

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 26 March 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
26 MARCH 1968

1. Vietnam

While military activity in South Vietnam remains at a low level, we continue to get more signs of heavy enemy infiltration into South Vietnam. Truck traffic through the Mu Gia Pass is at the highest level since just before the Tet offensive. Some of the trucks carry troops--a highly unusual procedure which suggests that the movement has a good deal of urgency behind it. Some Communist messages convey the same sense of urgency.

2. Panama

Max Delvalle, the Arias supporter whom the Assembly elected to the presidency yesterday to replace Robles, has called the Assembly into special session this afternoon to make changes in the electoral code.

This throws down the gauntlet to the National Guard, which refuses to recognize the impeachment of Robles and says it will not let the session meet. The confrontation could lead to violence, although Arias and his supporters seem to lack the resources in either manpower or equipment for an effective challenge to the Guard.

The general strike proclaimed yesterday by the Arias forces shows no sign of getting off the ground.

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3. Laos

The United States Intelligence Board has approved a Special National Intelligence Estimate on Communist intentions in Laos over the next two to three months. The estimate notes that the Communists could in fairly short order reduce the area controlled by Vientiane to a few enclaves.

It points out that the Communists might press ahead if, for instance, they saw an advantage in creating a "second front" in Laos to spread US resources. They might also do so if they thought it advisable to strengthen the Communist hand in any negotiations by taking as much territory as possible in Laos.

But, on balance, the estimate concludes that the Communists will probably content themselves with the capture of a few more positions and then reduce their pressure during the rainy season which begins in May.

4. Cambodia

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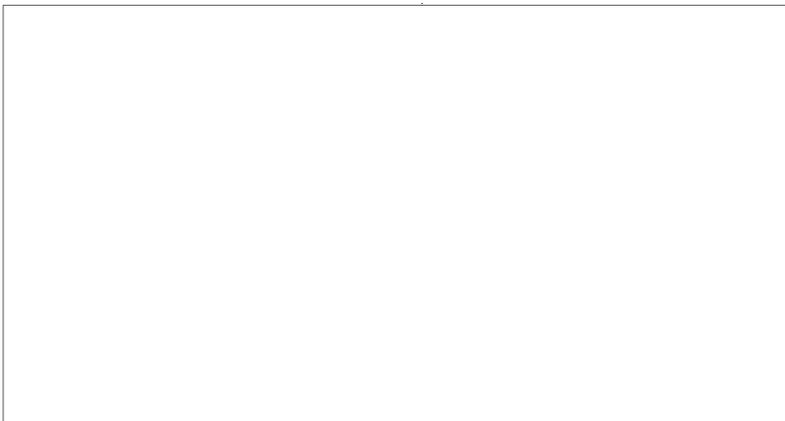
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5. Communist China



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6. Saudi Arabia



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7. Soviet Union -
Cuba

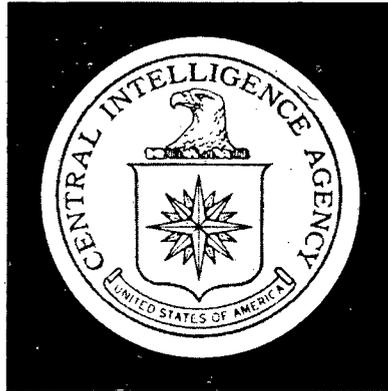
Growing political irritations between Moscow and Havana seem to have had little effect on their economic relations. The trade protocol for this year, announced last week after six months of negotiations, calls for a ten percent boost in trade. Also, according to press reports, Moscow is shelling out more credits. The new credits would presumably be to refinance previous ones and to cover Cuba's balance of payments deficits.

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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

26 March 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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--The supply of food and other goods in the capital appeared to be better this year than last, partly because of a "good" harvest, but also because of large food deliveries from China. (Our information suggests the harvest was mediocre and that food shipments from China, as well as from the USSR, made the situation tolerable.)

--Bomb damage in Hanoi's residential areas was more noticeable than a year ago. [REDACTED] antipersonnel bombs were especially feared and even foreigners wear steel helmets when in the streets. Loss of life because of the bombings, however, was not especially high because of strict civil defense regulations.

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--The number of trucks seen in Hanoi seemed to have grown markedly.

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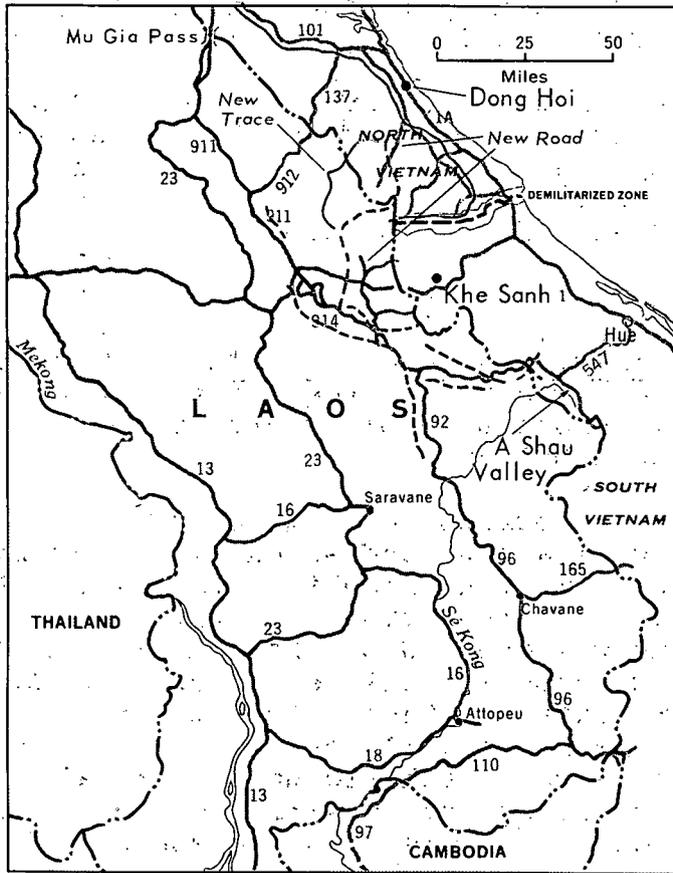
Paris Rally in Support of Hanoi: The embassy in Paris reports that the meeting of French intellectuals in support of Hanoi was a relatively quiet affair receiving only light press coverage. About 5,000 people reportedly attended, an appeal was signed, and plans for future publicity programs were discussed.

Organizers of the rally, as well as the Communist paper L'Humanité, tended to downplay the official status of the two Vietnamese Communist delegations. Their individual credentials as prominent "Vietnamese intellectuals" were featured instead.

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Communist Road/Communications-Construction



90050 3-68 CIA
25 MARCH

— Existing land line
 - - - - - Communications construction



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New Communist Road Construction: The Communists are constructing a new high-quality road which will considerably shorten supply routes from North Vietnam to the western DMZ area.

Aerial photography of 8 March shows the rapid construction of a new road--about 16 miles in two months through most difficult terrain--from Route 101 near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam, southward within a few miles of the western end of the Demilitarized Zone. The new road probably will be extended to connect with border routes in Laos. Once the connection is made, the Communists will be able to move supplies more directly from North Vietnam to the Khe Sanh and A Shau Valley areas, by-passing the longer existing logistics routes--Mu Gia Pass and Route 912.

The 8 March photography also showed a trace for a telecommunications line generally paralleling the new road. The line is apparently intended to connect an existing land line at Dong Hoi with lines under construction within the Laos panhandle.

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

Hanoi Reports Grand Central Station Demonstration:
Hanoi's international service on Monday reported the hippie "be-in" and war protest last Saturday at New York's Grand Central Station. The hippie aspects of the demonstration were suppressed, however, and the demonstrators were referred to merely as "American youths."

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