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ILLEGIB

FAR EAST

1.—Viet Minh military preparations in northwest Tonkin:

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The Assistant US Military Attaché in Indochina reports that French forces have reoccupied certain strategic posts in the Tonkin delta area that had been seized by the Viet Minh two weeks ago and have repulsed Viet Minh attacks of varying strength in other parts of the delta. Meanwhile, Viet Minh forces in the rugged mountain country some 150 miles to the northwest have been preparing to attack the French-held post of Laichau. The Attaché states that French officials believe this operation is intended as a "face-saving" venture to compensate for the failure of recent Viet Minh attacks in the delta. The Chinese Communist battalion that entered Indochina above Laichau two weeks ago is apparently still occupying the post of Phongtho and vicinity, but the Attaché sees no indications that a large-scale invasion is imminent.

Comment: The post of Laichau is significant only as the focus of converging trails and as a barrier to a hostile invasion launched from Yunnan province, China. It is located in a country of dense forests and 10,000-foot mountain peaks and inhabited by primitive Thai tribesmen of anti-Viet Minh and anti-Chinese sentiments -- factors that would not facilitate a large-scale Chinese Communist invasion in this area. Although the Chinese force at Phongtho has been reliably identified as Communist, the French have interpreted the situation as being only "a little bit more than a frontier affair." The French contention that the Viet Minh is planning action against Laichau for face-saving purposes is the latest of several different theories attempting to explain enemy activity in this area.

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NEAR EAST - AFRICA

3. Iranian Prime Minister plans strong measures:

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Prior to receiving a vote of confidence from Parliament's lower house on 17 April, Prime Minister Hussein Ala informed US Ambassador Grady that the situation in Iran was im-

proving and that, if his appointment were confirmed by the lower house, he would undertake strong measures to suppress the increasingly open activities of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party. Ala said he was concerned about UK action in the present crisis and stated that the Shah also felt that the UK was not only undermining the present government but the Shah as well. In this connection, Ala pressed strongly his belief that no UK frigates should be sent to Abadan.

Comment: Although the vote of confidence increases the stability of the government, Ala's optimism is not echoed by other reports from Iran which state that the situation continues to be critical. Despite the imposition of martial law in the southern oil fields, the appeals of various political leaders (including National Front member Mulla Kashani) to the strikers to return to work and the reported agreement by many strikers to do so, the majority of workers reportedly remain out. AIOC officials report that "absenteeism" has spread to company labor at the Abadan airport.

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4. "Unhealthy" political situation reported in Tripoli, North Africa:

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In a 17 April report, US Consul Lynch in Tripoli described the local political situation as "most unhealthy." He commented that while the new Tripolitanian Government probably contains the best available persons, there is no effective political organization. The most determined opposition group is led by Bechir Bey Saadawi, who is reportedly being subsidized by Egypt and whose "line" coincides with that of the local Communists. Saadawi has engaged in rabble-rousing inflammatory speeches against the US, in which he asserted that the "imperialistic Americans" are preparing to exploit Libya as an airbase.

Comment: For some time, the opportunistic Saadawi, who has effective connections in Egypt, has been a consistent and vocal critic of the present government in Tripolitania. US difficulties in acquiring land for enlarging its facilities at Wheelus Field (5 miles east of Tripoli) have provided him with a pretext for his anti-American propaganda. He has likewise exploited for propaganda purposes the recent dissatisfaction and confusion created in Tripolitania in connection with the formation of a Libyan state (of which Tripolitania is a part).

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EASTERN EUROPE

5. Soviet twin-jet bombers observed in Poland and East Germany:

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on 14 April seven

Soviet "Type 27" twin-jet bombers were sighted on the Soviet-occupied airfield at Brzeg, in southern Poland. The US Air Force comments that these planes may be enroute to East Germany, possibly to join units of the 80th Bomber Corps of the Soviet 24th Air Army. It further suggests that the planes may remain at Brzeg temporarily to participate in the May Day air show over Warsaw.

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observed twin-jet aircraft flying north of Berlin on 6, 7 and 9 April

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Comment: The "Type 27" is believed to be the first jet bomber produced in numbers by the USSR. Its combat radius is estimated at about 500 nautical miles, with a bomb load of 4400 pounds. It represents a considerable improvement in range and capacity over the conventional bombers now being operated by Soviet units in Eastern Europe.

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6. US information program faces elimination in Poland:

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The US Embassy in Warsaw reports that the Polish Security Police have threatened serious reprisals if USIE's Polish librarian does not surrender a complete list of the library's patrons for an official investigation to begin on 18 April. The list of 839 borrowers includes many of Poland's outstanding professional, religious, scientific and former political leaders who have maintained library membership as a means of continuing intellectual relations with the West. The Security Police agent who approached the Polish USIE librarian stated that the US information program in Poland would probably be completely eliminated within six months. The US Ambassador, who has taken precautions to safeguard the list, notes that if it fell into the hands of the Security Police, the careers and possibly the lives of the individuals concerned would be placed in the gravest jeopardy.

Comment: This is the most drastic step that the Polish Government has taken against USIE so far and indicates the government's intention to sever all intellectual and cultural contacts between Poland and the West. Since the first of the year, the Security Police have engaged in a sporadic, but ineffective, campaign of harassment against USIE patrons. With respect to Soviet Orbit countries, USIE is still able to conduct a curtailed form of activity in the USSR, Poland and Hungary.

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WESTERN EUROPE

7. Austrians concerned over signs of increasing Soviet aggression:

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Austrian Minister of the Interior Helmer has informed the US Legation in Vienna of his fears that the USSR is quietly building up Soviet troop strength in Austria, and he cited a number of recent indications as proof of this build-up. Helmer appeared particularly disturbed, however, by the recent wave of Soviet abductions and is convinced that a "vigorous reaction" by the Austrian Government is required to prevent the demoralization of the eastern zone population and the security forces.

Comment: Helmer's statements about a Soviet troop build-up, which are not confirmed, may represent an attempt to alert US officials to the seriousness of the situation in which he finds himself vis-a-vis the Soviet Occupation element as a result of his recent sweeping dismissal of Communists from the Austrian police force. Nevertheless, Austrian alarm over growing Soviet intransigence and its consequences for Austrian control of the eastern zone is sincere.

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