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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



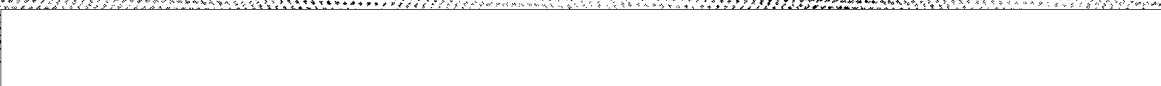
THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
8 September 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL



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HIGHLIGHTS

A Viet Cong battalion yesterday fought its way out of a government trap, south of Da Nang, inflicting heavy casualties on a South Vietnamese Ranger battalion. The large-scale operation 20 miles south of Chu Lai by five battalions of USMC and South Vietnamese troops has encountered scattered resistance; according to preliminary reports 48 Viet Cong were killed, against marine losses of one wounded and South Vietnamese losses of 3 killed and 31 wounded. On the political front, Buddhist leader Tri Quang expects antigovernment and anti-American agitation by students in Hué to continue. In North Vietnam, surface-to-air firings have recently increased; on 4 September, a drone aircraft was narrowly missed by a missile fired from a site in the vicinity of sites 6, 7, and 8.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

An estimated Viet Cong battalion employing mortars, recoilless rifles, and automatic weapons, yesterday fought its way out of a government trap 20 miles south of Da Nang, inflicting heavy casualties on a South Vietnamese Ranger battalion (Paras. 1-2). The multibattalion USMC/ARVN sweep-and-destroy operation launched yesterday 20 miles south of Chu Lai in northeast Quang Ngai Province is proceeding according to plan; so far, ARVN forces have encountered the most determined enemy resistance, and have reported 48 Viet Cong killed to date (Para. 3). USAF B-52 strategic bombers last night conducted a saturation bombing attack against a suspected Viet Cong concentration 15 nautical miles north of Saigon (Para. 4). Heavy airstrikes yesterday disrupted an attack by two Viet Cong companies against a Regional Forces outpost in the Mekong Delta province of Chuong Thien (Para. 5). Additional enemy attacks were reported yesterday in Binh Dinh Province, while to the south, Viet Cong terrorists

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were again active near Saigon (Para. 6). Several important changes in Viet Cong tactics in the southern IV Corps area of South Vietnam have been observed by MACV (Paras. 7-8). According to MACV's Weekly Military Report for 28 August - 4 September, the Viet Cong continued to maintain a cautious offensive posture avoiding major contact whenever possible with strong ARVN/US formations, and concentrating their principal effort on intensified small-scale harassment of isolated, lightly defended population centers, New Life hamlets, and strategic military outposts (Paras. 10-13). The weekly report summarizes rail and road interdictions and casualty statistics (Paras. 14-17).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Buddhist leader Tri Quang has told the US consul in Hue that he expects unrest in the northern provinces to continue festering, and implied that the tempo may again increase if the war and the tenure of the present Saigon government are prolonged (Paras. 1-3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
Since 4 September probably four missiles have been launched against US aircraft. A drone aircraft was narrowly missed by a missile on 4 September, and on 5 September two USN aircraft were fired at over the Gulf of Tonkin.

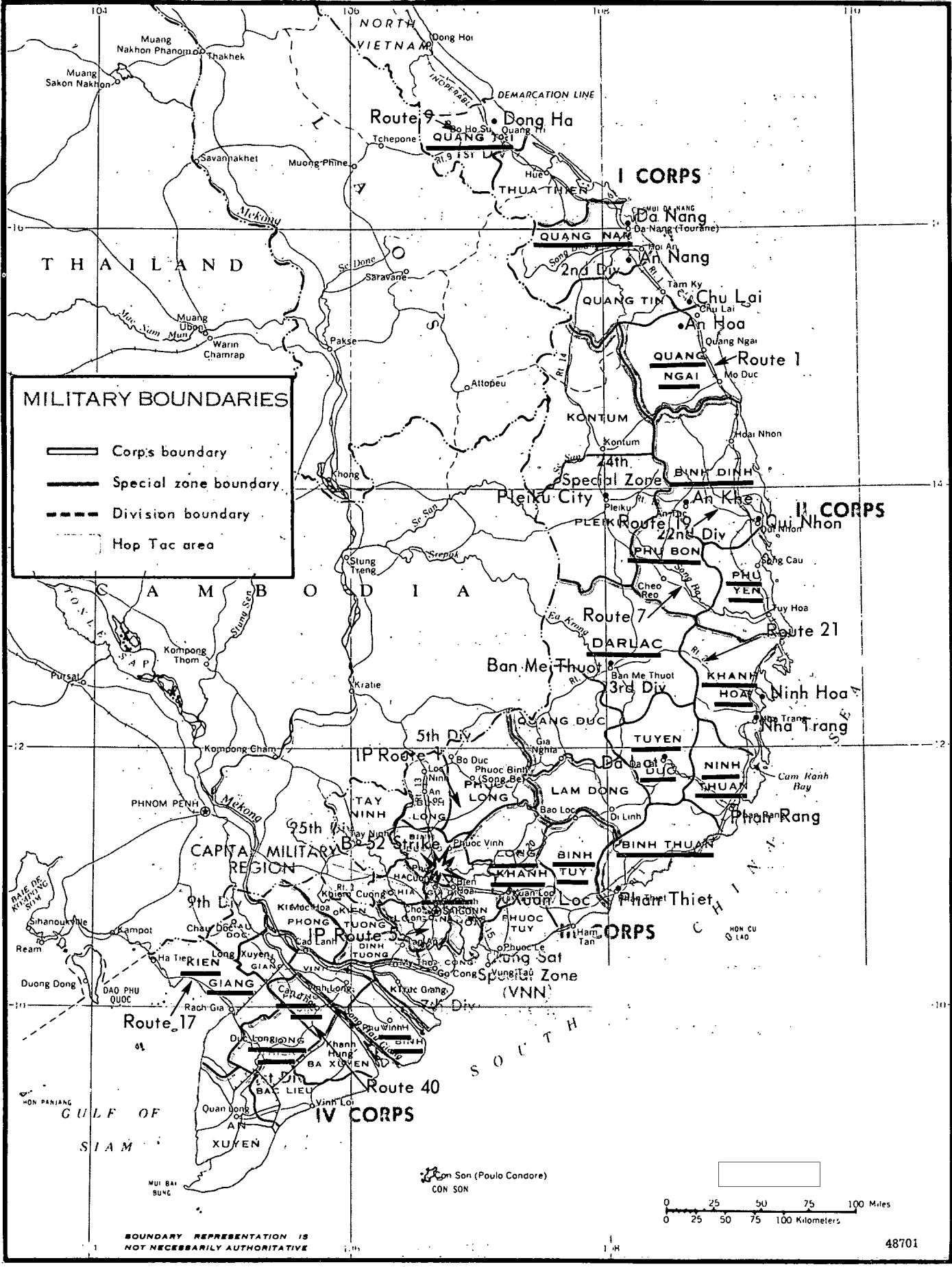
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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
Nothing significant to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Nothing significant to report.

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SOUTH VIETNAM



I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. An estimated Viet Cong battalion, employing mortars, recoilless rifles, and automatic weapons, yesterday fought its way out of a government trap 20 miles south of Da Nang, inflicting heavy casualties on a South Vietnamese Ranger battalion. Government losses were placed at 22 killed and 62 wounded, as against confirmed enemy losses of four killed and 13 captured. US air strikes on the Communist positions are believed to have saved the Ranger unit from possible annihilation.

2. The action occurred as the result of a multibattalion ARVN search-and-destroy operation initiated near the town of An Nang in Quang Nam Province on 5 September. Only the Ranger battalion established significant contact with the Viet Cong; casualties to other participating operational elements were termed "light."

3. The multibattalion USMC/ARVN sweep-and-destroy operation launched yesterday 20 miles south of Chu Lai in northeast Quang Ngai Province is proceeding according to plan. US forces have secured their tactical positions, with light sniper fire the only reported opposition. Three guerrillas have been killed and six captured thus far in this phase of the operation, against marine losses of one wounded. The ARVN sweep being conducted in the southern sector of the target zone has encountered more determined Viet Cong resistance, and four ARVN battalions are now in the area. Reports of this phase of "Operation PIRANHA" are incomplete, but as of late yesterday afternoon 48 Viet Cong were reported killed, seven captured, and 4 suspects detained, in contrast to ARVN losses of three killed and 31 wounded.

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4. Fifteen Guam-based USAF B-52 strategic bombers last night attacked a suspected Viet Cong supply, storage, training, and assembly area 15 nautical miles north of Saigon. All of the aircraft successfully released their bombs over the target area. No follow-up ground exploitation was planned.

5. In the Mekong Delta province of Chuong Thien, an estimated force of two Viet Cong companies yesterday besieged a small Regional Forces outpost with mortar and small-arms fire. Heavy airstrikes flown in support of the post reportedly killed 70 Viet Cong, and ultimately forced their withdrawal. Government casualties were officially placed at ten killed and 25 wounded. Unconfirmed press reports allege that an additional 50 Vietnamese civilians were wounded by the airstrikes and later evacuated by US Army helicopters.

6. A Viet Cong attack was also reported early today against the bivouac position of a reinforced Vietnamese company in Binh Dinh Province. Friendly casualties were believed heavy. Meanwhile, to the south, Viet Cong terrorists were again active in the Saigon area. One policeman was killed and seven wounded by a grenade thrown into a police station at Gia Dinh.

7. MACV has reported the following recent changes in Viet Cong tactics in the southern IV Corps area: instructions have been issued not to fire on low-flying aircraft unless the Viet Cong have been detected; field fortifications have been improved; the depth of overhead cover has been increased; and the Viet Cong are beginning to maintain close contact with ARVN as a protective measure against air attack. In one instance last week, the Viet Cong allowed an ARVN battalion to advance to within 50 meters of their position and then pinned the unit down with automatic fire. This made air attack against enemy emplacements virtually impossible.

8. Despite the heavy losses believed to have been sustained by the Viet Cong in recent weeks,

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MACV finds no indication of a flagging will to fight. Enemy units still devote considerable effort to removing their dead from the battlefield. In recent actions in the IV Corps, each Viet Cong soldier entered combat with a rope wound around his body and tied to his neck, to facilitate dragging away those killed or wounded.

9. MACV's military report for 6 September shows 104 Communist-initiated incidents, five of them occurring during the 24-hour reporting period. The most significant enemy action occurred in northern coastal Quang Ngai Province, where a Regional Forces platoon escorting dependents to fetch water was ambushed by an unknown number of Viet Cong, losing 11 killed, 13 wounded, 2 missing, and 7 weapons captured.

10. According to MACV's Weekly Military Report for the period 28 August - 4 September, the Viet Cong continued to maintain a cautious offensive posture, avoiding major contact with strong ARVN/US formations whenever possible, and concentrating their principal effort on intensified small-scale harassment of isolated, lightly defended population centers, New Life hamlets, and strategic military outposts. When forced to fight by government forces, the Viet Cong usually conducted tenacious defensive operations until nightfall, when they broke contact. On only one occasion did a Communist unit break and run during an operation. This occurred in the southern IV Corps when napalm was employed against the Viet Cong.

11. Statistically, while the over-all level of incidents initiated by the Viet Cong increased from 534 to 568, only one large-scale action was confirmed: a battalion-sized attack against a Regional Forces outpost at An Hoa in northeast Quang Ngai Province on 31 August. The post was retaken by ARVN reaction forces after approximately 12 hours of enemy occupation.

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12. A numerical comparison of last week's guerilla activity with that of the previous week follows:

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>At-tacks</u>	<u>Terror-ism</u>	<u>Sabo-tage</u>	<u>Propa-ganda</u>	<u>AA</u>	<u>Total In-cidents</u>
21-28 August	12	329	73	41	79	534
28 Aug-4 Sept	9	366	57	50	86	568

13. On the government side, large-scale search-and-destroy operations by ARVN and US forces continued to maintain pressure on the Viet Cong, thus forcing the enemy to operate mainly in small-unit formations. A three-battalion reaction by the 9th ARVN Division to Viet Cong harassment in Vinh Binh Province trapped an estimated enemy battalion along the banks of the Mekong River on 3 September. Sixty-two Viet Cong were killed and 22 captured, against friendly losses of 18 killed and 45 wounded. Road clearing operations by ARVN forces along Route 21 between Nha Trang (Khanh Hoa Province) and Ban Me Thout (Darlac Province), and by elements of the US 101st Airborne Brigade along strategic lateral Route 19 in Binh Dinh Province between Qui Nhon and An Khe, proceeded according to plan, without opposition from Viet Cong units.

14. National Route 1 remains closed in Quang Ngai, Binh Thuan, and Binh Tuy provinces; Route 19 is closed west of Pleiku city but passable to the east; Route 9 is closed in Quang Tri Province; Route 7 is closed in Phu Yen and Phu Bon provinces; Routes 40 and 17, in Phong Dinh and Kien Giang provinces respectively, are closed; and interprovincial Routes 1 and 5 are closed. The coastal railway is operational from Saigon to Xuan Loc (Long Khanh Province); from Phan Thiet (Binh Thuan Province) to Ninh Hoa (Khanh Hoa Province); from the mountain resort of Dalat (Tuyen Duc Province) to Phan Rang (Ninh Thuan Province); and from Da Nang to Dong Ha (Quang Tri Province).

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15. ARVN casualties during the period 28 August - 4 September totaled 689 (179 KIA, 410 WIA, and 100 MIA/captured), a slight decline from the previous week's casualty total of 710 (180 KIA, 499 WIA, and 31 MIA/captured). ARVN weapons losses increased to 380 from the 106 reported lost in the preceding week.

16. During 28 August - 4 September, the Viet Cong sustained 531 known casualties (422 KIA and 109 captured), a decrease in comparison with the previous week's total of 699 casualties (579 KIA and 120 captured). Government forces captured 170 weapons (three crew-served); in the preceding week 176 weapons (none crew-served) had been seized.

17. US battle casualties during the 28 August - 4 September MACV reporting period totaled 73 (26 KIA, 44 WIA, and 3 MIA/captured), a sharp decline from the preceding week's corrected casualty total of 119 (9 KIA, 103 WIA, 7 MIA/captured). American nonbattle casualties numbered 12 (8 deaths and 4 injuries); the previous week's total in this category was 77 (60 deaths and 17 injuries). There were no US civilian casualties reported.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. At the conclusion of his brief visit to Hué, Buddhist monk Tri Quang told the American consul last week end that he expected trouble in Hué to continue to fester unless there is an early solution to the country's problems. Quang claimed that the people in the area want a legally elected civilian government, and that the solution would be to convene a national assembly--either by selecting delegates from the recently elected provincial councils or by holding new elections--to choose a civilian prime minister and chief of state.

2. Quang exhibited little interest in details of the recent student "struggle movement" in Hué, characterizing the students as not against Americans, but as tired of war and resentful of the large American presence. He implied that antigovernment activity would continue in a "light vein," but that the tempo might increase, depending on developments.

3.

[Redacted] Tri Quang is in fact quite seriously concerned about anti-American sentiment in Hué. [Redacted] Tri Quang made a hurried trip to Hué, despite ill health, because he feared the situation was at "powder-keg tension" and that students and intellectuals in Hué might attempt to precipitate violent antigovernment or anti-American agitation in connection with the conference of intellectuals on 29-31 August. [Redacted]

[Redacted] Quang, in contrast to the tone of his remarks to the consul at the end of his trip, has stated that anti-Americanism was becoming serious in the Hué area, and that he wished to discuss the matter with Ambassador Lodge.

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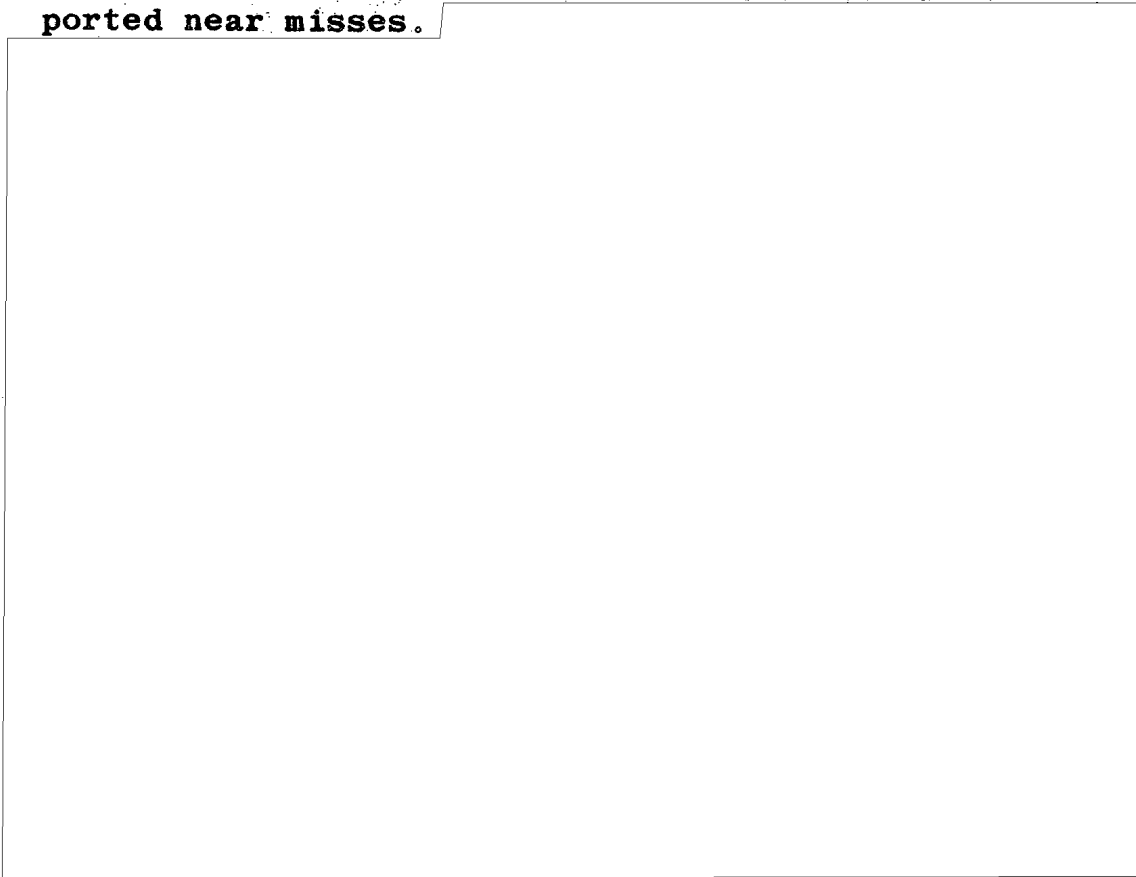


III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Surface-to-air missile firings in North Vietnam have recently increased. Since 4 September, three, and possibly four, SAM sites have launched missiles against US aircraft.

2. Preliminary scan of 4 September drone photography reveals a probable missile being launched at the drone from an unknown SAM site in the vicinity of sites 6, 7, and 8. The photography revealed a contrail originating from under a cloud, passing near the drone and continuing upward before detonation for a near-miss on the drone. There was no physical damage noted on the drone upon recovery.

3. Two SAM incidents occurred on 5 September, when two USN aircraft over the Gulf of Tonkin reported near misses.

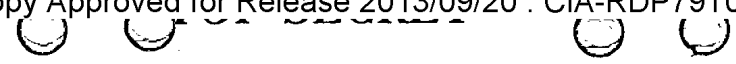


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