

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 11 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
11 DECEMBER 1968

1. Israel

Observers report increased Israeli military activity since early last week. These sightings include more than the usual number of troops moving about and indications that some Israeli reservists have been called up. This means that the higher alert posture assumed last week coincident with the raids into Jordan is being maintained to permit more quick strikes.

Yesterday's dogfight over the southern tip of the Sinai was the first between Egyptian and Israeli pilots in about a month. One Egyptian fighter was shot down, but, so far, there has been no sign that either side plans to follow up the air action.

2. Soviet Union

Finance Minister Garbuzov avoided anti-American diatribes yesterday in presenting the new budget to the Supreme Soviet. This suggests a continued desire not to muddy the water before any strategic arms limitation talks.

The defense budget showed an increase of six percent, and that for science (three-quarters of which is military research and space programs) about 13-14 percent. Because we have not seen the early spadework that would go into major new programs, we are inclined at first glance to question whether the increases in defense and space spending will actually reach the figures given by Garbuzov.

On the whole, we estimate the Soviets probably will spend next year about the equivalent of \$60 billion US on defense and space.

3. North Korea

One of North Korea's most experienced guerrilla leaders has been made minister of defense--an appointment strongly suggestive that even greater emphasis will be put on unconventional warfare against the South.

General Choe Hyon, a confidant of Kim Il Song's, learned his trade as a partisan fighting the Japanese. He also has commanded the school where North Korean soldiers are trained in infiltration and guerrilla warfare techniques. The 63-year-old Choe ranks fifth in the party hierarchy.

4. Dominican Republic

General Wessin is determined to get back to the Dominican Republic, and he may try to do so surreptitiously. The general's supporters are prepared to help him escape his Miami exile.

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Should he return, Wessin would not pose an immediate threat to Balaguer. Unfounded rumors of coup plots are flying about, however, and Wessin's presence would certainly be unsettling.

5. Brazil

The military and liberal churchmen are butting heads over the recent arrest of three French priests charged with subversion. As usual, the indecisive Costa e Silva looks as though he may be caught in the middle. While the army's case against the three priests has some merit, it is the military's excessive preoccupation with subversion, real or imaginary, which may turn out to be more dangerous. Under army pressure, Costa e Silva probably will shift toward more authoritarian rule.

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6. Panama

[redacted] frustrated Arias men are plotting to kill the National Guard's top commanders, Colonels Torrijos and Martinez. Arias' guerrilla movement is foundering and it is quite possible that some such desperate gambit might be tried. The Guard, however, is aware of this plot and its chances for success seem slim.

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7. Communist China

Something big may be afoot in Peking. The Chinese armed forces chief of staff cut short a state visit to Albania and returned hurriedly to the capital on 5 December. All the top leadership has been out of sight since 29 November--some, including Lin Piao and Mao's wife, for more than two months.

There is some possibility that Lin Piao is in southwest China trying to bring feuding factions into line. In any event, both contentious propaganda and the behavior of the leadership raise the prospect that the power struggle has taken a new and crucial turn.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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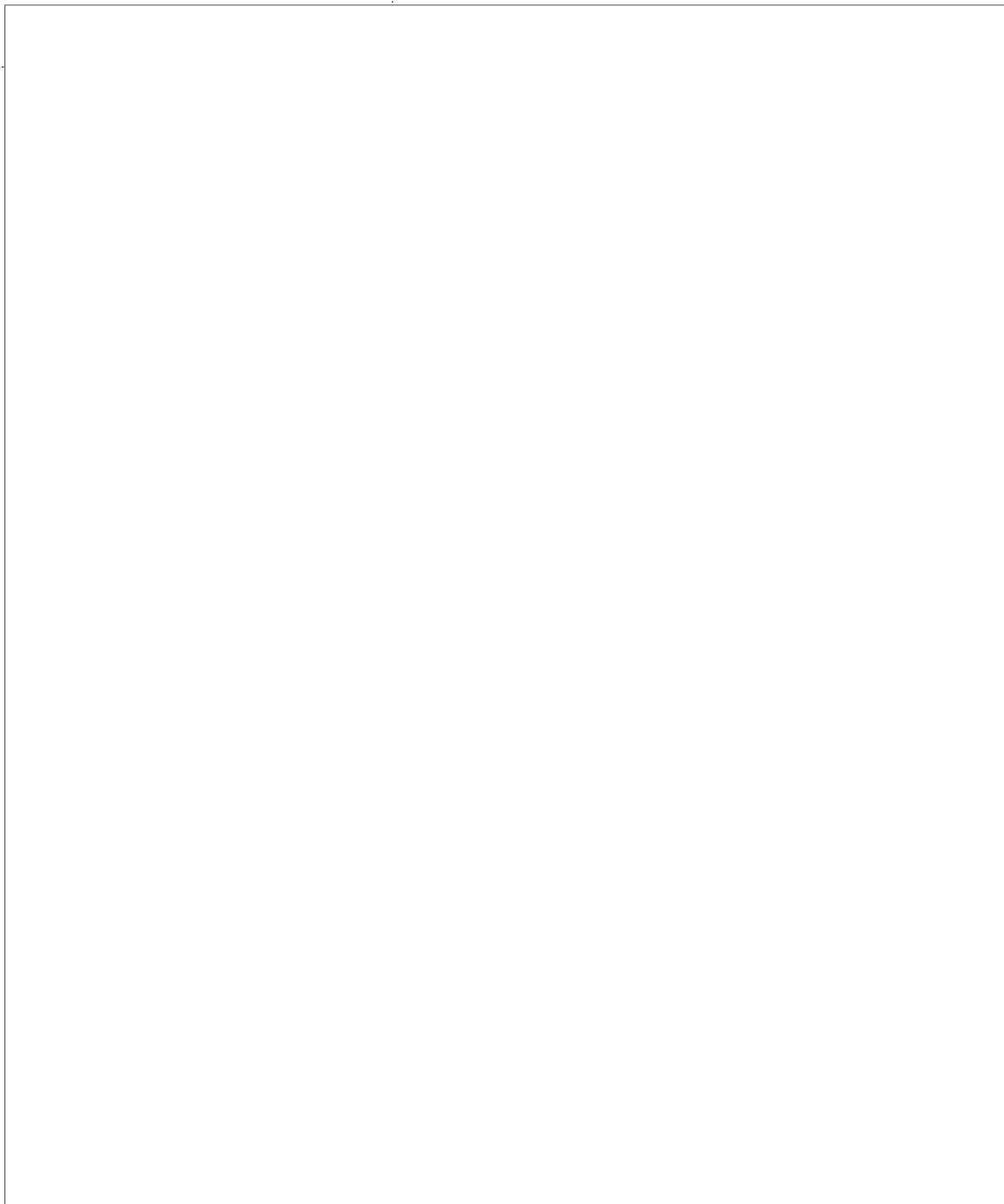
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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

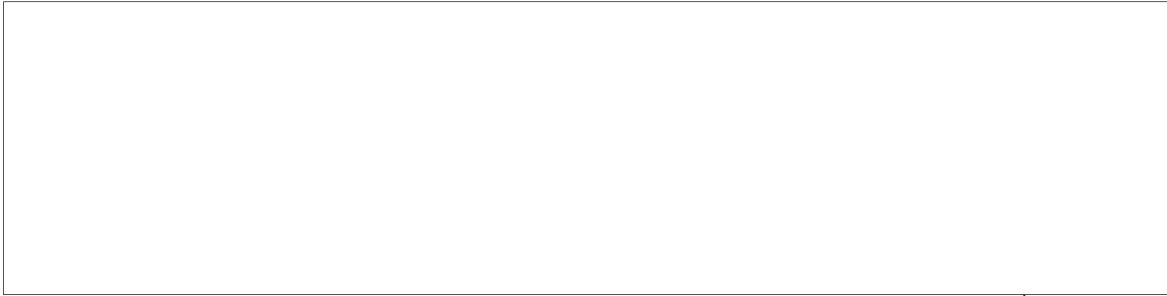


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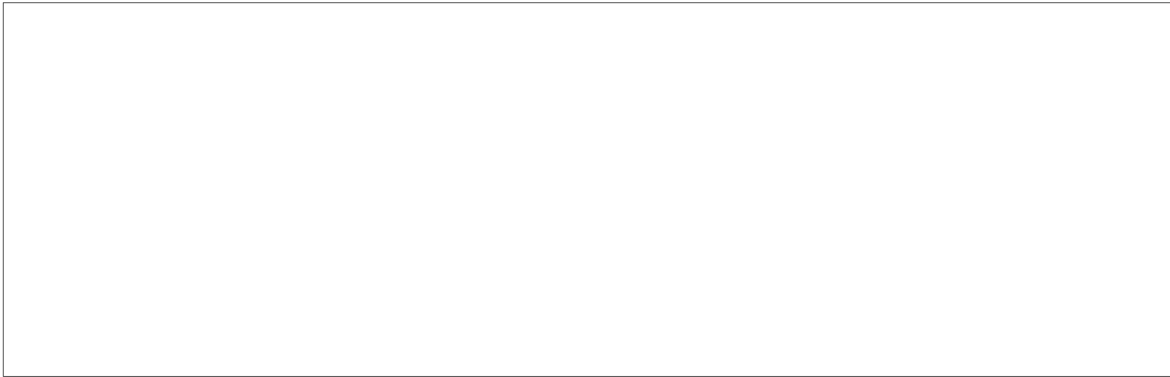


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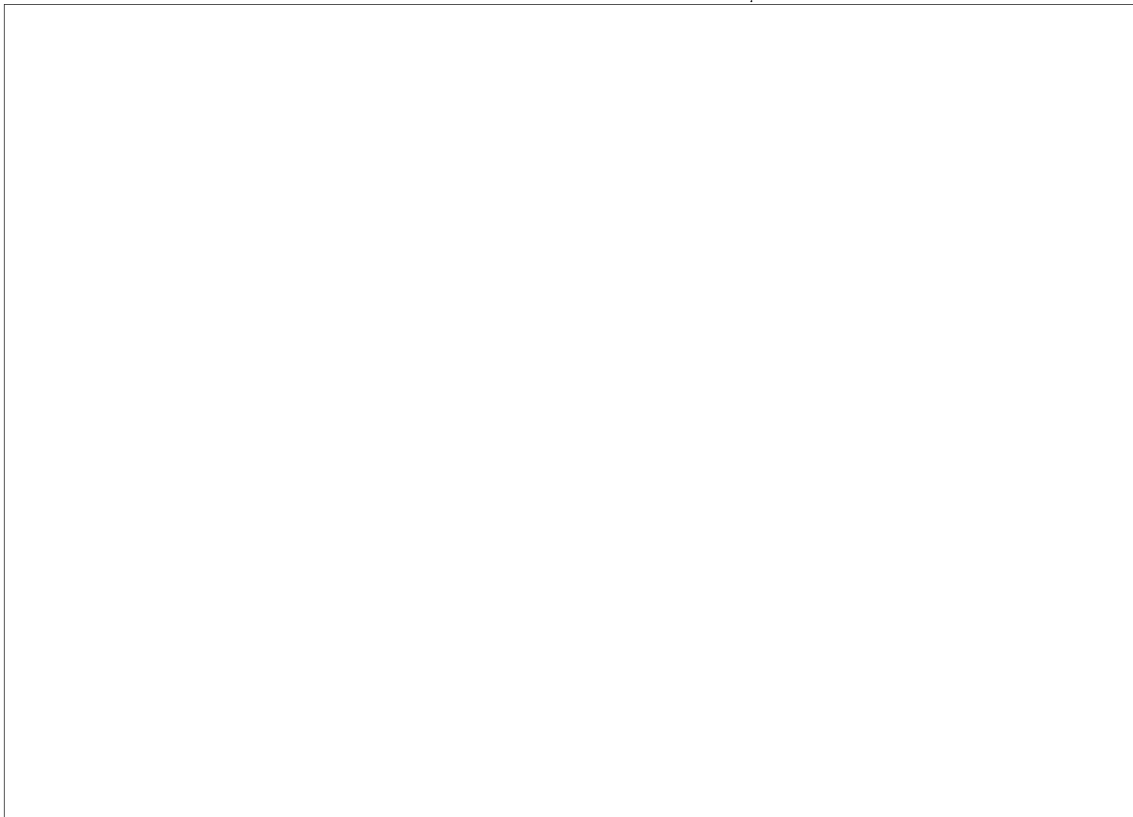
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Top North Vietnamese Diplomats Return to Their Posts After Consultations in Hanoi: At least eight North Vietnamese envoys are en route back to their foreign posts following a general diplomatic recall which began in October.

While in Hanoi, the diplomats almost certainly were briefed on the situation in South Vietnam and Paris and doubtless carry new instructions and guidelines regarding Hanoi's current policies in these areas. In their public and private statements, these officials can be expected to reflect at least the general drift of Hanoi's thinking on the war and Paris talks.

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Hanoi Issues Call for New Effort to Defeat US: The Central Committee Secretariat, in a 10 December circular issued in connection with plans to celebrate National Resistance Day on 19 December, the anniversary of the founding of the National Liberation Front on 20 December and the anniversary of the founding of the People's Army on 22 December, calls for renewed efforts to defeat the American aggressors. The circular claims that 1968 has brought great victories but warns that the enemy remains stubborn and unwilling to renounce his aggressive designs. In light of this, the North Vietnamese people are asked to increase labor output, to mobilize human and material resources for the front line, and to make realistic preparations for early 1969 tasks.

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North Vietnamese Coal Exports to China Increase: Coal exports from North Vietnam to China in December will total 46,000 tons, the highest level in more than six months, according to an intercepted 5 December message. Coal exports to China follow the pattern of total coal exports which suggests that recent production difficulties are being overcome. Production had dropped markedly during the summer from peak levels last spring.

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Smelting Plant South of Hanoi Reactivated: [redacted]

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[redacted] for the first time in over two years a smelting plant about 30 miles south of Hanoi on the west bank of the Red River appeared to be in operation. [redacted] the plant was completely illuminated and the glare from the blast furnace was visible.

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

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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