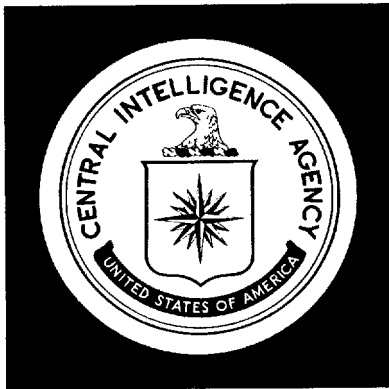


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CIA/SAVA /IM 2046/72



Intelligence Memorandum

*Maps of Communist-Dominated Areas of Indochina:
Their Limitations and Relevance to a Cease-fire*

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12

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
21 June 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MAPS OF COMMUNIST-DOMINATED AREAS OF INDOCHINA:
THEIR LIMITATIONS AND RELEVANCE TO A CEASE-FIRE

1. The four maps accompanying this memorandum are intended to depict, as of 6 June 1972, those areas of Indochina dominated by the Communists and those areas dominated by governments friendly to the US. The first map shows the areas of direct Communist military presence in Indochina as a whole. The other three are separate maps of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos--and each attempts to show the areas of predominant Communist or friendly influence in more detail than does the overall Indochina map.

2. We have divided the territory of Indochina into five categories on the maps, according to the following criteria:

- (a) Direct Enemy Military Influence: These are areas, depicted by red circles on the maps, where enemy main force (i.e., NVA) infantry units are concentrated.* The larger circles have a fifteen-mile radius, and are centered on the location of the headquarters of each enemy main force division, as of the date of the map. The smaller circles have a five-mile radius and are centered on the headquarters of

**None of the Chinese units in northern Laos are shown, nor do these illustrative maps show those enemy units which are protecting the trails in lower Laos.*

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each "independent" enemy main force regiment--i.e., those regiments which are not subordinate to one of the divisions depicted by the larger circles. The size of the circles was derived by establishing the minimum radius which would encompass the operating regiments of each division and the operating battalions of each independent regiment. The employment of the circles and their dimensions are obviously fairly arbitrary techniques of depiction. These circles are not intended to provide tactical information about the specific areas of operation of each major enemy unit. Frequently, one or more regiments of a division will operate at a distance considerably greater than fifteen miles from its divisional headquarters. Nevertheless, these circles do show in general terms the concentration of NVA main force infantry units, and they do show the areas of Indochina where the impact of the current military offensive is being felt the most. The overall map of Indochina shows only these circles, and does not depict other areas of lesser Communist influence, which are contained in the individual country maps.

- (b) Predominant Communist Influence: These are areas where the Communists have a significant military and/or administrative presence and the friendly government does not. There may be occasional armed clashes in these areas but, as of the given date, Communist domination is not seriously threatened. In the Communist-controlled parts of Laos and Cambodia, armed clashes are infrequent although friendly patrols may

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quite regularly gather intelligence and conduct clandestine operations.

- (c) Predominant Friendly Influence: These are areas where the friendly government has a significant military and/or administrative presence and the Communists do not. Again, there may be occasional armed clashes, but friendly domination is not seriously threatened. It should be noted, however, that the criteria for friendly control tend to be more stringent than for Communist control, primarily because we have more information about the shortcomings of friendly control than we do of enemy control.

- (d) Contested: Territory is considered contested if neither side has a clearly superior military force or administrative apparatus in the area. In most contested areas, both sides are present in some strength and clash frequently. We have also included in our definition, however, some areas in which both sides have few forces and do not exert much military effort to exclude each other. "Contested" territory thus includes such disparate areas as the current battleground to the north and west of Hue, and parts of Cambodia where most of the "contest" consists of a competition between the two sides to extort more goods, services, and taxes from the local populations.

- (e) Neither dominated nor seriously contested by either side: This is territory where there are practically no permanent enemy or friendly forces, practically no administrative apparatus of either side, and not much

interest on the part of either in establishing a permanent presence. In some cases, of course, such territory is used by one side or the other--or both--as a passage route for the transport of supplies and reinforcements. Most earlier maps have put such territory into the "contested" category, thus creating an impression of military or political confrontation over far wider areas of Indochina than is in fact the case. In South Vietnam, for example, areas which we have placed in this category have no significant GVN regional, popular or police forces in local villages and hamlets. They also do not have hamlet or village governments which are responsive, in a meaningful way, to GVN provincial administrations. At the same time, there are no significant enemy forces in these areas either.

3. It is important to note that all maps of this type have certain built-in limitations in terms of their value as tools to assist in formulating possible provisions of a cease-fire agreement. The principal limitations are as follows:

- (a) The maps at best can depict the control situation only at a given instant in time. In a fluid military situation where tactical control of areas is constantly changing, the maps may well depict divisions of territory which could be politically, militarily or economically untenable after a cease-fire was declared, or even after the pace of military activity slackened.
- (b) The maps of necessity tend to equate military occupation of an area with control of the area. Yet there can

be a substantial difference between occupying an area and controlling it. Under reasonably stable conditions, information systems such as the HES can be devised to measure "control" in a fairly meaningful fashion. During a major military offensive, however, the measurement of control is increasingly dominated by military deployment and battle results. This is adequate to portray territorial control in the tactical situation, but such maps cannot portray with fidelity the degree of control which each side would have in certain areas in a cease-fire environment.

- (c) A most important consideration affecting all such maps is the fact that, in Indochina, control of territory and control of people are two quite different matters. For example, the enemy's territorial gains resulting from his present offensive are not matched, in any immediate sense, by populations gains. The present flow of refugees to the GVN side testifies to this. The fact that most of the population has preferred not to remain in areas occupied by the NVA, however, would create new problems for both sides if there were a cease-fire. GVN-controlled urban centers presently crowded with refugees might become an economic liability if, under the cease-fire, the surrounding rural and food producing areas were left under enemy control. Conversely, from the North Vietnamese standpoint, a cease-fire might leave Hanoi's forces with certain areas of limited value in terms of political control because they had been largely de-populated.

(d) The attached maps also have an inherent limitation of scale--the scale is so small that information cannot be presented in sufficient detail. In many areas of South Vietnam it would be impossible--even if we had the necessary information--to depict the degree of control which each side now exerts in particular provinces or districts, without developing individual maps of each province and in some cases each district. In brief, we are faced with the old leopard-spot problem, and there are areas of South Vietnam where at present the numbers of spots, and their pattern, cannot be depicted on one country-size map. This also means, of course, that a control situation exists which would be exceedingly difficult to resolve in a cease-fire agreement.

4. A final general comment: Much of the territory in South Vietnam currently under Communist influence is largely devoid of population or--at best--thinly populated. Also, in much of the South Vietnamese territory which appears on our maps as being under Communist influence, the degree of influence which the enemy actually possesses has not been tested. (The same used to be said, with some justification, of GVN pacification gains.) Many of the North Vietnamese divisions now operating in South Vietnam are doing so without the benefit of a strong local organization, and their success in developing a local administrative structure remains to be seen. Many of the enemy's recent territorial gains which are shown on the map of South Vietnam may be as fragile and temporary as any ever depicted on a pacification map.

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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Map of Indochina: Areas of Direct Communist Military Influence as of 6 June 1972
2. Map of South Vietnam: Territorial Control as of 6 June 1972
3. Map of Cambodia: Territorial Control as of 6 June 1972
4. Map of Laos: Territorial Control as of 6 June 1972

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