

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 July 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
9 JULY 1968

1. Soviet Union

There are signs that the Soviets will try again to launch an unmanned spacecraft on a circumlunar mission later this month. Earlier attempts--
[redacted]
failed during launch.

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2. Israel

We presume that Golda Meir's resignation yesterday as secretary general of the Israel Labor Party was due mainly to age and poor health. Whatever the reason, her departure leaves an important void, and the selection of her successor will bring on a major intra-party struggle.

Mrs. Meir has long been a symbol of the party's old guard which has backed Prime Minister Eshkol. With her departure it may well become weaker. Her resignation will have no direct bearing on the course of Arab-Israeli relations.

3. Japan

Sato's Liberal Democrats did better than expected in Sunday's upper house elections. The chief opposition party--the Socialists--were set back for the second time in a row. Sato will undoubtedly be encouraged to keep his present course and maintain close ties with the US.

4. France

The French nuclear test on Sunday

[redacted]

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5. Communist China

The count of bodies recovered from the waters around Hong Kong is now over 60. Most of these victims of the factional fighting inside China had died violently before being dumped in the river.

6. Soviet Union-
Communist China

Sino-Soviet trade will probably hit rock bottom this year. Newly released Soviet statistics show a decline in 1967 to \$106 million--only one third the level of the year before, and about five percent of the 1959 figure.

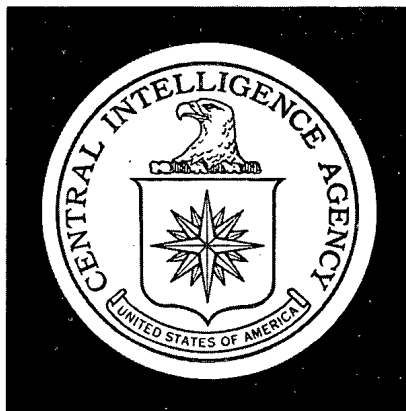
7. South Korea

Contrary to usual practice, important legislation has recently been getting through the National Assembly without major partisan delay.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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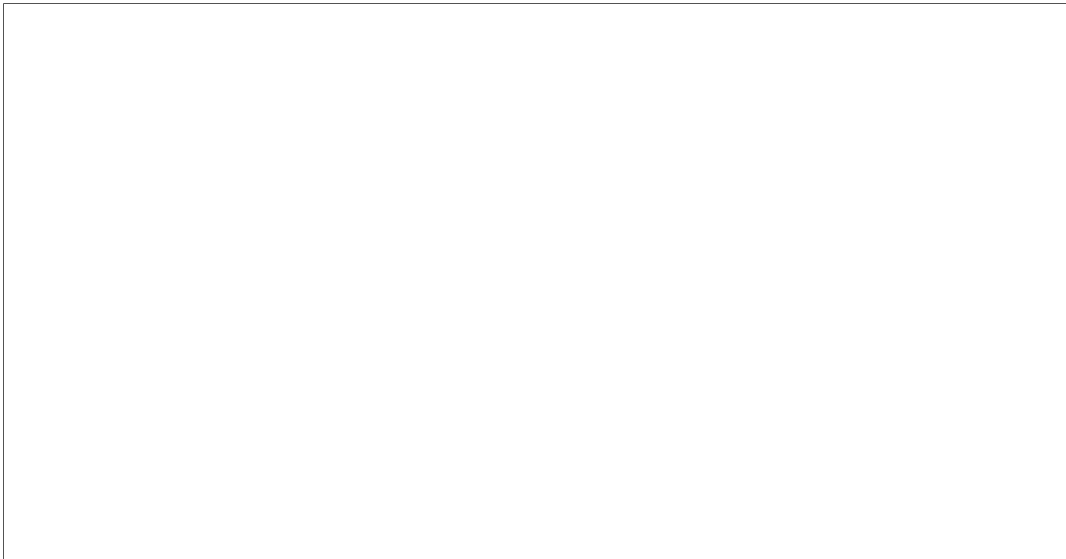
Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Reply to Ashmore: Hanoi has turned down Harry Ashmore's proposal for a Southeast Asian conference. In the process it went out of its way to chide him for failing to produce results in his previous mediating efforts. According to a message to Ashmore from the Indonesian ambassador in Hanoi, the editor of Nan Dhan (Ashmore's contact during his visit to Hanoi in March) did not reject the idea totally, but he considered the present time "not opportune because bombings continue and no progress in Paris." The editor then voiced "disappointment with follow-up after your talks in Hanoi, especially Department of State's public disavowal of unofficial contacts in Hanoi and your failure to influence US Government's subsequent attitude." The Indonesians gave the text of this message to Ambassador Green in Djakarta.

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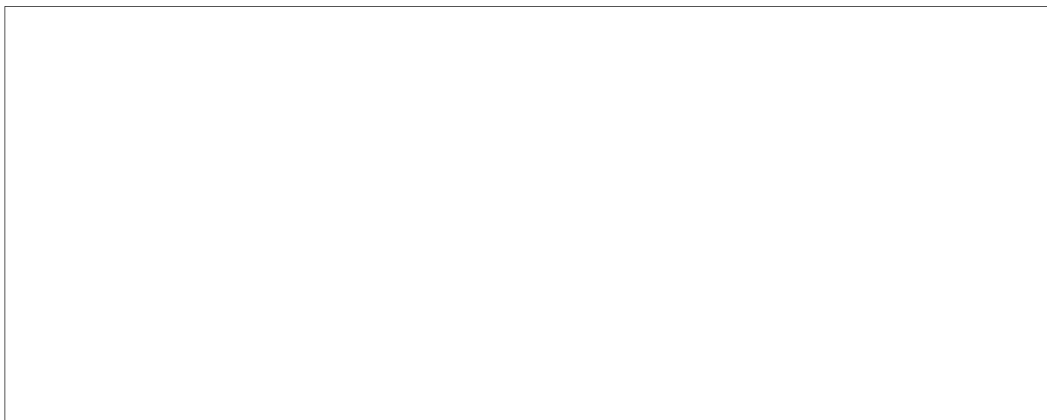


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New Road Around Demilitarized Zone: The North Vietnamese have almost completed a new road into the Laos Panhandle.

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The new road is apparently to connect with a route in Laos which is being extended northward. When the two roads are joined, the Communists will have a motor road which is shorter and more direct than the two existing entry roads from North Vietnam.

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Roads in Laos: The road construction near the Demilitarized Zone is related to a more general Communist effort to upgrade the road network in Laos.

as a result of this effort the network will for the first time be able to handle truck traffic all the way to the South Vietnamese border during the entire rainy season. In fact, the system can now handle more materiel, even in the rainy season, than is required by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam.

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All Indochinese are Brothers: In words which recall Hanoi's recent line that all Vietnam is "one country," the North Vietnamese press spokesman in Paris yesterday voiced support for Laotian and Cambodian resistance to "American aggressors." "The Vietnamese people, the Laotian people, and the Khmer (Cambodian) people," he said, "are three brother peoples living on the soil of the Indochinese Peninsula. Their fates are closely tied to one another."

In expanding the "one country" idea to include Cambodia, the spokesman came out strongly in support of Prince Sihanouk. In doing so he had to ignore the inconvenient fact that the internal dissidence which has plagued Sihanouk for months has received considerable Communist support.

* * *

Propaganda on Bombings: In a broadcast yesterday charging that the US had "intensified" air and naval attacks on North Vietnamese territory during June, Hanoi's international service cited dozens of bombing and artillery fire statistics to prove its point. The broadcast accused the US of singling out such civilian targets as schools, churches, homes, and hospitals for attack.

In a French language item transmitted on Sunday to the North Vietnamese news agency in Paris, Hanoi complained that North Vietnam has been "continuously overflowed" by US attack and reconnaissance planes since the bombing limitation was announced. Citing the "colossal interception network" which protects American airspace from invading aircraft, the broadcast found it "very regrettable" that the "rulers of the White House do not recognize the rights of other countries" to defend their sovereignty. The broadcast warned Communist anti-aircraft crews not to relax their vigilance, even in areas not being attacked, since "we should not exclude" the possibility that unlimited bombing might be resumed.

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

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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