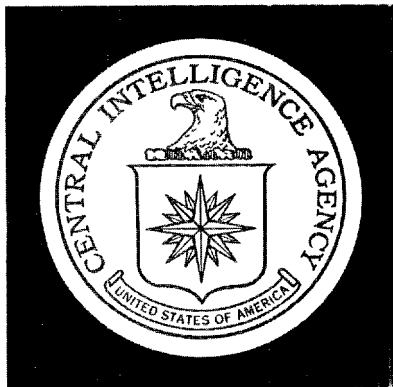


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MCO



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

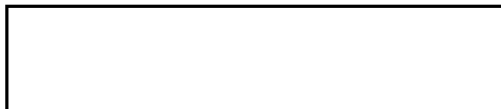
The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

NSA review completed

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

The Constituent Assembly has nearly completed its outline of the basic principles of the constitution with its approval on 22 December of an independent judiciary equal in rank with the legislative and executive branches of government.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Two US Marine command posts in Thua Thien Province were attacked early on 22 December and one American was killed and three wounded (Para. 1). Nine Viet Cong were killed by US forces participating in Operation THAYER II in coastal Binh Dinh Province on 22 December (Para. 2). A district town and two South Vietnamese outposts were attacked in the delta province of Kien Hoa on 22 December and three South Vietnamese were killed and ten wounded (Para. 3).

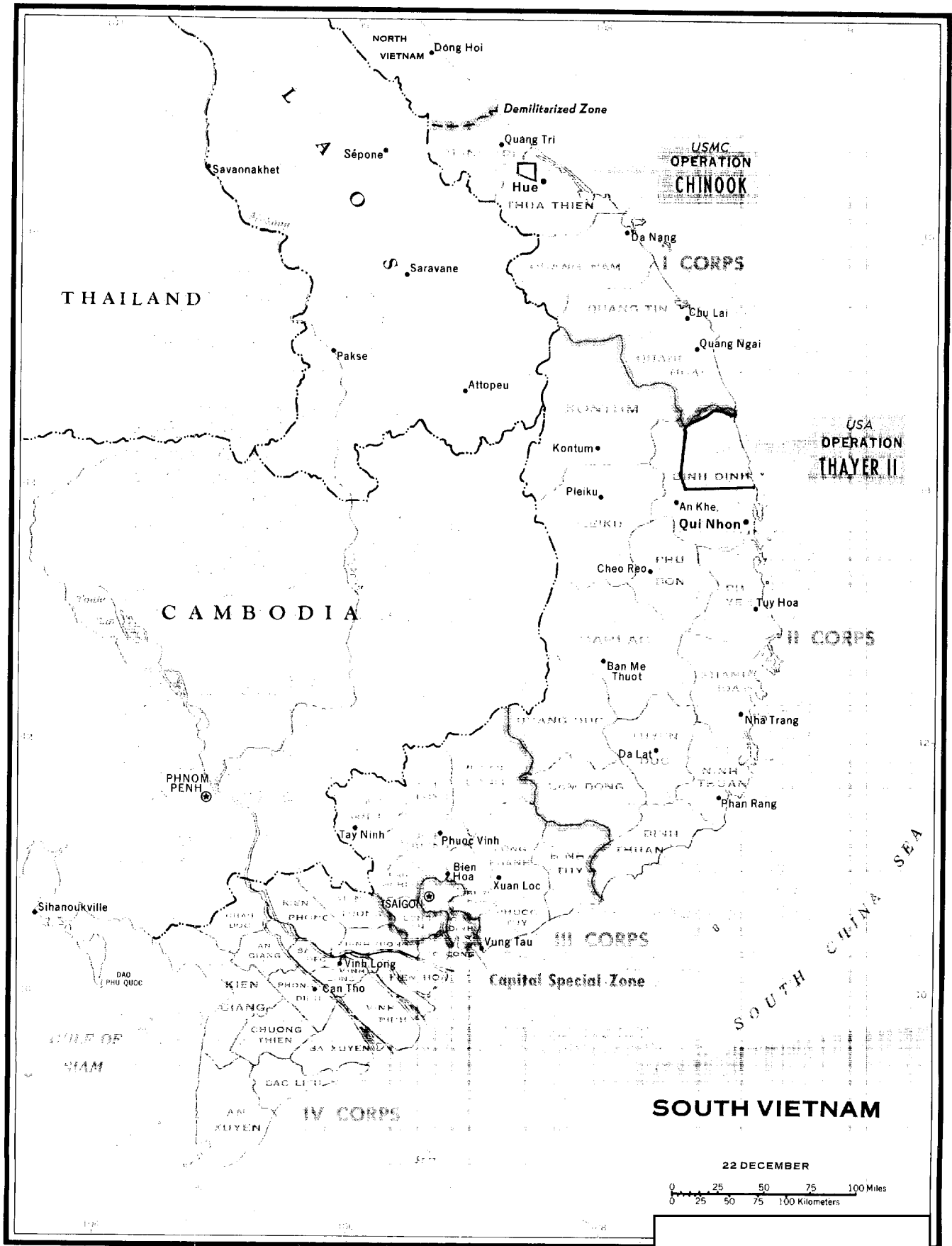
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Constituent Assembly is nearing the end of its work on the basic principles of the government which it will embody in the constitution (Para. 1). The Directorate, however, is not entirely pleased with all of the assembly's work to date (Para. 2).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi's propaganda continues to condemn US peace efforts (Paras. 1-2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Early on 22 December two US Marine command posts about 12 miles northwest of Hue in northern Thua Thien Province were hit by Communist mortar fire. The command posts are part of US Operation CHINOOK, a one-battalion search-and-destroy operation which began on 19 December. The Communist attack covered an effort by an estimated 300 enemy troops to recover bodies of members of their forces killed in an earlier engagement. US aircraft, mortar, and artillery supported the Marines. Preliminary reports of casualties list one American killed and three wounded. One Communist soldier was killed.

2. Elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division taking part in the four-battalion search-and-destroy Operation THAYER II engaged an estimated platoon-size enemy force in Binh Dinh Province on 22 December. Nine enemy soldiers were killed in the encounter which took place about 28 miles north of Qui Nhon. Another engagement about 40 miles north of Qui Nhon resulted in five Communists killed and seven captured. There were no American casualties reported in either engagement.

3. In the Mekong Delta, the Viet Cong simultaneously attacked a district town and two South Vietnamese outposts in Kien Hoa Province early on 22 December. Three South Vietnamese were killed and ten wounded in the attacks. Enemy losses are unknown.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. With the approval on 22 December of an independent judiciary equal in rank with the legislative and executive branches of government, the Constituent Assembly has nearly completed its outline of the basic principles of the constitution. The US Embassy reported that there was widespread approval of the need for a bicameral legislature during the meeting on 21 December, but that attempts to define the method of electing members to the upper house provoked diverse suggestions. This issue was left to be decided later.

2. [REDACTED] the Directorate is not completely satisfied with the assembly's plan for the executive branch of the future government. Some Directorate members reportedly feel that the legislature has been granted too much power as a result of the provision enabling it to remove the prime minister and the cabinet. [REDACTED]

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3. Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the assassination of Tran Van Van, a spokesman for a three-man assembly committee investigating the killing told the assembly that the committee had received little cooperation from the national police. The spokesman added that police director General Loan had personally insulted him as well. According to the embassy, the other two members of the committee would like to disband it, since interest in the identity of the assassin is now waning on the part of other assemblymen.

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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. North Vietnam's official radio quoted the party daily on 21 December as roundly condemning "the sinister designs" of the US "imperialists" in talking of their good will for peace "while frantically boosting their war of aggression." As evidence of this escalation, the commentary pointed to the 13-14 December raids allegedly on civilian targets in the Hanoi area, claiming that such actions have made US talk about peace negotiations all the more "perfidious." Moreover, US offers of "peace negotiations," according to the article, meant further intensification of the war and the article called upon the people to "devote all their strength and energy to defeating the US aggressors."

2. A similar note of bellicosity was also present in Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap's annual address on the anniversary of the Vietnamese Peoples Army (VPA), 22 December. After reviewing the "glorious successes" of the VPA, Giap asserted that the Vietnamese people were determined to "fight resolutely until complete victory." "Whatever the sacrifices and hardships may be, no matter how many more troops the US aggressors may bring in, and to whatever extent they may escalate the war," our people are sure to defeat them, Giap declared.

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