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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
4 August 1966

State Dept. review completed

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

Premier Ky has apparently decided to modify his recent public remarks on invading North Vietnam.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Operation PAUL REVERE continues in the central highlands where 6,000 North Vietnamese troops are reported operating (Para. 1). Operation HASTINGS concludes and is followed by Operation PRAIRIE in the same area of Quang Tri Province (Paras. 2-3). Operation EL PASO III terminated without significant contact (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The government's national election seminar ended yesterday in Saigon, with appropriate appeals to local officials for honesty, sincerity, and efficiency in conducting the elections (Para. 1). Premier Ky apparently has decided to modify his recent public remarks on invading North Vietnam (Para. 2). In addition, Ky reportedly stated within the past few days that he could not remove Deputy Premier Co at the present time because it would disturb the balance of military leadership (Para. 3). Militant Buddhist Tri Quang is being subjected to increasingly tighter controls by the government (Para. 4).

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V. Communist Political Developments: Status
of General Vo Nguyen Giap (Paras. 1-2).

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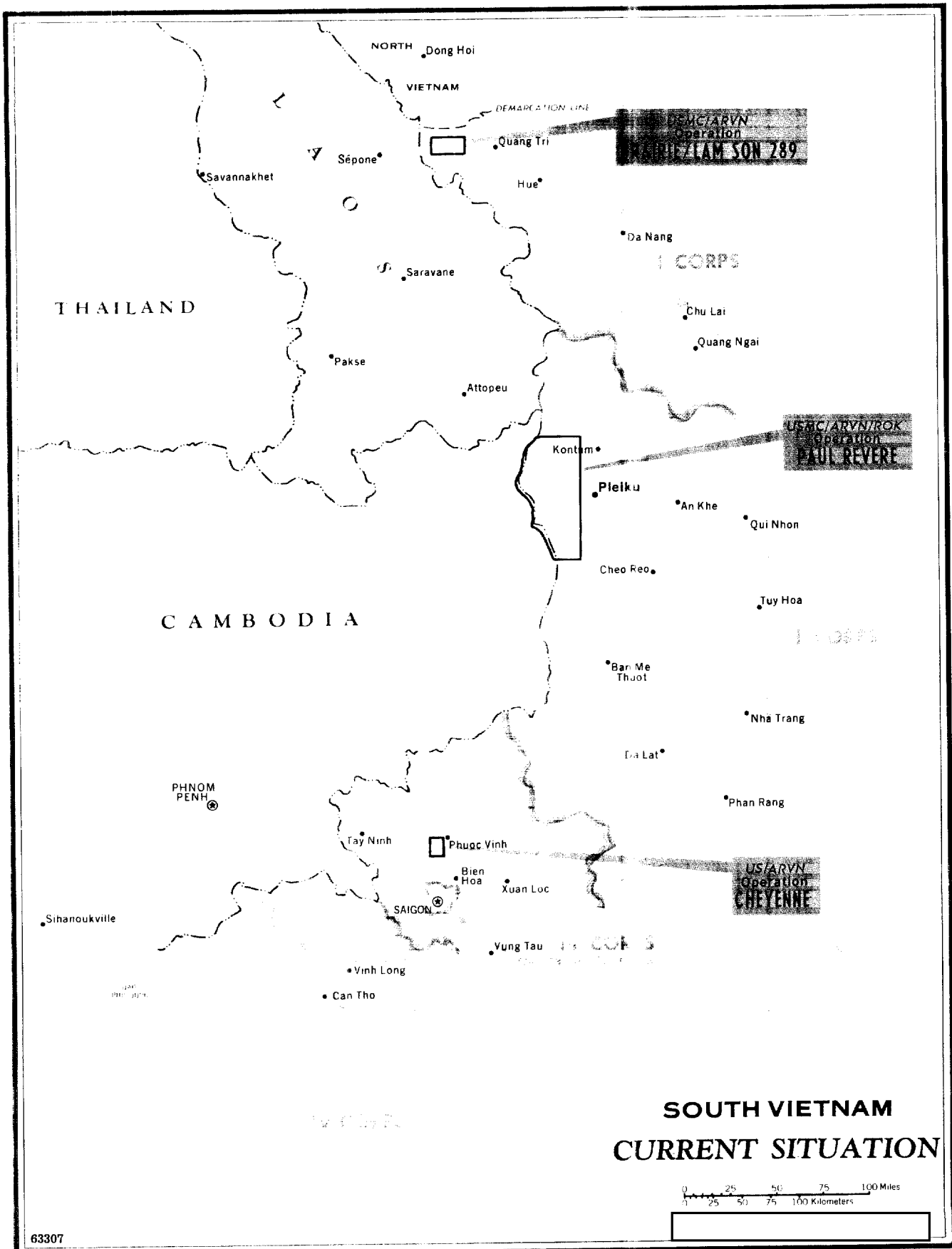
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Only light, sporadic contact with Communist forces has been reported as Operation PAUL REVERE continues in the jungles of the central highlands. Three North Vietnamese Army regiments--the 32nd, 33rd, and 66th, each with an estimated 2,000 men--are reported to be in the western portion of Pleiku Province, where US troops encountered enemy resistance earlier in the week.

2. Operation HASTINGS, the largest US Marine offensive of the war, ended yesterday in northernmost Quang Tri Province. In this operation 147 Americans were killed and 448 were wounded. Communist losses were 882 killed, 15 captured, and 254 weapons captured. Unofficial estimates indicate that possibly 1,000 more enemy troops may have been killed. American pilots flew 1,180 sorties in the support of the operation, the highest number for any operation to date.

3. Operation PRAIRIE was initiated by four US Marine battalions immediately upon the termination of HASTINGS and will continue to sweep the northern areas of Quang Tri Province in conjunction with South Vietnamese Operation LAM SON 289, in search of elements of the North Vietnamese 324B Infantry Division.

4. Elements of the US 1st Infantry Division suspended Operation EL PASO III in Binh Duong Province on 1 August. No significant contact was made with enemy forces. These units have joined up with other 1st Infantry Division units participating in Operation CHEYENNE, a road security operation in an area approximately 30 miles north of Saigon in Binh Duong Province. One American has been killed and 10 wounded in this action to date.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The national election seminar for province chiefs and other officials ended yesterday in Saigon. Appropriate closing speeches by several ministers expressed the government's determination to demonstrate sincerity, honesty, and efficiency in conducting the elections. Premier Ky also stated again that he would return to full-time military duty when the civilian government is established sometime next year.

2.

[redacted] Premier Ky will make a "careful retreat" from his recent statements on the necessity of invading North Vietnam in a speech which he plans to make next week in Manila. Ky's decision to modify his remarks on this issue came after discussions with Vu Van Thai, Vietnamese ambassador to the United States. Ky recalled Thai to Saigon temporarily after Thai had made public statements contrary to the premier's earlier remarks. However, Thai apparently convinced Ky that Ky's remarks on invading the north had caused difficulty in Washington.

Early Removal of Deputy Premier General Co Reported Unlikely

3. Within the past few days, Premier Ky expressed the feeling that Deputy Premier and War Minister Co could not be dismissed at the present time because it would disturb the balance of military leadership [redacted]

[redacted] Ky reportedly made his remarks as government action was being taken to disapprove a moneymaking scheme allegedly involving General Co. General Co himself will soon begin a 17-day good-will tour through Africa and Europe.

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Monk Tri Quang Now Under Full Government Restrictions

4. The US Embassy has reported that militant Buddhist leader Tri Quang was prevented by police from leaving the Saigon clinic where he is residing in order to attend a meeting of the Buddhist Institute Council on 3 August. Controls on visitors to Tri Quang, already very strict, reportedly have now been tightened to the point where only medical personnel are allowed to see him.

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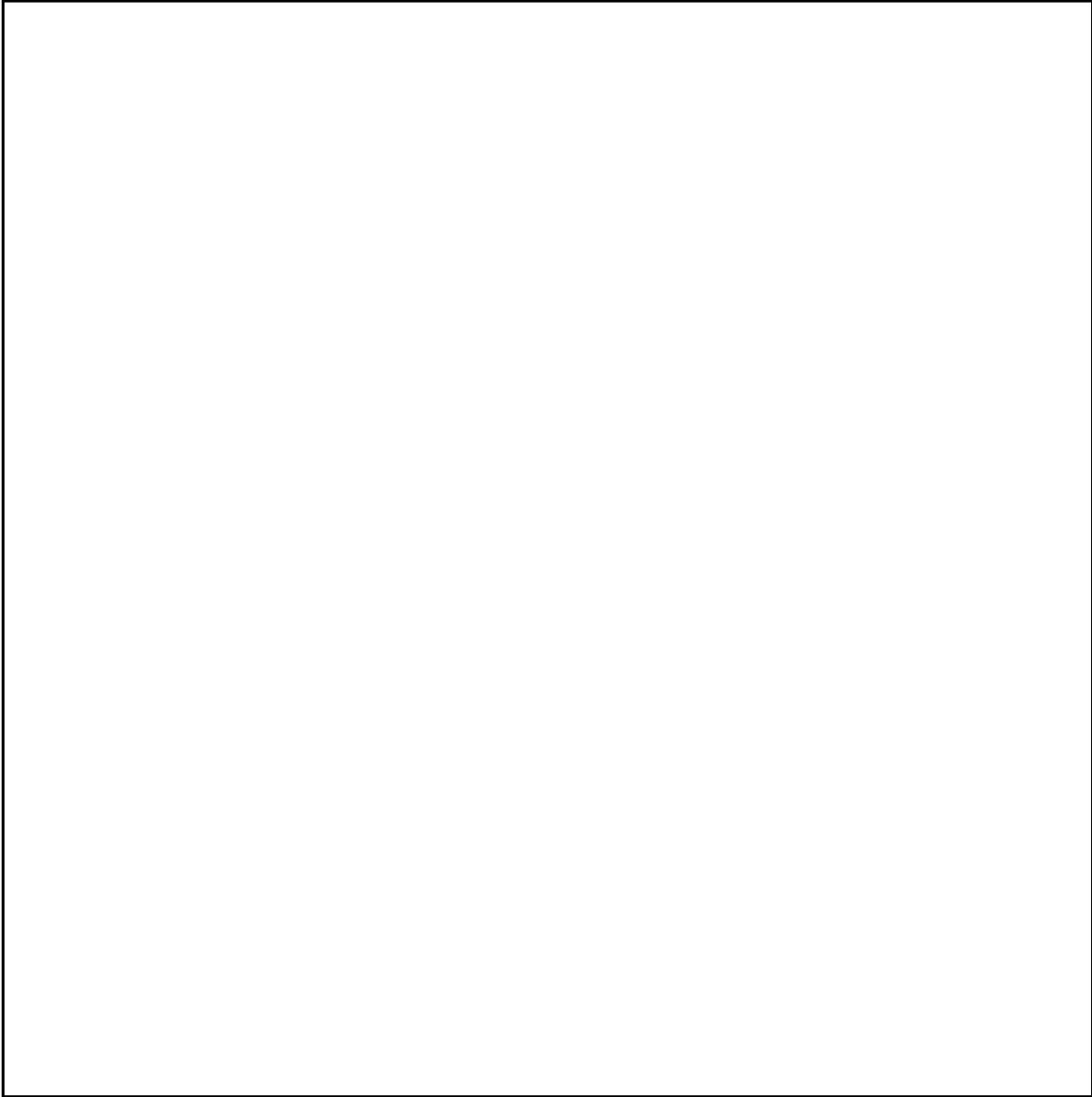
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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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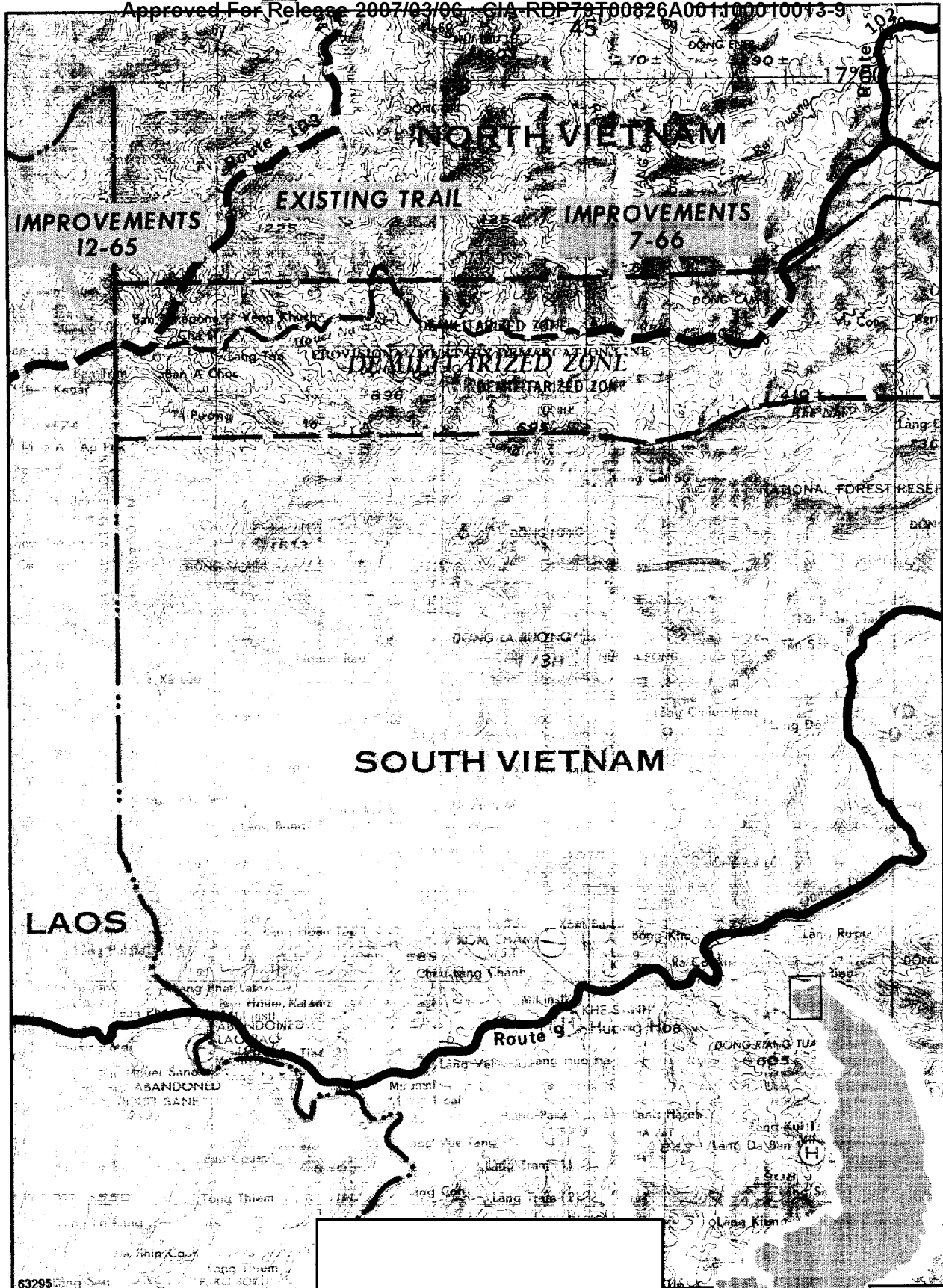


4. Moreover, recent photography has disclosed DRV attempts at road improvement in this area, consisting mainly of the widening, grading and

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Construction Activity in the DMZ

realignment of trails extending westward in the DMZ toward Laos. Available photography, however, has not yet disclosed any trail improvement or road construction southward across the DMZ. The activity is similar to that observed last December on a trail south of Route 103, with which this trail connects. When completed, the construction now under way will provide North Vietnam with an improved system of routes for the infiltration of personnel through the DMZ and Laos into South Vietnam.

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5. [] photography shows work under way on an existing trail running through the DMZ, north of the Demarcation Line, from the southern terminus of Route 102 westward to the Laotian border. Some sections now apparently are able to accommodate vehicular traffic. The general alignment of this trail is such that few bridges are required and it is possible that some fair-weather vehicular capability could be provided from the end of Route 102 up to the Laotian border if current activity is extended westward.

6. In contrast, the trail leading south from Route 103 has numerous bridges and stream crossings, and construction activity observed last December apparently resulted only in an improved foot trail.

7. The establishment of a VC/NVA base area in Quang Tri Province, with its nearby sanctuary and support area in the DRV--similar to the VC/NVA base area in the central highlands near Cambodia--could provide the flexibility the Communists need to be able to tie down large numbers of allied troops while leaving their own forces free to continue their harassing activities and attempts at attrition elsewhere in northern South Vietnam. The activity seen to date makes it appear likely that Hanoi will continue to commit its forces in this area in the coming months.

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8. Bomb damage assessment photography of the 2 August strike on the Haiphong POL facility indicates that the target is 88 percent destroyed. Two previous missions [redacted] had achieved an 80-percent level of destruction of North Vietnam's largest petroleum handling and storage site. Preliminary analysis of the poststrike photography indicates that two of the remaining storage tanks were destroyed and four others received varying degrees of damage. Numerous support and packing buildings were destroyed by fire.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Rumors continue to grow that North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap's influence is declining.

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Giap reportedly advocated a return to terrorism and guerrilla activity in South Vietnam and was turned down by the leadership.

[Redacted]

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2. Although speculation about Giap's eclipse is still in the rumor category, it has been fanned by Nguyen Chi Thanh's recent article on the war which implies that differences of opinion exist in the Hanoi high command over strategy and tactics to be followed in the South. Giap's disappearance from public view for about two months also provided some support for these rumors. Giap, however, was not the only official absent from the Hanoi scene. Almost the entire North Vietnamese politburo was conspicuously inactive throughout this period. Moreover, Giap appeared on 31 July to attend the Hanoi celebration of Chinese Army Day, in the role of spokesman for the North Vietnamese Army. On balance, although the number of rumors about Giap is on the increase, definitive evidence of a decline in his influence is still lacking.

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