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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
24 FEBRUARY 1965

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

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

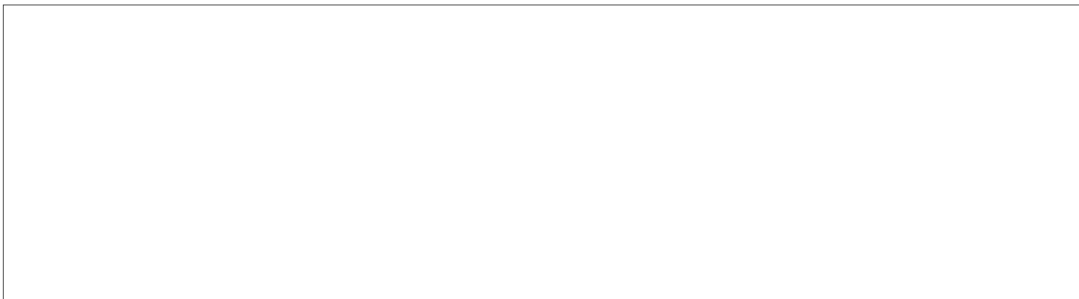
Political Developments in South Vietnam

1. General Khanh appears to be resigned to leaving South Vietnam in his new capacity of "roving ambassador." Talking to reporters in Dalat yesterday, Khanh seemed relaxed but resentful of the way in which he had been removed as commander-in-chief. He implied that his services might again be needed in South Vietnam "at some point."

2. There are indications that Buddhist leaders are assessing recent developments in Saigon and are apprehensive that Khanh's ouster may have anti-Buddhist overtones. Addressing followers in Saigon yesterday, Buddhist monk Tam Chau made no direct reference to Khanh. He stated that the Buddhists are opposed to any coup d'etat but added they will support the present government.

3. Press accounts of the meeting quote Chau as calling for an end to the fighting, similar to remarks allegedly made by Tri Quang to a reporter last week. Chau commented that supporters of Communism should go to North Vietnam and that supporters of freedom should stay in the South.

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Viet Cong Military Activity

5. Viet Cong activity continues to pick up throughout the country, most notably in the southern provinces where some drop in intensity was reported last week. In central Vietnam, extended fighting has been reported about midway along the main road linking the II Corps command in Pleiku with its supply depots at Qui Nhon on the coast. Although periodic upswings of Viet Cong activity have been observed as a past pattern, the present gradual step up may reflect Communist efforts to take advantage of the latest political upheavals in Saigon.

6. Further analysis of the coastal freighter sunk by South Vietnamese aircraft last week indicates that it was 120 feet long and had a cargo capacity of 100 tons. Components examined to date include an engine of East German design, a French engine order telegraph, and a Chinese windlass. Place of construction and registry are still unknown. The ship is not salvageable by flotation, although various small sections could be recovered. As of 21 February the ship had been stripped of all name-plate data, weapons and cargo by underwater demolition personnel. This material has been turned over to J-2, MACV for analysis.

Communist Military Developments

7. No Chinese Communist or Vietnamese military deployments connected with Vietnam have been detected in the last 24 hours.

8. Preliminary analysis of 19 February photography suggests that the Chinese are building a second new airfield near the Vietnamese border, about 25 miles northeast of Mengtzu. An area some 7000 feet long has been cleared and approximately 34 buildings were noted there. Earlier photography had indicated that a major airfield has been under construction since October at Ningming, some 20 miles from the Vietnamese border.

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12. The Soviet freighter Admiral Senyavin (reported in the 21 February Sitrep as unloading unknown cargo on 18 February in Nam Dinh, a port for Hanoi) is now known to have been carrying about 4,500 tons of fertilizer and is not believed to have carried any military cargo. The ship departed the Soviet Far East on 29 January, several days prior to Kosygin's visit, and has been in North Vietnamese ports since 10 February.

Communist Political Developments

13. Soviet caution in handling the Vietnam crisis is reflected in Mikoyan's 23 February remarks at a reception for Finnish President Kekkonen. According to a TASS report, Mikoyan confined himself



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to a reiteration of support for the Geneva agreements and stressed the need to prevent a wider military conflict in Southeast Asia. He took much the same line in his response to Cambodia's 11 February request asking the USSR to intercede with the US and Britain for an immediate convening of a Geneva conference.

14. Commenting on Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov's 23 February meeting with President De Gaulle in Paris, press reports based on "reliable sources" stated that the USSR agreed with French desires for a new conference on Vietnam but on the condition that the US bombing raids on North Vietnam are halted for two or three weeks. The same sources maintained that this was also Hanoi's position and implied Communist China's agreement. However, TASS coverage of the meeting did not mention negotiations but simply stated that Vinogradov had said that "efforts should be made to remove the danger...in the area."

15. No major propaganda pronouncements on the Vietnamese situation have been issued during the past 24 hours by Peiping or Hanoi.

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