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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
25 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL



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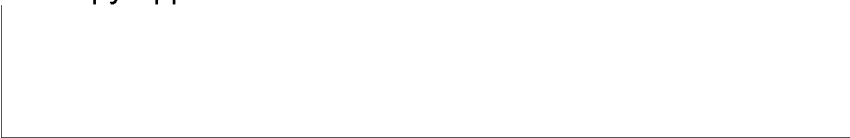
HIGHLIGHTS

Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, in a recent conversation with a US newsmen on 22 April, asserted that the proposed Cambodian conference was the "only possibility now available for any sort of talks." He suggested that such a conference might provide the opportunity for "corridor talks" about Vietnam. US refusal to negotiate with the "Liberation Front" would not cause difficulties at such a conference, he suggested, although it remains an obstacle to any settlement of the Vietnam situation. Dobrynin took a hard line about US-Soviet relations, claiming that American policy in Vietnam was now "killing the Soviet peaceful coexistence policy." He professed not to understand US foreign policy, especially in Vietnam where the US "could not possibly win." He claimed that since US actions had engaged Soviet prestige, the USSR felt compelled to escalate Vietnam hostilities when the US did. He stressed that the Soviets --not the Chinese--were now "running the Vietnam show," since it was only the USSR which could provide the military means that the North Vietnamese needed.

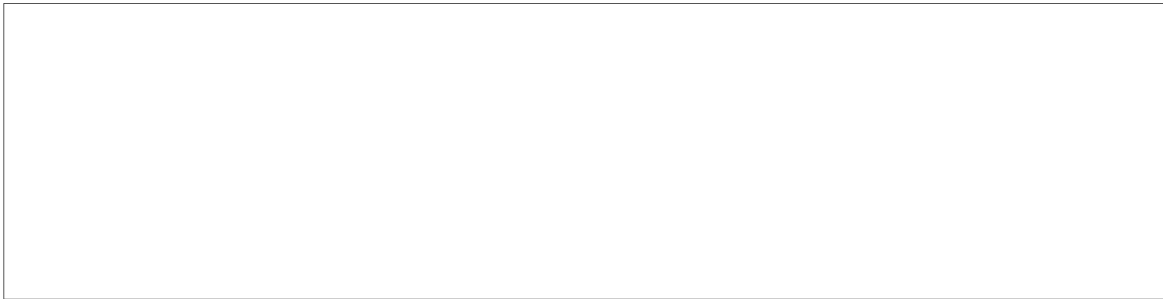
I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Two US Marines were killed and four wounded early today when Communist guerrillas attacked and overran two marine outposts near Phu Bai Airfield. Sniper fire was placed on a US Marine patrol near Da Nang air base, while to the south in Long An Province, a Regional Forces - Popular Forces outpost was attacked and destroyed (Para. 1). Two major government search-and-destroy operations, in Quang Tin and Binh Dinh provinces respectively, have been favorably terminated (Paras. 2 and 3). A Viet Cong ambush of government coastal and ground forces units in Kien Hoa Province on 23 April has resulted in heavy friendly casualties and weapons losses (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Formal replacement of Admiral Cang as navy chief and the transfer of Saigon garrison commander General Dong to a less sensitive command appear imminent. Both have been under suspension on charges of corruption (Para. 1). Lesser leaders of the abortive 19 February coup go on trial Tuesday, but the two principal defendants remain at large (Para. 2).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
US aircraft destroyed the Xom Thai Xa highway bridge and a vehicle ferry at Vinh Son on 24 April (Para. 1). On 25 April, South Vietnamese aircraft heavily damaged a vehicle ferry at Ron on Route 1, and approaches to the Bai Duc Thon road bridge have been cratered by the USAF (Para. 3). No reactions have been reported to several apparently hostile intrusions over the Hanoi area on 25 April (Para. 6).



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V. Communist Political Developments: The Soviet ambassador to Peiping has told his Algerian colleague that the North Vietnamese have adopted a more flexible position on negotiations as a result of their recent discussions with Soviet leaders in Moscow. The Soviet ambassador claimed that Hanoi will forego stipulating the evacuation of US forces as a precondition. (Para. 1). Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, talking recently with a US newsman in Washington, stated that the proposed Cambodian conference was "the only possibility now available for any sort of talks." He said that "corridor talks" on Vietnam might take place at such a conference (Para. 2). North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, outlining his position in negotiations, has said that favorable conditions would be created if the US "recognized" the application of the 1954 agreements as a basis for a settlement (Para. 5). North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist propaganda media have been concentrating their fire in alleged US intentions to escalate the Vietnam war (Para. 6).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Cambodian chief of state Sihanouk, in his latest formulation concerning a Geneva conference on Cambodia, has taken a stand against the participation of the Saigon government,

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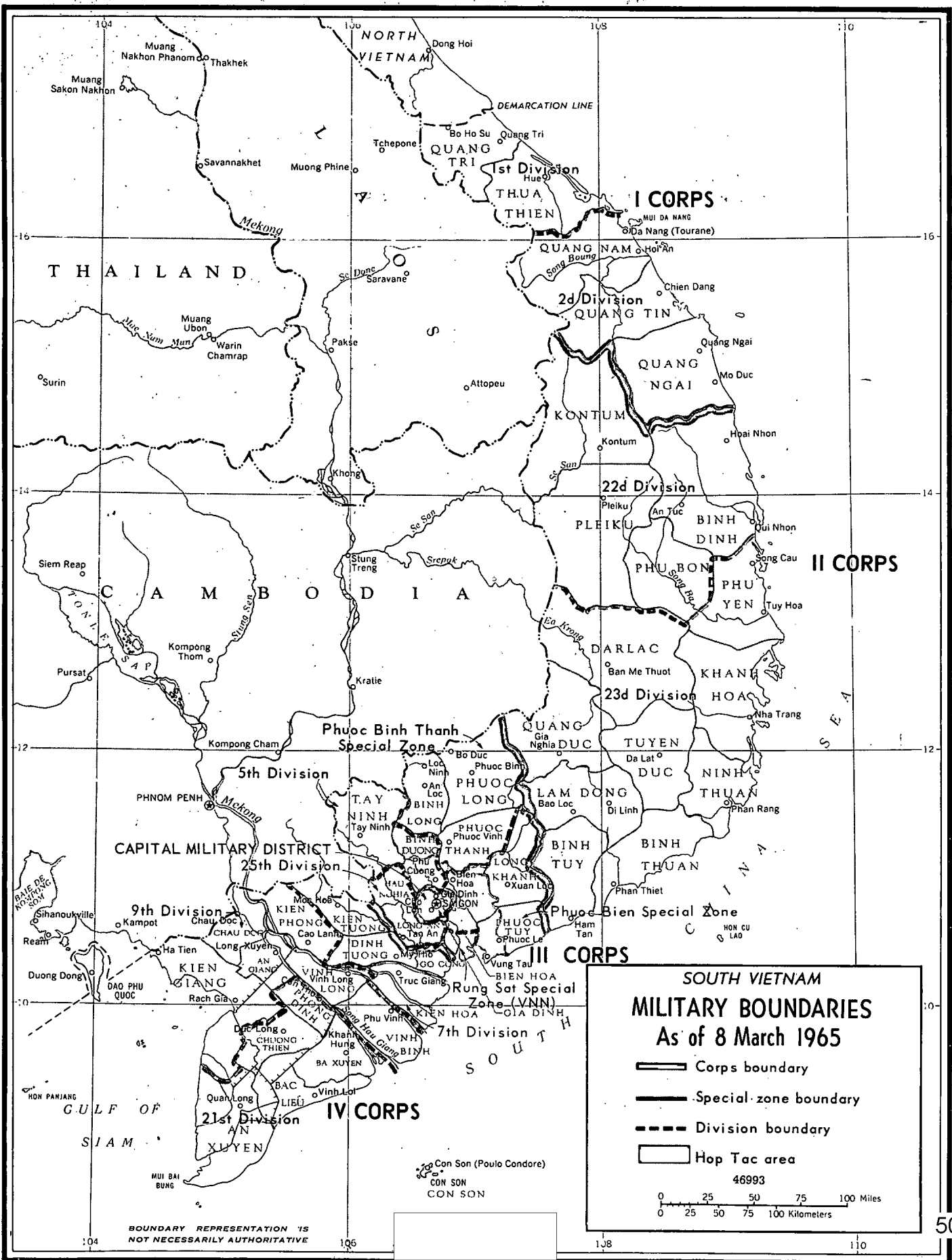
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presumably out of skepticism that the Communist states could be brought to a conference table which included the South Vietnamese Government but excluded the National Liberation Front (Paras. 1 and 2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The press reports that Viet Cong guerrillas attacked and overran two US Marine outposts on the security defense perimeter of Phu Bai Airfield, between Hué and Da Nang, early today, killing two US Marines and wounding four others. Elsewhere, a patrol of 150 US Marines encountered enemy sniper fire 13 miles southwest of Da Nang. Two marines received minor injuries. In Long An Province, an unknown number of Viet Cong reportedly attacked and overran a government outpost, killing 16 Popular and Regional Forces soldiers and wounding 15 others.

2. According to MACV, the government's large-scale search-and-destroy operation with airborne support initiated on 18 April against the estimated concentration of 3,000 Viet Cong in the Viet An area of Quang Tin Province, was terminated on 23 April. Enemy losses were placed at 350 killed (the great majority by air strikes), while ARVN units sustained losses of 26 killed, 86 wounded, and 28 missing. Two UH-1B helicopters and two armored cars were damaged, and 32 weapons captured, including one 57-mm. recoilless rifle, three 60-mm. mortars, one .50-caliber machine gun, and three light machine guns.

3. Final results have also been received on the government's large-scale heliborne operation conducted in Binh Dinh Province during 19-22 April against the 50th main force Viet Cong battalion and one local force Viet Cong company. Seventy-three Communist guerrillas were killed, 23 captured, and 16 weapons seized, while friendly losses were placed at 15 killed (ten US), 19 wounded (one US), and two armed UH-1B helicopters destroyed.

4. MACV's military report for 22 and 23 April shows a combined total of 131 Communist-initiated incidents, nine of which occurred during the reporting periods. The most significant action was reported in Kien Hoa Province on 23 April, where

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elements of two Vietnamese junk divisions and a Popular Forces platoon on a ground combat patrol mission were ambushed by an estimated 100 Viet Cong supported by 81-mm. mortar fire. Friendly losses were placed at 32 killed, five wounded, four missing, and 36 weapons, including three automatic rifles and nine submachine guns. Enemy losses are unknown. Forty government troops escaped the Viet Cong encirclement and returned safely to base.

5. Additionally, during 22-23 April, guerilla-directed 60- and 81-mm. mortar fire was placed on an ARVN base area in Phuoc Thanh Province, and on government outposts in Long An and Phu Yen provinces. An unescorted train was mined in Quang Nam Province, derailing four cars and damaging one rail. Small arms harassing fire was directed against new life hamlets in Kontum and Phuoc Tuy provinces, a government post in Bien Hoa Province, and a watchtower in Bac Lieu Province.

6. During the two-day period 22-23 April, 13 government ground operations of battalion strength or larger were initiated and 13 terminated, leaving 22 in progress on 23 April. Twenty-five Viet Cong were captured and eight suspects detained during an ARVN search-and-destroy operation conducted in Dinh Tuong Province on 22 April.

7. Company size or smaller operations conducted during 22-23 April numbered 4,534. Twenty-six contacts were made with the Viet Cong, with enemy losses listed as 49 killed, six wounded, 17 captured, and 18 weapons seized. Government forces sustained losses of 17 killed, 21 wounded, and three missing. Sixteen weapons were captured.

8. The level of over-all USAF activity generally increased during the reporting periods, while VNAF activity reflected a slight decline. Pilot reports from combat air operations conducted throughout South Vietnam during 22-23 April estimate 117 Viet Cong killed and 421 structures and 17 sampans destroyed.

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9. The total number of reported infiltrees from North to South Vietnam since 1959 has now risen to 39,517, up some 2,000 over the February total, according to a report from USMACV. Some 1,200 are reported as having infiltrated in 1965. Of the total estimate of 39,517, 20,878 are regarded as confirmed as compared to some 19,678 reported in this category in February.

10. The 1,200 infiltrees reported in 1965 are considered to be members of the North Vietnamese 101st Regiment, 325th Division. One battalion of 400 men is considered confirmed by MACV, with two more battalions totaling some 800 men reported in South Vietnam but not, as yet, confirmed.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. General "Little" Minh, the armed forces commander, has indicated that he has cleared with Premier Quat the transfer of General Pham Van Dong from command of the Saigon military district to command of the NCO school in Nha Trang, and the replacement of Admiral Cang as navy chief by the incumbent navy chief of staff. Both Dong and Cang have been under suspension for the past two weeks, ostensibly pending investigation into charges of corruption. To date no hearings on their cases are known to have been conducted, and it is possible that the charges may be quietly dropped, particularly in the case of Dong, who is believed to be more the victim of Buddhist pressures than actually guilty of serious malfeasance.

2. The government has announced meanwhile that leaders of the abortive coup attempt on 19 February will go on trial Tuesday. The principal leaders, General Lam Van Phat and Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao, have thus far managed to evade arrest. Thao is continuing efforts to stimulate another coup attempt, operating from various hiding places in the Saigon area. American officials in Saigon are inclined to doubt Thao's ability to launch a coup at this time. Nevertheless, there continue to be signs of restiveness among militant Catholic elements, who will watch the forthcoming trials for confirmation of their belief that the Quat government is engaged in a Buddhist-inspired vendetta against them.

3. The Buddhist hierarchy has issued a statement calling on priests, pagoda heads, and school directors to prevent any more monks or nuns from sacrificing themselves by self-immolation. The statement denounced as "deplorable" the suicide last week of a young novice and an unsuccessful attempt by a Buddhist nun. Both handwritten letters protested the peoples' suffering and calling for peace. The press reports that yet another monk burned himself to death after issuance of the appeal, although his reasons for doing so are not cited.

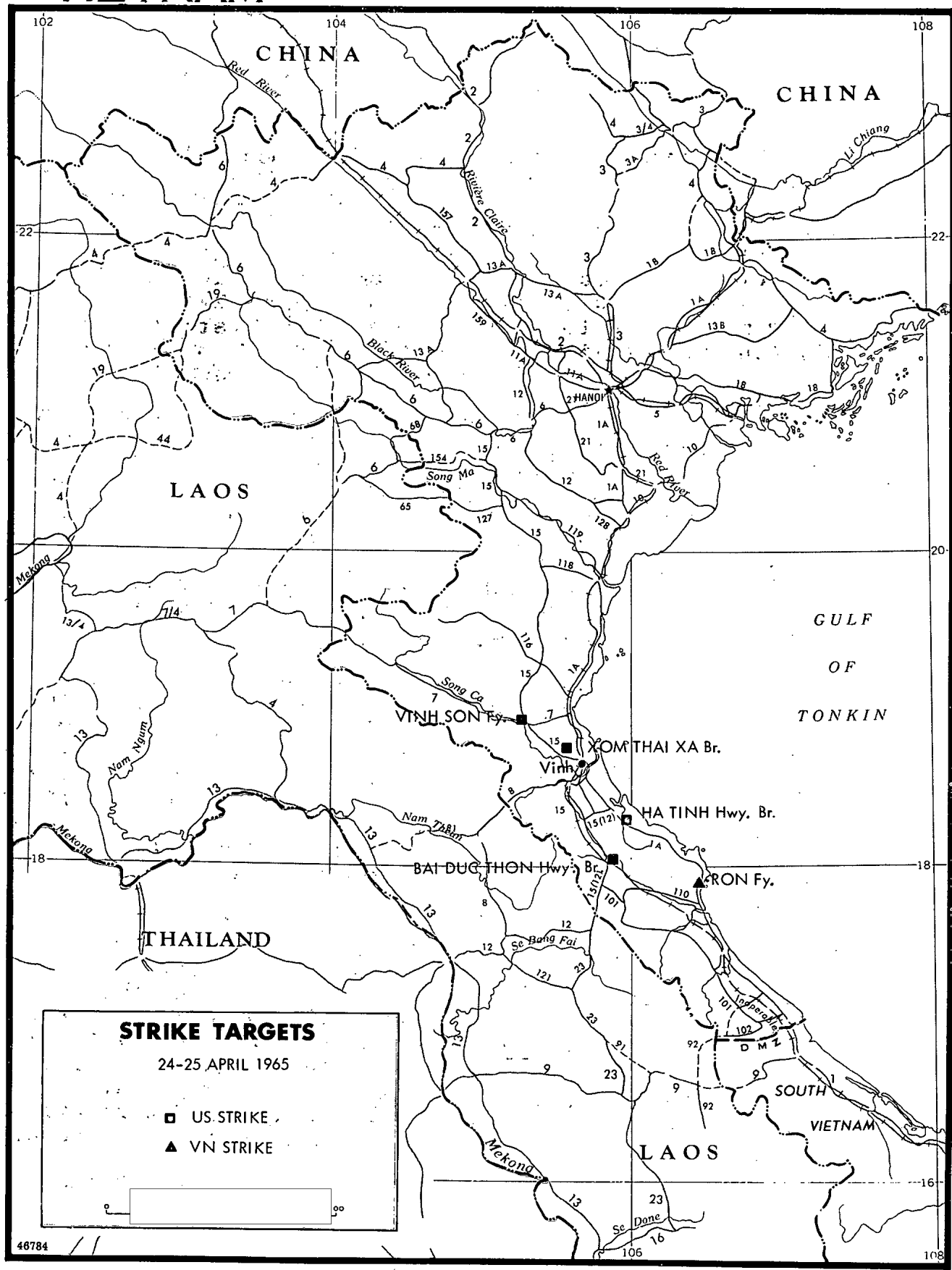
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NORTH VIETNAM

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

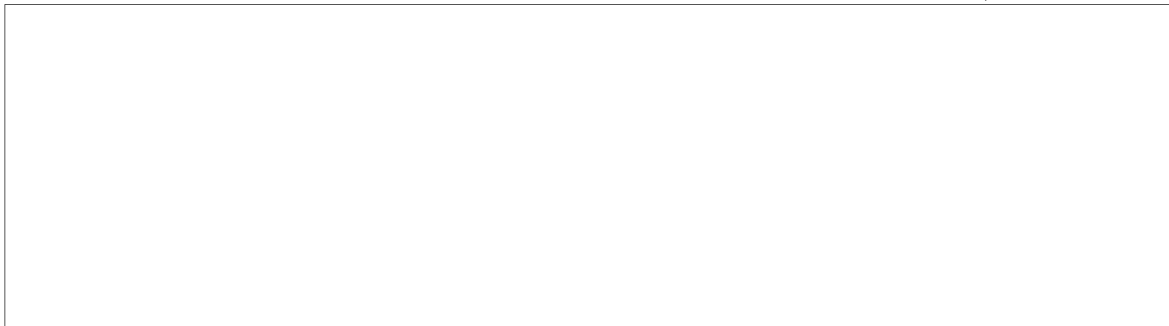
1. On 24 April, USAF aircraft destroyed Xom Thai Xa highway bridge and a vehicle ferry at Vinh Son. The approaches on another road bridge at Ha Tinh were also damaged by USAF aircraft.



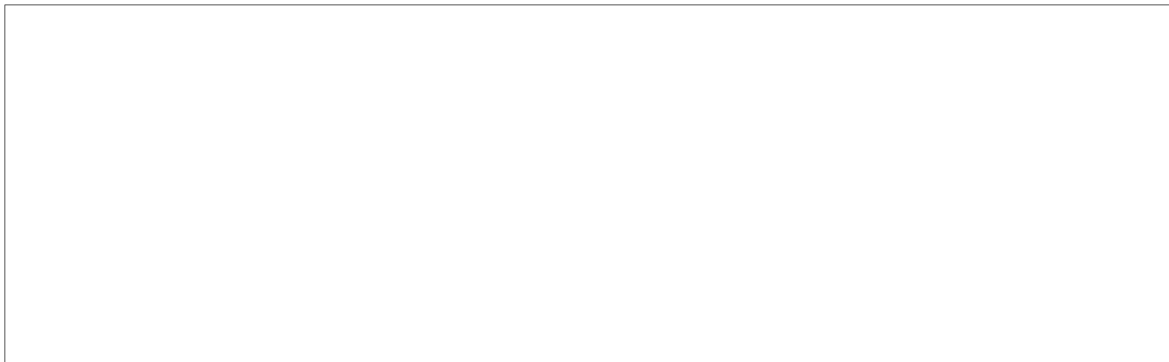
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3. VNAF aircraft heavily damaged a vehicle ferry at Ron on Route 1 on 25 April. The approaches to the Bai Duc Thon road bridge were cratered by the USAF, but the superstructure apparently remains in tact. US Navy aircraft caused moderate damage to about 50 rail-road boxcars on the line north of Vinh.

4. As of 1600 EST 25 April, there were no reported losses of US or Vietnamese aircraft as a result of the week-end strikes.



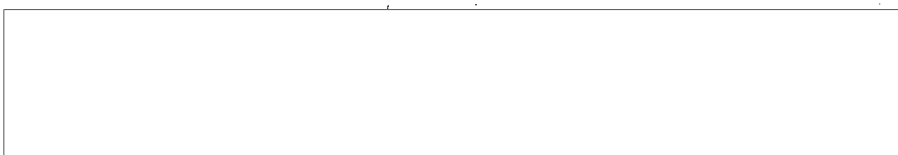
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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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2. Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, in a recent conversation in Washington with a US newsman, stated that the proposed Cambodian conference was "the only possibility now available for any sort of talks." Dobrynin said that the US would just have to risk the possibility of a "propaganda pounding" at such a conference. He added that he could not say whether there would be "corridor talks" about Vietnam at such a conference, but claimed that "there may be."

3. Dobrynin suggested that the question of "Liberation Front" representation would not be a problem at a Cambodia conference, but that US refusal to recognize the Front posed a real obstacle in the way of a Vietnam settlement. He maintained that US refusal to recognize the "Liberation Front" and its insistence that Hanoi must accept responsibility for Viet Cong actions were really "preconditions" for negotiations.

4. Taking a hard line on US-Soviet relations, Dobrynin said that American policy was now "killing the Soviet peaceful coexistence policy." He professed his inability to understand US foreign policy,

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especially in Vietnam, where the US "could not possibly win." Dobrynin implied that the USSR had miscalculated US policy toward Vietnam. He claimed that the Soviets thought "they were dealing with a Franklin D. Roosevelt, but they now know that they are not." US actions had engaged Soviet prestige, he charged, and the Soviet Union felt compelled to escalate when the US did. He stressed that the Soviets--rather than the Chinese--were now "running the Vietnam show," since was only the USSR which could provide the military means that the North Vietnamese needed.

5. Hanoi's position on negotiations, as stated by Premier Pham Van Dong in a report to the National Assembly published on 12 April, is that favorable conditions would be created for a conference if the US "recognized" as a basis for a settlement of the situation the application of the 1954 agreements. This would include cessation of attacks on the north, withdrawal of US forces from the south, settling of South Vietnamese problems in accordance with the program of the Liberation Front, and the peaceful reunification of Vietnam by the Vietnamese without foreign interference.

6. North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist propaganda media over the week end concentrated their fire on alleged US intentions to escalate the war in Vietnam. Hanoi radio on 24 April, quoting a party press commentary, lashed out at "new measures" which it claimed were decided upon at the Honolulu conference to "intensify and expand" the war in both North and South Vietnam. Despite these "new adventures" being prepared by the US, the final result will be "total and ignominious defeat" for the US "aggressors."

7. Also on 24 April, Hanoi radio once again took up the cudgel against President Johnson's proposals for unconditional discussions. The broadcast quoted an article in the DRV fortnightly journal, "Vietnam Courier," which characterized the President's proposals as a "booby trap." In terms similar to

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those used earlier by the Chinese Communists, the article asserted that the 7 April speech actually demanded that the Communists agree to the division of Vietnam into two zones "indefinitely," that the South Vietnamese people should accept "any Diem, Khanh, or Quat" Washington sees fit to appoint, that the South Vietnamese should stop fighting against the "bloodthirsty puppet regime in Saigon," and that US troops and bases in South Vietnam should be allowed to "remain there forever."

8. The article commented that "some people advise the Vietnamese people not to put forward any preconditions to negotiation." The article asserted that the Vietnamese "people" are not fighting for "preconditions" but for their "independence, freedom, the unity of their fatherland," and "all those fundamental and inalienable rights indelibly inscribed in the Geneva agreements and constituting the essence of these accords."

9. Comparing the US proposals to those made by France in the Algerian War, the article claimed that Washington wants the Viet Cong to lay down their arms, to leave US troops in South Vietnam undisturbed, and to bow their heads before the "Saigon puppets," and then "peace would come." To this the article replied, "no, nothing doing." The article concluded by asserting that the "Vietnamese people are not frightened by your stick and will not stoop to beg for your carrot."

10. The Chinese Communists also attacked the Honolulu conference, terming it another of a series of "calculated steps for a gradual expansion of the war." A People's Daily editorial on 24 April claimed that the Honolulu meeting was called after the "US war blackmail and peace fraud" had "gone to the dogs." The editorial alleged that what it called "the theory of escalation" is now popular in US "ruling circles" and compared it with the tactics of Hitler "just before the outbreak of World War II." The path of "escalation," according to the editorial, is a path leading the US "to the grave."

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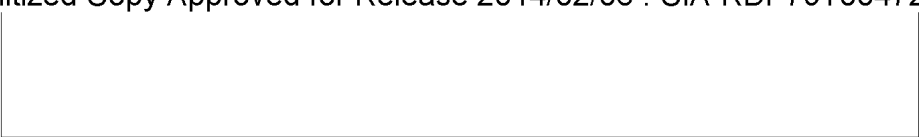
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11. Unity between North Vietnam, Communist China, and the Laotian Communists was the theme of a Chinese Communist banquet in Kunming staged for North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong during his two-day stopover on his way home from the Bandung anniversary celebrations in Djakarta last week. Chinese Communist leader Chu Te, one of Mao's old "comrades in arms" and chairman of the National Peoples Congress Standing Committee, went to Kunming to greet Dong. Chu Te, in his remarks at the 24 April banquet, called upon the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Laotian people to "consolidate their unity" and to "fight to the end" against "US imperialism." Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphannouvong was also present, having returned from the Indonesian celebrations with Pham Van Dong.

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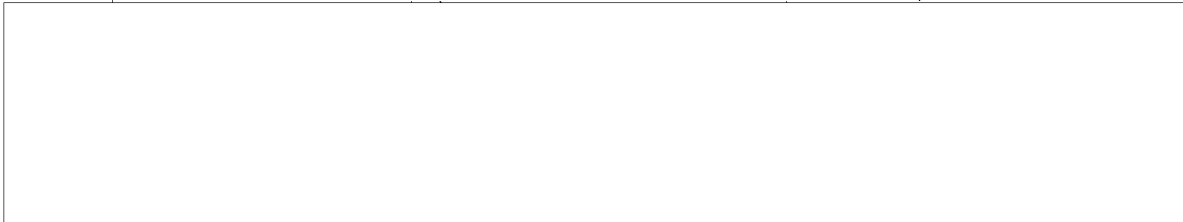
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Prince Sihanouk, in a speech given on 24 April, stated that any Geneva conference on Cambodia would be restricted to the signatories of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which if adhered to literally would exclude South Vietnam and the US, neither of which signed the agreements. The Cambodian chief of state added that participation of the Saigon government would in particular cause difficulties, since it is not recognized by "certain of the Socialist powers." Sihanouk's latest stand on a conference seems to reflect his skepticism that the Communist states would attend if a conference would include the South Vietnamese Government but would exclude the National Liberation Front.

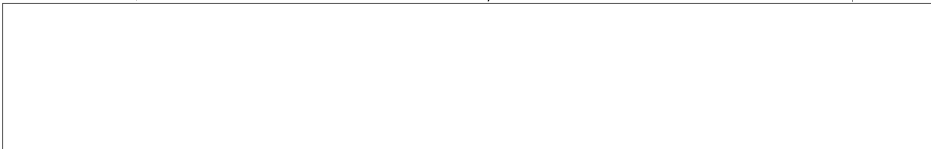


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3. The Japanese Government is considering taking the initiative to help restore peace in Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Sato has handed Ambassador Reischauer a Foreign Ministry outline of a draft proposal to the USSR. It asks Moscow to persuade North Vietnam to drop its demand for the withdrawal of US forces as a precondition, in return for which Japan would encourage the US to consider an early opening of negotiations. In addition, independent of the above approach, the Japanese Foreign Ministry proposes talks with the US in regard to a preliminary suspension of the bombings and some form of Viet Cong participation in a cease-fire agreement.

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