

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 3 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
3 APRIL 1968

1. Vietnam

South Vietnam's chief of the general staff, General Cao Van Vien, has tendered his resignation, according to a Saigon press report. There is no indication yet whether Vien's resignation will be accepted. He and several of the corps commanders have been threatening to resign for several weeks. They are disgruntled with Thieu's handling of the government.

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Evidence of heavy infiltration into South Vietnam continues to mount. North Vietnamese units above the Demilitarized Zone are disappearing from their regular communications networks, a good indication they are moving south. At least 36 infiltration groups have now been identified. A premium appears to be on speed. Personnel of one North Vietnamese regiment now in the central highlands moved over 500 miles from North to South Vietnam in about a month.

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Ambassador Goldberg notes that reports of air strikes near Thanh Hoa have drawn some unfavorable comments from non-Communist UN delegates.

2. Brazil

Political tension is still high, but student demonstrations have tapered off. Trouble could flare up again tomorrow when a mass will be held for a youth killed by police in Rio. Student leaders are beginning to bicker among themselves, however, and this is limiting their effectiveness to some extent.

3. Jordan-Iran

The Iranians are requesting US reaction to a proposed transfer of American-supplied tanks and artillery to Jordan. Husayn asked the Shah for help on an urgent basis after the Israeli attack last month. Husayn feels he needs the equipment now to fill in until similar hardware arrives under the recent US-Jordanian agreement. The Iranians are not sure yet whether they would sell or loan the equipment, nor are any specific numbers being mentioned.

4. Czechoslovakia

Dubcek continues to shake the old hardliners out of the party tree. Monday, Jiri Hendrych, the once-powerful spokesman for the "neo-Stalinists," admitted his "past mistakes" and resigned his posts on the presidium and the party secretariat. Lesser men are going too.

One of the best indications of the new wind blowing in Czechoslovakia was a Prague domestic broadcast quoting the Czech Washington correspondent on President Johnson's address: "In my view," he said, "it would be unjust and improper to dismiss Johnson's speech as another maneuver.... On the contrary, it would be better for the socialist countries to carry out a deep analysis of the long-term consequences that Johnson's speech can have."

5. Communist China

There is ample evidence that warring members of the Politburo continue to stalk one another. Three senior military officers--one a Lin Piao protégé--were purged last week; this week posters have gone up attacking some of Chou En-lai's followers.

In some provinces outside Peking, the struggle for power is considerably more direct and deadly. Bitter street fighting between contending factions is reported from several cities.

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6. Panama

National Guard Commandant Vallarino is letting it be known that he will not accept any decision by the Supreme Court against Robles. Robles expects a favorable decision today, but Panamanian law provides enough loopholes to let the court delay until mid-April. Meanwhile, there are signs that some of Arias' key backers feel their money is on the wrong horse; there is talk of dumping him for another candidate, perhaps Vallarino himself.

7. Guatemala

The first reports of military coup plotting are coming in the wake of last week's move by President Mendez to shake up the army hierarchy.

So far the threat to Mendez does not appear immediate. Much, however, depends on how far Mendez tries to go in curtailing the extralegal "counter-insurgency" groups who range the countryside under army auspices hunting leftists. If the President tries to eliminate these vigilantes, then the army may well move against him.

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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
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

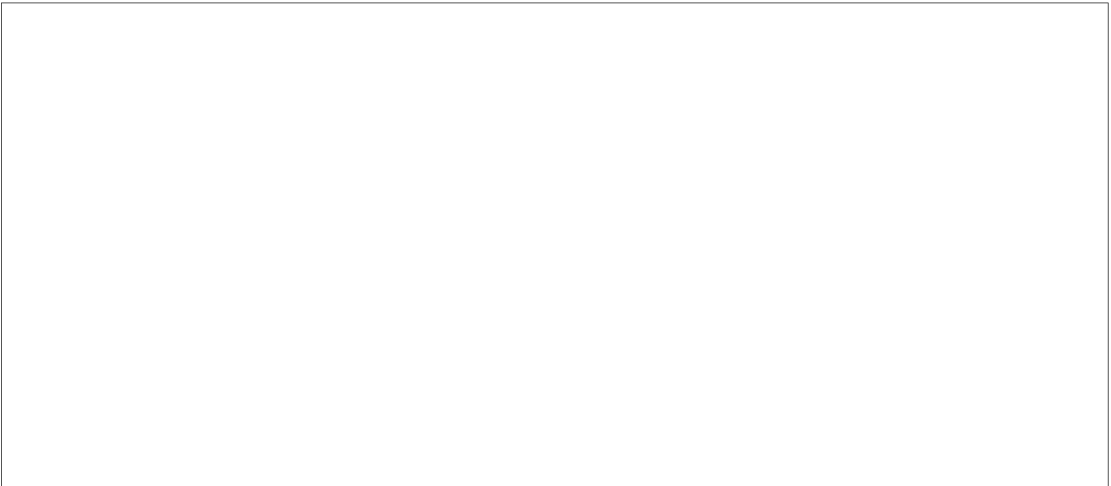


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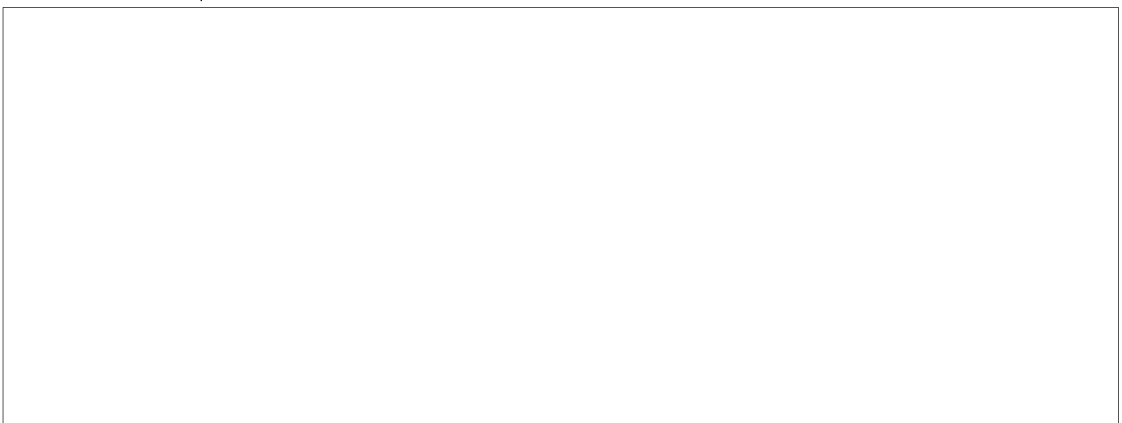


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Foreign Shipping to North Vietnam in February:
Ship arrivals dropped sharply in February after the record high in January. The 92,500 tons of seaborne imports in February (on 29 foreign ships) were less than half the January figure (on 46 ships).



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North Vietnamese exports rose in February, a reflection of renewed coal exports from Cam Pha and Hon Gay.

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Hanoi Delegation Begins African Trip: The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry delegation headed by Vice Foreign Minister Hoang Van Loi arrived in Algiers on 2 April on the first stop of a tour scheduled to include Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Congo Brazzaville, Tanzania,



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and Syria--all the countries in Africa and the Middle East where Hanoi currently has diplomatic representatives. The trip is part of Hanoi's current attempt to gain additional support for its position on negotiations. In an airport reception in Algiers, Loi outlined his government's standard position on a settlement of the war but refused to comment on President Johnson's 31 March statement.

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Two North Vietnamese Diplomats in Eastern Europe Have Left Their Posts, Perhaps for Home: US Embassy officers in Bucharest and Sofia reported on 1 April that North Vietnamese ambassadors in these cities are absent. In Rumania, the Polish ambassador reported that his North Vietnamese counterpart left for Hanoi "hurriedly last week" without the usual notification to his diplomatic colleagues. In Bulgaria, the local press reported that Hanoi's ambassador was not in the country. Both of these absences appear to predate President Johnson's 31 March speech.

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

Hanoi Reacts Cautiously to President's Speech:
Hanoi's initial press reactions to President Johnson's 31 March statement are negative and hostile, but the regime has handled the matter cautiously in its radio propaganda.

Both the party and the army newspapers on 2 April carried general denunciations of US policy, but apparently failed to address the President's move directly. The army paper scored US unwillingness to halt the bombing "finally and unconditionally" throughout North Vietnam, according to the Soviet news agency. The party

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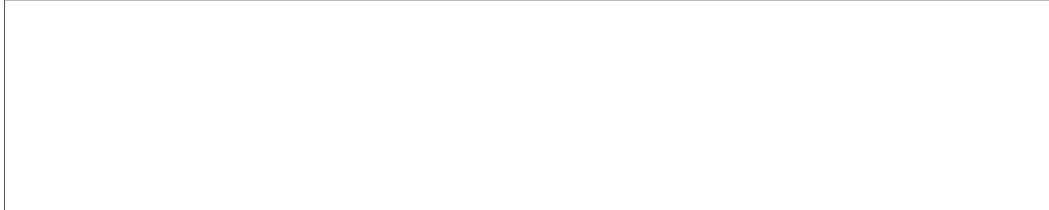


paper talked of a "new plot" and a "fraudulent proposal," according to French and Japanese accounts.

Neither item has been broadcast by Hanoi radio, which seems to have limited itself to quotes of Soviet accounts charging that the bombing halt is not in accordance with North Vietnam's conditions.

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