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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
27 September 1966

State Department review
completed

NSA review completed

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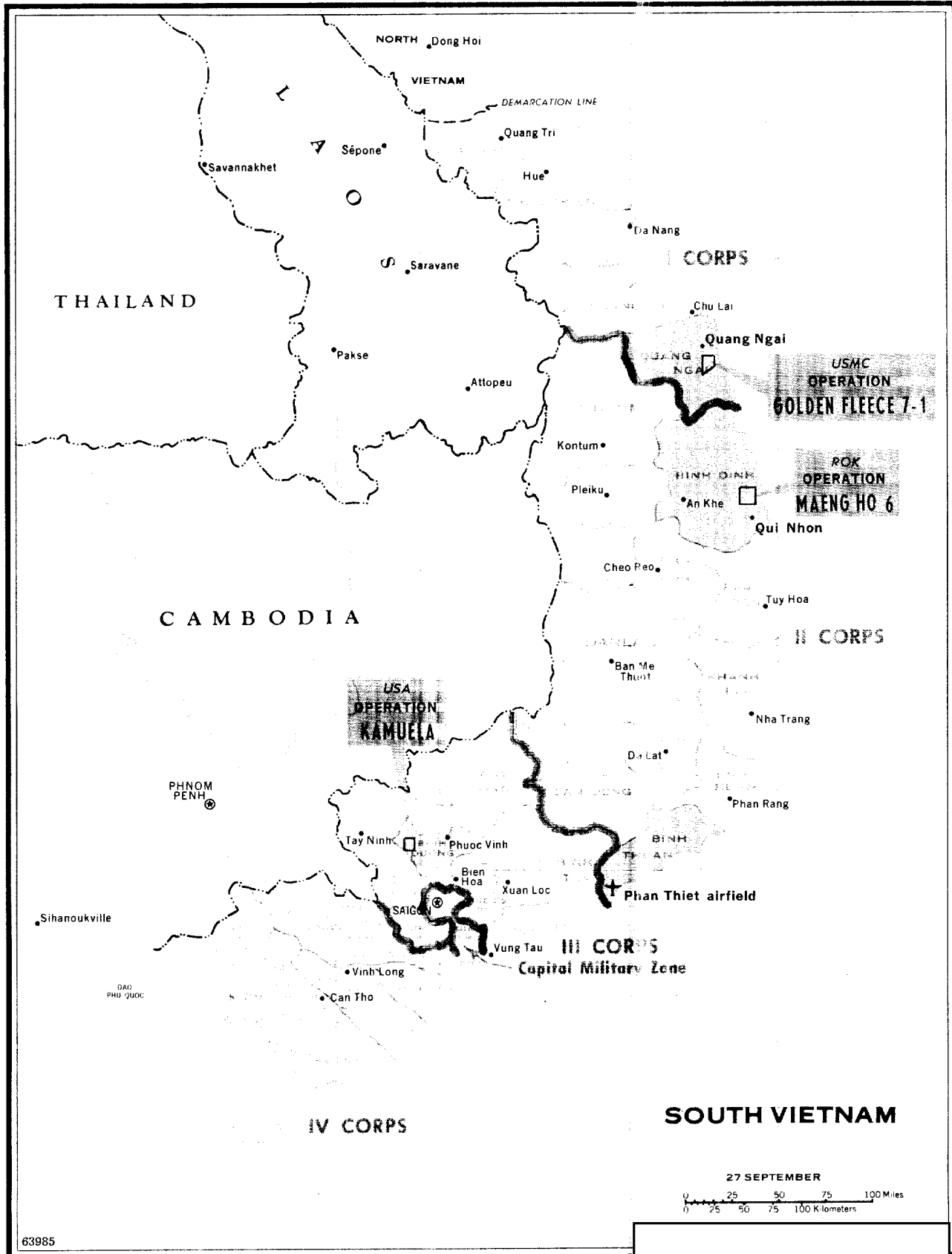
HIGHLIGHTS

The constituent assembly formally opened on 27 September and turned its attention to the selection of temporary assistant officers. Military activity remained light for the second day throughout South Vietnam.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Military activity throughout South Vietnam continued at a low level for the second consecutive day. US Marines report 27 Viet Cong killed as a result of artillery fire in Quang Ngai Province (Para. 1). South Korean forces report killing 92 Viet Cong as Operation MAENG HO 6 continues in the mountains north of Qui Nhon (Para. 2). Phan Thiet Airfield was attacked by Viet Cong using mortar and small-arms fire early on 27 September causing damage to five helicopters and wounding eight Americans (Para. 3). US soldiers located a Communist rice cache with an estimated 294 tons of rice in an area about 40 miles northwest of Saigon (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: There were no significant developments reported during the opening session of the constituent assembly, which apparently is considering the election of temporary assistant officers as its first order of business (Paras. 1-2). Thus far, there is still no consensus on permanent assembly officers, or on the question of an early discussion of Article 20, the government's controversial veto power (Paras. 3-4). Premier Ky will attend the seven nation conference on Vietnam sponsored by President Marcos in Manila next month (Para. 5). The Vatican on 27 September announced that a special mission will arrive in Saigon soon to study the problems of the Catholic church in Vietnam (Para. 6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US Marines dug in 11 miles south of the central coastal city of Quang Ngai participating in Operation GOLDEN FLEECE 7-1 spotted an estimated 300 Viet Cong in an open area and called for artillery fire. Sweeping the area later, the marines reported finding 27 enemy dead. Cumulative Communist losses since this operation began on 16 September now total 244 killed and three captured. American casualties are reported as one killed and 18 wounded.

2. The South Koreans, fighting in the Phu Cat mountains six to 15 miles north of the coastal city of Qui Nhon, have intensified their activities since the beginning of Operation MAENG HO 6 (Fierce Tiger) on 22 September. Units of the South Korean Capital Division reported killing 92 Viet Cong on 27 September. According to press reports 300 enemy have been killed in the five days of fighting in central, coastal Binh Dinh Province. The Koreans also reported capturing 102 prisoners, 71 weapons, and quantities of grenades, mortar shells, and ammunition.

3. Early on 27 September, the Phan Thiet Airfield located in coastal Binh Thuan Province about 93 miles east of Saigon was attacked by a Communist force of unknown size. Five mortar rounds and small-arms fire were directed at the American installation. Elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division reacted with airborne rocket artillery. Eight Americans were wounded and six helicopters were damaged. Communist casualties are unknown.

4. US soldiers participating in Operation KAMUELA in Binh Duong Province located a Viet Cong rice cache estimated to total 294 tons in an area about 40 miles northwest of Saigon. Plans are being made to evacuate the rice. This search-and-destroy operation which began on 19 September has made only light contact with Communist forces.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Following speeches the morning of 27 September by Chief of State Thieu, Premier Ky, and acting assembly president Nguyen Ba Luong which generally urged the drafting of a meaningful constitution, the constituent assembly settled down to consider its order of business. During a 30-minute exchange, some 10 or 12 delegates expressed varying views. Some wanted a discussion of the assembly's agenda; another wanted to draft a resolution of the assembly's "viewpoint," including a condemnation of the Communists. The US Embassy reported, however, that a consensus that temporary assistants to the acting president and secretary general first be elected was being formed and included among others Dr. Phan Quang Dan. In view of the lively debate developing during the public, and more or less ceremonial, initial session, acting president Luong recessed the assembly until mid-afternoon.

2. The afternoon session was closed to the public, and no details have yet been received. Presumably, the assembly considered the election of temporary assistant officers. The assembly is scheduled to meet again the morning of 28 September.

3. There have been no recent reports indicating any consensus among the delegates on permanent assembly officers, nor on the likelihood of an early discussion of Article 20, the government's veto power over the assembly's work whenever it lacks a two-thirds majority. The press, however, has been speculating to some extent on the possibility of the younger and relatively unknown members of the assembly rejecting the leadership of the older and more experienced politicians from the Saigon area. One "youth" candidate for president mentioned by press sources on 27 September is Tran Tan Viet, a 30-year-old lawyer from Thua Thien Province, who was described in earlier official reporting as the province's official VNQDD candidate. Although the possibility of younger candidates opposing the leadership of the older politicians cannot be ruled out, official reporting from the field thus far has reflected no particular concern over this probability.

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4. The prospects for an early assembly discussion of Article 20 also remain somewhat obscure. Among well known Saigon politicians, Dang Van Sung and La Thanh Nghe are working to head off any such discussion, while Tran Van Van apparently still favors it. In addition to some southern delegates close to Van, there are indications that Article 20 is strongly opposed by representatives from central Vietnam, some of whom made campaign promises to abrogate it.

Premier Ky to Attend Manila Conference

5. According to press reports, Premier Ky announced on 27 September that he will attend the conference of nations contributing to the allied military effort in South Vietnam which has been called by President Marcos in Manila on 18 October.

Vatican Mission to Arrive in South Vietnam Soon

6. The Vatican has announced that a special mission headed by Sergio Pignedoli, the apostolic delegate to Canada, would leave for Saigon on 27 September to study the problems of the Catholic Church in Vietnam. There was no disclosure of what specific moves the mission might undertake, but Vatican sources reportedly described the trip as of "major importance." The Pope received Archbishop Pignedoli in audience on the morning of 27 September.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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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

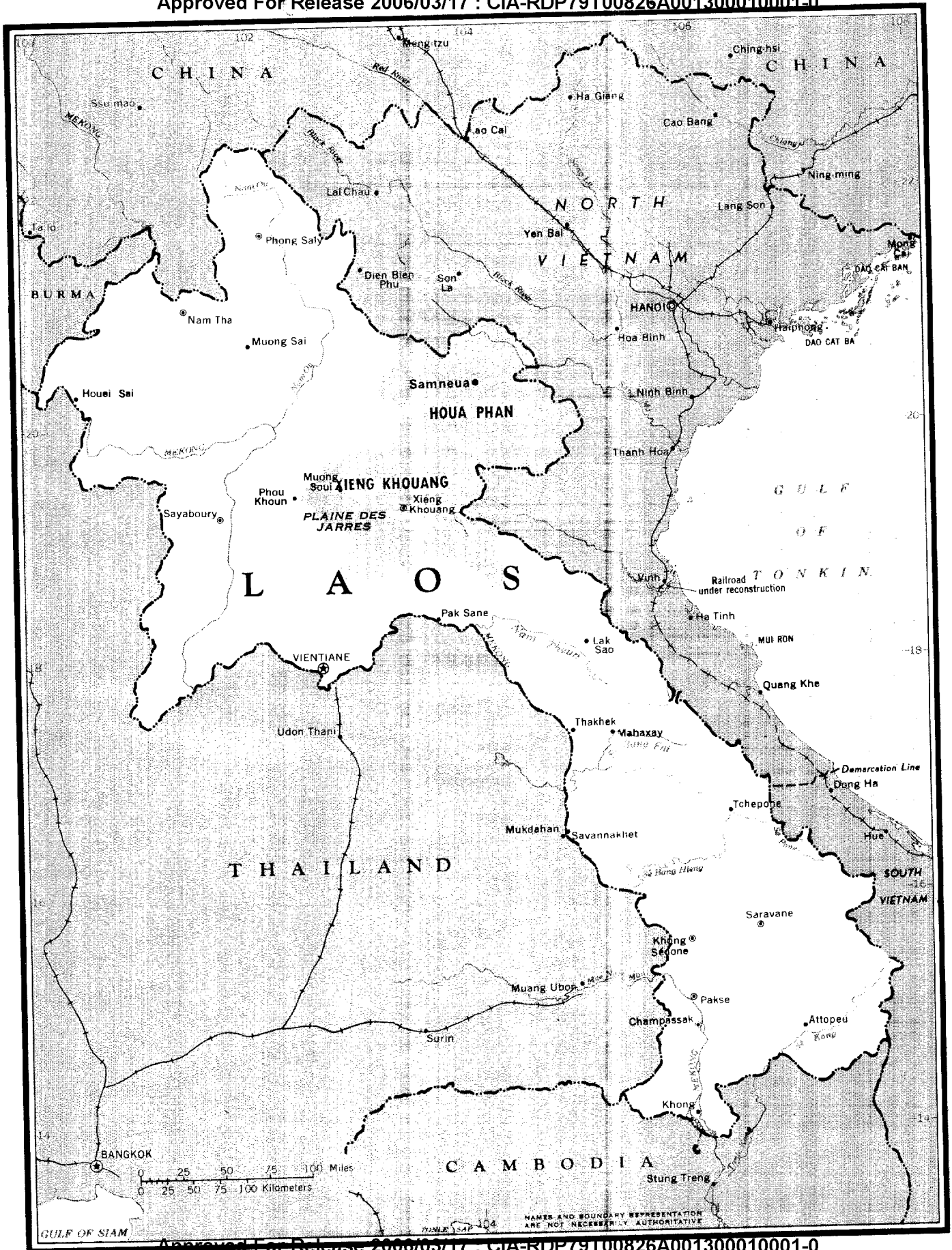
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1.

[redacted] some North Vietnamese troops in Houa Phan and Xieng Khouang provinces withdrew during the summer rainy season to North Vietnam. [redacted]

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[redacted] the North Vietnamese had cited heavy casualties, privation, and periodic troop rotation as reasons for their return.

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2.

[redacted] Some DRV troop movement may therefore be taking place. In the past, rainy season conditions have produced some North Vietnamese troop reduction in Laos. As in recent years, the onset of dry weather in October may result in an increase in the numbers of DRV troops there.

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[redacted] fresh DRV troops may have already arrived east of Sam Neua. There are no indications, however, that the Communists contemplate a substantially higher level of military action in the northern provinces than in the past several years.

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