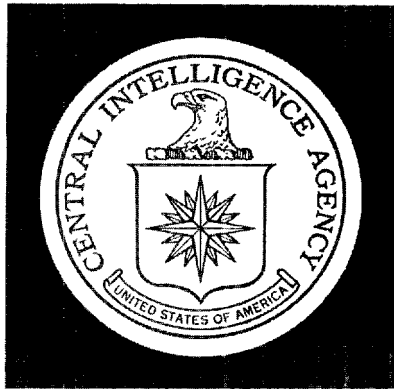


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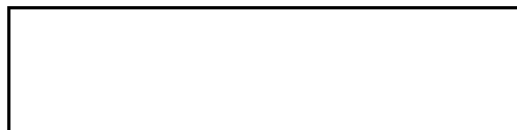
MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

NSA review completed

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12 December 1966



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Information as of 1600
12 December 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

There is nothing available in photography or communications intercepts to confirm recent press reports that the North Vietnamese air order-of-battle has been radically increased.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Heavy fighting between ARVN and Viet Cong troops was reported on 11 December in Dinh Tuong Province (Para. 1). Operation TRINIDAD II ended in Quang Nam Province with 33 Communist soldiers killed (Para. 2). Operation SIERRA began in Quang Ngai Province in the same area where three Viet Cong battalions with a strength of 950 men are reported to be operating (Para. 3). A Communist weapons cache was located in Kontum Province by US Army soldiers participating in Operation PICKETT (Para. 4).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing available in photography or communications intercepts to confirm recent press reports that the North Vietnamese air order-of-battle has been radically increased (Paras. 1-2).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: Both North Vietnam and the Liberation Front have hailed the opening of a Front office in Hanoi (Paras. 1-2).

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Heavy fighting between South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) troops and Viet Cong forces in the Mekong Delta province of Dinh Tuong was reported on 11 December. An estimated Viet Cong battalion harassed an ARVN base camp about 15 miles northwest of My Tho. Air strikes and artillery supported the ARVN defense efforts. Friendly casualties were three killed and 12 wounded compared to 15 Viet Cong killed. Nine enemy weapons were captured. Three ARVN battalions have been committed as a reaction force, but no contact with the Communist force has yet been reported.

2. Three-day-old Operation TRINIDAD II, a search-and-destroy operation conducted in an area about 12 miles south of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province by one battalion of US marines, ended on 11 December. American casualties were one killed and 20 wounded. Communist losses included 33 killed, 27 captured, and six suspects detained.

3. Operation SIERRA, a one-battalion US marine search-and-destroy operation, began on 11 December about eight miles south of Quang Ngai city in coastal Quang Ngai Province. Three Viet Cong battalions--the 19th, 38th, and 48th--are reported operating in the area with an estimated strength of 950 men. No contact with the enemy has been reported.

4. A company of the US 101st Airborne Division participating in the three-battalion search-and-destroy Operation PICKETT in Kontum Province located a cache of 59 individual weapons on 11 December. The operation, which began on 8 December, is sweeping the Cambodia - Kontum Province border area in search of elements of the 1st North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Division (formerly the 630th NVA Division).

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing available in photography or communications intercepts to confirm recent press reports that the North Vietnamese air order-of-battle (AOB) has been radically increased. North Vietnam is believed to possess 96 MIG-15/17 and 15 MIG-21 interceptors. Fifty-four of the MIG-15/17s and all of the MIG-21s are operating from three of the DRV's five principal airfields. The remaining 42 MIG-15/17s are in a reserve status

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2. Since 1 September 1966, North Vietnam is believed to have lost as many as nine fighter aircraft, three of which were MIG-21s. During the same period, more than 30 additional Vietnamese and at least 21 Korean pilots may have become available for use by the DRV Air Force. The loss of aircraft, the increase in combat-ready pilots, and the continuing US strike activity combine to suggest that an increase in the DRV interceptor inventory would be desirable from Hanoi's viewpoint. There is, however, nothing at this time to indicate that such a buildup has taken place.

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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 establishment of a Liberation Front office in Hanoi has been heralded by Communists on both sides of the 17th Parallel as a symbol of the national unity of Vietnam. The Liberation Front broadcast a long editorial using effusive language to describe the new office as another manifestation of the North's continuing support of the revolution in the South. President Ho Chi Minh was described as the leader of all Vietnam and the goal of reunification was given special emphasis. The new representative, Nguyen Van Tien, is a prominent Front central committeeman who has served primarily as a delegate to a series of international conferences.

2. Hanoi's reception of the new delegation was equally effusive, according to a VNA broadcast of 12 December. Tien was greeted by the DRV Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, an impressive gathering of representatives of mass organizations, and much of the foreign diplomatic corps. In the broadcast, however, Nguyen Duy Trinh was not described as the DRV foreign minister (only as a politburo member and vice premier), suggesting that the new Front representative is not to be given full diplomatic status but is to have the same semiofficial capacity as Front representatives in other Communist capitals.

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