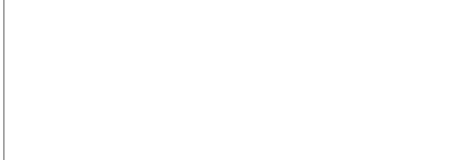
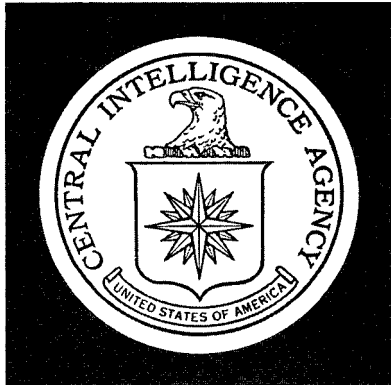


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Dept. review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

On the military front, large truck convoys continue to move south through the Mu Gia Pass

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On the political front, Hanoi continues to hold out the prospect of talks if the bombings are stopped.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
No significant contact on 3 February has been reported between Communist forces and any of the 33 allied ground operations (Paras. 1-2). Personnel shortages apparently are forcing the Viet Cong to recruit 14-year-old boys and to place recruits in main force combat units (Paras. 3-4). A recently captured document discloses friction between the local populace and Viet Cong troops (Paras. 5-6).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Constituent Assembly made further progress on 2 February in approving procedural provisions concerning an elected legislature, but may end up postponing debate on the more controversial legislative powers until after Tet (Paras. 1-2). Premier Ky participated in a 3 February Hoa Hao ceremony in the delta, possibly to offset Chief of State Thieu's earlier delta tour which was widely interpreted as a campaign swing (Paras. 3-4). South Vietnam released 28 North Vietnamese Army prisoners across the demarcation line to North Vietnam on 3 February (Para. 5).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: A preliminary translation of a newly captured document provides some details of Le Duan's speech at the North Vietnamese Communist Party's 12th central committee meeting (Paras. 1-5). Hanoi continues to publicize the possibility of talks with the US if the bombings stop (Paras. 6-7).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Trucks continue to move through Mu Gia Pass into Laos at a high rate (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Although allied forces continued to press 33 battalion-size or larger ground operations against known or suspected Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army troop concentrations and base areas on 3 February, no significant new contact has been reported. American forces are currently involved in 15 of these 33 operations.

2. Early on 2 February in the coastal flatlands of Quang Ngai Province, one platoon of US Marines participating in Operation DESOTO located an enemy force of approximately 30 men. The marines requested naval gunfire support and six of the enemy soldiers were reported killed. Since this one-battalion search-and-destroy operation began on 26 January, a total of 74 Communists have been killed and five suspects detained compared with American losses of 14 killed and 86 wounded.

Viet Cong Personnel Shortages Continue

3. [REDACTED] the Viet Cong in the northeastern part of coastal Quang Tin Province have started an intensive recruiting campaign. The new recruits--including boys as young as 14--will be assigned to armed Viet Cong units from guerrilla to main force size.

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4. The recruitment of 14-year-olds and the assignment of recruits to main force units indicates that a severe manpower shortage may exist at all levels. Previous reports have indicated Viet Cong intentions to conscript both young men and women in other parts of the country, including the Mekong Delta provinces.

Friction Among Viet Cong Units in MR IV

5. The first evidence of actual fighting among Viet Cong units, as well as further indications of friction between the local populace and Viet Cong troops

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were disclosed in a document captured during Operation CEDAR FALLS. The document did not specify the reason for the fracas.

6. According to the document, which consisted of minutes of a meeting held in September 1966, a fight that broke out between guerrillas and a unit of MR IV almost resulted in a fire fight. In addition, the document observed that the war had affected the people's morale, that many "wanted to keep away from cadres and troops," and that "unity between the army and the people was broken." This friction was blamed on poor discipline among troops and on their failure to observe regulations. References in the document to directives restricting troop movements along Route 14 to the hours of darkness only, prohibiting troop bivouacking in local hamlets, and requiring that troops on the move disguise themselves as civilians, may reflect not only regular security measures but also an effort to reduce such friction.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. On 2 February, the Constituent Assembly approved various constitutional provisions dealing with requirements to be met by candidates for the upper house of the legislature, the filling of vacancies in the upper and lower houses, and the immunity to prosecution or arrest for members of both houses during their terms. The only controversial issue to arise was whether there should be a separate electoral law for ethnic minority candidates to the upper house, whose membership is elected at large. The assembly resolved the issue by adopting an article stipulating that procedures and conditions for the election of candidates including minority representatives to both houses would be prescribed by law.

2. The assembly session scheduled for 3 February was delayed until the afternoon in order to permit 38 deputies to attend a Hoa Hao ceremony in the delta in the morning. The US Embassy believes that this delay, together with some revamping of the order in which certain articles are being taken up, could postpone debate on the more controversial questions of legislative powers until after the Tet holidays. Such a delay, however, might permit the assembly to work out a quiet compromise with the Directorate on these sections. The assembly has also appointed a small subcommittee to polish up the language of articles of the constitution already approved. This may allow for some further adjustment of provisions not yet fully satisfactory to the Directorate.

Presidential Campaigning

3. Premier Ky flew to the delta on 3 February to participate in the ceremony of the Hoa Hao religious sect. Although Ky's trip is possibly designed in part to assuage any Hoa Hao concern over rumors of a pending reshuffle of province chiefs in the delta, it may also be intended to offset the publicity given Chief of State Thieu's tour of the delta early last week. Thieu's trip was widely interpreted as a "campaign swing".

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4. Touching also on themes discussed by Thieu in a press reception in Saigon this week, Ky told reporters that he hoped to speed up the elections by some three months to early summer, to adopt a "new" program of issuing land titles to farmers tilling former French lands, and to make a systematic investigation of corruption in all four corps areas. Ky also declared that Hanoi may now be increasing its peace feelers because it fears an elected government in Saigon, he said that peace would come when North Vietnam ceased its aggression, and that he would be "willing" to talk with Ho Chi Minh to achieve such a peace.

Release of DRV Prisoners

5. South Vietnam on 3 February transported 28 North Vietnamese prisoners of war and two Viet Cong prisoners to the Ben Hai River bridge between North and South Vietnam for release to North Vietnamese authorities. The two Viet Cong prisoners declined at the last minute to depart, and were accepted by GVN officials as Chieu Hoi ralliers. The 28 North Vietnamese crossed the bridge, and were met and taken off in trucks by local police. A similar release of North Vietnamese prisoners by the GVN in connection with the Tet holidays occurred last year. Hanoi on 2 February had denounced the "repatriation" as a "hoax" and said that the "compatriots" will be allowed to choose whether they will stay in the North or return to the South.

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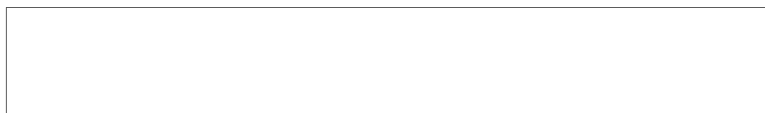


IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A preliminary MACV translation of a recently captured Communist notebook in South Vietnam provides gists of a briefing at the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) concerning the 12th central committee meeting in North Vietnam as well as some revealing comments on the situation in the South.

2. According to the notebook, the briefing covered a report given by party first secretary Le Duan on the situation in the North. Le Duan stated that US air strikes "did not amount to anything" since North Vietnam received its arms from foreign sources. The party first secretary also reported that Soviet party official Shelepin, who visited Hanoi in January 1966, had intended to try to convince North Vietnam to negotiate with the US. The North Vietnamese, however, had confronted him upon his arrival with a communiqué that stated Hanoi's determination to continue the war. Consequently, according to the notebook, Shelepin did not reveal his intention and promised instead to support Hanoi as long as the war lasted. This is undoubtedly a North Vietnamese version of events and may not accurately reflect the circumstances of Shelepin's visit. However, there have been other reports tending to confirm that Shelepin did come to Hanoi in the hope of gaining North Vietnamese agreement to take steps toward negotiations.

3. The notebook quoted the briefer as saying that the 12th central committee resolution advocated the policy of "tactical negotiation" in the "coming rainy season." No explanation was given of what was meant by "tactical negotiation" and since the excerpted translation does not provide the date of this particular note, or the date of the 12th resolution, it is impossible to determine which rainy season is meant. The notebook account of the briefing went on to state that "negotiation is one thing and fighting is another, and at the present time the balance of power is not quite in our favor." The cryptic nature of these references reveals little of DRV intent. The complete translation of the notebook might provide a clarification.

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4. Other sections of the captured notebook contained interesting assessments of the war in the South. For example, it stated that the status of guerrilla warfare had decreased and had not developed. It also noted that too little value was being placed on guerrilla forces and their rudimentary weapons, and too much attention was placed on concentrated forces. These same observations have been made in several recently published articles in the North Vietnamese press. According to the notebook, a 15 December 1966 COSVN resolution directed that strong attacks be launched utilizing individual initiative and that consideration should be given to the guerrilla warfare movement.

5. The notebook also mentioned that during the first ten months of 1966, 440,000 people had been removed by the allies from the "liberated areas." Another recently captured Communist notebook implied that one million additional people in rural areas had come under Saigon control in 1966.

Hanoi on Negotiations

6. The North Vietnamese continue to appear anxious to have their willingness to talk with the US widely publicized. DRV representatives abroad are beginning to publicize the 28 January statement of their foreign minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, promising Hanoi's consideration of US-DRV talks in exchange for an unconditional cessation of the bombings. The DRV ambassador in Cairo discussed the foreign minister's statement with local press representatives on 28 January and on 2 February. In Phnom Penh, according to a Reuters dispatch, the DRV representative at a 3 February press conference also said that Hanoi would be willing to have conversations with US officials after a bombing cessation. The DRV ambassador in New Delhi reiterated this line at a 3 February press conference.

7. The Soviet ambassador in Djakarta quickly passed on to US Embassy officials a conversation that he had had the previous evening with the North

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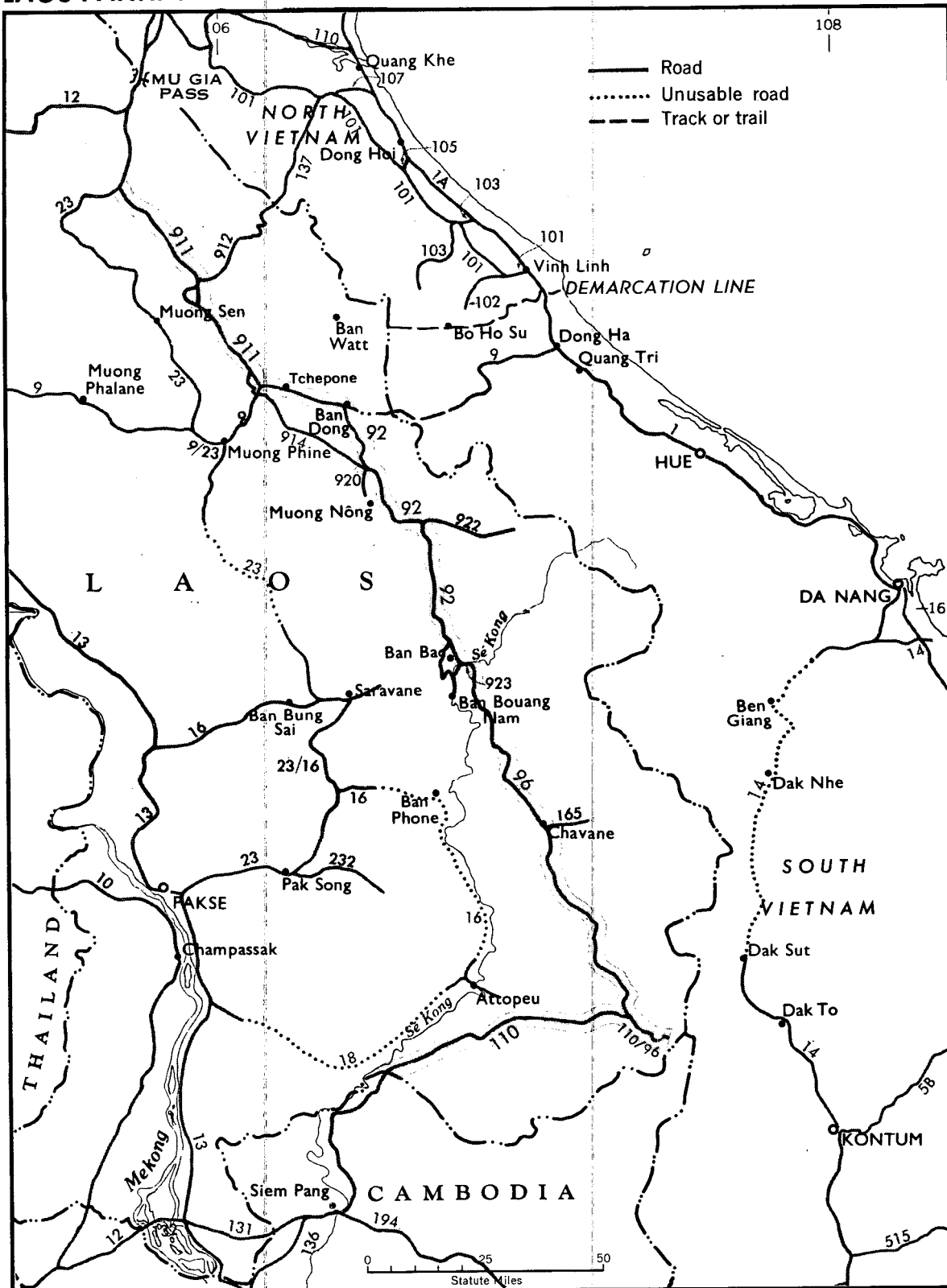
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Vietnamese ambassador. According to the Soviet official, the Hanoi diplomat had been "eager" to discuss prospects of ending the conflict and had affirmed that the DRV Government would be prepared to enter discussion with the US immediately if the US ceased the bombings. On 3 February limited unofficial Soviet and East European commentaries have begun to charge that the US by not responding to the Hanoi offer, is not genuinely interested in a peaceful settlement.

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LAOS PANHANDLE



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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Trained observers continue to report large numbers of trucks moving south in the Mu Gia Pass area of the Laotian panhandle. During the week of 17-23 January, a total of about 150 southbound trucks were sighted compared with some 235 southbound trucks the previous week.

2. For the first three weeks of January, truck traffic entering Laos through the pass appears to have been at the highest level since the beginning of the current dry season in October 1966. This would still be somewhat less than the approximately 28 southbound trucks per day average believed to have been maintained on the northern portion of the infiltration corridor during the 1965-66 dry season. However, irregularity of coverage makes any year-to-year comparison of levels of traffic rather tenuous.

3. Farther south, the panhandle road network leading to the South Vietnamese border remains open, although only light traffic has been reported during January on Routes 911 and 91. Sporadic reporting from ground observers points to continued low-level truck movement on Route 110. Such activity probably reflects continuing Communist efforts to maintain a flow of Cambodian foodstuffs to Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam.

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