

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 23 March 1967



50X1

DAILY BRIEF
23 MARCH 1967

1. South Vietnam

Tri Quang has launched a new effort to get his militant Buddhist movement back into the spotlight. He is leading a campaign for a "permanent ceasefire" to begin on 23 May, Buddha's birthday. Appeals have already gone out to a number of governments in addition to the US for a ceasefire. If this idea prospers, Tri Quang and company intend to press for an indefinite extension of the ceasefire and, finally, to offer their services as mediators.

This is so transparently a self-serving scheme on Tri Quang's part that we expect little positive to come of it. It may, however, generate some publicity.

2. Communist China

Peking is more and more turning to the army to administer the country and keep the economy from collapsing. The military now appear to be in complete charge in two provinces, and to have at least a dominant voice in most others.

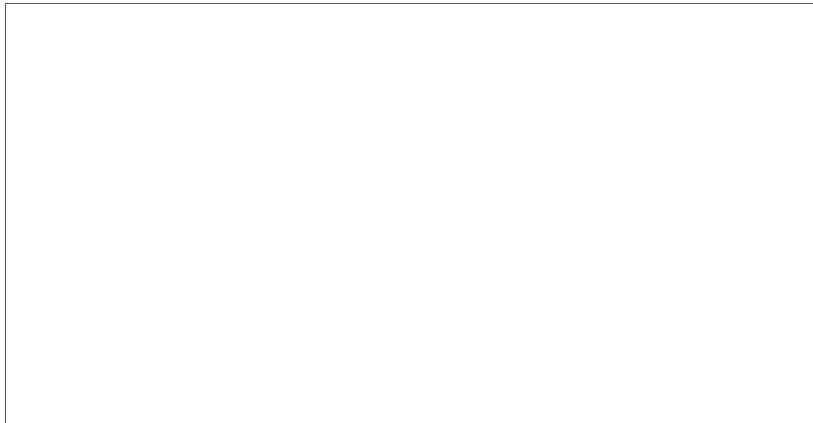
The army controls the civil airline, some of the railroads and communications facilities, as well as a segment of the merchant shipping. The Central Committee has also directed the military to supervise spring planting and support industrial production.

This does not mean the army will become a vast labor force. It probably will, however, replace the shattered party and government apparatus as Peking's administrative instrument for conveying orders and seeing that they are carried out.

3. Austria

Vienna still wants to join the Common Market and acquire defensive missiles--and Moscow still objects. During a just-completed visit to Russia, Chancellor Klaus was told that neither desire was compatible with the 1955 peace treaty or Austria's political neutrality. Moscow would consider Austrian affiliation with the Common Market as a virtual second absorption of the country by West Germany.

4. Panama



50X1

5. Laos

The "little war" in northern Laos grinds on. Government forces attempting to enlarge their area of control are meeting determined resistance from both Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese units. We have no evidence, however, that the Communists are gearing up for any big offensive during the current dry season.

6. French Somaliland

Reinforced French troops are keeping the lid on in Djibouti. Somalia says it does not "recognize" Sunday's referendum, but is reacting cautiously. Addis Ababa says that unless the Somalis do "something foolish" in the near future, Ethiopian troops will move back from the border area.

50X1

7. Sierra Leone

Following their intervention yesterday to keep the premier-designate from taking office, the military have put the capital city under tight control. The army chief says "all efforts" are being made to form a "constitutional government," but these words coming from a man who has just seen how easy it is to seize power seem to have a slightly hollow sound.

Top Secret