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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
21 February 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
21 February 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
as of 0600 Hours

Political Developments in South Vietnam

1. There continue to be signs that General Khanh is on the way out, although General Thi stated at a military press conference yesterday that Khanh "at present" remains commander-in-chief. Statements broadcast by both the military commanders and the newly created National Legislative Council contained references to the need for "energetic and efficient leaders" and to "individual and factional ambitions" which may be intended as attacks on Khanh.

2. No mention of Khanh was made on Saigon Radio's final round of domestic news events yesterday. US officials have now obtained a copy of the Armed Forces Council's resolution of "no confidence" in Khanh which accuses him of pursuing a policy of "injustice and rottenness" and of creating serious divisions within the army.

3. Khanh, who reportedly spent the day in Nha Trang and Pleiku "inspecting troops," telephoned General Westmoreland last night from Dalat, stating that he had turned the problem of settling the coup and its aftermath over to the Armed Forces Council. He appeared to lack knowledge of what was actually transpiring in Saigon.

Viet Cong Military Activity

4. Unconfirmed press reports state that the Viet Cong placed mortar fire on two government military headquarters near Saigon late last night.

The headquarters of the 25th Division at Duc Hoa, 15 miles east of Saigon, was hit; government casualties were reported as four troops killed and 100 wounded. One regiment of this division was involved with the coup forces, and elements of two other regiments joined the rescue forces on the government side. No casualties were reported as a result of the firing on another regimental headquarters at Ben Cat, about 25 miles north of Saigon. Only one other small-scale attack was reported, in Quang Ngai Province in the north, but Viet Cong harassing and sabotage activity apparently continues at a relatively high level.

5. There is no official confirmation so far of a press report that a Viet Cong guerrilla, killed in recent fighting near Da Nang, carried a detailed map of Da Nang airbase and a list of agents inside the base.

Viet Cong Weapons Cache

6. A preliminary US appraisal of the weapons cache discovered near the site of the Communist vessel sunk off Phu Yen Province indicates that most of the weapons and ammunition are of Chinese Communist or Czech manufacture, except for a small number of Soviet carbines. All rifles and machine-guns had been used and were apparently reconditioned. US officials have told the press that the items were spread over an area 100 by 300 yards, and were estimated to weigh 80 tons.

7. A quick count of the equipment showed the following items: approximately 1,000,000 rounds of assorted small-arms ammunition; 1,000-1,500 stick grenades; 500 pounds of Chinese TNT in prepared charges; 2,000 rounds of Chinese 82-mm mortar ammunition; 500 Chinese heat grenades; 500 rounds of Chinese 57-mm recoilless rifle ammunition; 1,000-1,500 rounds of Chinese 75-mm recoilless rifle ammunition; one Chinese recoilless rifle, two Chinese heavy machineguns; 2,000 Mauser rifles; 100-plus Soviet carbines; 1,000 Chinese submachineguns; 15 Chinese light machineguns. An additional 500 rifles [redacted] were reportedly found nearby by Vietnamese forces.

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8. About 500 pounds of assorted medical supplies were recovered. These came from North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Communist China, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Japan, East Germany, and the USSR.

9. Various documents, letters, photographs, and medical packages taken from the hull of the sunken ship clearly link the ship with North Vietnam. Among these documents were three detailed nautical charts, two of them of the Haiphong and Hong Gay areas of North Vietnam, and the third of the Vinh Binh Province area in South Vietnam at the mouth of the Mekong.

Communist Political Developments

10. The lull in Communist propaganda bearing on the Southeast Asian situation continues.

11. An editorial in the Hanoi daily on 21 February, commenting on the attempted coup in Saigon, attributes it to a conflict between rival "US puppets," and asserts it was aimed at Khanh--"a thorn in the flesh of Maxwell Taylor because he serves another U.S. force antagonistic to the Taylor group." The editorial uses the coup attempt to underscore its view of "the utterly rotten situation of the U.S. imperialists," who, it claims, are attempting to expand the war to stabilize the political situation in Saigon.

12. A Hanoi editorial on 20 February spoke out at length for the first time on retaliation, noting that this is "an extremely grave matter." However, in contrast to Peiping's statements that the US air strikes across the Demilitarized Zone have given the DRV the right to strike back in self-defense, Hanoi merely reiterated that the "rash acts" of the US imperialists "can only hasten their doom." Hanoi's continuing references to counter-blows from the Vietnamese people in "both zones" strongly suggests that the North Vietnamese are not ready to discard publicly the concept of the demarcation line.

13. Soviet President Mikoyan repeated stock concern over the situation in a reply to a recent message from the Cambodian Chief of State, Norodom Sihanouk. The Soviet leader expressed "deep concern" over the US air strikes on the DRV in his message,

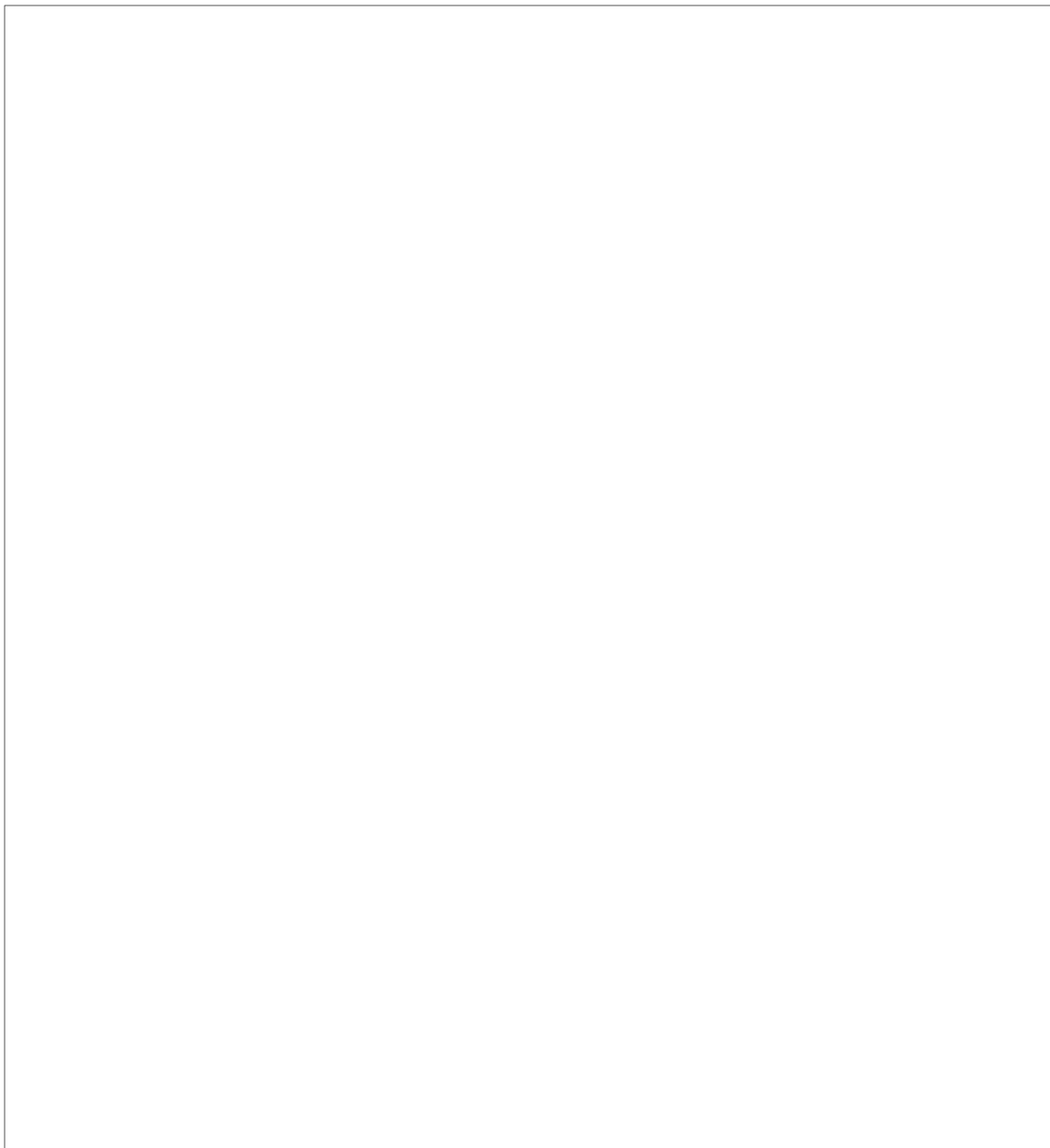


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which was reported by TASS on 20 February. Asserting that the strikes are incompatible with both international law and the Geneva agreements, he stated that only respect for the UN Charter and the Geneva agreements can ensure Southeast Asian security.

Communist Military Developments

14. No Chinese Communist or Vietnamese military deployments have been detected in the last 24 hours.



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