

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 26 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
26 DECEMBER 1968

1. Venezuela-Guyana

[redacted]
[redacted] the Venezuelan military is getting ready for an operation against a large section of Guyana that the Venezuelans have long coveted. The Venezuelan move reportedly would come in response to an "appeal" from the Indians who inhabit the area.
[redacted]

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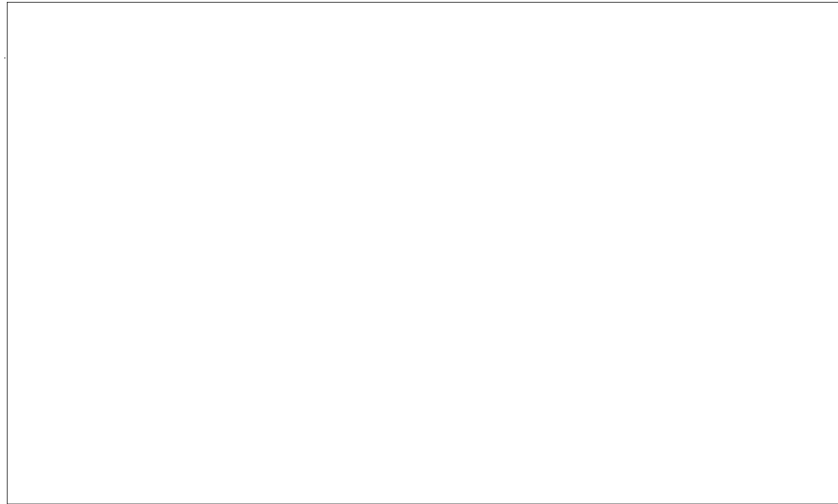
The Guyanese do not have the means to resist a Venezuelan incursion. They probably would move as quickly as possible to secure UN condemnation of the "aggressors" in Caracas.

2. South Vietnam

[redacted]

3. Soviet Union -
Middle East

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4. Italy -
Communist China

The new Italian Government has decided to recognize Peking in the fairly near future, according to Foreign Minister Nenni. The government will be implementing a decision which was announced in principle five years ago.

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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Reaction to American and South Vietnamese Statements: There has been almost no authoritative Vietnamese Communist response to recent US and South Vietnamese statements about separating military and political problems in the course of negotiations and leaving the burden of a political settlement to Saigon and the Liberation Front. Hanoi probably is acting cautiously in part to avoid jeopardizing potentially useful openings for the negotiations. At the same time the Communists are well aware of the divisive influence some recent statements have had on the allied side, and they may feel that anything they say would only serve to close ranks between Saigon and Washington.

The only significant Communist reaction to Secretary Clifford's television remarks about mutual troop withdrawals on 15 December has been a Liberation Radio broadcast of 19 December. Avoiding the substance of the remarks, it simply castigated Clifford for using "shamelessly deceitful and provocative arguments." There has been no reporting in Communist media on Henry Kissinger's Foreign Affairs article concerning Vietnam. The French news agency reported that a Liberation Front spokesman in Paris on 19 December "rejected" the idea of separate negotiations on military problems between North Vietnam and the United States and political negotiations between Saigon and the Liberation Front, which had been "suggested successively" by Clifford and Kissinger. Hanoi's version of the Front spokesman's remarks omitted any reference to this subject.

Tran Buu Kiem, head of the Front delegation in Paris, "categorically rejected" Vice President Ky's statements on television last weekend, according to an "exclusive interview" by the French press agency. Kiem's interview has been quoted widely in the Western press, but its accuracy is at best dubious and

the Communists clearly do not consider it an authoritative release. Kiem allegedly said, for instance, that the Front does not have the "direct means" to overthrow the Saigon government and that the Front would not be opposed to a "peace cabinet" headed by General "Big" Minh. These comments almost certainly are distorted and they cast doubt on the reliability of the rest of the interview. No Communist broadcasts have carried the statements attributed to Kiem, and none has so far responded to Ky's remarks on television.

This gingerly treatment of these issues almost certainly indicates considerable Hanoi interest. Some of the general ideas expressed by Secretary Clifford, Kissinger, and even Vice President Ky mesh fairly well with long-standing Communist scenarios for separate handling of problems concerning North and South Vietnam and for a political settlement "without outside interference." Many of the details in these statements are clearly unacceptable to the Communists, particularly Ky's suggestion of political negotiations after North Vietnamese troops have been withdrawn, but Hanoi probably sees in them at least some potential for future productive bargaining.

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Giap's Address: General Vo Nguyen Giap delivered the keynote address at a major holiday rally in Hanoi on 21 December. The ceremonies, attended by Ho Chi Minh and other high officials, jointly celebrated the anniversaries of the establishment of the North Vietnamese Army in 1944 and the start of the anti-French resistance in 1946.

In his speech, as broadcast by Radio Hanoi's international service, Giap presented a generally optimistic review of the situation but without much of the bluster and exaggeration commonly used in Communist propaganda. This fairly low-key approach is Giap's trademark, but at this time it probably also reflects the leadership's sober assessment of Communist military prospects and the heavy reliance Hanoi is placing on its hopes that Washington is interested in negotiating an early reduction in the US commitment to the war.

Giap argued that the bombing halt, and what he termed US reassessment of its position with a view toward "de-Americanizing" the war, clearly demonstrated that the Communists are prevailing. But, citing continued aerial reconnaissance over the North and a large military presence in the South as evidence of US intentions to hang on, Giap urged continued efforts to press forward along the lines of the party's "correct" revolutionary war strategy. He asserted that past successes stemmed from that strategy.

Giap described this strategy as "combining armed struggle with political struggle to launch... offensives in all forms," bringing to bear Communist "moral and political superiority" against US military and economic power. On the military front, the strategy calls for "stepped up big-unit fighting and ...widespread guerrilla warfare at the same time."

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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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