

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
3 January 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

Viet Cong military activity continues heavy in Quang Ngai Province, and there are indications that the Communists may be planning to step up the action in Pleiku Province.

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In Hanoi, the North Vietnamese have again broadcast a denunciation of what they term the "deceitful and hypocritical" US peace campaign. The broadcast attacked the dispatch of senior US government officials to various world capitals as "nothing but trickery." Hanoi continues to avoid mentioning the cessation in US air strikes on North Vietnam.

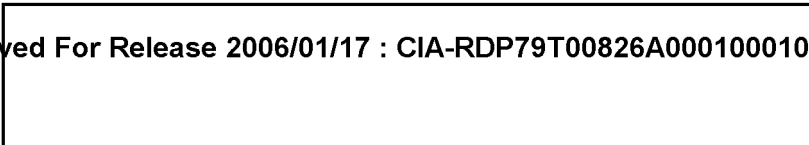
I. Military Situation in South Vietnam: The Viet Cong are continuing their high level of activity in Quang Ngai Province (Paras. 1-3).

the Viet Cong are planning attacks in Pleiku Province (Paras. 5-8). Friendly troops have lost contact with the enemy in Hau Nghia Province (Para. 10). Tear gas has been used in Hau Nghia and Phu Yen provinces (Paras. 10-11).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
Nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi today again attacked what it termed the "deceitful and hypocritical" US peace campaign (Paras. 1-2). The North Vietnamese economic delegation currently touring East Europe signed new agreements on aid to Hanoi in East Germany on 31 December, then moved on to Bucharest (Paras. 3-4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Heavy Viet Cong activity continues in Quang Ngai Province. Press reports indicate that an enemy force, estimated at two battalions, yesterday attacked a South Vietnamese outpost 10 miles southwest of the provincial capital, Quang Ngai city. The outpost's 100-odd defenders reportedly repelled the attack with the help of air support. The Viet Cong apparently are still in the area, however. No casualty reports have been received so far.

2. The Viet Cong have been extremely active in Quang Ngai since late December. On 29 December they overran the district capital of Minh Long in the center of the province, shelled another district capital on Quang Ngai's coast, and blew up three bridges south of the provincial capital on South Vietnam's main coastal highway. The next day, the Viet Cong attacked and briefly occupied an outpost near a third district capital--killing at least 18 South Vietnamese, while losing six dead--and overran a militia outpost 14 miles southwest of Quang Ngai city. In the latter action, 203 militiamen are reported missing. Viet Cong casualties are unknown. On 31 December, the Viet Cong assaulted and briefly held still another militia outpost--this one 11 miles west of Quang Ngai city--killing 14 of its defenders; another 14 are reported missing. Again, Viet Cong casualties are unknown.

3. At least one Viet Cong regiment, and one North Vietnamese Regiment [redacted] were reported in the province in December. Several reports about that time indicated Viet Cong intentions to increase activity in Quang Ngai.

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4. Casualty reports have come in for the action in Chau Doc Province, described in the Situation Report of 30 December. The Viet Cong lost 45 killed, as against eleven killed for the South Vietnamese.

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6. Reports of impending Communist activity in Pleiku Province are continuing to come in. [redacted] reports indicate the Viet Cong plan to attack two Special Forces camps northwest of Pleiku town early this month. In December, a local villager reported that he had been a member of a 200-man porter party which had moved to within ten miles of one of the camps. He said 1,000 Viet Cong (allegedly now in Cambodia) were to participate in the attack on the camp. The PAVN 32nd Regiment was reported in Cambodia near Pleiku in mid-December.

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9. Two explosive charges, preceded by a short burst of small arms fire, were detonated beside a US Army enlisted men's quarter in Dalat in Tuyen Duc Province on 30 December. The explosions killed one American and wounded nine. A South Vietnamese national was also wounded.

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10. Operation MARAUDER, in Hau Nghia Province west-southwest of Saigon, continues, but at last report US airborne soldiers had lost contact with the enemy. So far, friendly troops have killed 238 Viet Cong (body count), captured 77, and detained 553 suspects. Friendly losses are 81 killed (15 US), and 173 wounded (76 US). Tear gas has been used against the Viet Cong on three occasions during MARAUDER, but its effectiveness is unknown.

11. Friendly forces also used tear gas yesterday in Phu Yen Province in support of the two Korean and two South Vietnamese companies operating there. So far, the gas has been ineffective because of high winds. The Viet Cong are reportedly holed up in bunkers, however, and tear gas reportedly will be used again.

12. Yesterday, 18 US heavy bombers struck a Viet Cong supply complex about 28 miles north-northeast of Saigon. No ground follow-up is planned.

13. A five-day American operation in Binh Dinh Province, called CLEAN HOUSE III, officially ended on 31 December. Elements of the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) killed 34 Viet Cong and captured nine. The enemy killed five Americans and wounded 35. Four US soldiers are listed as missing.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi again today let loose a blast at what it termed the "deceitful and hypocritical" US peace campaign. A commentary in the 3 January issue of the party daily, Nhan Dan, charged that the dispatch of senior US officials to various world capitals was nothing but "trickery." It rehashed old DRV allegations that the US, rather than proposing "unconditional discussions," is actually insisting that its troops remain in South Vietnam indefinitely.

2. The commentary seemed to reflect chagrin by Hanoi at a loss of political initiative due to the US "peace offensive." It attempted to dismiss US offers for talks as a "trick aimed at screening their plans of war intensification and expansion." The commentary continued the DRV practice of avoiding any mention of the cessation of US air strikes against North Vietnam. Hanoi apparently feels that to admit that a halt in the bombings has taken place would put it even more on the defensive in the eyes of world opinion. It undoubtedly also wants to keep the cessation in effect as long as possible, and probably believes that to comment negatively might provoke resumption of the strikes.

3. A joint communiqué signed on 31 December by a North Vietnamese economic delegation headed by Le Thanh Nghi and East German officials announced new agreements on GDR aid to the DRV and on goods exchange between the two countries for 1966. The East German agreement, like the one signed in Hungary on 27 December, was vague in wording and avoided any mention of specific aid. Both of these new agreements appeared as efforts to shore up the Soviet bloc's claims of full support to the Vietnamese Communists.

4. The communiqué noted that "both sides stressed that the unity within the socialist camp was one of the important conditions for the victory

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of the Vietnamese people's just cause." Nghi moved on to Bucharest on 31 December and will probably sign similar agreements with Rumanian officials. It is probable that the delegation will also visit other Eastern European capitals, as it did on a similar trip in June and July, before making its last scheduled stop in North Korea.

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