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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

State Department review completed

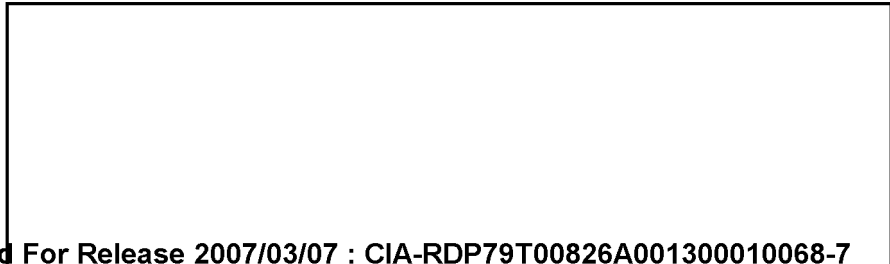
NSA review completed

Information as of 1600
23 October 1966

ARMY review(s) completed.

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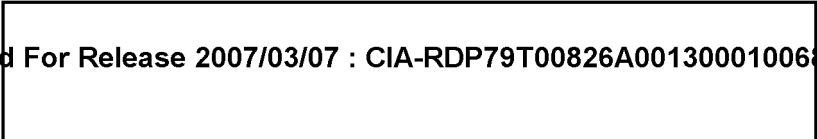
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HIGHLIGHTS




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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Little significant activity was reported over the weekend except in an ARVN operation in Quang Nam Province (Paras. 1-2). Radio stations serving several North Vietnamese Army elements have converged in an area in and south of the DMZ just to the west of National Route 1 (Paras. 3-4). MACV has revised its criteria for infiltration into two categories--accepted and possible (Paras. 5-6). NVA and VC Strength in South Vietnam has been revised downward by some 5,400 (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

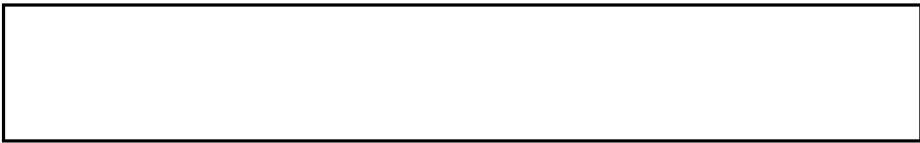


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 The special congress of the Buddhists has reportedly collapsed (Paras. 6-7). Constituent Assembly delegates are ready to elect their permanent officers this week (Paras. 8-9).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
NSA has tentatively identified a communications group in Military Region III as a division-level entity (Paras. 1-2). Daily North Vietnamese fighter activity is continuing (Paras. 3-4).

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

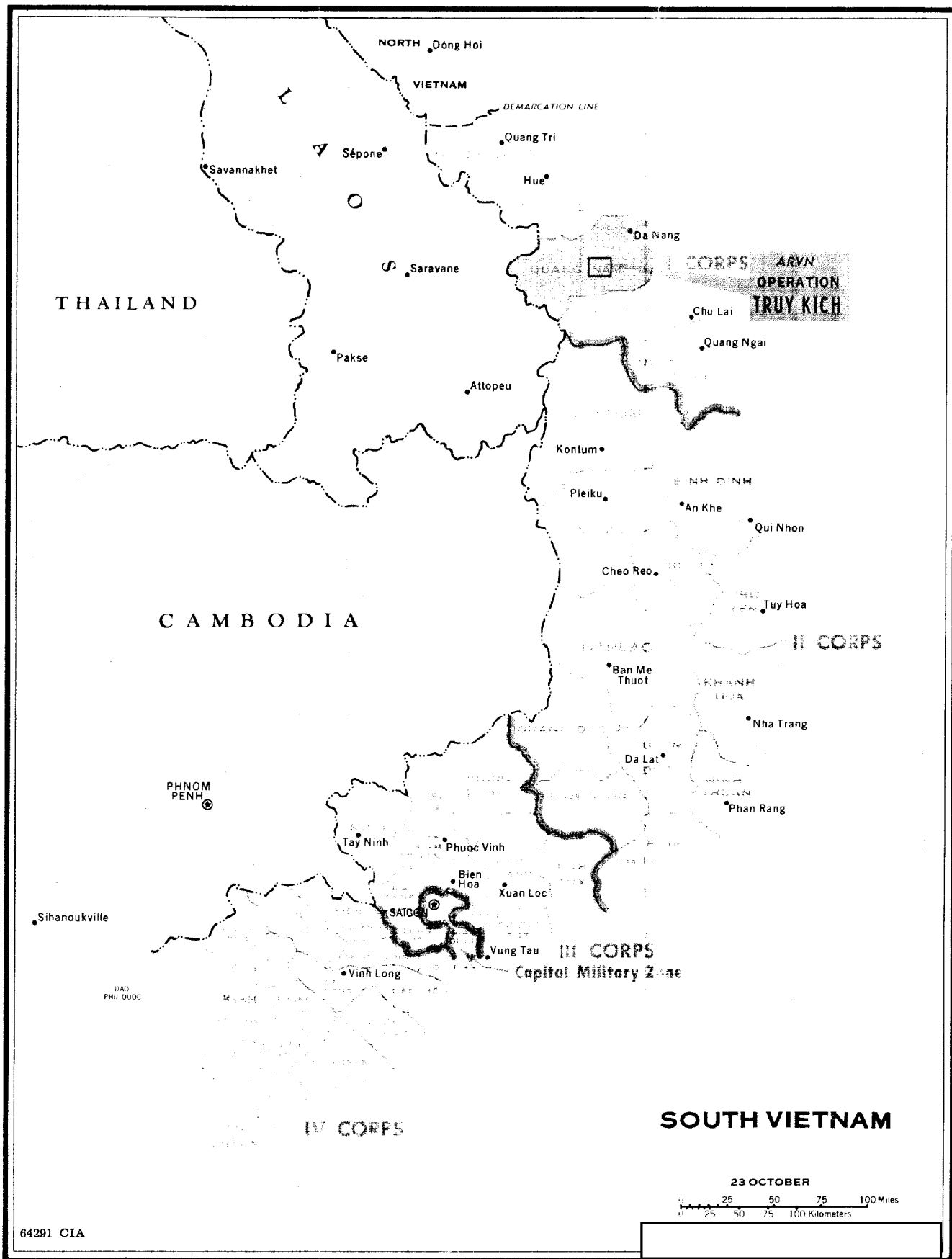


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V. Communist Political Developments: The communique announcing the conclusion of the Communist summit gathering in Moscow was unsigned, and mentioned Vietnam only obliquely (Paras. 1-2). The North Vietnamese continue to disparage the Manila conference (Para. 5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. There was little significant action reported over the weekend in the 30 operations of battalion size or larger which were in progress. US forces were conducting 11 of the operations and were part of a combined force in another. The sharp upsurge in Viet Cong terrorist activity continued, however, throughout the country. For example, during the 24-hour period which ended at noon on 21 October there had been 20 VC attacks and acts of terrorism which resulted in friendly losses of 79 killed, 75 wounded, and 37 missing. The Viet Cong lost 22 killed in these attacks.

2. A South Vietnamese Army operation which began on 17 October in Quang Nam Province, some 25 miles southwest of Da Nang, has reportedly killed 235 Viet Cong and captured some 50 weapons. Friendly casualties in this operation--named TRUY KICH--were 30 killed, 110 wounded, and 40 missing.

North Vietnamese Concentration in the DMZ

3. Intercepted communications of 20 October suggest that the radio stations serving several North Vietnamese Army elements, which have been located in and near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) for the past several weeks, have converged on a small area in and south of the DMZ just to the west of National Route 1. The radio stations involved include two subordinates of the 324th Division--one regimental-sized element and a military intelligence element--as well as an unidentified subordinate of the DMZ "Front" headquarters, which controls the 324th and 341st Divisions in this area. In addition, the radio station serving the headquarters element of the 341st Division and a probable regimental subordinate of the DRV's Military Region IV headquarters have moved into this general area.

4. [redacted] communications of the last several days have not discussed any activities which

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appear to be out of the ordinary for these elements, the redistribution does suggest that some tactical activity may be in preparation. Aside from elements of the 324th Division thought to be in this area, recently captured documents associated with two regiments of the 341st Division suggest that sizable forces of this division may also be in Quang Tri Province.

MACV Revises Infiltration Criteria

5. MACV has revised its criteria for infiltration into two categories--accepted and possible. The accepted category is further broken down into "accepted confirmed" and "accepted probable." An "accepted confirmed" unit is defined as one which is determined to exist on the basis of information provided by a minimum of two captives, returnees or captured documents (any combination). An "accepted probable" unit is defined as one which is believed to exist on the basis of information which can be evaluated as probably true provided by one captive, returnee or captured document. A "possible" infiltration unit is one which is believed to exist on the basis of information which can be evaluated as possibly true, even though no captive, returnee, or document is available to verify the report or reports.

6. Infiltration figures have not changed as a result of the revision of criteria except for the monthly average. For example, MACV now lists 47,967 infiltrators in the accepted category for the first nine months of 1966. There are a total of 20,525 infiltrators now listed in the possible category (for the first ten months of 1966). Total infiltration thus far in 1966, therefore, now totals 68,492. The average for the first nine months of 1966 is roughly 7,400 men per month. This figure is considerably above that of 4,500 to 6,000 per month which has been featured prominently in the press; it does not, however, reflect any significant increase in

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infiltration. Rather, the monthly average now reflects the inclusion of the possible category where previously it did not.

NVA and VC Strength in South Vietnam Revised Downward

7. MACV has revised the strength estimates on a number of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units based on the latest information from prisoners, returnees, and documents as well as casualty counts. As a result, over-all Communist main force strength now stands at 108,585--a drop of some 5,400. Total North Vietnamese strength in South Vietnam now stands at 45,630--a drop of 3,270. Total Viet Cong strength has dropped slightly over 2,000 from 65,114 to 62,955 men.

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Buddhists Special Congress

6. After a series of disorderly sessions held on 21 and 22 October, the Unified Buddhist Association dissolved their extraordinary congress without even agreeing on an agenda. It is not known whether the subsequent meetings will

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be held this week, but it appears doubtful. The sessions were marked by lively arguments and disruptive political tactics; at one point shots were fired into the air by plainclothes security police in an attempt to quell the disturbance.

7. The disruptive tactics, which included demonstrators with placards denouncing the congress, appear to have been part of a deliberate plan by moderate Institute chairman Thich Tam Chau and his followers to keep the militants from choosing another chairman and packing a new Institute council with their own monks. The former council, of which Tam Chau was chairman, resigned on 13 October, leaving the Buddhist hierarchy theoretically leaderless. The militant-moderate schism has apparently suffered another blow and, according to the embassy, it is likely that Tam Chau will leave the Unified Buddhist Association, taking the northern Buddhists, the Cambodian Theravada Buddhists, and the remaining moderates with him.

Constituent Assembly

8. The last hurdle blocking the way to final approval of the assembly's procedural rules was cleared on 21 October. Discussion of the previously passed controversial article two was reopened and debated at some length. Several amended versions were brought to a vote before the deputies finally approved a mild one stating that the "chief responsibility of the constituent assembly is to draft and approve a constitution." A broader version stating that the constituent assembly would have other responsibilities according to the demands of the situation was offered by Tran Van Van, but it was voted down. Van has been one of the behind-the-scenes agitators for more southern influence in the current cabinet dispute.

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9. The election of officers to some 20 permanent positions in the assembly should be accomplished this week. The front-runners for the top positions, primarily those of chairman and secretary general, are still Phan Khac Suu, Tran Van Van, Phan Quang Dan, and La Thanh Nghe. According to an embassy appraisal, the officers will be selected one at a time, rather than in blocs or slates, thus minimizing the tendency toward regional or religious affiliations.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. A communications group which first appeared in late 1965 in Military Region III of North Vietnam has been tentatively identified by NSA as serving an unidentified division-level entity. The headquarters of this unit, located in the Ninh Binh area, communicates with five subordinate terminals.

2. It is not known whether this unidentified division is a new unit or is one that has deployed to MR III from elsewhere in North Vietnam. The SIGINT order of battle tentatively identifies two other divisions in Military Region III--the 304th and 330th.

North Vietnamese Air Activity

3. During the period 12-19 October there were no reactions by North Vietnamese fighters to US strike activity, primarily because adverse weather restricted US sorties. Nevertheless, Phuc Yen - based fighters were active every day flying approximately 75 sorties out of a total of some 156 pre-flighted. Vietnamese pilots engaged in one practice ground-controlled intercept (GCI) exercise as well as ground gunnery and weather reconnaissance flights. About a third of the 75 sorties flown were in MIG-21 aircraft while all sorties were confined to the normal areas used by Phuc Yen fighters.

4. Soviet participation in North Vietnamese air activity continues to be noted. Three Soviet pilots on 21 October flew a probable radar calibration mission under the control of a Russian ground controller.

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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 communiqué announcing the conclusion of the Communist summit gathering in Moscow, which ended on 21 October, was "remarkable for its total lack of clues as to reasons for the meetings and the subjects discussed," according to the US Embassy in Moscow.

2. The communiqué, which mentioned Vietnam only obliquely, was unsigned and apparently drafted to avoid comment on agreement or identity of views. The embassy speculated that the absence of a joint statement probably reflected an advance agreement not to make one--"an agreement which may have been a condition for acceptance in the first place by some participants (e.g., the Rumanians.)"

Peking Reiterates Its Standard Position on Vietnam

3. In a People's Daily Observer article on 23 October, Peking once again accused the Soviet Union of collaborating with the US to "sell out" the Vietnamese and reiterated China's opposition to any compromise settlement of the war. Asserting that the "secret meeting" at the White House between Foreign Minister Gromyko and President Johnson on 10 October was further proof of Soviet perfidy, the article alleged that the USSR was calling for "peace talks" through a "pause in bombing" to allow the US to remain in Vietnam and to "strangle the Vietnamese revolution." The article repeated Peking's insistence that a settlement of the war would have to be in accordance with the DRV four-point stand and the Liberation Front five-part statement. However, it went on to add in familiar language that the Vietnamese people would have to bear primary responsibility for conducting the war.

4. Despite Peking's vituperation against Moscow, it is continuing to allow at least some Soviet goods to reach Vietnam by rail through China.

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Hanoi Comments on the Manila Conference

5. The North Vietnamese are continuing to disparage the Manila Conference. President Ho Chi Minh, speaking at the North Vietnam Congress of People's Security Forces on 22 October, suggested the gathering was a "plot to enlarge the war." On the other hand, the Hanoi daily Nhan Dan commented on the 23rd that one of President Johnson's objectives at Manila was "to campaign for the Democratic Party in the November elections...by clamoring again for peace."

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