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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CZECH TASK FORCE

Situation Report, 1200 hours EST, August 22, 1968

1. Situation in Prague: Embassy Prague and AP report that large crowds of Czechoslovaks are gathering in Václavské Namesti, Prague's main square, protesting the Soviet invasion. Shots have been reported but it is not clear whether there has been any firing on the crowds. Soviet tanks have closed off all bridges across the Vltava river.
2. Czechoslovak Government: Embassy Prague reports that a radio broadcast claims that a Government meeting at 0800 today chaired by Machacova passed a resolution demanding, inter alia, the immediate withdrawal of Warsaw Pact forces, the release of arrested government members, and the release of communications media by the occupying forces. Radio Brno has broadcast what it describes as an unauthenticated report that the Soviets have issued an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak party to form a new party leadership and a new Government. The Soviets are said to recommend the following: Bilak, Indra, General Rytir, Pavolovsky, and Lenart. Embassy Prague states that a Czechoslovak source reports that a new government was under formation this morning. The Embassy notes that a puppet regime will have a difficult time asserting its authority. A late Reuters report states that a clandestine Prague radio station reported today that the Soviet authorities succeeded in forming a new authority composed of Czechoslovaks to rule the country.
3. General Strike Called: "Radio Czechoslovakia" has issued a call for a general strike to begin at noon. Reuters reports that at noon sirens and car horns sounded to call for the opening of the strike.
4. Rump Czechoslovak Party Congress Meeting: A clandestine radio station has announced that 927 delegates met at an unspecified location to hold the party congress which had been scheduled for September 7.
5. Czechoslovak Military Calls for Soviet Withdrawal: The staff of the Czechoslovak Central Military District has announced its support for President Svoboda and has condemned the detention by the Soviets of Czechoslovak leaders. The General Staff of the Army has condemned Soviet intervention and calls for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the release of detained Czechoslovak leaders. The Soviets are reported this morning to have virtually completed their takeover of the Headquarters of the Czechoslovak General Staff.

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6. Romanian Army Mobilization: According to a Vienna UPI report, Romanian Party-Government Chief Ceausescu announced "a state of full mobilization" on August 22. Ceausescu reiterated his condemnation of the intervention in Czechoslovakia.

7. Evacuation of Americans: A 25-car convoy left the Prague area for West Germany shortly after 1100 hours local time. Arrangements for additional evacuations are being made.

8. U.S. Actions: We have instructed our missions to deliver copies of President Johnson's statement to Foreign Ministries and to emphasize that the U.S. "takes a most serious view of the situation." The Secretary gave a background press briefing on August 21. Presidential candidates were briefed during the day, and the Secretary may inform the 50 Governors of developments and of the activities of Embassy Prague in assisting in the evacuation of Americans. Ambassador Bohlen has briefed NATO, EA and some neutral Ambassadors. We are taking an active role in the Security Council debate. The Department has coordinated with DOD regarding vigilance procedures to be observed by U.S. Armed Forces in Europe.

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