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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

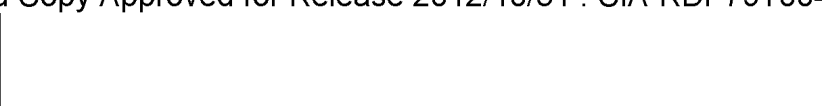
Information as of 1600  
14 September 1965

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HIGHLIGHTS

A joint US/South Vietnamese force yesterday launched a major attack against a Viet Cong force of about 10,000 men, 30 miles north of Saigon.



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North Vietnamese propaganda aimed at domestic audiences seems to reflect growing anxiety in Hanoi over the effect on popular morale of the unrelenting US air strikes.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

A major US/ARVN search-and-destroy operation was initiated yesterday near the district capital of Ben Cat, in Binh Duong Province, 30 miles north of Saigon, against Viet Cong forces with an estimated aggregate strength of about 10,000 troops (Paras. 1-2). Thirty Guam-based USAF B-52 strategic bombers last night attacked a suspected Viet Cong logistical center in the vicinity of the Ho Be woods, Binh Duong Province, 15 miles north of Saigon (Para. 3). A Viet Cong force estimated at two battalions early today launched a three-hour attack against a government outpost at Cau Dinh, in Binh Duong Province, 25 miles north of Saigon; preliminary results indicate 33 Vietnamese defenders killed, wounded, and missing, as against enemy losses of 50 killed (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The secretary general of the military Directorate states that plans are proceeding to set up a civilian advisory council to the cabinet by a target date of 1 November (Paras. 1-2).



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The Saigon government may be planning shortly to execute a Viet Cong terrorist for whose death the Viet Cong have threatened to retaliate against a US captive (Para. 4). Despite recent government military moves against dissident mountain tribesmen, the US Embassy



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believes there is still some flexibility in the government position (Paras. 5-6).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: The DRV delegation now visiting France wants to go to Italy next, but so far has been refused permission by the Italian Government; it is possible that Hanoi would like to use this group to probe for indications of US willingness to accept any of North Vietnam's conditions for ending the war (Paras. 1-2). Hanoi responded to the landing of the US 1st Air-Mobile Division in South Vietnam with a blustering article seemingly intended to bolster the morale of rank-and-file Vietnamese Communists (Paras. 3-4). North Vietnamese propaganda for domestic consumption seems to reflect growing anxiety in Hanoi over the effect on popular morale of the unrelenting US air strikes (Paras. 5-8).

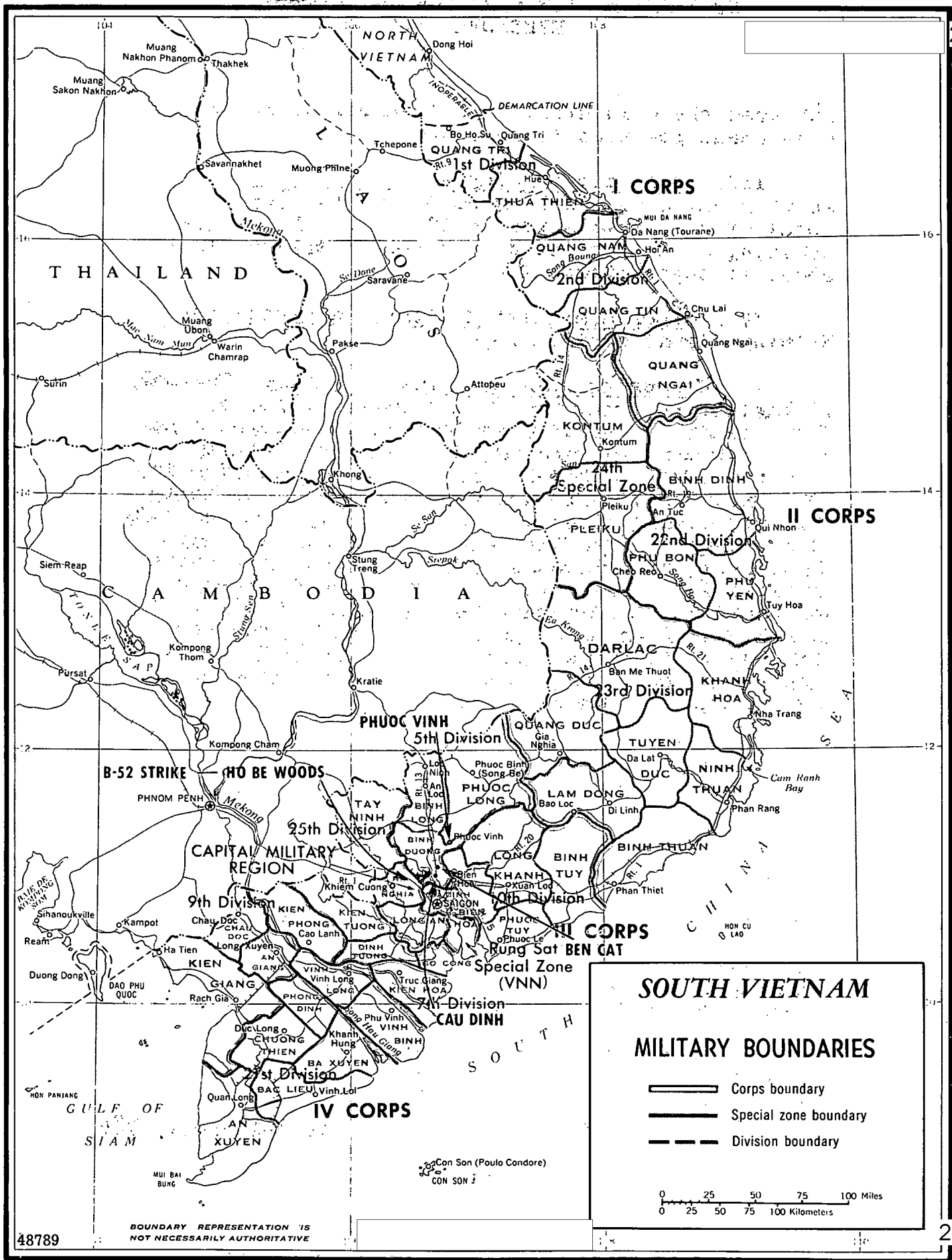
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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A major US/ARVN search-and-destroy operation was initiated on 13 September near the district capital of Ben Cat, in Binh Duong Province, 30 miles north of Saigon. Viet Cong forces in the area are believed to consist of two or three Main Force regiments, five or six Main Force battalions one Local Force battalion, and six Local Force companies with an aggregate maximum strength of 10,150 men.

2. Friendly forces participating in the operation, which is expected to last from eight to ten days, number approximately 5,000 troops. These include 2,700 Vietnamese soldiers, 1,500 Americans, 700 Australians, and 110 New Zealanders. The US force consists of units of the 173rd Airborne Brigade ((reinforced)). Additionally, one Australian infantry battalion, a New Zealand artillery battery, and the US 145th Aviation Battalion will provide initial support. ARVN forces include four airborne battalions and elements of the 5th ARVN Division. Two ARVN Ranger battalions are being held in reserve at Phuoc Vinh. Close air support is being provided by USAF F-100 Supersabres and A-1E Sky-raider aircraft. According to the latest available information from MACV, the operation is proceeding according to plan.

3. Thirty USAF B-52 Stratofortresses from Andersen AFB, Guam, last night conducted a saturation bombing mission against a suspected Viet Cong logistical and transshipment center in the vicinity of the Ho Be woods, Binh Duong Province, 15 nautical miles north of Saigon. The attack was made in two waves of 15 aircraft each, with all aircraft successfully releasing their bombs over the target area. No follow-up ground exploitation was planned.

4. An estimated two Viet Cong battalions, employing heavy mortar and small-arms fire, launched an attack early today against a government outpost at Cau Dinh, in Binh Duong Province, 25 miles

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north of Saigon. The assault, which lasted for three hours, resulted in initial friendly casualties of four killed, 18 wounded, and 11 missing. Enemy forces are believed to have sustained 50 killed. Two ARVN reaction force units were dispatched to assist in the defense of the besieged outpost.

5. MACV's military report for 12 September shows 48 Communist-initiated incidents, five of which occurred during the 24-hour reporting period. No significant new actions were reported.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. General Pham Xuan Chieu, secretary general of the Military Directorate, told the US Embassy political counselor yesterday that plans were going forward toward the establishment of an advisory council with a target date of 1 November. Chieu said that the military were thinking of a council membership of about 100, including one member elected from each provincial and municipal council, with the balance of the members to be selected from among the religious sects, professional groups, labor unions, and acknowledged political parties.

2. Chieu said that the council would serve as an advisory body to the cabinet rather than to the Directorate, and that, if it proved successful, it might eventually evolve into a constituent assembly. Although he admitted that there might be political troublemakers of the council, Chieu appeared cautiously optimistic that the council would be controllable, particularly through its appointed members. Ambassador Lodge has reported his own concern that there appears to be no group of civilians upon whom Premier Ky can rely to assure effective cooperation from an advisory council and that the council might become a vehicle for obstructionism or divisiveness such as occurred in previous regimes during the past two years.

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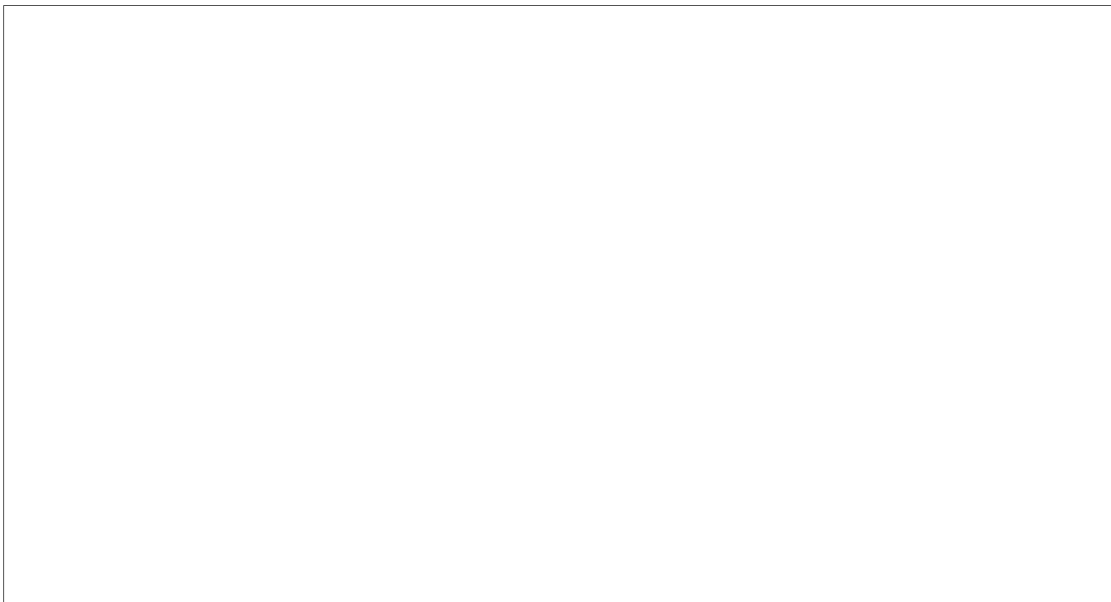
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4. The US Embassy has been informed confidentially that the Saigon government has reviewed and rejected appeals from six convicted Viet Cong terrorists, whose executions may now take place in the near future. Among the six is embassy bomber Nguyen Van Hai, for whose execution the Viet Cong have threatened to retaliate against Gustav Hertz, a US AID official now in Communist hands.

5. In reviewing recent developments affecting ethnic tribesmen in the central highlands, the US Embassy believes that the situation is still fluid. Government suspicions that negotiators from FULRO-- the dissident tribal autonomy movement--have been stalling while trying to subvert government CIDG camps in the area have already caused some precipitous government moves, beginning with the disarming of one CIDG camp on 7 September, and the subsequent surveillance of two others still deemed loyal to Saigon. Shortly after a local Vietnamese commander was informed of an approach by FULRO to a US Special Forces officer for weapons and medical supplies, a government operation was launched on 10 September which led to the surrender of a 400-man FULRO unit; on 12 September, another 30 CIDG troops were temporarily detained and partially disarmed.

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6. The desire for strong action by some Vietnamese commanders may have adverse effects on presently loyal tribesmen. However, the II Corps commander General Vinh Loc, although an advocate of strong measures, states that he intends for the present to treat leniently those who surrender. He also plans to begin a series of meetings between Saigon authorities and tribal leaders in each highland province in an effort to try to meet tribal objectives.

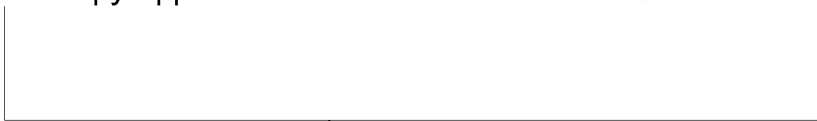
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**IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS**

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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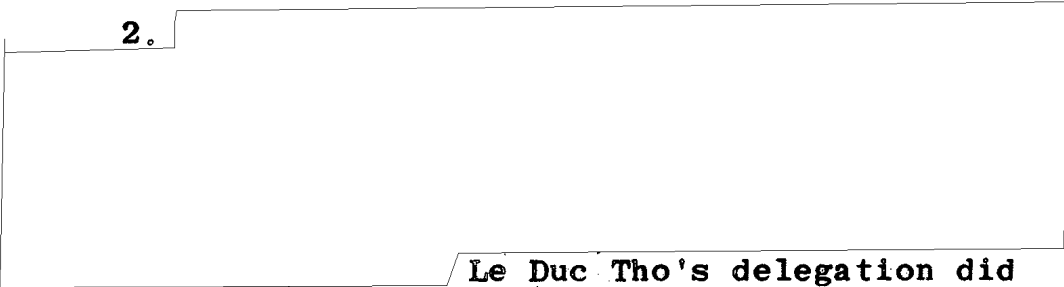
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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. According to the US Embassy in Rome, the Italian Communists have so far been unsuccessful in their efforts to obtain permission from the Italian Government for a visit to Italy by the DRV party delegation presently in France. Hanoi expressed an interest several months ago in having Le Duc Tho, who heads the delegation in France, stop in Italy for talks with the Italian Communists. Communist leaders in Italy claim that the DRV delegation "might be carrying some interesting proposals" (presumably on ending the war).

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Le Duc Tho's delegation did visit Rumania in early August prior to its trip to France. It seems unlikely that this delegation has been empowered by Hanoi to present proposals on negotiations, but it is possible that Hanoi would like to use the group to probe for any signs that the US is willing to accede to any or all of North Vietnam's demands for a settlement of the war.

3. Hanoi's initial response to the landing of the US 1st Air-Mobile Division in South Vietnam came in a 14 September Nhan Dan article which denounced the move as a "brazen provocation against the whole of progressive mankind." The article pointed out that US forces already in Vietnam have met repeated "disasters" and asserted that additional troops would not be sufficient to win the war. In language seemingly intended to bolster the morale of the rank-and-file Vietnamese Communists, the article declared that "the more US forces that come to Vietnam, the more they will be wiped out."

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4. The announcement of an increase in the US commitment to the Vietnam war in the past has often drawn threats from the Vietnamese Communists to call in outside volunteers. Although there was no warning of DRV intervention in the Nhan Dan editorial, new threats to call for outside personnel may come in the Liberation Front's propaganda response to the 1st Division's deployment.

5. The deleterious effect on the North Vietnamese populace caused by the unrelenting attrition of the US air strikes is apparently of growing concern to the Hanoi regime. The most explicit statement of anxiety on Hanoi's part over public morale in some time was contained in a domestic broadcast on 11 September discussing conditions in the Viet Bac Autonomous Region--the northeastern DRV. The broadcast warned that "cadres and people" in this area "are not yet fully aware of the shrewd plot and tricky, dangerous schemes of the enemy," or of the "nature of sabotage waged by the US" against North Vietnam.

6. In particular the authorities expressed dissatisfaction with evacuation procedures in the area. The broadcast implied that when US aircraft strike local residents take to their heels with little regard to planned evacuation procedures. Cadres and state employees were urged to "explain things" to the people in order "to reassure them."

7. The broadcast also revealed the regime's continuing suspicion that the Viet Bac area is harboring spies and provocateurs. All provinces were instructed to counter the "erroneous views" allegedly spread through the area by the enemy and to "smash in time" all "counterpropaganda arguments."

8. The air strikes also appear to be seriously straining public health facilities in North Vietnam. At a recent conference, reported by Hanoi radio on 13 September, the minister of public health stressed the steps needed to "reduce to the minimum" the losses in human lives caused by air raids. The

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conference discussed the production and distribution of medicines and medical equipment and encouraged local cultivation of medicinal plants for the self-supply of drugs and medicines "most needed" for "emergency treatment on battlegrounds." The need for local production of drugs reflects not only the increased number of casualties, but the interruption of normal transportation. The importance which the regime places on this problem is reflected by the fact that the conference was called by the key party central committee secretariat and was addressed by Premier Pham Van Dong himself.

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