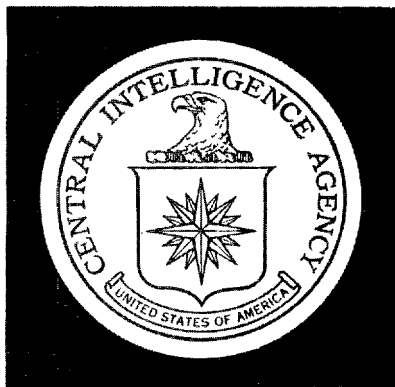


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

NSA review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Viet Cong attacked a CIDG Special Forces unit northwest of Saigon near Tay Ninh city on 19 December.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: No significant contact with the enemy has been reported in any of the 28 large-scale allied ground operations currently in progress (Para. 1). A South Vietnamese CIDG Special Forces unit sustained moderate casualties on 19 December when attacked by a Viet Cong force of unknown size near Tay Ninh city (Para. 2). Intercepted Viet Cong communications continue to reflect serious concern over the possibility of additional major allied ground operations against the Communists' War Zone "C" in Tay Ninh Province (Paras. 3-5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: During its 19 December session, the Constituent Assembly discussed the method of selection of provincial officials under the new constitution (Paras. 1-2).

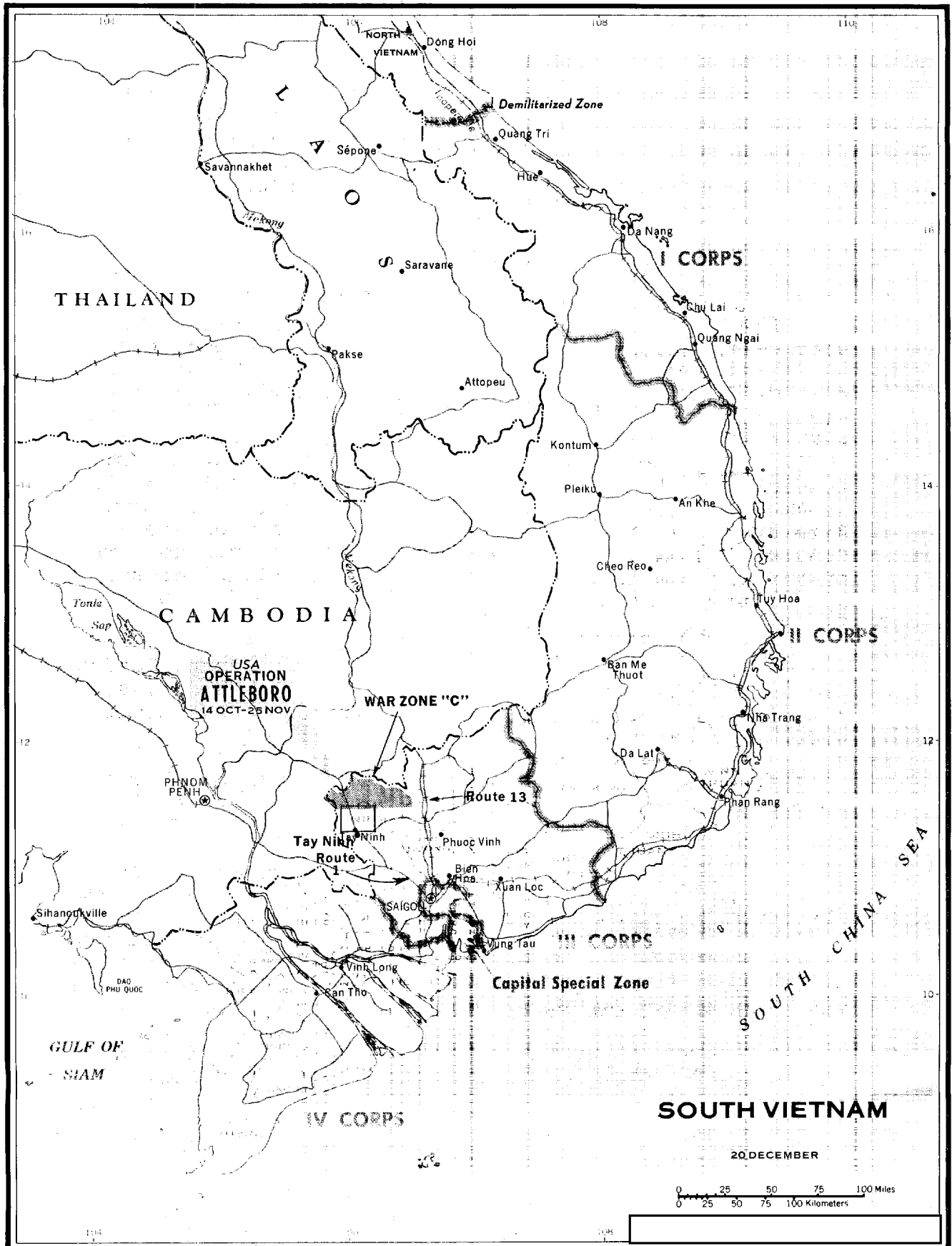
III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: North Korean pilots continue to increase the tempo of their training (Paras. 1-2).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: No direct comment yet from Hanoi or the Liberation Front on US appeal to U Thant (Paras. 1-2). Peking continues to protest the bombings of the Hanoi area (Paras. 3-4).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Non-Communist reaction to the air strikes in the Hanoi area (Paras. 1-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US combat forces are participating in 13 of the 28 battalion-size or larger allied search-and-destroy operations currently in progress. No major contact with the enemy was reported in any of these operations on 20 December.

2. Communist forces of unknown size attacked a Vietnamese CIDG Special Forces unit operating approximately 59 miles northwest of Saigon near Tay Ninh city on 19 December. The assault featured heavy mortar and small-arms fire and lasted for more than two hours. South Vietnamese casualties were six killed and 16 wounded. Enemy losses included one killed and one captured. A government reaction force failed to re-establish contact with the attackers.

Viet Cong Communications Reflect Continuing Concern Over Allied Incursions Into War Zone "C"

3. Enemy communications intercepted since late November 1966 have reflected increasing Viet Cong concern and anticipation of further major allied ground operations against their long-time jungle preserve--War Zone "C"--in northern Tay Ninh Province.

4. In several recent messages, the Military Intelligence Bureau of the Viet Cong's Central Office for South Vietnam (MIBC/COSVN) has expressed serious concern to subordinates in Tay Ninh and adjacent Binh Duong Province about the possibility of allied forces again conducting large-scale sweep operations--similar to Operations ATTLEBORO and BIRMINGHAM--against War Zone "C". For example, on 29 November the MIBC informed a subordinate in the Tay Ninh - Binh Duong border area that "the enemy is determined to destroy our base camp in War Zone 'C' this year." In this message, and in several others passed to additional subordinates on 9, 10, and 19 December, MIBC ordered recipients to employ

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every means for keeping "the enemy" under surveillance and to report immediately any indication of the concentration or movement of allied forces at outposts, along Routes 1 and 13, and along air routes in their respective tactical areas of responsibility.

5. There are no major allied ground operations currently in progress in or near War Zone "C" in Tay Ninh Province. According to MACV, the relatively unexpected and unplanned large-scale commitment of US troop reserves to the highly successful recent Operation ATTLEBORO (14 October - 25 November) forced the postponement of a major US operation, originally scheduled for December, which had the objective of clearing War Zone "C." That operation, now intended as a follow-up to ATTLEBORO, is presently scheduled for January 1967 at the earliest.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. During its 19 December meeting, the Constituent Assembly debated the problem of providing constitutional guarantees for the election of provincial officials. The deputies agreed in general that it would be desirable to guarantee the election of village chiefs and members of the provincial, municipal, and village councils in the constitution. There was considerable disagreement, however, on whether to establish this method for choosing province chiefs and mayors. Those arguing against the election of important provincial and urban officials included several Catholic deputies and a prominent military deputy, who were probably reflecting the viewpoint of other military members of the assembly. Those in favor of elected provincial leaders were reportedly the small, militant Southern Renaissance Bloc, the Hoa Hao religious sect, and several deputies from the Greater People's Bloc.

2. The province chief, almost always a military officer, has become an extremely powerful individual, answering only to the military commander of his respective corps area or to the Saigon authorities. The military establishment probably sees the increasing number of assembly appeals for more local autonomy as further steps toward eroding military authority.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. North Korean pilots in North Vietnam were noted practicing air intercepts for the first time on 18 December. They were observed in the same role on 19 December. On 18 December they were noted also for the first time, working with North Vietnamese pilots.

2. On both days, North Korean pilots were airborne while US aircraft were in the Hanoi area. Aircraft piloted by North Koreans came within 1,000 feet of a US aircraft on 19 December after being told by a ground controller to drop their fuel tanks. Intercepted communications did not indicate any intent by the North Koreans to engage the US aircraft.

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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. Neither Hanoi radio nor the Liberation News Agency has yet mentioned the US appeal to UN Secretary General U Thant on 19 December to help get talks started on a cease-fire. An Algiers domestic raidobroadcast, however, reported that the Liberation Front representative in Algiers did comment on the US proposal in a press conference on 19 December. According to the broadcast the Front official characterized the US initiative as a "manuever designed to halt the heroic Vietnamese Liberation struggle." He is reported to have said that the new appeal aroused no interest at the UN because it contained nothing new.

2. Only three days ago, a Liberation Front representative speaking in Oslo made a special point of telling his Norwegian audience that the Front did not accept U Thant's earlier three-point program as a basis for a solution to the Vietnam problem. When press representatives reminded him that a recent local Norwegian leftist demonstration (which the Front official had previously commended) had supported U Thant's plan, the Vietnamese commented: "If that is the case we must talk to our Norwegian friends and explain our views."

Peking on the Bombings in the Hanoi Area

3. Peking continued its propaganda campaign on the US bombing near Hanoi with a People's Daily editorial on 20 December marking the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front. Asserting that the Chinese have made all preparations to take such actions "as they and the Vietnamese" deem necessary at any time to "attack jointly" the US "aggressors," the editorial concluded with a warning that should the US expand the war, the Chinese "will resolutely meet the challenge and go to war."

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4. The wording "attack" the Americans and "go to war" are a variation on Peking's standard formulation and have apparently been employed to make the Chinese response appear more forceful without actually increasing Peking's commitment to aid the Vietnamese. The editorial, however, does not go beyond previous Chinese statements to send men "if needed" and continues to imply that the Chinese will not take the initiative in provoking war with the US.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

Non-Communist Reaction to Air Strikes in Hanoi Area

1. Reaction in the non-Communist world generally has reflected concern that the US might have escalated the war by its air strikes in the Hanoi area. The concern, however, has appeared to be more directly related to the threat of escalation than to Communist claims of widespread civilian casualties. The British press has given the story prominent play but no general pattern of commentary has emerged. In Parliament, left-wing Laborites closely questioned Foreign Secretary Brown, pressing him to disassociate Britain from the "bombing of population centers." The foreign secretary handled the questions in general terms and reaffirmed his confidence that the US is only attacking military targets.

2. The bombings story has caused increased uneasiness in the Scandinavian countries, particularly in Sweden. The press, already basically unsympathetic to the US position in Vietnam, has criticized the most recent bombings as a dangerous escalation of an already explosive situation.

3. Reaction in Africa has been confined to a few press articles and radiobroadcasts. These, however, have been generally condemnatory in tone, even in normally moderate states.

4. No Japanese reaction has been noted on the bombing of the Hanoi area on 13 and 14 December. Earlier in December, however, a sense of uneasiness was apparent when the Japanese press began to step up its coverage of Vietnam. The press implied that air strikes near Hanoi indicated that the US had decided to escalate the bombing of North Vietnam.

5. In Algeria, some 300 demonstrators broke into the US Embassy grounds on 20 December to present a petition of protest to the US ambassador. The embassy

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was not damaged and the group withdrew peaceably. In addition, the formation of an Algerian Commission to Investigate US War Crimes was announced on 20 December. The 13-man commission is headed by one of the members of the Algerian Ruling Revolutionary Council.

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