

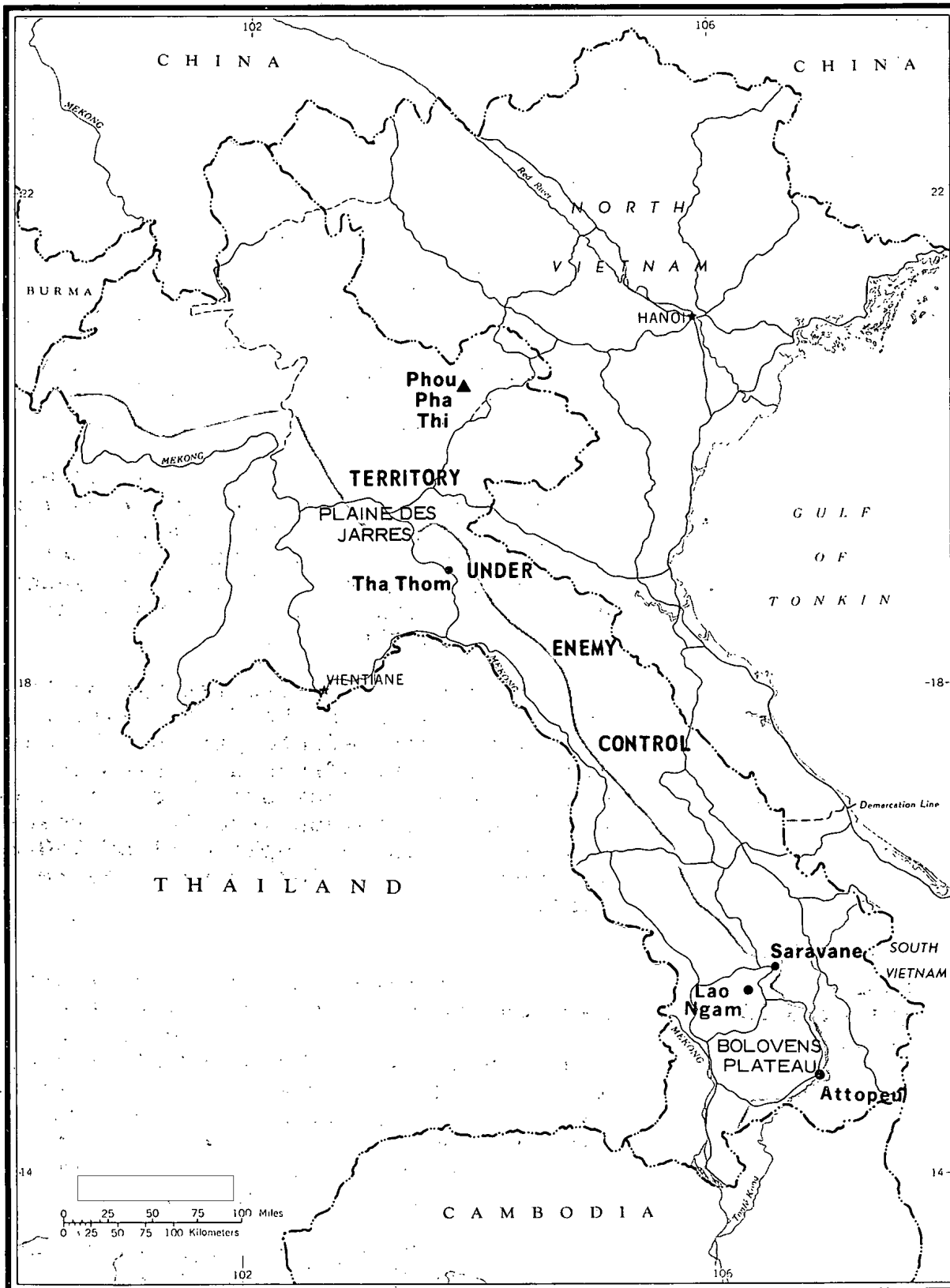
The President's Daily Brief

~~*Top Secret*~~ 23 February 1968



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LAOS



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DAILY BRIEF
23 FEBRUARY 1968

1. Vietnam

Several Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army units have moved closer to Saigon, possibly in preparation for new attacks on the city.

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2. Laos
(as of 5:30 AM
EST)

The anticipated Communist attack on Saravane appears to have begun this morning.

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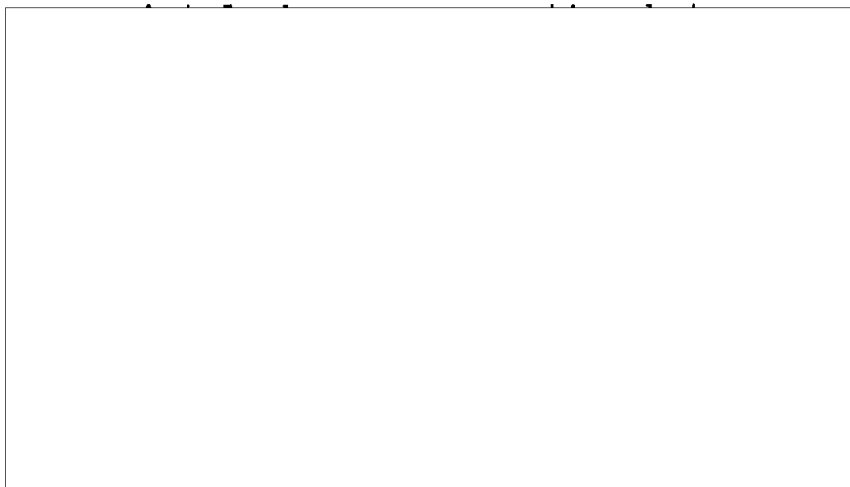
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3. North Korea

Washington analysis of the BLACK SHIELD mission flown earlier this week bears out the preliminary field findings that there have been no major changes in Korean military dispositions. Rail and road traffic along major lines of communication was at routine levels. The southern two-fifths of North Korea was covered with fair to good photography.

The Pueblo was not seen, but the area in which it had been anchored at the time of the last photography on 26 January was cloud-covered.

4. Soviet Union



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5. Canada

Pearson is faced with the formidable tasks today of maneuvering another confidence vote and then winning it. Even if he succeeds on both counts, however, the prospects for his minority government are bleak. The four opposition parties have shown a growing determination to force elections and a caretaker Liberal government under someone such as Foreign Minister Martin would have serious difficulty continuing with this parliament.

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6. Czechoslovakia

The Dubcek regime has announced a wide-ranging political "action program" which, if carried out, could drastically reduce the influence of the Communist party. The program gives expanded powers to the parliament and provides for an end to the party's interference in the management of state, economic, and social institutions.

Conservative forces entrenched in the party and government can be expected to fight full implementation of the program although they have been on the defensive since the ouster of Novotny from the top party post. Moscow, too, is showing signs of concern over both the effect of the program on Czech stability and the prospect that the liberal germ will infect more of Eastern Europe.

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7. Panama

Arias' threats to impeach Robles and stage a massive march on Panama City have thus far kept the Supreme Court from suspending two pro-Arias electoral judges. Both sides are showing some signs of trying to get off the collision course, but tensions remain high and the National Guard continues on full alert.

8. Guatemala

New terrorist attacks in Guatemala City on 21 February took the life of an official of the US-owned International Railways of Central America and seriously injured a second. Neither man is a US citizen. In a separate incident the same day, a police agent was killed when bombs exploded under police cars guarding the homes of the chief of the judicial police and the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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23 February 1968

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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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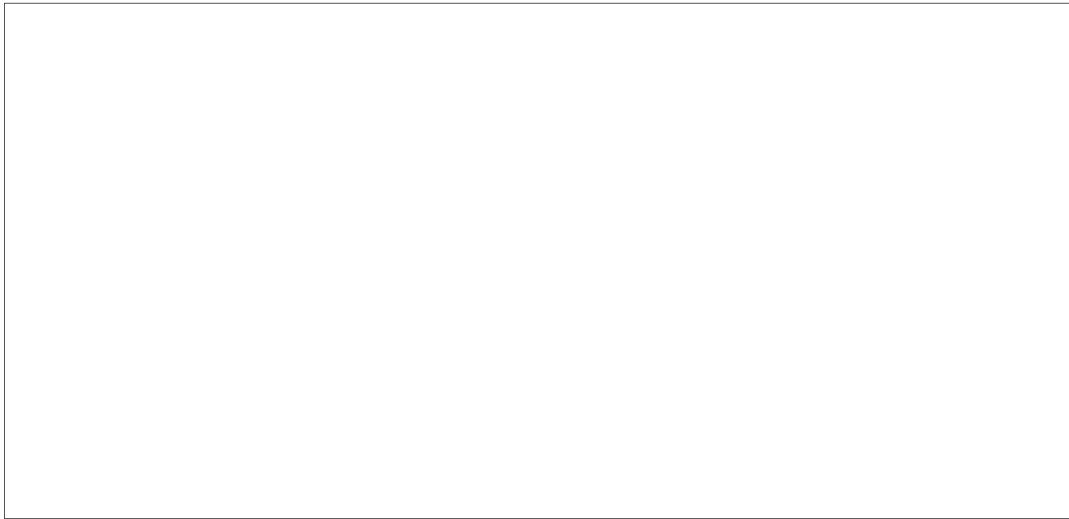
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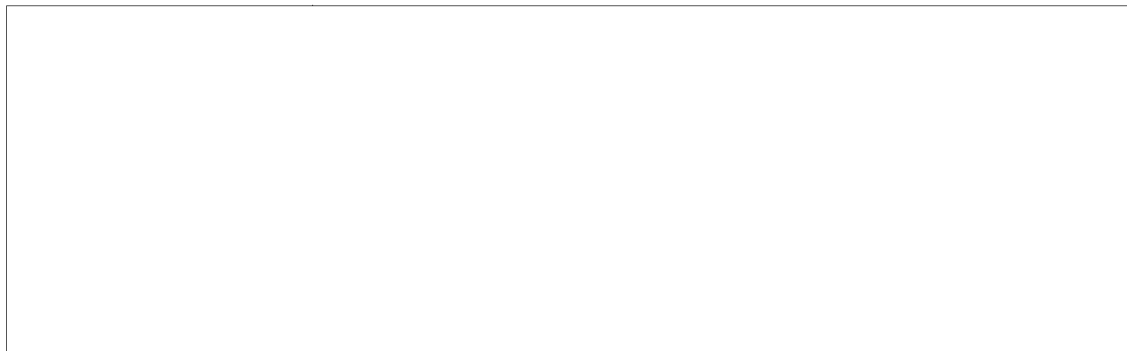


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Observations of Conditions in Hanoi:

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[redacted] who lived in Hanoi during last year thinks that US bombing of targets in the Hanoi area was relatively ineffective. He said this was partly because of successful camouflage and deception techniques employed by the North Vietnamese. He also says that textile mills and a training school for party and government cadres are "strategic" targets which have not been touched by the bombing.

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This observer said that by late November there was a chronic shortage of food in Hanoi caused by transportation problems. Food was plentiful in the countryside but city markets were often bare. Other observers have reported the same thing. This is partly true, but depleted markets seem also to be the result of governmental dispersal of marketing facilities and the abandonment of some markets because of the evacuation of residential areas.

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Like other reporters, [redacted] also noted that the regime's control apparatus remains strong, and apparently is effective in overcoming many of the problems caused by the war. He said the people are still well disciplined and their morale seems high, partly because of the all-pervasive government organization and control of daily life. He noted there were rumors of resistance and undefined "political activity" among Catholics, but his knowledge was based on hearsay [redacted]

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[redacted] Unrest, discontent, and war weariness doubtless is widespread in North Vietnam, but there is no sign of any situation developing into a serious threat to the regime's control apparatus.

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More on Hanoi's Diplomatic Drive: The North Vietnamese diplomatic initiative in Sweden apparently did not amount to much. It probably was simply another attempt to spread the word that Hanoi is ready to talk any time the US is willing to stop the bombing unconditionally. A Swedish broadcast on 21 February says the talks between the North Vietnamese ambassador to Moscow and the Swedes have produced much speculation, but no indications of movement in the Communist position. Swedish Foreign Minister Nilsson publicly denied that North Vietnam had asked for any help in arranging contact with the US or that he had anything new to relay to Washington.

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Nonetheless, the Swedish ambassador to Peking is headed for Hanoi soon, and, according to the press, he will be accompanied by the personal secretary to Foreign Minister Nilsson.

* * *

French Communist to Hanoi: The secretary general of the French Communist party may be headed for Hanoi soon. His visit has been expected for some time, and a French Press Agency report on 22 February states that it may occur soon. Hanoi doubtless will use it as one more opportunity to push its case for a bombing halt.

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Hanoi's Wheat Flour Imports: This month the Soviets completed the 1967 contract for delivery of 150,000 tons of wheat flour to North Vietnam.

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] In the past, Hanoi had generally imported a little over 100,000 tons of food annually; wheat flour was generally not included and is not customarily part of the North Vietnamese diet. Domestic food production in North Vietnam was poor last year, however, and in some areas as much as 40 percent of the monthly grain ration for individuals now consists of wheat flour.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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

Hanoi on Antiwar Movement in US: A Hanoi broadcast of 22 February takes note of a message sent by the four Intrepid sailors denouncing the Vietnam war and appealing to Americans for backing of the antiwar movement. The broadcast also reports that an organization has been set up in Sweden to help US soldiers who refuse to participate in the war and have deserted to Sweden. It says that more than 20 Americans have chosen this course so far. The broadcast also cites an Associated Press item reporting antiwar sentiments at Harvard University, where a poll of graduate students is said to have shown overwhelming sentiment against the war.

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