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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
21 July 1966

State Dept. review completed

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PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED HEREIN IS NOT AUTHORIZED

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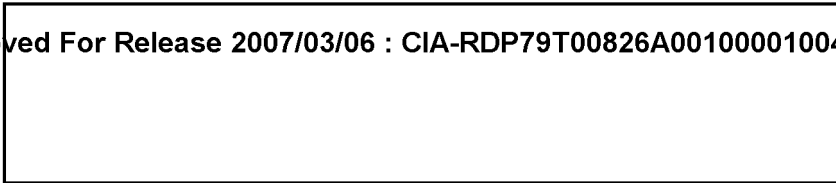
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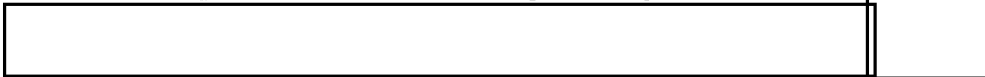
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HIGHLIGHTS

Militant Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang's attendance at the reception given today by Father Quynh's "Front of All Religions" was Quang's first public appearance since beginning his fast.

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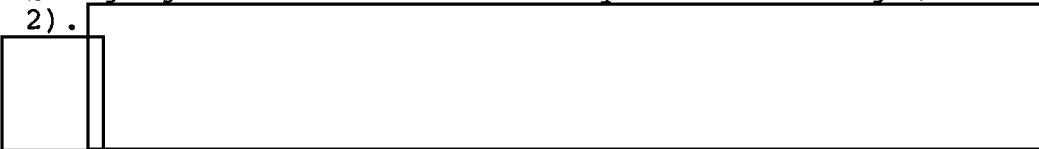
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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Operation HASTINGS/LAM SON 289 continues with only sporadic contact with the enemy reported (Para. 1). Quang Ngai Airfield attacked by the Viet Cong (Para. 2).

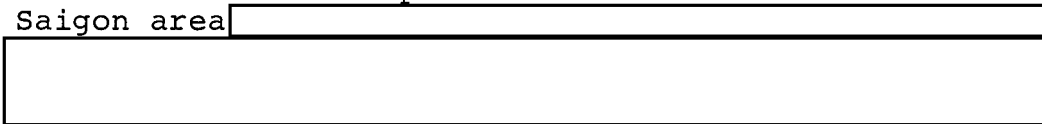
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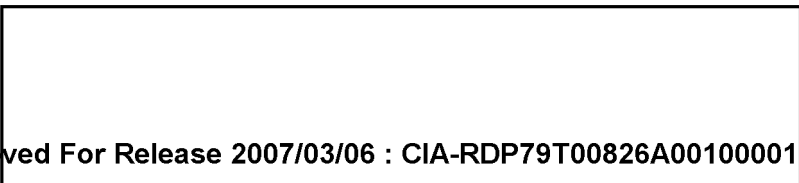


II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The reception given today by Father Quynh's "Front of All Religions" was highlighted today by the attendance of militant Buddhist Thich Tri Quang (Paras. 1-2). A young Buddhist monk attempted self-immolation outside the building where the reception was held (Para. 3). Recent developments concerning the constitutional assembly election in September include a generally favorable US Embassy assessment on a countrywide basis, but some criticism of the lack of prominent candidates in the Saigon area

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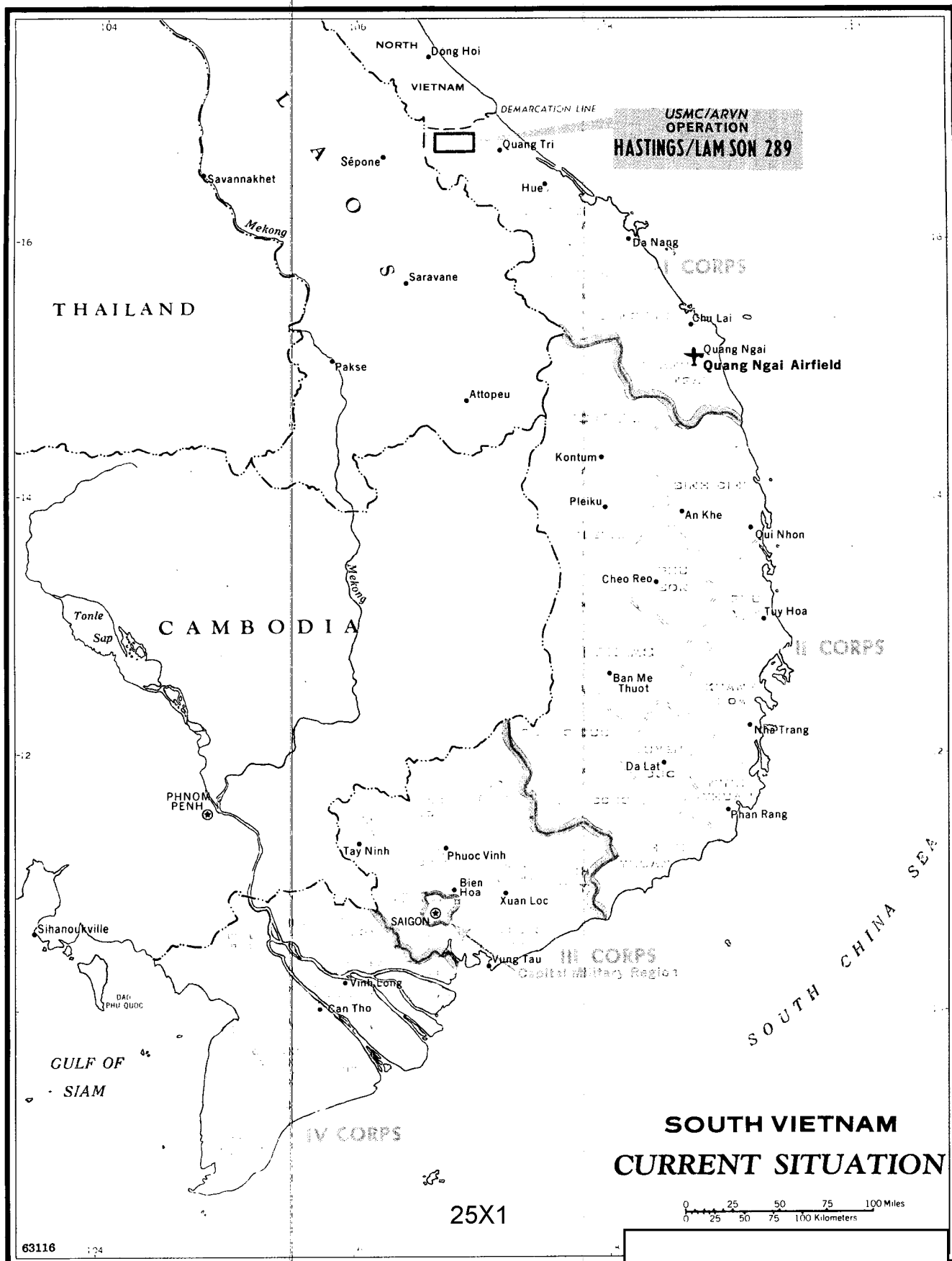
III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
Three US aircraft were lost on 21 July as air de-
fense activity continued at a high level for the
third day (Paras. 1-2). Subsequent reports for
20 July indicate four MIG encounters took place
but no US planes were lost (Para. 3). Missile
activity for the past week reached a new high
and suggests that the DRV may be concentrating
its SAMs in the Hanoi-Haiphong area (Para. 4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Joint US - South Vietnamese Operation HASTINGS/LAM SON 289 continues in northern Quang Tri Province with only light, sporadic contact reported. Several scattered skirmishes took place today with a total of 13 US Marines killed. Cumulative casualty figures include 56 Americans killed and 164 wounded. Communist losses stand at 425 killed and 100 assorted weapons captured.

2. Quang Ngai Airfield was attacked by a Viet Cong force of undetermined size early this morning. Following a mortar attack on the base, a Viet Cong squad penetrated a US Marine position in the vicinity of the airfield, using grenades and satchel charges. Seven Americans were killed in the action. There was no reported damage to aircraft or to the airfield.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Militant Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang made his first public appearance in more than a month today at a reception sponsored by Catholic Father Quynh's "Front of All Religions." In a brief statement to approximately 200 assembled guests, Quang remarked that he agreed entirely with the Front's program, particularly in regard to its September election boycott, its demand for an interim government, and its call for the unity of the army and the people in order to defeat the Communists. He declared that the realization of these three points would allow him to end his fast. Quang also stated that he was attending the reception to show his support for the Front and his belief in the unity of all religions.

2. Other notables attending the reception included three ranking monks from the Buddhist Institute, although they told a US Embassy officer that they were not officially representing the Institute. In line with his remarks yesterday, southern Buddhist leader Mai Tho Truyen was present as an observer only. Northern refugee priest Father Hoang Quynh, the sponsor of the Front, reportedly told an American journalist that he was not representing any Catholic organization in his current activities, although he formerly headed the Catholic Citizens Bloc, which he claimed had two million followers. Quynh, however, did declare that the Buddhist Institute was lending official support to his Front.

3. As the reception began to disperse, a young Buddhist monk attempted self-immolation in front of the building. He was taken to the hospital, apparently in critical condition. The US Embassy did not immediately learn the reason for the suicide attempt, although press accounts state that the monk left three letters which presumably explain his action.

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Election Developments

4. Former president of the Saigon City Council La Thanh Nghe, who heads one list of candidates in Saigon, recently expressed concern to a US Embassy officer that the forthcoming elections would not live up to what he and others had expected, at least in the general Saigon area. Nghe, who expressed confidence that he would be elected, complained basically of a lack of prominent candidates in the Saigon area. Among other factors contributing to this situation, Nghe cited pressures from the Buddhist Institute, Father Hoang Quynh's group, a number of old-time politicians who had decided not to participate, and the Viet Cong. He also criticized the list system of voting, and mentioned a lack of confidence in the intentions of the government to conduct an honest election as another reason contributing to the scarcity of prominent candidates.

5. Meanwhile, following a preliminary survey, the US Embassy has reported that the number of candidates who have filed throughout the country is impressive. Candidates generally appear to be younger than those who ran last year in the provincial and municipal council elections, although a number of these councilors have also entered the September election. Small businessmen and educators are also well represented. The major additions to the classification of candidates by background are civil servants and military officers; the total number of such candidates, however, is not yet available. The embassy has also commented that the government's administrative performance regarding the election appears to have been most satisfactory thus far. Although public interest in the elections appears slight in most areas, it can be expected to grow as the candidates become known and as voter registration progresses.

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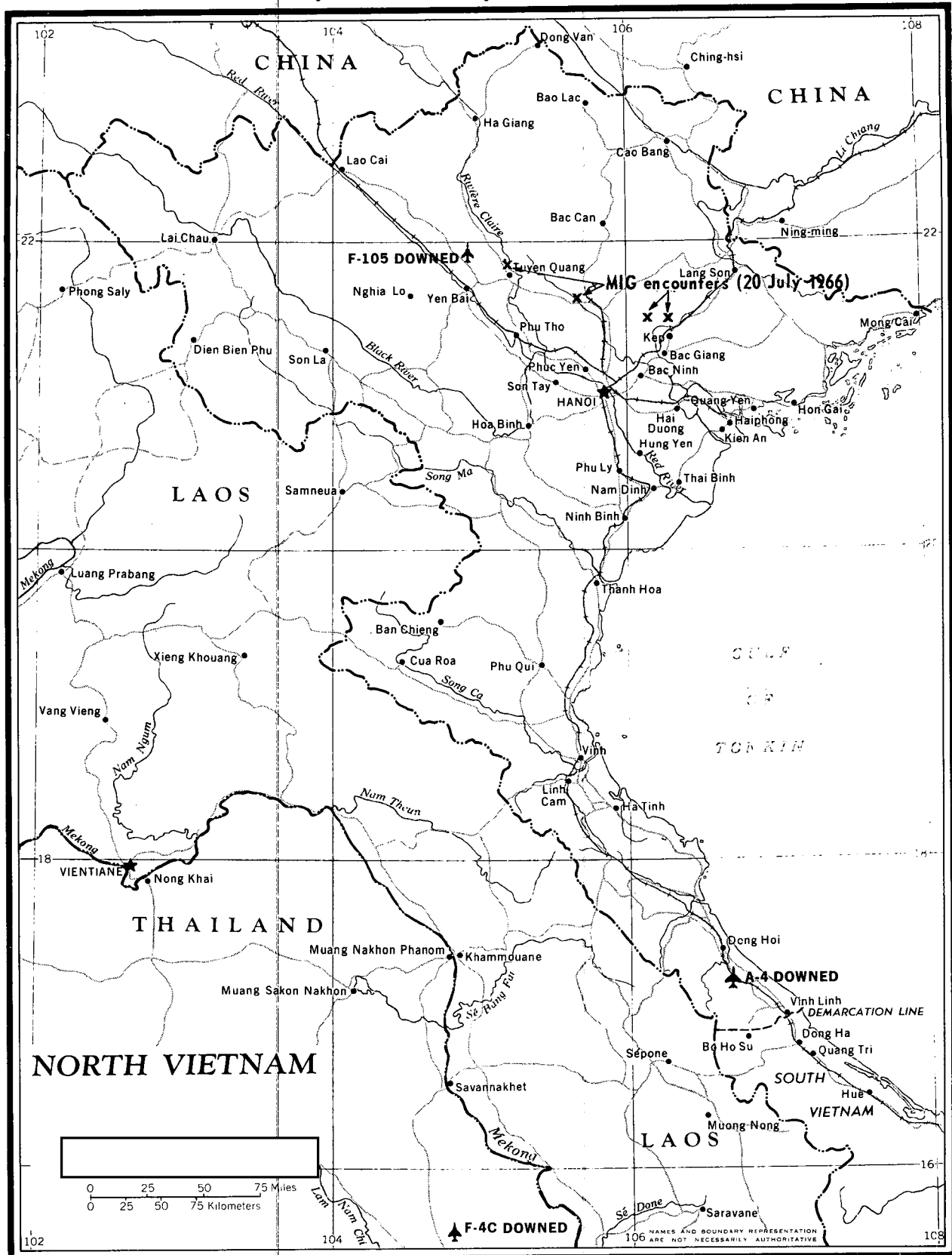
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Air Defense Activity 20-21 July 1966



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Air defense activity on 21 July continued at a high level for the third straight day. A US Marine A-4 Skyhawk was hit by probable 37-mm. fire while bombing DRV targets close to the Demilitarized Zone. The pilot was forced to eject but was later rescued in good condition.

2. A US Air Force F-4C Phantom returning from an armed reconnaissance mission crashed eight miles short of the runway at Ubon, Thailand. The pilot was killed and the aircraft commander was seriously injured. The plane was believed to have suffered combat damage prior to the crash. Another F-105 Thunderchief was lost to an undetermined type of fire 75 miles northwest of Hanoi. Visual and electronic search efforts failed to turn up any trace of the pilot or his aircraft.

3. Subsequent reports of air activity on 20 July indicate that US pilots were involved in four encounters with DRV fighters northwest of Hanoi. Two MIG-21 Fishbeds made a pass at four F-105 Thunderchiefs operating ten miles northwest of Kep Airfield, but no aircraft were lost. Five minutes later another flight of F-105s was attacked in the same area by two unidentified fighters, possibly the same MIG-21s involved in the previous encounter. The DRV interceptors launched two air-to-air missiles which failed to guide as the US planes turned to engage the MIGs. The Fishbeds moved away to the west and the F-105s continued on to their target. Two other flights of US aircraft sighted DRV interceptors, but the MIGs failed to engage the American planes.

4. Missile activity on 20 July declined from the record high of the previous day when 34 SAMs

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were sighted by US pilots. Nevertheless the 12 missile firings reported brought the week's total number of observed SAMs to 76, a new record for a seven-day period. Three new SAM sites were discovered during the past week, bringing the total number in the DRV to 120. The absence of an observed missile firing more than 35 miles south of Hanoi since 1 July may indicate that the North Vietnamese have concentrated their estimated 20-25 SAM units in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. The 162 missiles launched in this vicinity since the first of the month suggest that the DRV still has an ample supply of SAMs.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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