

The President's Daily Brief

Top Secret 16 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
16 APRIL 1968

1. Vietnam

The Vietnamese Communists are re-
viving the claim that they exercise
administrative control over large areas
of South Vietnam. A recent Viet Cong
broadcast, for example, boasts that 1.6
million more people and 600 more ham-
lets and villages have come under their
control since Tet. The "revolutionary
administrations" set up in "liberated
areas" will eventually merge to rule the
entire country, the broadcast asserted.

This was a prominent propaganda
theme right after Tet, but has been
rare since mid-March. Its revival now
is presumably related to the prospect
of US - North Vietnamese talks.

2. South Vietnam

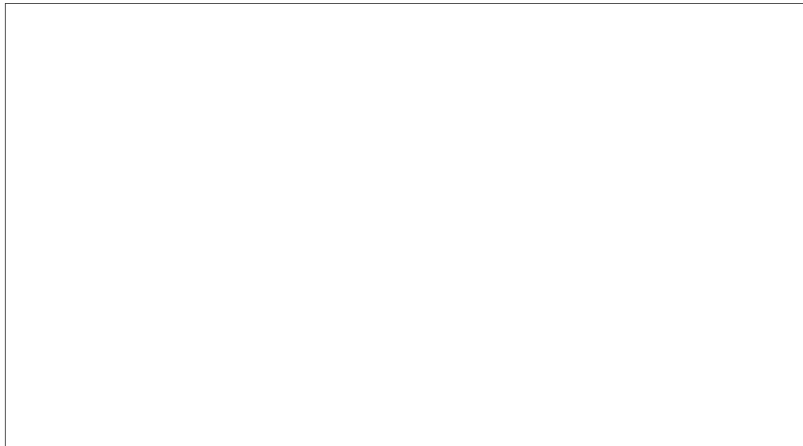
Ky has all but withdrawn his sup-
port from Prime Minister Loc

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This will
make it much easier for President Thieu
to replace Loc with a more effective
man.

3. Soviet Union



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4. Canada

Unless something gives soon, Ottawa will be under strong pressure to break diplomatic relations with Paris early next week. The Province of Quebec, after a "reminder" from Paris, intends to send a delegation there on Monday for a conference of education ministers of various French-speaking nations.

Both Pearson and Trudeau had publicly threatened that if France bypasses Ottawa and deals directly with Quebec on this matter, relations will be broken. The Canadian press is not letting them forget this commitment. Neither Ottawa nor Paris wants a break, but neither can seem to get off the hook.

Trudeau, who takes over next week, feels even more strongly than Pearson that something must be done to keep Quebec from whittling away at Ottawa's prerogatives.

5. West Germany

Leftist youths continued their violent demonstrations yesterday for the fifth straight day. At least half a dozen cities were affected. There are signs that the demonstrators intend to keep it up through May Day.

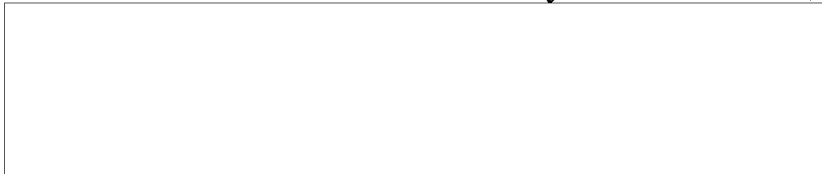
Kiesinger is worried, and he has warned that continued violence will be met "decisively." According to US press reports, he is considering the use of federal troops.

6. Rumania

Bucharest's acceptance of a US invitation to send a high-level scientific delegation to Washington early next month is another sign of its strong desire to expand relations with the West. The delegation is to be headed by Alexandru Birladeanu, a deputy premier whose special job is the direction of scientific research.

7. France

The French are resisting Soviet efforts further to expand Franco-Soviet space cooperation. A full review of the matter is now under way in Paris.



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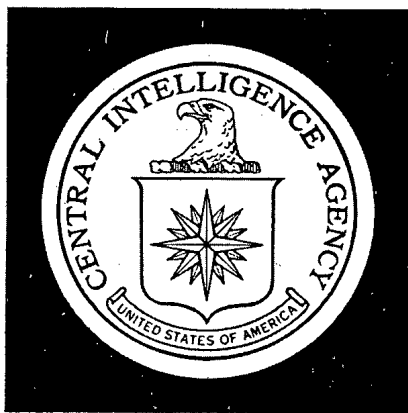
Paris has explained that its commitment to the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium bars closer co-operation with the Soviets.



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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
for the President's Eyes Only

16 April 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Current Propaganda Line: Hanoi radio continues to portray the Viet Cong on the offensive in South Vietnam. An army daily commentary on 15 April described the fighting around Khe Sanh as intense-- with the US Marines still under siege and Operation PEGASUS able to make only a few miles a day because of "heavy" Communist opposition. The commentary admitted in a backhanded way that the siege of Khe Sanh had been lifted, but claimed the US lost more than five battalions.

The new allied operation north of Saigon, said the newspaper, was getting on no better than its predecessor and was being frustrated by local Communist guerrillas at all turns. Communist forces were credited with recent "brilliant successes" in artillery attacks, in ambushes, and in "lightning operations deep into enemy territory."

On the peace front, Premier Pham Van Dong continues to reach out for Western audiences by making himself available to a growing number of non-Communist foreign correspondents. In an appearance on French television on 12 April, he was extremely confident, according to Western news accounts. He condemned the US for not stopping the bombing completely and told his French listeners that the North Vietnamese were dealing from strength on all sides--economically, militarily, and politically.

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More from Hanoi on US "Stubbornness": Hanoi radio's international service broadcast an English translation today of another Nhan Dan article criticizing the US for "refusing to agree to the sites suggested by North Vietnam for preliminary contacts between the two sides." The broadcast asserted that the US has been "widely criticized both at home and abroad because it has failed to match its deeds with words (sic)." It then went on to claim that the

"deliberate delay" by the US in agreeing to a site, accompanied by the continuing "aggressive acts in both zones of Vietnam," prove that the US really does not want to move toward peace."

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More on Self-Defense and Militia Forces: A recent editorial in the party daily Nhan Dan stresses the role of North Vietnam's self-defense and militia forces in the "new stage" and because of the "new situation." The editorial says the size of local security forces has grown "rapidly" in recent years, but also notes that they have shown "definite weak points and shortcomings." The self-defense and militia forces are once again urged to increase their "combat strength" in order to carry out the role of "protecting the rear and serving the front."

Such exhortations in Hanoi's propaganda are routine, but it is likely all the same that a special effort is under way to tighten security and to make certain that all military and paramilitary organizations are geared up to support the war.

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Hanoi on US Air Attacks: Hanoi continues to report routinely on alleged "violations" of North Vietnamese airspace by US aircraft and to complain about bombings in the southernmost provinces of the country. Broadcasts pointedly complain of violations "at the 21st and 22nd parallels," and near Hanoi, presumably referring to US reconnaissance flights.

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American Group to Meet North Vietnamese: A mixed bag of Negro radicals, civil rights workers, and war critics were scheduled to leave New York Saturday for Stockholm. The delegation is sponsored by the American Communist Party and is to meet with North Vietnamese representatives. The purpose of the meeting is unknown.

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

Hanoi's Propaganda Treatment of the US Elections: Hanoi's propaganda media normally devote a very small percentage of their output to the US domestic debate and US dissension over the conduct of the war in Vietnam, and only a small portion of this propaganda in recent months has been addressed specifically to the US presidential election campaign. This low-volume pattern did not change with the acceleration of campaigning by the candidates and the beginning of the party primaries. The New Hampshire primary prompted a single Nhan Dan article and the Wisconsin primary was totally ignored.

An examination of Nhan Dan for March turned up only two articles on the presidential elections: an unsigned article on the 15th dealt with the results of the New Hampshire primary, and an article on the 20th commented on Senator Kennedy's announcement that he was entering the presidential race. Nhan Dan publishes a daily column reviewing world press comment on various subjects, but on only three occasions during March were there references to the US elections or the candidates. On 5 March, this column noted a UPI report of a statement by Senator Kennedy on the situation in South Vietnam. On the 17th, it cited US and British press comment on the New Hampshire primary, and on the 26th it briefly mentioned the challenge to the President by Senators Kennedy and McCarthy.

There was also scant attention to the elections during March in monitored Hanoi radio broadcasts. The two Nhan Dan articles cited above were broadcast; otherwise, the North Vietnamese radio audiences heard only a scattering of news reports on US dissent over the war.

The Vietnam News Agency (VNA) carried no commentaries on the election in its English language transmissions during the month, although there were a few references to critical remarks by Kennedy and McCarthy in news items. The Nhan Dan article on 15 March about the New Hampshire primary was, however, carried in VNA's Vietnamese language transmission.

The small amount of attention to the elections is consistent with Hanoi's general practice of devoting only a meager portion of its output to US domestic developments. Hanoi's propaganda on the week of protest in Washington last October was typical of its treatment of internal US developments. This highly exploitable event occasioned seven commentaries in a single week, but even that was relatively minor attention when compared with treatment of an event such as the South Vietnamese elections in September 1967, which occupied as much as half of Hanoi's broadcast time.

(Hanoi's view of the US position in Vietnam is not limited to election problems alone. The North Vietnamese also emphasize other problems for the US: antiwar sentiment and opposition, racial disorders, economic problems, military manpower squeeze, and international complications for US policy.)

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