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**PHOTOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE REPORT**

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**AIRFIELD UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

**YEN BAI AREA, NORTH VIETNAM**



CIA/PIR 77024

DATE JULY 1966

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YEN BAI AIRFIELD UNDER CONSTRUCTION

PREFACE

Analysis of aerial photography taken over Yen Bai, North Vietnam, has led to the conclusion that an airfield is under construction (21 43 40N-104 51 50E, UTM coordinates VK852030) 2.1 nm NNW of the town of Yen Bai, North Vietnam. The entire area of interest - including the airfield, support facilities, storage area, and truck parks, comprises a 5.3 square nautical mile area.

The construction activity has progressed through two stages - the first stage, which is coming to a close, involves improvement of existing roads and the construction of new ones; the building of workers' housing and storage facilities; the addition of AA and AW sites, which are continually relocated as construction progresses; and the expansion of existing drainage systems by the excavation of new canals along the periphery.

Workers' housing, storage facilities, and road construction projects appear to have now been completed, indicating the beginning of the second stage. From the end of March 1966, this second stage has shifted emphasis to a major construction effort involving the grading, leveling, filling, and clearing of the predominantly karst terrain. Photography has also revealed piles of aggregate on the bank of the Red River adjacent to the construction site. The drainage system that is evolving is quite elaborate, primarily because the low lying terrain is subject to flooding.

The orientation of the airfield is favorable to the prevailing winds in the area, and allows for further expansion in either direction. The ensuing text will historically document the progress of this airfield in detail, with photography of the area taken between [redacted]

- A. Gabe 8, [redacted]
  - 1. High altitude aerial photography, dated [redacted] revealed that within an area 2.1 nm northwest of Yen Bai, North Vietnam, construction activity was in progress in the form of new road construction and improvement of existing roads.
  - 2. Four probable vehicle revetments, which appeared unoccupied, were observed at VK842041.
  - 3. Eighteen light anti-aircraft sites (number of positions varied from two to eight) and 18 automatic weapon sites were identified within, or surrounding the area of interest. Of the 18 AA sites, six were occupied, four unoccupied, and eight were under construction. Occupancy of the AW sites could not be determined.
  - 4. There are 30 identifiable buildings, probably civilian, within the immediate area. No heavy engineer equipment or vehicles were observed.

- B. BLUE SPRINGS [redacted]
  - 1. High altitude aerial photography dated [redacted] revealed that there was a significant increase in construction activity since August 1965. A major effort had added 203 new buildings within the immediate area. They have the appearance of barracks or storage-type buildings - rectangular in shape and not at all consistent with the indigenous Vietnamese architecture.
  - 2. Other developments consisted of new road construction and the continued improvement of existing ones and 20 new air defense sites, five of which were light AA and the remainder AW sites. The occupancy of these sites could not be determined due to the quality of the photography.

- C. [redacted]
  - 1. Medium altitude aerial photography dated [redacted] revealed continued significant changes since [redacted]
  - 2. Major earth-moving activity was observed in an attempt to level and fill the existing terrain, which is predominately karst, from VK845037 to VK862020. There were approximately 39 pieces of heavy equipment present; however, due to photo quality the specific class of equipment could not be identified. The following pieces of equipment were observed: 11 possible bulldozers, eight possible tractors, 11 possible cargo/dump trucks, four possible earth scrapers, one possible crane-shovel and four possible rollers.
  - 3. Other new activity consisted of sixteen new AW sites and 54 new storage-type buildings. As of [redacted] there were 287 buildings in the immediate area.
  - 4. A drainage pattern was evident with two large canals having been excavated. One canal begins at VK861019 and continues on to VK871009, at which point it flows into a small stream. The other canal parallels the construction activity from VK857029 to VK848039. (Note overlay.)

- 5. New road construction and improvement continued since [redacted] (Note overlay.)

- D. [redacted]
  - 1. Medium altitude oblique aerial photography dated [redacted] revealed significant changes in the area since [redacted]. These changes centered around an attempt to level and fill the existing karst terrain. A definite pattern has taken shape from this attempt; the pattern was 7200' long and 800' wide.

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2. An extensive drainage pattern had emerged with the most recent addition being a canal running parallel to the earth moving activity from VK846034 to VK861018.

3. Individual revetments and revetted truck parks had been built along with temporary drive-through revetments on the construction site itself. An open storage area (apparently POL drum storage) is adjacent to the activity at VK857029. Quality of the photography precluded a determination of the number of drums stored there.

4. There were 14 new air-defense positions, but due to obliquity and resolution it could not be determined whether they were occupied, or if they were AA or AW sites.

5. A pontoon bridge was observed in place spanning the Red River at VK867999.

6. With the work emphasis on earth moving, road construction slowed, although some improvement was noted.

7. Approximately 36 pieces of construction equipment were observed within the area, of which the following 22 could be identified: three bulldozers, four cargo/dump trucks, two probable trucks, five possible rollers, five tractors, one probable tractor, five earth scrapers, and one probable earth scraper.

E.

1. Medium altitude panoramic aerial photography dated [redacted] indicated that the construction activity was now centered almost exclusively on leveling and filling the terrain in one particular area. Photographic coverage from August through December indicated that the primary effort was to develop good logistical support by developing an adequate road system as well as adequate storage and support facilities. The April coverage indicates a passing out of this as a prime activity with few new road extensions or new buildings observed since December. This new phase, centered around the leveling of the terrain, extends from VK845037 to VK863020. Remarkable progress was evident in an attempt to level this area, along with a noted enlargement and extension of the already developing drainage system. The photography revealed at VK842041 a large work force of "coolie labor" being employed to excavate a drainage canal. Also noted was a pile of aggregate, probably being used to help fill and compact the soil, on the bank of the Red River at VK837036.

2. A new drainage canal was under final stages of completion extending from VK861026 to VK867023. This canal will probably continue to extend southeast until it joins a stream at VK872017. (Note map overlay.)

3. Twelve new light AA sites had been built since [redacted] none of which appeared to be occupied.

4. Of approximately 33 pieces of equipment observed, the following 30 could be identified: seven probable earth scrapers, two possible motorized crane-shovels, three probable dump trucks, ten probable bulldozers, and four possible rollers. At VK866999, two junks were observed, one with a probable cargo of wood. Parked alongside the junks were two possible trucks.

F.

1. Medium altitude aerial photography dated [redacted] indicated that new earth-moving activity had enlarged the previous area under construction. This new area was 10,500' long and 1,000' wide (VK843042, VK866019, VK861017, and VK840039). New activity paralleling the airfield site had developed a pattern that extended from one end of the airfield to the other, VK840039 to VK862017. (Note map overlay.)

2. Coverage of the area immediately northeast of the construction site indicated that since [redacted] (the date of last available coverage) a major effort had produced a massive storage complex. This complex was contained in an area of approximately three square nautical miles (VK839046, VK858059, VK837035, VK871018). Photography indicated that this area was being used primarily for worker's housing and the storage of construction materials, and equipment. Several new truck parks and numerous vehicle revetments indicated a determined effort to conceal and protect the equipment. One such revetment, in final stages of construction, will provide a permanent protective covering over an existing drive-through revetment at VK859032.

3. Significant truck parks are evident at:

- a. VK859045 - This truck park had seventeen parking revetments containing six pieces of equipment, one of which was a tractor-scraper combination. The remaining pieces of equipment were unidentifiable. Adjacent to the truck park at VK857044, was a new area being constructed for vehicle dispersal with a large pile of wood stored in the open.
- b. VK860052 - This truck park had 12 identifiable vehicle revetments - foliage prevents further analysis. No equipment was observed at this time.
- c. VK864036 to VK859032 - This large truck park followed a major road running north and south and had 26 vehicle revetments, some of which were the drive-through type. Foliage had at this time concealed the major portion of a truck park at VK859031. A tractor-scraper combination was identified in a drive-through revetment, but other equipment proved more difficult to identify due to foliage, canvas-coverings, or film resolution.

4. The following areas are groupings of storage and support-type buildings that make up this complex. These buildings, rectangular in shape, and approximately 30 to 50 feet in length by 25 feet in width, have gable roofs and do not conform to the local architecture - which consists of thatched-roofed huts or dwellings. This breakdown is an attempt to discriminate between the existing indigenous dwellings and the new storage complex: (Note photo mosaic)

Area 1 - VK859055, VK861053, VK859053, VK857054; five storage/support buildings served by newly improved road. It appears that an attempt had been made to conceal these buildings from the air by use of existing foliage. To the north at VK862055 were two vehicle revetments and three pieces of equipment. This location is 1.3 nm NE of the actual construction activity and typifies the effort which had been made to disperse valuable construction equipment at the end of the day.

Area 2 - VK857052, VK859051, VK857046, VK849050, VK850051, VK852052; area comprises 62 storage/support buildings served by a newly constructed improved road. A network of personnel trenches was evident, as were AW sites and one light AA site.

Area 3 - VK865050, VK861049, VK859051; area included 23 storage/support buildings served by newly improved road. A small storage area with three vehicle revetments was observed at VK859050. A light AA site was located next to this storage area.

Area 4 - VK869050, VK864045, VK864050; area included 28 storage/support buildings served by newly improved and constructed roads.

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- Area 5 - VK871045, VK873044, VK872043, VK869044; area comprised of ten storage/support buildings adjacent to native village. The village is associated with agricultural activities and had not changed since first observed on [redacted]
- Area 6 - VK867044, VK866042, VK864043; area comprised of 15 storage/support buildings which are adjacent to newly improved roads. Lack of adequate roads indicates that no vehicles or equipment were being brought into this area at this time.
- Area 7 - VK863045, VK865044, VK863042, VK861043; area included 20 storage/support buildings that are interconnected by numerous personnel trenches. Area served by newly improved roads and defended by an AW site.
- Area 8 - VK863043, VK869037, VK871034, VK870032, VK861040; area comprised of 62 storage/support buildings interconnected by an extensive network of personnel trenches and defended by AW positions; it is served by newly improved roads capable of handling heavy equipment. This same area in August 1965 lacked buildings and the only activity was limited to small agricultural endeavors.
- Area 9 - VK858042, VK858038, VK856038, VK856042; area included 27 storage/support buildings interconnected by personnel trenches; a truck park at VK858039 with nine vehicle revetments, two of which were covered with roofs; and an open storage area at VK858037 with piles of wood stacked uncovered.
- Area 10 - VK861035, VK862034, VK861033, VK860034; area comprises 15 storage/support buildings, some of which look like native huts. This area had two native huts in August 1965, but because of the area's location in relation to the new road network it appears to be used for support purposes. Personnel trenches have been added and vehicle revetments are numerous.
- Area 11 - VK853040, VK859033, VK858032, VK852039; area contained 42 storage/support buildings that at this time were not served by any newly improved road. It is a heavily defended area surrounded by light AA and AW sites.
- Area 12 - VK874041, VK875039, VK871037, VK869038; area had 25 storage/support buildings compared to six native dwellings in August 1965. Personnel trenches were evident; an attempt has been made to conceal some newer storage buildings under the canopy of the trees. Newly improved roads connect from four directions to serve this area.
- Area 13 - VK880043, VK884039, VK880032, VK877037; this large storage/support area encompassed 26 buildings, all of which were served by newly improved and constructed roads. A very extensive trench system was evident under the foliage, with attempts to conceal some buildings. This area was virtually uninhabited in August 1965.
- Area 14 - VK874037, VK875035, VK873033, VK872035; area included 33 storage/support buildings in an area that in August 1965 was uninhabited; a newly constructed road network connects this area with previously improved roads; a small truck park at VK872036 had four vehicle revetments and a pull-off.
- Area 15 - VK872033, VK879023, VK877023, VK872031; area composed of 31 storage/support buildings served by a newly improved road. This area was uninhabited in August 1965.

- Area 16 - VK868032, VK872024, VK869023, VK866032; area included 11 storage/support buildings that were predominately indigenous in appearance. Eight of these buildings were observed in August 1965; however, the location of the dwellings indicate their probable use in support of the construction effort.
- Area 17 - VK864033, VK865027, VK864024, VK862032; area had 44 storage/support buildings that were served by a newly improved road and heavily defended by light AA and AW sites. This area was not built-up in August 1965.
- Area 18 - VK868022, VK870019, VK869016, VK866019; area consisted of 20 storage/support buildings, interconnecting trenches, and AW sites. Area was not built up in August 1965.

Immediately surrounding the construction site were approximately 170 buildings that are probably supporting the construction effort, but their exact function cannot be determined. This brings the total number within the area of interest to 719 or a net increase since [redacted] of 434 new buildings. These new buildings are primarily the storage and support buildings located within the storage complex itself.

5. Approximately 1111 pieces of equipment were noted; however, due to the film resolution and canvas coverings, 62 pieces were unidentifiable. The remaining 49 pieces of equipment could be identified as follows: three trucks, two probable trucks, ten tractors, ten earth scrapers, 17 bulldozers, five probable bulldozers, and two probable crane shovels. However, large scale photography dated [redacted] provided sufficient resolution to identify one earth scraper of the D-374 class. No further identification was possible.

6. A large number of new interconnecting roads had been constructed within the storage and support complex (note map overlay).

7. Aggregate has appeared at a ferry slip (VK859009) and across the Red River at another slip (VK858005). Dredging for aggregate appears evident 5.2 nm to the north, on the Red River at VK794095, and near the construction site on the bank of the Red River (VK837036). Other piles near the site are located at: VK848017, VK868010 and VK875040.

8. Five new light AA sites were identified; three of which were occupied. Due to the good vertical coverage of the [redacted] photography, a complete analysis of the defense posture of this area was possible. There were a total of 50 AA sites, 17 of which were occupied, and 56 AW sites.

Light AA		
Number of Gun Positions Per Site	Number of Sites Completely Occupied	Number of Sites Unoccupied
2		3
3	3	1
4	8	14
5	1	
6	8	4
7		3
8		5
	20	30

9. Expansion of the drainage system was continuing as of [redacted] with larger and deeper canals replacing temporary ditches.

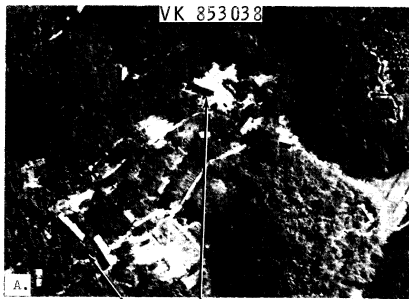
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CONTRASTING ARCHITECTURE



Photos A and B illustrate the architecture of the storage and support buildings that have been newly constructed within the immediate area. Note the long rectangular shape, gable roof and wood construction.

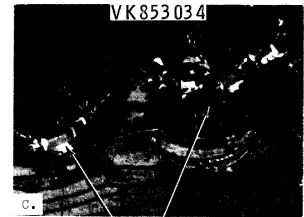


Photo C illustrates the local architecture, consistent with the style employed by the indigenous Vietnamese, in contrast to the storage buildings. The native dwellings have hipped roofs with roofing material predominantly of thatch.

FIGURE NO. 1

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HARDENED STORAGE AREAS U/C



Photo A illustrates a drive-through revetment at VK359032, that is being hardened for use as a possible storage area. This operation is nearing completion, with the roofing nearly intact.



Photo B illustrates two examples at VK 865022, that are in earlier stages of construction. The cuts have been made into the hillside and it appears that the sides are being reinforced before the roofing is attached.

FIGURE NO. 2

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EQUIPMENT DISPERSAL

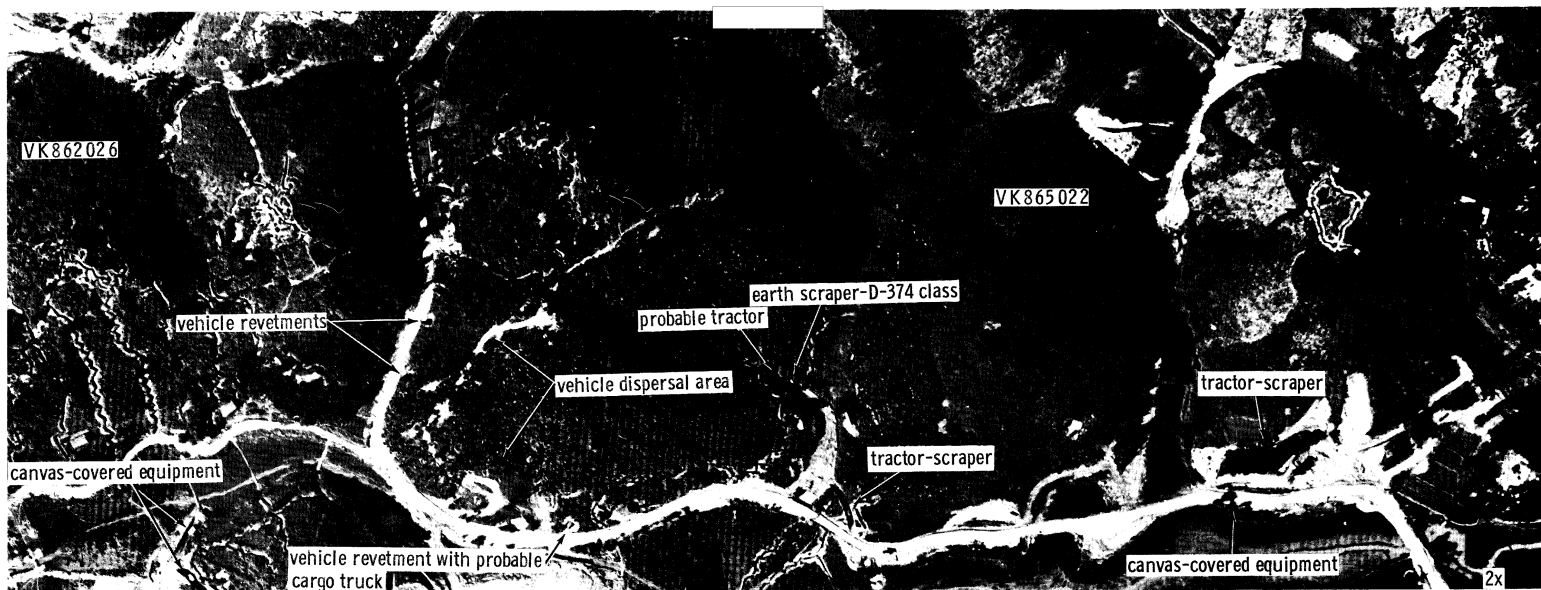


FIGURE NO. 3

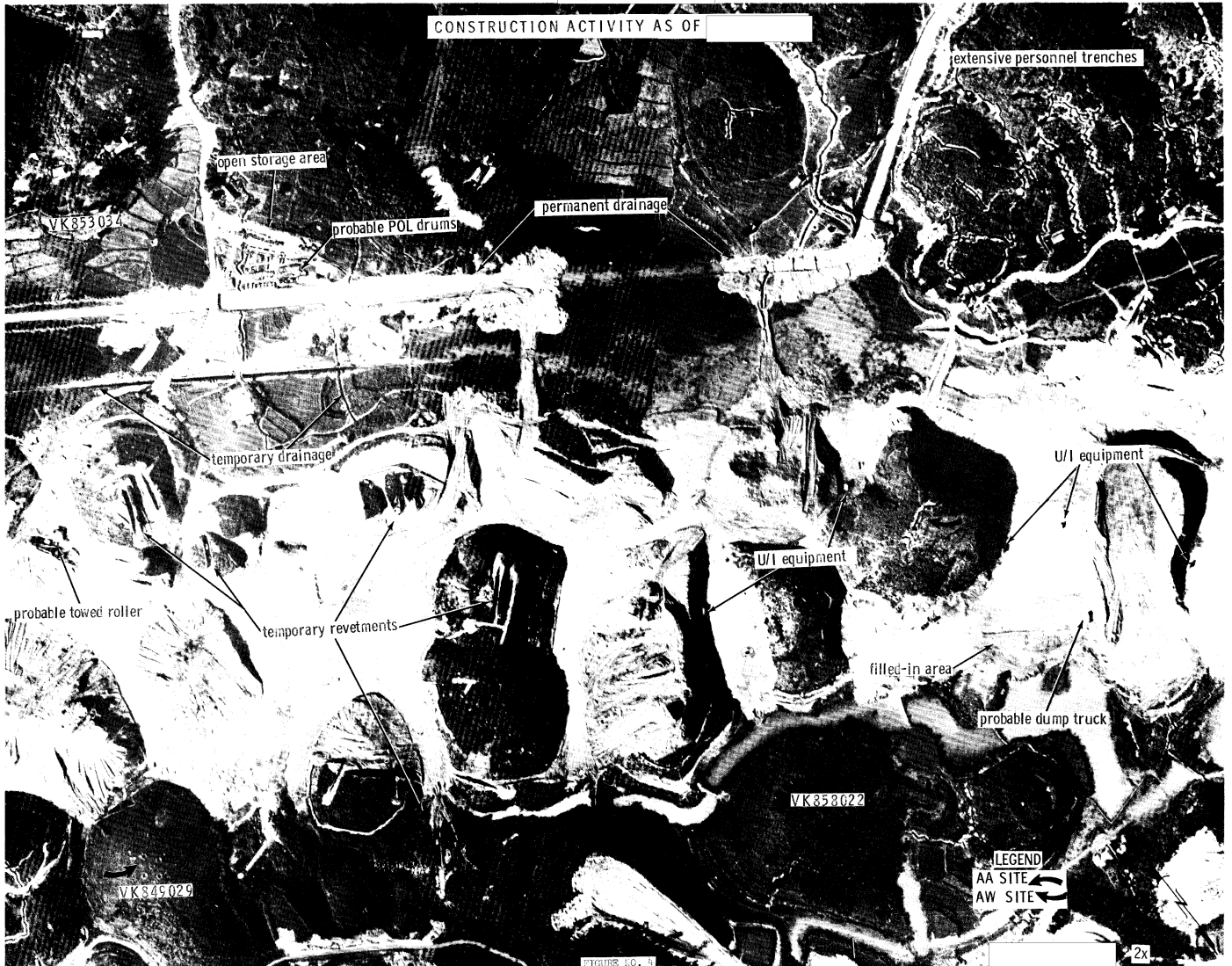
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CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY AS OF



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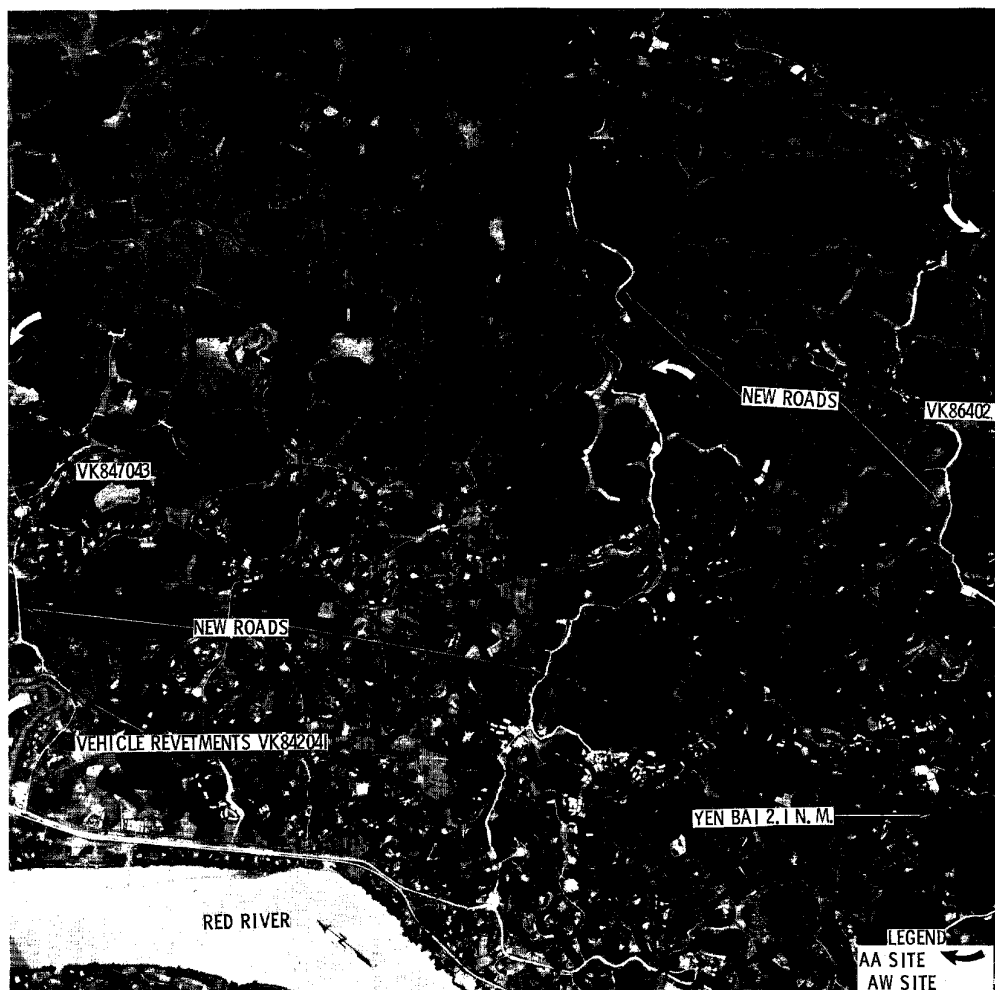


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AREA IN AUGUST 1965



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FIGURE NO. 7

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# YEN BAI AIRFIELD U/C 214340N/1045150E

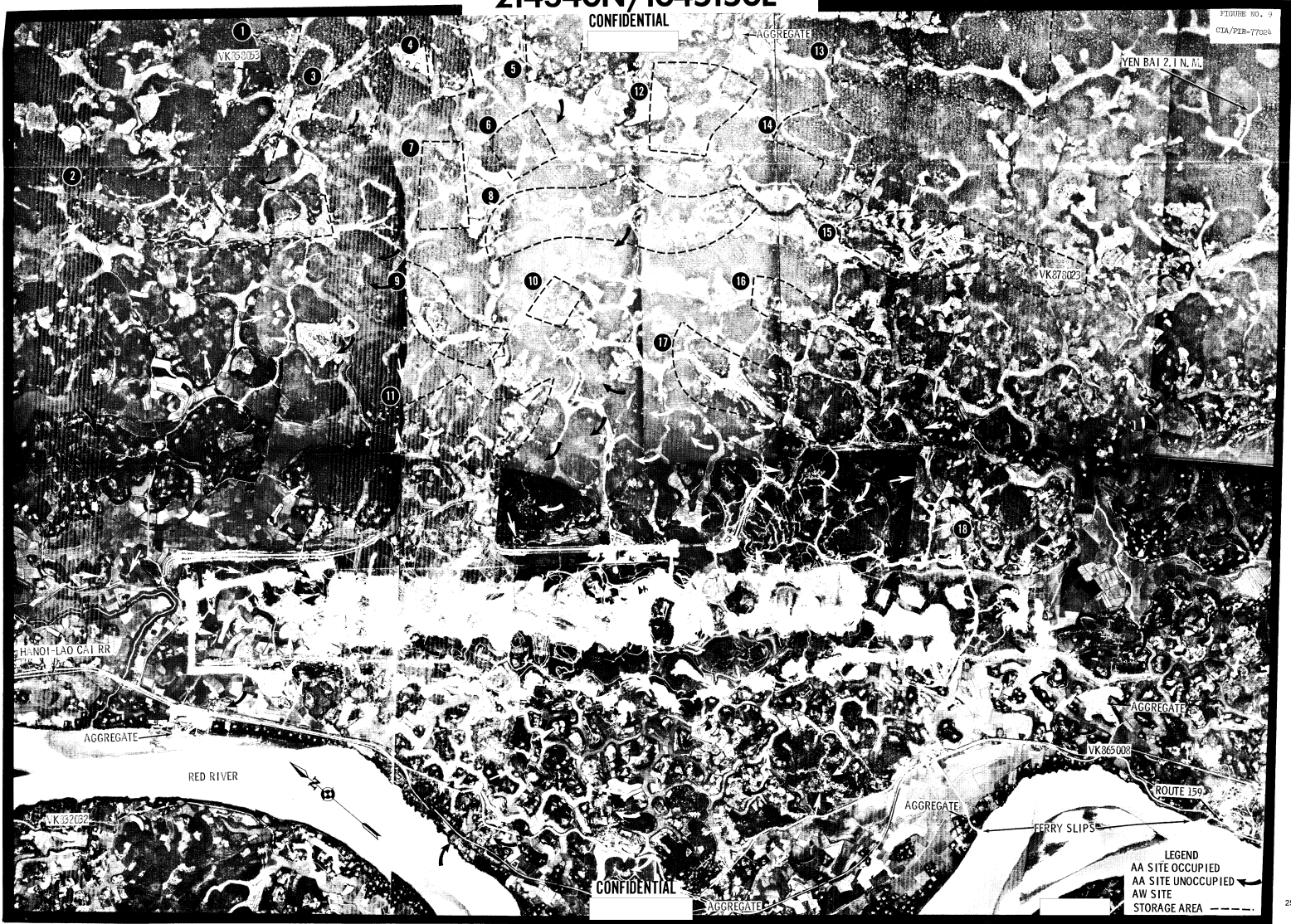


FIGURE NO. 9  
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LEGEND  
AA SITE OCCUPIED  
AA SITE UNOCCUPIED  
AW SITE  
STORAGE AREA

25X1

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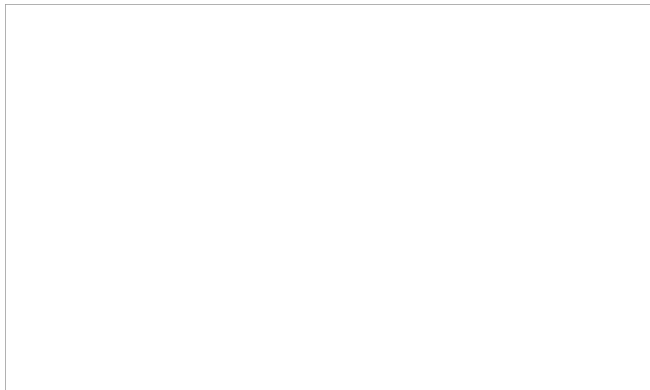
[Redacted]

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MAPS

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**REQUIREMENT**

C-RR6-83,410

CIA/IAD PROJECT

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