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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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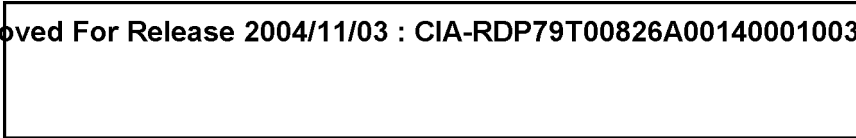
9 November 1966

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Information as of 1600
9 November 1966



HIGHLIGHTS

The Constituent Assembly voted today to demand that the government amend the law on constitutional development, particularly that part which gives the government the power of veto over the assembly's actions.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

A large Communist tunnel complex was located today north of Tay Ninh city as US forces continued to sweep the area near War Zone "C." Only light contact was reported with enemy forces (Paras. 1-4). South Vietnamese Operation LIEN KET 68 ended today in Quang Nam Province (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The Constituent Assembly today decided to seek amendment of the government's Decree Law 21 and to impose a one-month time limit on achieving an acceptable change (Paras. 1-2).

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Moderate Institute chairman Tam Chau has recently been attempting to solidify his position (Paras. 6-7). The influx of refugees into friendly areas continues to constitute a major problem for the government (Paras. 8-12).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:

There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:

Another report that the Chinese are interfering with the transport of Soviet aid to North Vietnam has been received (Paras. 1-2).

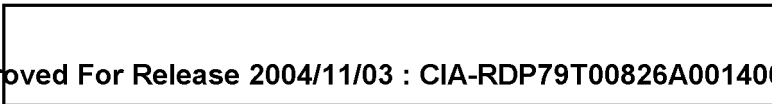
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V. Communist Political Developments:

morale is still high, that evacuation has slowed down, and that air raid warnings are less frequent (Paras. 1-4). Vietnamese Communist representatives in Moscow reportedly have restated their independence from both Moscow and Peking (Paras. 5-6).

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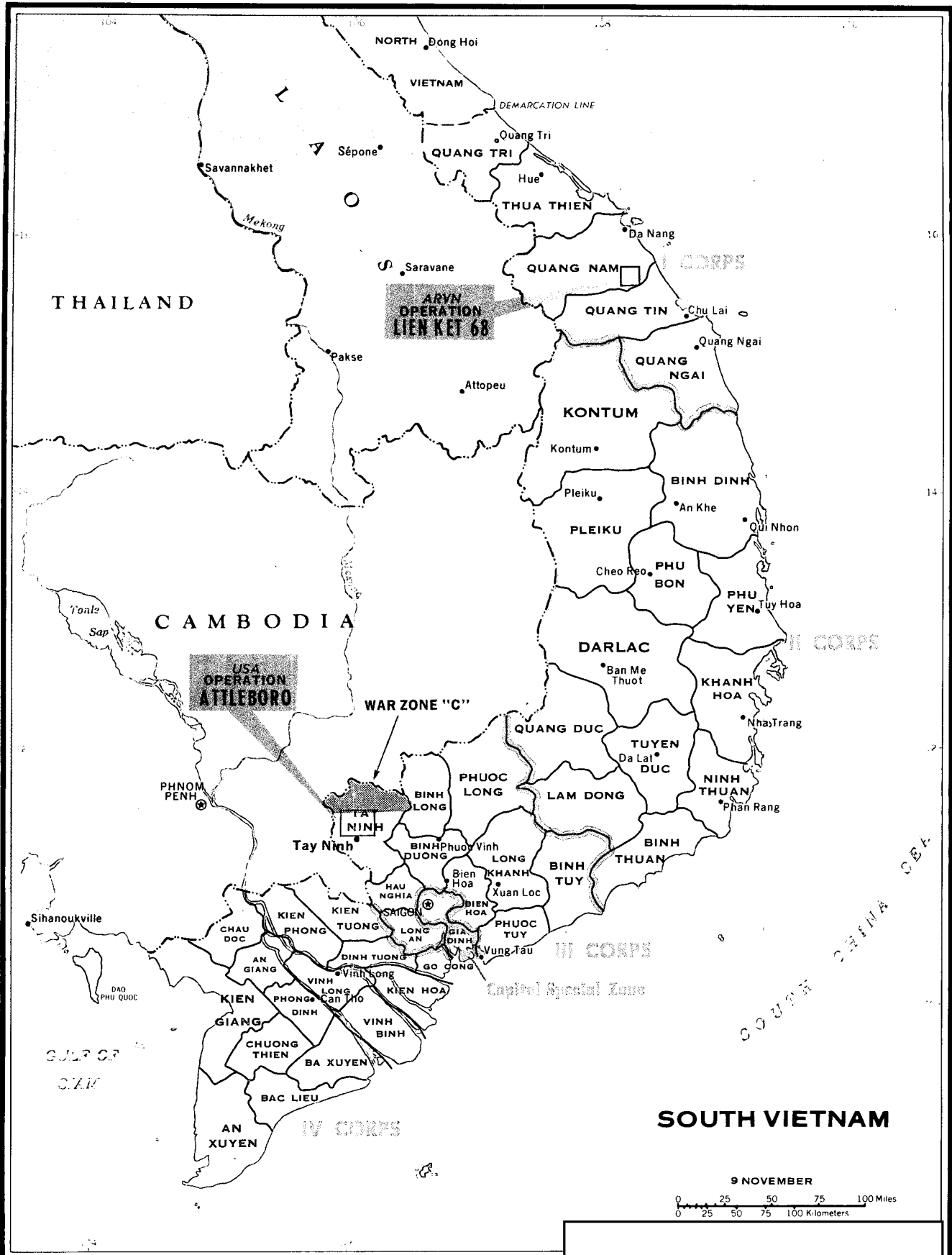
VI. Other Major Aspects: Poor weather and other factors have hampered the flow of North Vietnamese trucks in the southern DRV and Laos since mid-October (Paras. 1-4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Only light, sporadic ground fighting was reported in Tay Ninh Province today where 14 US battalions continued Operation ATTLEBORO's sweep of the area near the Viet Cong stronghold known as War Zone "C." About ten miles north of Tay Ninh city, US forces located a Communist tunnel complex containing nearly 100 bodies. The complex also contained a regimental command post and a mine factory containing 450 claymore mines.

2. There has been a significant increase in the number of Communist casualties reported as US troops continue to search the battle area following the heavy action of 4-6 November. Cumulative enemy losses now show 853 killed and nine captured as compared with American losses of 85 killed and 340 wounded.

3. US officials in South Vietnam have speculated that this six-day battle in Tay Ninh Province may have halted part of a planned Viet Cong winter offensive, according to press reports. A captured document reportedly indicated that a buildup of men and supplies in the province by the Viet Cong was part of an offensive planned for the "cool" season, which begins about mid-November.

4. Nearly 7,000 Communist troops are still believed to be active in Tay Ninh Province. The Viet Cong 9th Light Infantry Division is known to have been operating in and near War Zone "C" recently. There have also been many reports during the past week of the movement of men and supplies on the various highways and supply routes that crisscross the province.

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5. South Vietnamese Operation LIEN KET 68 ended yesterday in Quang Nam Province. This five-battalion operation began on 5 November and resulted in 125 Communist troops killed. Friendly casualties were 70 killed and 92 wounded, including one American.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly today voted--unanimously--to seek amendment of the government's Decree Law 21, which prescribes constitutional development, and--by a majority--to impose a one-month time limit on achieving a satisfactory change. The assembly plans to discuss a course of action during its 10 November session, and it now appears likely that a small delegation will be appointed to meet with government leaders while the assembly begins work on the constitution.

2. Regarding the decree law, the US Embassy has commented that the assembly is unlikely to be happy with anything less than at least partial modification of Article 20, the government's veto, and Article 21, which limits the assembly to drafting a constitution. Government leaders, on the other hand, oppose any significant change in the decree law, especially the veto provision. There may be some flexibility in the assembly's position, since the embassy also reports that a majority of the delegates still appear to recognize the need to avoid a head-on clash with the government.

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Buddhist Developments

6. There have been no recent reports on the prospects for another special Buddhist congress to resolve the split in the leadership of the Buddhist Institute. Two separate Institute chairmen, moderate Tam Chau and militant Thien Hoa, continue to function independently of one another. Tam Chau has recently taken steps to consolidate his position by naming four new commissioners and by appointing a delegation to accompany him to the eighth World Buddhist Fellowship convention in Bangkok from 6-11 November. Prior to his departure, Chau accompanied a visiting Japanese Buddhist leader in a call upon Premier Ky, and issued a press statement praising Ky as a supporter of the Buddhist faith in Vietnam.

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The Refugee Situation

8. The government of South Vietnam continues to be plagued by the influx of refugees into areas under its control. The refugee flow, which has been swelling since July 1964, has created serious financial, social, and security problems for the GVN, many of which have so far defied adequate solution. Combat operations in populated areas, a desire by the people to flee from Communist-controlled territory, and natural disasters are among the factors causing this influx.





9. As of 31 August, a total of 1,361,288 persons, as compared with 784,351 on 31 January 1966 had been processed as refugees by the GVN. Of this number, 592,660 still remain in temporary shelters, an increase of 50,138 since 31 January 1966. Persons in temporary shelters are essentially wards of the government, supported by a daily monetary dole plus some additional gifts of food and clothing from various public and private agencies.

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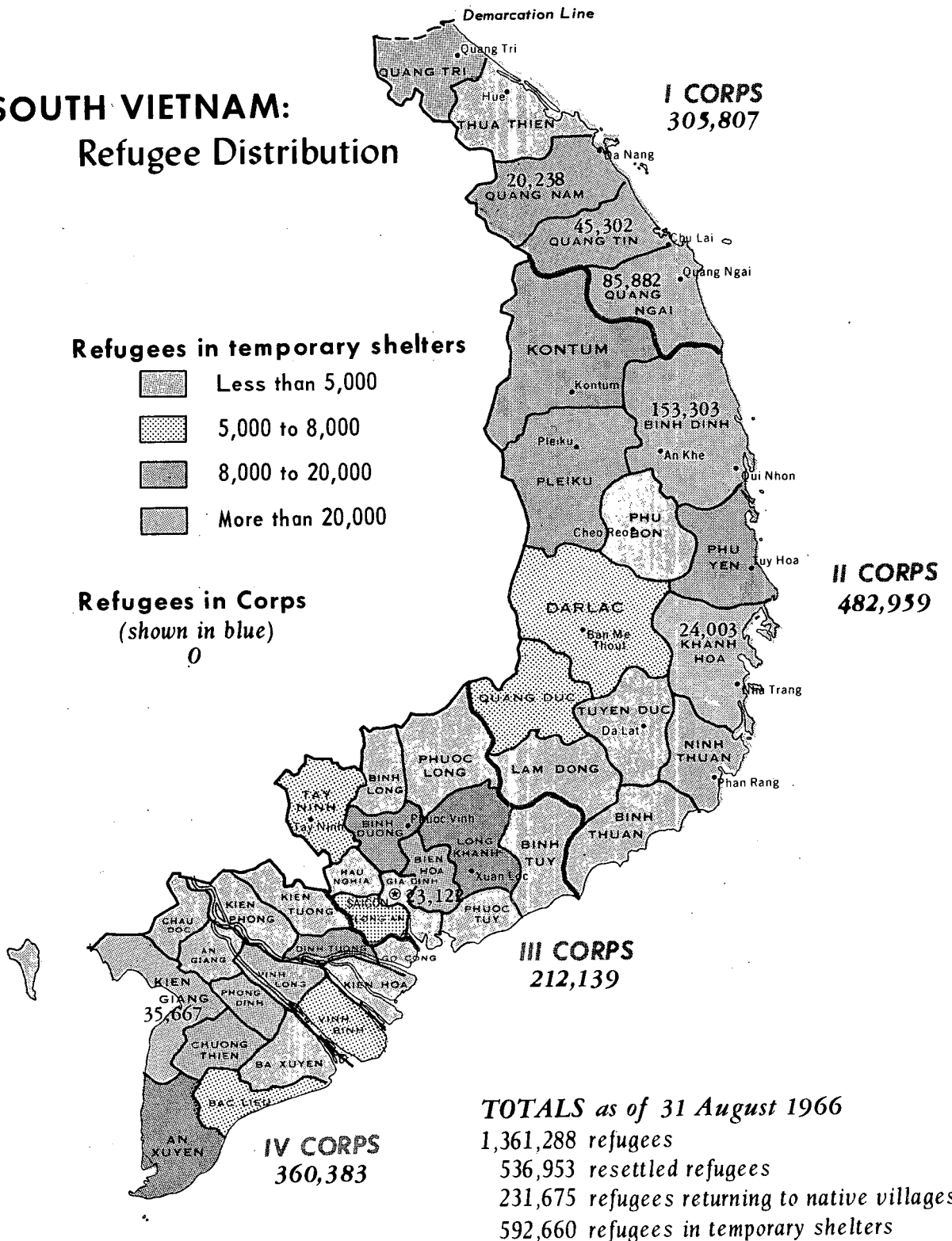
SOUTH VIETNAM: Refugee Distribution

Refugees in temporary shelters

-  Less than 5,000
-  5,000 to 8,000
-  8,000 to 20,000
-  More than 20,000

Refugees in Corps (shown in blue)

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10. In addition to those listed as being in "temporary shelters," refugees are further categorized as "resettled" or "returned to home villages." There are 536,953 in the "resettled" category and 231,675 in the "returned" category. The resettled refugee is given a one-time payment that now is the equivalent of about US \$30.00.

11. The continuing rise in the number of refugees in temporary shelters is indicative of a decline in the security situation, and of the GVN's inability to cope with the resettlement situation. On the other hand, the flow of refugees back to their home villages is an indicator of the government's control of the countryside. Less than one tenth of the refugees have so far returned home.

12. Although every province in South Vietnam has some refugees, the distribution is quite uneven. About 51 percent of the refugees processed through 31 August were handled in I and II Corps zones. These two corps also have the bulk of the refugees who are still in temporary shelters, some 424,615 out of a nationwide total of 592,660. Some 338,700 of the unsettled refugees in I and II Corps are concentrated in five of the provinces. Binh Dinh Province reportedly has 153,000 refugees in temporary shelters. In the last two years the Communists had made extensive inroads in this province, although recent allied military operations have deeply shaken their position.

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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. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] claims that transportation bottlenecks in China had prevented two thirds of the military aid from Soviet bloc countries from being shipped to Vietnam. No time frame is mentioned. This story may have originated with the Russians. The Chinese, however, are almost certainly still harassing delivery of Soviet bloc aid although indications are that the aid is getting through. In addition, there have been reports that the transportation of millions of Red Guards has slowed movement of freight in China.

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2. The claim that only one third of Soviet military supplies had been dispatched is similar to a claim made [REDACTED] in July. The Chinese, on the other hand, charged in May that the Soviets had used only one third of the freight cars made available in the first quarter of 1966. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] also claimed that Soviet-aligned countries had asked China to open a port between the North Vietnamese border and the Luichow Peninsula. The Chinese reportedly refused, demanding that Haiphong be used. The Chinese have accused the Soviets several times of being afraid to send military aid to Vietnam via the sea route.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] characterized the people as optimistic and relatively relaxed. He claimed that food shortages in Hanoi are not serious, that the city has fewer air raid alerts, and that evacuation measures have reduced the city's population by one third and government offices by almost one half.

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2. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] AFP reports out of Hanoi in October citing poor harvest prospects and food shortages should be qualified. [REDACTED] maintain that there are no prolonged food shortages and [REDACTED] Vietnamese people are capable of tightening their belts occasionally without "getting upset." Morale is high, [REDACTED] and the people accept difficulties with "good heart."

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3. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the regime currently is giving little attention to either the construction of air raid shelters or to air raid drills in Hanoi. As of 4 November, [REDACTED] had not heard an air raid warning in the capital city for three weeks. The evacuation which was undertaken with such energy last July also has petered out. About 300,000 people have been evacuated, another 300,000 remain in the city, and 400,000 still live in the suburbs. Every day, however, thousands of people who have been evacuated return briefly to their homes to check up on them and to collect valuables left behind.

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4. Other reports received recently reinforce

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morale was high, that the people were determined to fight on to final victory, and that rice and other food supplies were more than adequate.

DRV Relations with Peking and Moscow

5. The North Vietnamese and Liberation Front representatives in Moscow have bluntly restated the independence of the Vietnamese Communists from both Peking and Moscow, according to the Egyptian ambassador to the USSR. The Egyptian told the US ambassador in Moscow that the DRV representative had told him that "some people say that the Soviet Union could influence us toward peace talks. We will decide this for ourselves." The DRV representative further stated that "some people say China is pushing us to continue fighting. This is something we can decide for ourselves. No people can push another whole people into war, if they do not want it."

6. The Vietnamese Communist diplomats were also quoted to the effect that "some people say the matter (the war in South Vietnam) can be settled with Hanoi. This is not true, It cannot be settled without the NFLSV." This has also been a common theme of Vietnamese Communist propaganda aimed at ensuring the participation of the Front in any conference.

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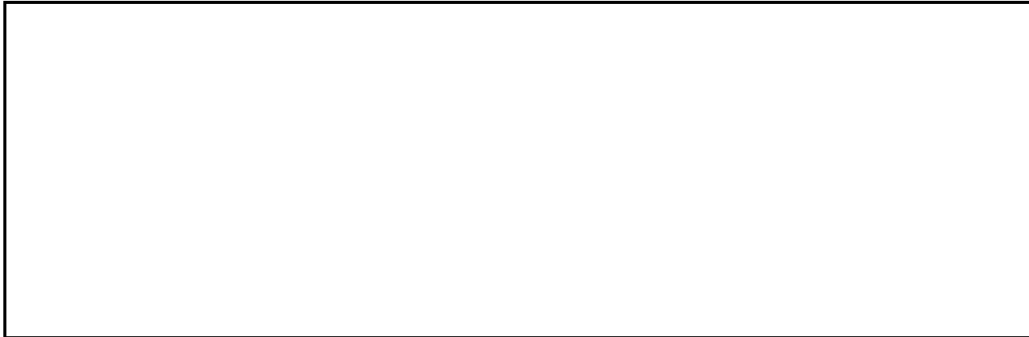
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Road maintenance and traffic in the southern part of North Vietnam and in the Laos panhandle may have been disrupted during the last three weeks by bad weather, air attacks, and other causes.

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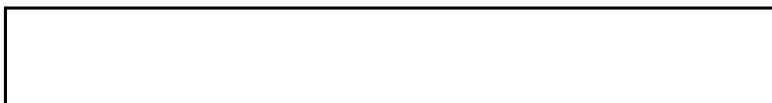


3. It is unlikely that established roads, which are usually designed to resist flooding, have been extensively damaged. However, temporary bridging and other water-crossing facilities used to replace bombed-out bridges are highly vulnerable to flooding. There has been no indication that truck traffic through MR-IV has been critically affected by the weather or by other causes, although uncompleted segments of new roads are reported to have suffered heavily.

4. In the Laos panhandle, weather also has contributed to a delay in resumption of truck traffic all the way to the South Vietnam border. [redacted] an average of a dozen trucks a day coming into Laos through Mu Gia pass between late September--when the rainy season there nominally ended--and mid-October. [redacted] little traffic in the pass area since mid-October. [redacted] heavy mist and rain, suggesting that a temporary worsening of the weather was responsible for the drop in truck traffic. [redacted] little effort has been made to repair the damage to roads in the southern part of the panhandle. Until these roads are repaired, through truck traffic from North Vietnam to the South Vietnamese border cannot resume. This type of traffic resumed in mid-November in 1965.

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