

NSC BRIEFING

6 April 1954

THE SITUATION AT DIEN BIEN PHU

- I. Garrison Dien Bien Phu still established at major strongpoints and French cautiously optimistic although admit situation precarious.
 - A. French believe they survived "second phase" of battle intact. Expect "third phase" attack within week.
- II. Current picture at Dien Bien Phu.
 - A. French lost three out of five subpositions in Dominique and one out of four in Eliane over past eight days.
 - B. Since first attacks 13 March lost about four battalions. Three replaced.
 1. Several hundred wounded pose threat to defenders' morale.

~~TOP SECRET~~

- C. Two more paratroop battalions in delta available but Navarre not planning to commit them *yet.*
 - 1. However, ~~US airlifting~~ two parachute battalions ^{*is*} from North Africa at Paris ^{*available*} ~~request.~~ Expected arrival about ten days.
- D. Enemy AA fire makes drops ^{*so*} reinforcements and supplies difficult.
 - 1. Planes forced high altitudes and use delayed-action parachutes.
- E. ^{*Ground haze - showers -*} ~~Weather~~ hampers resupply. Many resupply and combat missions forced turn back.

III. Current Viet Minh picture.

- A. Enemy casualties may be 20,000. Perhaps half this figure reasonable minimum.

~~TOP SECRET~~

B. Viet Minh received 3,000 replacements.

1. These been committed as De Castries attributes weakening enemy power to very youthful raw troops plus combat fatigue.

C. Viet Minh ordered ^{Some} ~~close~~ 20,000 more reinforcements. About 5,000 of these could be there in few days but arrival time of remainder cannot be accurately determined.

1. Many untried recruits.

D. French say Viet Minh supplies sufficient to last into May.

1. [REDACTED] believes 25X1X6 enemy now parceling out ammunition.

25X1X7

IV. [REDACTED]

25X1X7

[REDACTED] said there every indication enemy to continue all-out effort

~~TOP SECRET~~

- V. Loss of Dien Bien Phu could start trend rapid military deterioration.
 - A. Loss won't be military catastrophe. Viet Minh suffered huge casualties.
 - B. But Vietnamese troops and populace will abandon hope for victory.
 - 1. Many Vietnamese troops probably desert or refuse to fight.
 - 2. People will greatly increase support Viet Minh.
 - C. Navarre, who shown will to win, will lose prestige. Probably forced resign.
 - D. Viet Minh will find it easier replace its losses.
- VI. If French hold out, turning point road to victory may have been reached.
 - A. Favorable effect on Vietnamese.
 - B. French can capitalize heavy losses of enemy to mount offensives.

~~TOP SECRET~~