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14 November 1960

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

14 November 1960

DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

South Vietnam: Suppression of the attempted coup against President Diem appeared virtually complete by the afternoon of 12 November with the surrender of nearly all rebel paratroopers to loyal forces which had entered Saigon in response to Diem's earlier radio appeals. Efforts are being made to stabilize the military situation as rapidly as possible in order to prevent Communist guerrillas from profiting by the diversion of field units to Saigon. Some increase in Communist activity has been reported in Tay Ninh Province west of Saigon.

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Effective government control is now in the hands of Diem and loyal military officers on whom he may be increasingly dependent to maintain his authority. He has promised repressive action against the rebel military leaders and reportedly has arrested some civilian opponents not known to have been actively involved in the plot. Unless he is prepared to carry out his earlier promises to the rebels to effect sweeping reforms and government reorganization, he may face early difficulties from civilian mobs who evidenced considerable support for the coup attempt when it seemed to be succeeding and who may have received some arms from the paratroops.

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Laos: In Luang Prabang, the group of officers under Major Bountheng, having apparently sustained its 10 November coup in the royal capital, is moving to establish closer ties with General Phoumi's Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee. Premier Souvanna Phouma meanwhile seems determined to hang on despite the narrowing of his area of maneuver caused by what now appears to be the loss of northern Laos to his Savannakhet opponents.

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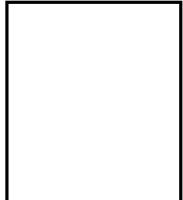
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Turkey: The removal of 14 members of the Committee of National Unity (CNU) on 13 November by chief of state General Gursel appears to have eliminated--for the present--the "extremist" wing of the ruling military junta. Most of the remaining 23 members of the CNU are regarded as firmly pro-Western and as more likely to work for an early return of the government to civilian control. While Gursel's move probably represents the will of the stronger faction within the original CNU, the influence within the armed forces of the "extremists"--particularly that of their leader, Colonel Alpaslan Turkes--is believed to be strong and is a potential danger to the present ruling group.

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III. THE WEST

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[West Germany: Ambassador Dowling believes that Adenauer's reported initiatives to improve relations with the USSR stem primarily from his desire to exploit Khrushchev's recent display of a less hostile attitude toward him. Adenauer has long been disturbed by the intensity and duration of Soviet propaganda against the Federal Republic, including charges of "war-mongering" which he feels have gained some credence in the West. The chancellor also has doubts and misgivings regarding the support of his allies, but Ambassador Dowling believes a German-Soviet "deal"]

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is precluded by Adenauer's conviction that West Germany's survival depends upon its close association with the West.]

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Venezuela: President Betancourt advised US Charge Stewart on 9 November that he would soon re-organize his cabinet--whose incumbent members resigned en masse on 11 November--and exclude representatives of the pro-Castro Democratic Republican Union, long a dissatisfied and obstructionist component of the ruling three-party coalition. Some elements of this party reportedly were involved with Communists and pro-Castro leftists in the serious antigovernment demonstrations of 19-28 October, and these groups now may form an open alliance in a continuing effort to undermine the government, particularly by exploiting the sharp deterioration of Cuban-Venezuelan relations and Venezuela's economic difficulties. The cabinet reorganization is nevertheless likely to strengthen Betancourt in the long run by consolidating his support from moderates and the armed forces.]

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Nicaragua: Rebel groups attempting to seize key spots in southern Nicaragua were dispersed in separate actions on 11 and 12 November by Costa Rican and Nicaraguan defense groups. They apparently represent a variety of Nicaraguan opposition groups, from conservatives to a leftist pro-Castro faction. Members of the latter group were cultivated by the Cuban ambassador prior to the Nicaraguan diplomatic break with Cuba last June and may subsequently have received Cuban aid. There is no confirmation, however, of Nicaraguan Government claims that the rebel move was directed or closely supported by the Castro regime. The Nicaraguan Government, which has declared martial law, expects another attack by rebels known to be near the border with Honduras to the north, but is believed capable of suppressing any new rebel raids from this quarter.]

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*Guatemala: President Ydigoras remains in control in the capital following coordinated insurgent attacks on military installations in Guatemala City and two key provincial capitals on 13 November. The attackers, however, apparently withdrew from their Guatemala City objective with a quantity of military equipment and were joined by an unknown number of defecting soldiers. Ydigoras, faced with the most serious threat of his nearly three years in office, immediately decreed a state of siege throughout the country. [redacted]

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[redacted] the insurgents are led by a coalition of expediency composed of a rightist faction and a Communist front political party which has ties with the Castro regime in Cuba. [redacted]

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DAILY BRIEF

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Attempted Coup D'Etat Fails in South Vietnam

Suppression of the attempted coup d'etat against South Vietnamese President Diem was virtually completed by the afternoon of 12 November with the surrender of nearly all rebel paratroops to loyal infantry forces which entered Saigon in response to Diem's radio appeals. Control of the government appears to be in the hands of President Diem and a committee including loyal military generals, with former field commander Brig. Gen. Nguyen Khanh actually directing operations in Saigon. Efforts are being made to stabilize the situation as rapidly as possible so that army units diverted from areas of Communist guerrilla activity can be withdrawn from Saigon. No abnormal Communist attacks have been reported except in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border.

Diem's position is likely to remain shaky and increasingly dependent on the military. There is no certainty that he will carry out the concessions made in negotiations with the coup leaders on 11 November in an apparent effort to gain time for his rescue. Should he postpone or fail to carry out his promises of sweeping reforms to alleviate economic corruption and political repressions, or revert to reliance on the political advice of his unpopular brother Nhu, he will continue to face apathy among the rural population and growing hostility in Saigon itself.

Although the paratroop ranks have reportedly been granted amnesty, Diem has threatened severe punishment for their leaders. Reports are conflicting concerning the whereabouts of revolt leaders Lt. Col. Nguyen Chanh Thi and Lt. Col. Vuong Van Dong. There are also reports that the Diem government has arrested several civilian opponents of the regime who are not known to have been actively involved in the plot. Such moves could

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lead to unrest among mobs in Saigon who evidenced considerable enthusiasm for the coup attempt when it seemed to be succeeding and who may have received arms from surrendering paratroopers. There is some danger that Communist agents may attempt to stir up mob actions which could lead to further army firing on civilians.

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The Situation in Laos

[Major Bountheng, leader of the group of officers which seized control of the royal capital of Luang Prabang on 10 November, has asked General Phoumi in Savannakhet to send a delegation at once to concert plans for action against the Souvanna Phouma government in Vientiane. Phoumi plans to send military and civil liaison officers shortly but will not go himself. No overt opposition to Bountheng's take-over has been reported in the First Military Region, which embraces northern Laos and has its headquarters in Luang Prabang.]

[Although former Premier Phoui Sananikone was apparently in Luang Prabang at the time of the Bountheng coup, there is little evidence that he stimulated the action. However, he will undoubtedly exert a strong influence on the Bountheng group while holding himself in readiness for a possible bid to head any new government formed in the event Premier Souvanna Phouma resigns or is ousted by the National Assembly.]

[Souvanna meanwhile seems determined to hang on even though his freedom of maneuver has been seriously reduced by what now appears to be the loss of northern Laos to his Savannakhet opponents. He asked Ambassador Brown in Vientiane on 12 November to hold up further military aid shipments to Luang Prabang. He also stated that he will refuse to recognize the validity of any action taken by the King because he considered the monarch to be in effect a prisoner of Phoumi. Souvanna talked vaguely about retaking Luang Prabang by force, but such a move is unlikely, inasmuch as he lacks the military resources to accomplish this while at the same time holding Vientiane against either the Pathet Lao or Phoumi forces to the south.]

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Adenauer Seeks to Reduce Tension With USSR

[Ambassador Dowling in Bonn believes that Chancellor Adenauer's reported initiatives to improve relations with the USSR stem from a desire to exploit Khrushchev's recent change of attitude toward him. Adenauer has publicly welcomed Khrushchev's "friendly attitude," evidenced by overtures to the West German ambassador in Moscow and the avoidance recently of strong personal attacks on Adenauer. The chancellor has been disturbed by the intensity and duration of Soviet propaganda against the Federal Republic, including charges of "war-mongering" which he feels have gained some credence in the West.]

[The chancellor in turn has had doubts and misgivings regarding the support of his allies, but Ambassador Dowling believes a German-Soviet "deal" is precluded by Adenauer's conviction that West Germany's survival depends upon close association with the West. Adenauer's public hint on 11 November that Khrushchev may be invited to Bonn may be an attempt to pressure Bonn's allies to remain firm on Berlin. In view of Khrushchev's demands for an April summit, Adenauer may also feel that proposing a meeting with Khrushchev after that date will delay new negotiations on Berlin.]

[Although Adenauer's call on 10 November for a meeting between President-elect Kennedy and Khrushchev to discuss disarmament is a switch from his usual suspicion of bilateral talks, he continues to oppose discussion of the Berlin and Germany problems until there has been a significant reduction of international tension through an agreement on disarmament. Khrushchev's letter of 12 November to an East Berlin student rally, while couched in moderate terms, indicates that there has been no change in Soviet policy on Berlin.]

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[REDACTED]
Pro-Castro Party to Be Excluded From Ruling
Venezuelan Coalition

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[Venezuelan President Betancourt advised US Charge Stewart on 9 November that he would soon reorganize his cabinet--whose incumbent members resigned on 11 November--and exclude representatives of the pro-Castro leftist Democratic Republican Union (URD), long a dissatisfied and obstructionist component of the three-party coalition. The new government will be composed of the moderate Christian democratic COPEI and independents as well as Betancourt's own Democratic Action party (AD), a reorganization which will probably strengthen Betancourt in the long run by consolidating his support among moderates and especially in the armed forces. Betancourt, with the cooperation of COPEI, will also retain control of the Congress and be released from the pressures by the ultranationalist URD on his moderate leftist policies.]

[The breakup of the present coalition was foreshadowed by the URD's criticism of the regime and demands for its leftist reorientation following the antigovernment violence of 19-28 October--the major test of Betancourt's stability since he took office in early 1959. Some elements of the URD, whose top leaders seemed to condone the unrest, were apparently involved with Communists and a pro-Castro Marxist faction in fomenting it.]

[These groups, already joined in a struggle with the AD for control of organized labor, may now ally openly in a continuing effort to undermine the government. They have maintained close liaison with the Cuban regime, which still has considerable appeal to radical elements in Venezuela, and are likely to exploit the recent sharp deterioration in Cuban-Venezuelan relations. The opposition will probably also attempt to capitalize on Betancourt's serious economic difficulties, including depressed business conditions, high unemployment, and a critical decline of foreign exchange reserves which led to the imposition of exchange controls on 8 November.]

[A massive progovernment rally in Caracas on 1 November, at which the crowd jeered the Cuban Government and its leaders and called for the "firing squad" for Castro, will possibly have a sobering effect on pro-Castro elements who may be planning additional disturbances.]

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The Situation in Guatemala

(Based on information available as of 0400 hours EST, 14 November)

President Ydigoras remains in control in the capital following coordinated insurgent attacks on military installations in Guatemala City and in two key provincial cities on 13 November. Attempts to seize the two major army garrisons in Guatemala City--which would have meant the immediate fall of the government--failed, but the insurgents were able to enter a lesser military installation in the capital and to withdraw with a quantity of military equipment and with a number of defecting soldiers. At about the same time, the army garrison in the Caribbean city of Puerto Barrios revolted and the garrison in Zacapa, key city controlling the rail line from the capital to the sea, also apparently came under insurgent control. Ydigoras, facing the most serious threat of his nearly three years in office, immediately decreed a state of siege throughout the country.

The extent of army defection is still unclear, but key officers including Defense Minister Gonzalez Sigui and the capital's two regimental commanders apparently have thus far remained loyal. The air force, potentially a decisive element in quelling the revolt, has already gone into action against insurgent-controlled bases in Puerto Barrios and Zacapa.

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[redacted] part of the airforce is committed to neutrality in passive support of the revolt.

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While there is no evidence at this time that the 11 November rebel attacks in Nicaragua and the current revolt in Guatemala are coordinated moves directed from Cuba, the Castro regime is known to be deeply involved in Central American revolutionary plotting.

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