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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
28 September 1966

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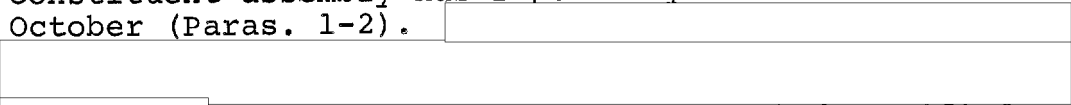
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HIGHLIGHTS

The chairman of the Liberation Front has recently spelled out in clearer and more precise language the NFLSV terms for negotiations. These terms, contained in a three-point formula, embody all the essential elements of the Front's original position set forth in March of last year, but bring the Front's program closer to the language of the North Vietnamese position on negotiations.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Light contact was reported yesterday between US Marines and Communist forces as Operation PRAIRIE continues in Quang Tri Province near the DMZ (Para. 1). South Korean forces killed 47 Communist troops yesterday in a three-hour engagement in Binh Dinh Province (Para. 2). US soldiers sweeping northern Binh Dinh Province reported light contact yesterday with Communist forces (Para. 3). Nearly 8,000 tons of rice were harvested in Quang Ngai Province during the period Operation GOLDEN FLEECE 7-1 was in progress (Para. 4). A total of 229 Communist soldiers were killed during one-week Operation BINH PHU 27 which ended yesterday (Para. 5). A large Viet Cong arms and ammunition cache was uncovered by South Vietnamese troops 30 miles south of Saigon early today (Para. 6). MACV's latest infiltration figures are given (Paras. 7-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The constituent assembly has reportedly recessed until 1 October (Paras. 1-2).

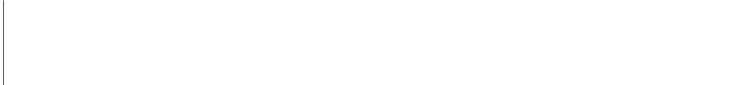


An extraordinary congress of the Unified Buddhist Association is scheduled to start on 21 October (Para. 4).

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

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

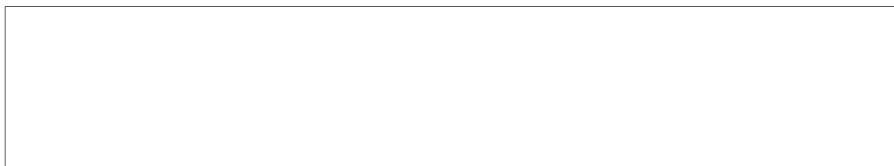




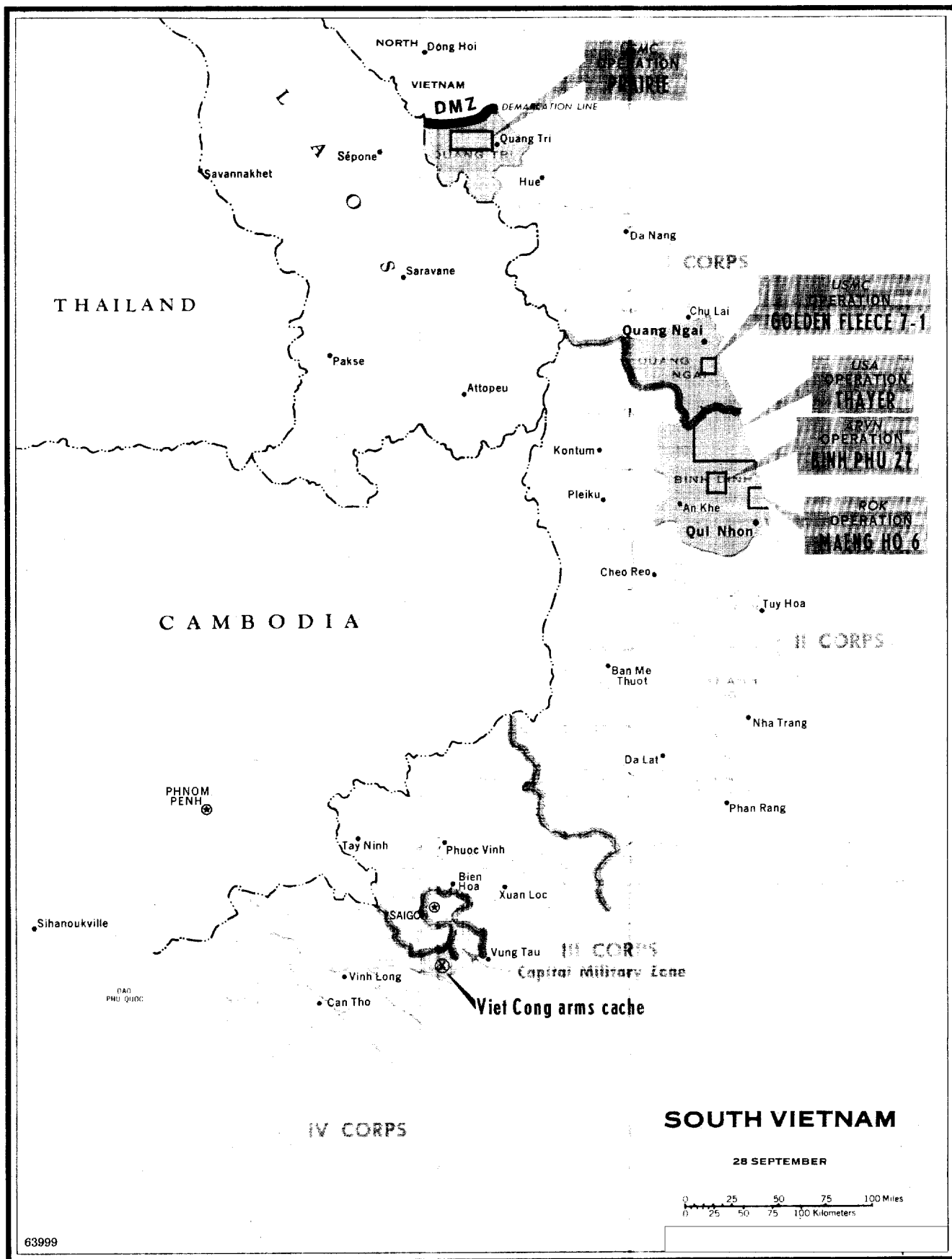
V. Communist Political Developments: The Vietnamese Communists are continuing their propaganda attack on Ambassador Goldberg's 22 September speech at the UN (Paras. 1-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Operation PRAIRIE--a four-battalion US Marine search-and-destroy operation--continues in northernmost Quang Tri Province. Light contact was reported yesterday between one of the US Marine battalions and an estimated company-size Communist force in a mountainous area just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). During the daylong engagement, four Americans were reported killed and 14 wounded. Confirmed enemy losses totaled seven killed.

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2. South Korean (ROK) forces continue to report success in locating and destroying troops of the Communist 610th Division in the Phu Cat mountains several miles north of Qui Nhon in coastal Binh Dinh Province. Yesterday, two ROK companies engaged an estimated Viet Cong platoon for over three hours during Operation MAENG HO 6 (Fierce Tiger). A total of 47 enemy troops were killed and 40 weapons captured in yesterday's action; three ROK soldiers were also killed.

3. Elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division participating in the seven-battalion search-and-destroy Operation THAYER, which is sweeping the northern part of Binh Dinh Province, reported light contact with an estimated Viet Cong platoon yesterday in an area about 38 miles northwest of Qui Nhon. Friendly losses during the ensuing two-hour battle totaled one killed and six wounded; five Viet Cong were killed and four captured. Over 150 Communist troops have been killed since this operation began on 12 September.

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4. Operation GOLDEN FLEECE 7-1, a one-battalion US Marine search-and-destroy/rice harvest protection operation in Quang Ngai Province, ended yesterday. Some 8,000 tons of rice were harvested during the 11 days this operation was in progress south of Quang Ngai city. Final casualty reports show one American killed and 19 wounded while Communist losses include 244 killed and three captured.

5. South Vietnamese Operation BINH PHU 27 ended yesterday in central Binh Dinh Province. This one-week operation was conducted by units of the 22nd ARVN Division who were attacked by a two-battalion Viet Cong force on 23 September. Six South Vietnamese were reported killed and 30 wounded in the action. Final casualty figures show eight South Vietnamese were killed and 38 wounded as against enemy losses of 229 killed, seven captured, and 51 weapons taken.

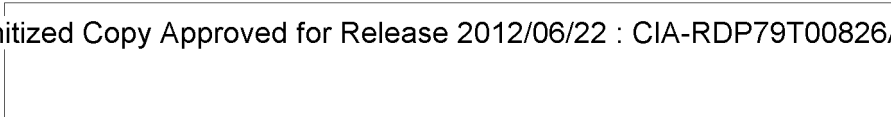
Large VC Arms Cache Uncovered

6. South Vietnamese troops on a search-and-destroy mission in Go Cong Province, in the Mekong Delta about 30 miles south of Saigon, uncovered a large Viet Cong ammunition cache today. The cache was in an unguarded cave and was seized without a fight. It contained 400 rounds of 81-mm. mortar ammunition, 200 rounds of 75-mm. recoilless rifle ammunition, 7,000 grenades, 4,000 antitank mines, and 70,000 rounds of small arms ammunition.


Infiltration Figures

7. MACV's latest figures on infiltration for the first eight months of 1966 now stand at 46,462 men; an average monthly infiltration of some 5,800 men. Of this total, some 22,000 infiltrators have been confirmed while the remainder are carried in the probable or possible categories. This figure, compared with the yearly total of some 26,000 for all of 1965, gives an idea of the magnitude of the Communist effort this year in the face of heavy US air strikes and attempts at interdiction of the infiltration routes.

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8. Numerous reports from captured prisoners, documents  indicate that large-scale infiltration continues in a number of areas in South Vietnam. Moreover, the time lag that has been inherent in infiltration estimates in the past suggests that the current figure is likely to grow significantly in the coming months as better information is developed and new enemy units are contacted.

9. The most significant area of infiltration at the present time appears to be in Quang Tri Province in northernmost South Vietnam. US forces have been relatively successful in recent months in disrupting Communist plans for an offensive in this area, through multibattalion search-and-destroy operations. Nevertheless, heavy infiltration into this area is believed to be continuing and may now comprise several divisions of the North Vietnamese Army.

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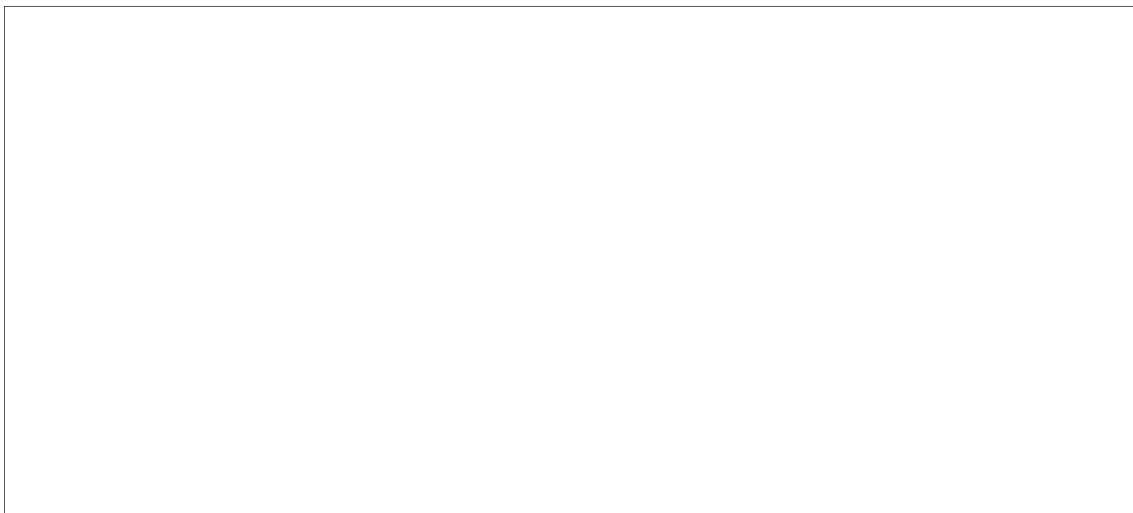


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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM


1. The new constituent assembly has recessed in honor of Confucius until Saturday, 1 October, according to a press report. In the meantime, informal sessions are reportedly being held by various groups of delegates in anticipation of several issues which will soon be raised in the assembly. According to the US Embassy, however, one of the most important issues--the election of assembly officers--is not expected to be brought up until the week of 10 October.

2. One task facing the assembly prior to the election is the examination and approval of delegate credentials. The assembly cannot officially begin its work until two thirds of the deputies have been officially approved. Two delegates have already been convicted in the courts of election irregularities, and the embassy feels that several more will at least be challenged. Convicted delegates are not valid members unless they win an appeal in the courts.



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Buddhist Extraordinary Congress

4. A national extraordinary congress of the Unified Buddhist Association is scheduled to begin on 21 October,  The Buddhist Institute chairman, Thich Tam Chau, is trying to drum up support for his moderate views on relations with the government and for his position as chairman. He has been under unrelenting pressure lately from the more extremist bonzes to step down as the formal leader of the Institute.

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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

1. The Vietnamese Communists are continuing their propaganda attack on Ambassador Goldberg's 22 September speech at the UN on Vietnam. In two commentaries broadcast on 27 September the Liberation Front harshly criticized the statement as a "peace fraud" and discounted claims that the speech represented any new factors in the US position on a negotiated settlement of the war. Characterizing the statement as "the stupid and irresponsible words of obstinate bandits" the Front went on to score some of Ambassador Goldberg's specific proposals.

2. On the question of a mutual withdrawal of "foreign forces," the Front pointed out that the US, as the aggressor in Vietnam, had no right to exact any condition from those being attacked. Rather, the commentaries demanded that the US must withdraw its troops from the South "unconditionally," claiming that this was "common sense" and left "no room for further discussion."

3. Dealing with the assertion that the role of the Liberation Front in a settlement would not present an "insurmountable" problem for the US, the commentaries insisted that since the Front was the "sole legitimate and legal representative of the South Vietnamese people" any proposal which did not provide it with a decisive voice in a political settlement of the war was out of the question. This view was strongly supported in a Hanoi commentary--also broadcast on the 27th--which claimed that the UN speech represented an effort to downgrade the position of the Front from a decisive role to a secondary role in the settlement of the Vietnam problem.

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4. Both NFLSV commentaries also called for US recognition of the Front's terms for negotiations as expressed in the five-point statement made on 22 March of last year. These terms were spelled out in clearer and more precise language by Front chairman Nguyen Huu Tho in a late August interview with leftish Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett. The Tho interview--released only recently--contained all the essential elements of the Front's original position in a three-point formula which brought the Front's program closer to the language of the North Vietnamese position on a negotiated settlement of the war.

5. Tho's formula, for example, did not specifically make US withdrawal a precondition for negotiations, and was thus more in line with Hanoi's position on this point. The original five-point proposal of the Front had specified the necessity of a US withdrawal prior to talks; since that time, however, Front spokesmen have occasionally taken Tho's position on this question.

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