No word has yet come on the substance of the talks.

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Satellite photography of last week shows that the Pueblo has been moved from its anchorage in Wonsan Bay to a more secure berth at a nearby naval base. This will facilitate examination of the ship's equipment, presumably with the help of Soviet experts.

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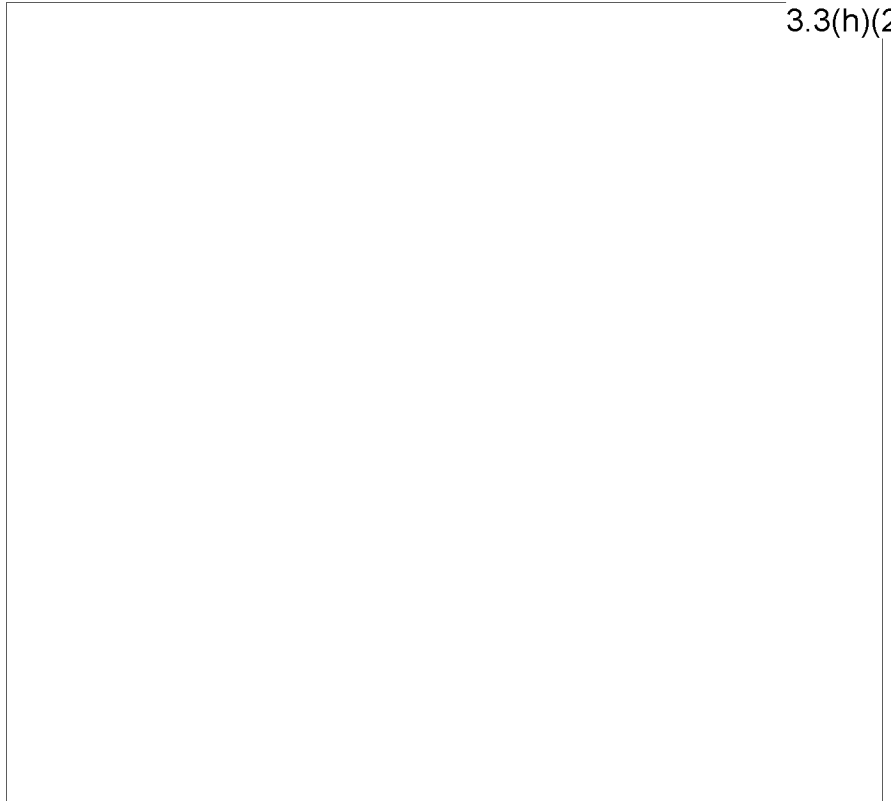
3. Cambodia

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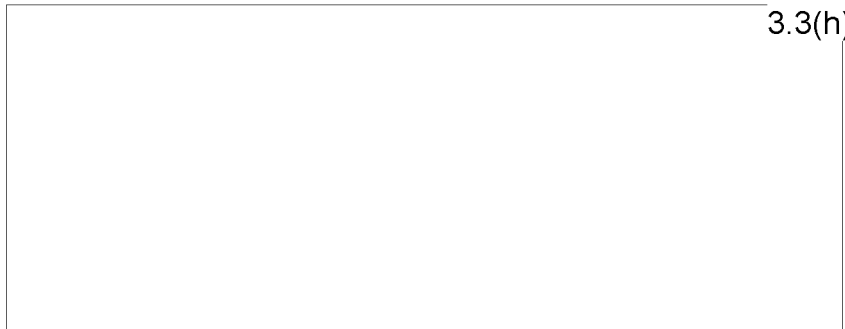
4. Australia

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5. Nigeria

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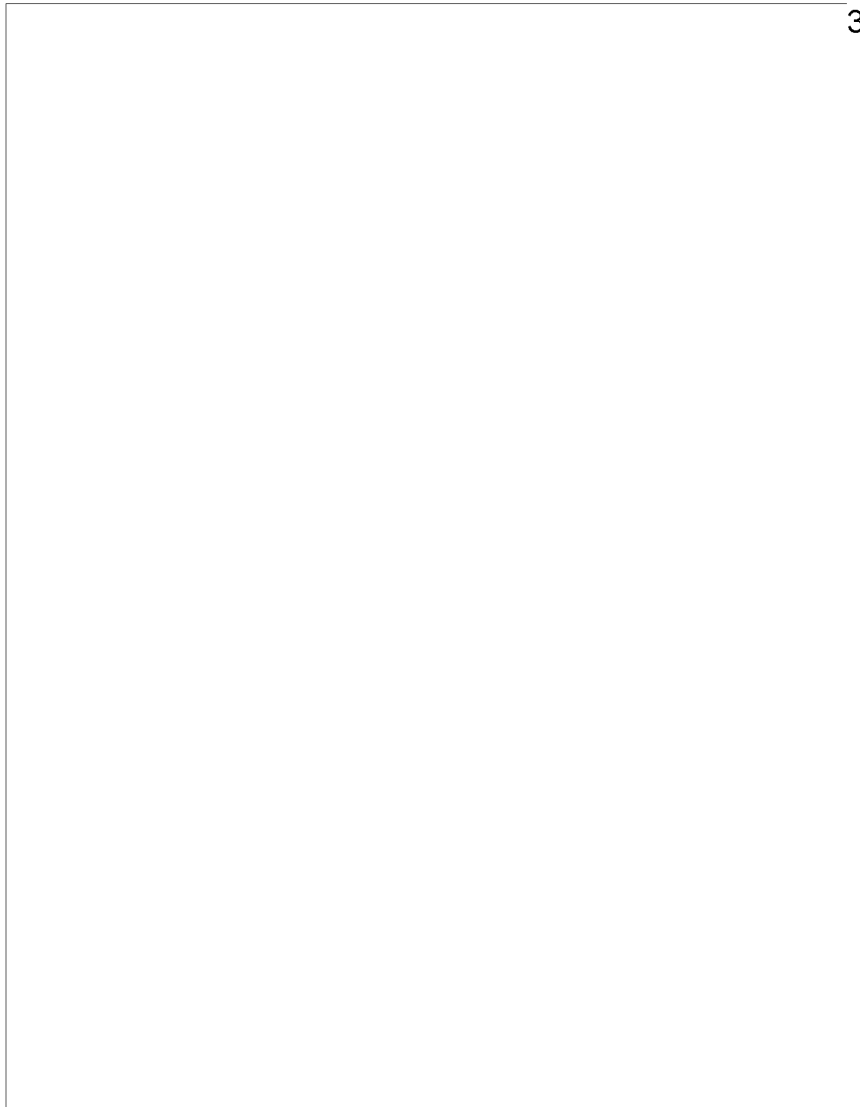
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6. Czechoslovakia

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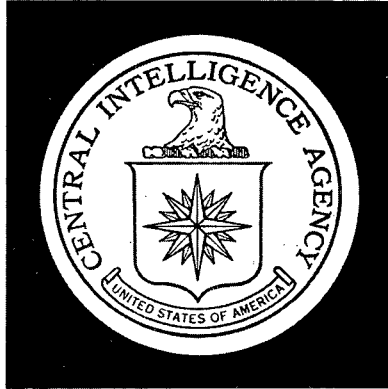


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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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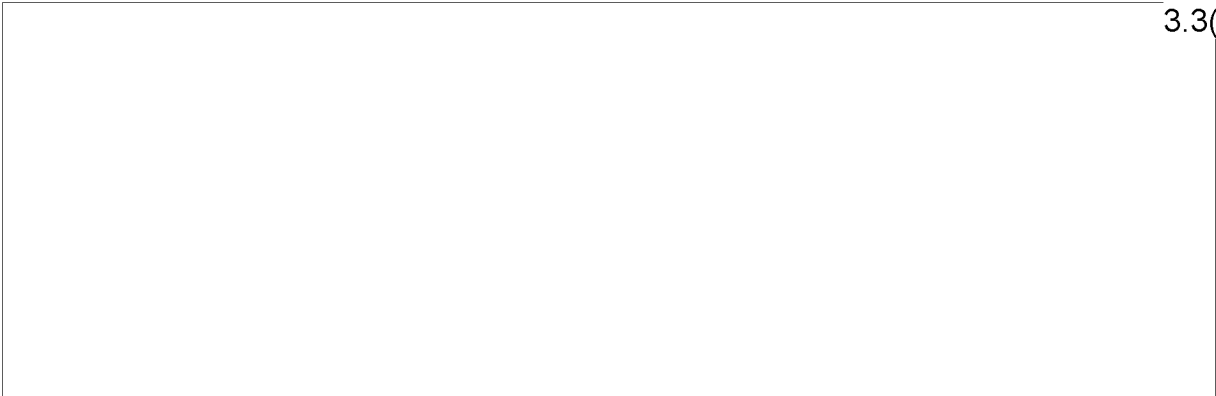
Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Front Activities: Liberation Front officials abroad are continuing to make a big effort to be seen and heard. Nguyen Van Hieu, the Front man in Phnom Penh and one of the Front's most authoritative spokesmen on foreign affairs, recently discussed the Viet Cong plans to establish a coalition government. Although radio propaganda and prisoners captured in the Tet offensive have indicated that this is a Front objective, Nguyen Van Hieu is the first responsible Front official to comment on it.

Hieu made his remarks at a press conference on 8 February which was attended by Wilfred Burchett.



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Other Communist representatives have been seeking publicity contacts to emphasize the Viet Cong's military successes. In Moscow and Prague, Front representatives briefed prominent party personalities amid much publicity. The official statement issued after Dang Quang Minh's meeting with Brezhnev emphasized the political aspect of the Tet offensive. In recent days Moscow has also issued a formal TASS statement affirming support of the Viet Cong military action and of the North Vietnamese "will talk" attitude.

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The Front spokesman in Hanoi this weekend issued an unequivocal endorsement of the North Vietnamese offer to talk with the US. Front representative Nguyen Van Tien told a Hungarian journalist on 9 February that the Front "entirely agrees with the North Vietnamese foreign minister's statement and fully supports its contents." The Front also used the interview to boast that it controlled three out of eight districts in Saigon and said the Viet Cong intended to mobilize the young people of towns and villages and arm them to help defeat any possible American "counteraction."

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Other Front Activities: Just prior to the Tet offensive, the head of the Front office in Djakarta told Indonesian Government officials that he had attended a Front central committee meeting last summer and had come away with renewed confidence about the war. In a rare admission of past difficulties, the official admitted that US forces had had some success in the past two "dry seasons," but boasted that Communist units now had new weaponry and much greater experience and the US would not do so well this year.

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Hanoi Continues Playing Up New Front Groups in the South: A Hanoi broadcast monitored in Tokyo yesterday reported what purported to be a decision by the National Liberation Front to strengthen ties with the "Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces," which it claims has sprung up in various South Vietnamese cities since the onslaught of the Tet offensive. Yesterday's broadcast claimed that the Front had issued a call for talks with the "Alliance" on "the most suitable way of reunifying Vietnam."

Peking propaganda takes the story a little further. A Chinese press agency report yesterday, quoting a North Vietnamese army newspaper, reported that the "rural people" in South Vietnam have resolved to set up a "people's regime" in response to the Viet Cong call.

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U Thant's Travels: The Secretary General has scheduled a meeting for today with the National Liberation Front representative in Moscow, according to press reports. Thant was received by Kosygin shortly after he flew in from New Delhi yesterday, and plans another meeting today, after which he is scheduled to leave for London en route back to New York. Little solid information is available to flesh out press speculation that Thant is embarked on a major new peace effort. Peking, reacting characteristically to this speculation, blasted Thant yesterday for trying to "peddle the US 'peace talks' scheme."

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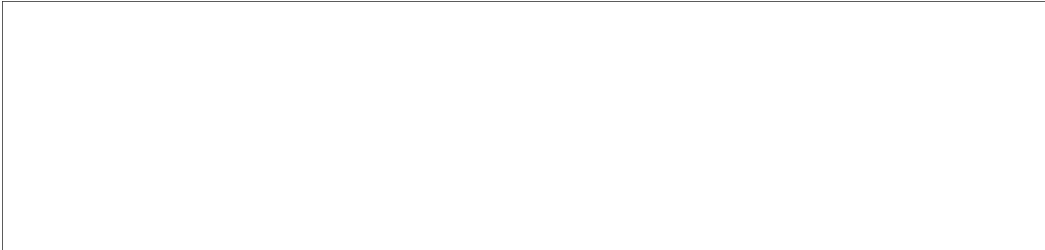
Chinese Troops: In radio conversations between Chinese units in North Vietnam intercepted on 30 and 31 January, one unit stated that the problem of food shortages "troubles us very much" and that some people might have to be sent to Nanning.

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Another Chinese unit in North Vietnam said that the North Vietnamese were "very kind," gave them food, and invited them to attend their Lunar New Year Festival party at Thai Binh.

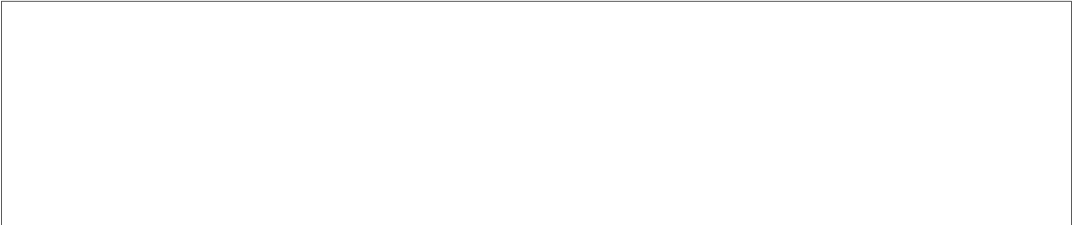
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Voice intercepts of Chinese units in North Vietnam are rare. The only voice communications previously noted were between antiaircraft observation posts.

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US Pilots: Since the three American pilots scheduled to be released from North Vietnam did not make the ICC flight on Friday, the ICC is trying to arrange a special flight tomorrow. The next scheduled flight is not until Friday.

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II. REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

World Reaction to Senator Robert Kennedy's 8 February Speech: The Senator's speech on Vietnam has received only light coverage in world news media. Neither



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Hanoi nor Peking has yet commented. Moscow commentators have referred to Kennedy's "admissions" only in passing and have contrasted his statements with the continuing "hawkish" stance of the administration. Several press services in other Communist countries have noted the speech in brief, factual terms. Such comment as there has been in these countries has used the speech to buttress claims that the American public is becoming more disillusioned with the war, or that the recent Communist offensive has caused "anxiety and confusion" in Washington.

Free World press reaction has also been minimal. Comments in British and West German papers have been mixed.

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