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TS# 185702-b

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

2 January 1964

REVISED MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Probable Reactions to Various Courses of Action
with Respect to North Vietnam

REFERENCE: MACV- [REDACTED] Op-Plan No. 34 A-64/TIGER,
of 15 December 1963

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

1. In response to General Krulak's request, we assess below the probable Communist and international reactions to 13 specific operations given us from among those of the referenced Op-Plan. With one exception, the given operations are small unit (South Vietnamese) airborne or maritime sabotage efforts against specific targets (bridges, railways, dumps, etc.) in various areas of North Vietnam. The one exception is a three company (plus) raid against a small island just north of the 17th parallel DMZ. All of the 13 operations are part of general Krulak's Phase I: i.e., to be mounted within about four months' time from the Op-Plan's activation. We note that except for the island raid

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noted above and a few other of the 13, most of these operations
[REDACTED] have already been approved.

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2. In sum, we believe that:

a. Communist reactions to most of these operations
would be slight.

b. Communist reactions would be sharper in the cases
of (1) Haiphong (No. 33, below); (2) Ile Du Tigre (No. 34); and
(3) the railroads near the borders of China (Nos. 54 and 55). The
reactions would be felt primarily in South Vietnam and Laos but
would not be so extreme as to change the character of hostilities
in those countries.

c. The operations under review would not be likely to
lead to appreciably increased Chinese Communist involvement in the
area. Neither would these operations -- with the possible excep-
tion of the Ile du Tigre raid -- lead the Soviets to believe that
the US had made a significant change in its policies.

d. The 13 operations under review, taken by themselves,
and even if all were successful, would not "convince the DRV leader-
ship that their continued direction and support of insurgent activities

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in the RVN (South Vietnam) and Laos should cease" -- this, according to the reference Op-Plan, being their stated goal.

e. It is possible, however, that the North Vietnamese Government might see these operations (especially if that against the Ile du Tigre were included) as representing a significant increase in the vigor of US policy, potentially dangerous to them. If so, they would probably wish to halt the new developments at an early date, and would therefore try to arouse international pressure for a conference to settle the problem of Vietnam before it expanded into a more general conflict in the Far East.

f. In general, such operations as the 13 here considered would probably be viewed with disfavor by most of our major allies. Taipei and Bangkok, of course, would probably support the US strongly. British officials in South Vietnam would probably see these operations' merit and consider them worth trying, but London's reaction -- particularly to any international political complaints engendered -- would be complicated by the UK's position as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference and hence (with the USSR) principal guarantor of the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which such operations

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would violate. France would almost certainly be opposed to any US/RVN attempt to carry the war to the North, and would probably cause the US the most difficulty. Canada would probably find it difficult to support the US in any North Vietnamese complaints formally submitted to the ICC. If such operations helped generate a Communist call for an international conference, this call would probably find much support elsewhere in the Free World.

g. The principal determinant of DRV prosecution of the war will not be damage suffered from such small-scale operations, but the course of the war in the South and the degree of risk Hanoi believes will be involved in its prosecution.

3. We assess the various operations below, under their designated Op-Plan categories of I, II, or III. We note, however, that these categories of increased expected damage to the DRV do not necessarily correspond to what we believe to be increased reactions. We believe, in general, that:

a. Those small unit airborne and maritime operations not far north of the 17th parallel (all, that is, except Nos. 33, 34, 54, and 55 below, and whether category I, II, or III) would probably provoke the least response.

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b. The Haiphong channel operation (No. 33) and the large raid against the Ile du Tigre (No. 34) would provoke greater response.

c. The sabotage efforts against the Hanoi-Lang Son (No. 54) and Yen Bay-Lao Kay (No. 55) railroads would probably provoke little if any overt response at first, but if successfully continued would probably provoke the Chinese to more threatening outcries, increased offers of support to the DRV, and attempts to increase the Chinese presence in North Vietnam and northernmost Laos.

SPECIFIC RESPONSES BY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY I - HARASSING OPERATIONS

4. General description. This category includes small, unspectacular demolition operations and small-scale intelligence collection actions, including tactical reconnaissance probes by small military units, temporary interdiction of lines of communication, and general low level harassment. These operations may be launched and effected by land, sea, and/or air.

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5. Specific operations under consideration.*

a. (29) Interdiction of Route 7 about 50 miles from Lao border by airdropped 15-man team to exfiltrate through Laos.

b. (30) Interdiction of Route 8 southwest of Vinh by 8-man airdropped team.

c. (31) Interdiction of Route 12 by 15-man airdropped team.

d. (43) Amphibious raid by 4-man team on Ly Hoa Bridge across the Rao Da River near Badon.

e. (45) Amphibious raid by 13-man team on security post at mouth of Dong Hoi River.

6. In essence, operations of this category have been taking place since June 1963. Additional such operations will probably evoke reactions similar to those prompted by past operations: e.g., propaganda complaints and spy trials, but little more. We share the view expressed in the Op-Plan's Appendix 6 that Hanoi might

* For more details, see Annex. The operation numbers are those used in Appendix 3 to Annex C of Op-Plan 34 A-64/TIGER.

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begin preparing a formal protest to the ICC. With the Op-Plan, we think it unlikely that non-Communist nations or the UN would become concerned with operations in this category, and Communist China's reaction would probably remain confined to denunciations of the US and its "puppets."

7. We believe, however, that operations launched from Laos against targets well north of the 17th parallel and/or operations involving the exfiltration of teams through Laotian territory -- i.e., operation No. 29 -- are not of the same order as the others in this category. Some such activity is already going on, of course, and if the level and success of present activity are not markedly increased, Hanoi's reaction is not likely to change in any major respect. On the other hand, should Laos-based or Laos-exfiltrating teams begin achieving some substantial success, the Communists would probably attempt strong local reaction and would try to seize -- or, at least, to destroy -- the bases from which such operations were being mounted, using whatever force was necessary. Should this force require additional introduction of North Vietnamese units into Laos, such units would probably be introduced. The chances of a general Communist offensive in Laos would increase, but this is probably not the course the North

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Vietnamese would initially follow. Charges of new US intervention would almost certainly be made, especially if the US made extensive use of helicopters or STOL aircraft for infiltration or resupply. Such charges would probably create additional difficulties for Souvanna Phouma and might prompt certain of our European allies, especially the French, to assert that US actions were jeopardizing the LAOS settlements.

CATEGORY II -- ATTRITIONAL OPERATIONS

8. General description. These include small-scale resistance operations, airborne and seaborne raids by small forces on important military and civil installations, and demolition of important facilities.

9. Specific operations under consideration.

a. (32) Seaborne 12-man team strike on Vinh Son radar installation.

b. (34) 3-company amphibious raid on Ile du Tigre (north of 17th parallel about 20 miles off the NVN coast).

c. (42) 14-man team amphibious raid on security post and coastal defense battery north of Dong Hoi.

d. (44) 10-man team amphibious raid to sabotage bridge on Route 1 north of Dong Hoi.

e. (54) Airdropped 10-man long-term team for hit-and-run attacks on Lang Son-Hanoi railway.

f. (55) Airdropped long-term 5-man team to operate against Yen Bay-Lao Kay railway northwest of Yen Bay.

10. In accord with Appendix 6 of the Op-Plan, we believe successful Category II operations will evoke DRV propaganda and complaints to the ICC; but we do not agree with its judgment that the DRV would be likely to respond by requesting any appreciable increase in Chinese material assistance. Hanoi probably would increase the intensity of Communist activity in Laos, though probably not to the point of launching an all-out offensive. We would not anticipate any major new pressures in the south, since we believe Hanoi and the Viet Cong are already doing all they are capable of doing there without changing the nature of the war. However, the Communists might undertake some specific retaliatory measures: e.g., more intensive attacks upon South Vietnam's rail system, increased terrorism aimed particularly at Americans. etc.

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11. We do not believe, however, that all of the operations in this category would produce similar degrees of Communist reaction. For example, operations against the Lang Son-Hanoi and the Yen Bay-Lao Kay railways -- if repeated and successful -- are much more likely to evoke a sharp Communist reaction than operations against objectives in the southern portion of North Vietnam. With respect to the Ile du Tigre, a three-company amphibious assault on a fortified island over 20 miles off the coast -- unlike the sabotage of a railroad bridge -- could not be plausibly represented as the work of indigenous dissidents. Whatever be the uniforms worn by the attacking troops, the Ile du Tigre raid would be construed by Hanoi, and the world, as a deliberate incursion into North Vietnamese territory by RVN regular forces -- an incursion made with US consent. Some traffic and memoranda relating to the Op-Plan suggest that the Ile du Tigre is part of the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ). If this were the case, international political reaction to a raid against it would be very sharp indeed. Even if attacking GVN forces could prove conclusively that the island had been fortified and was being used as an infiltration training and staging base -- in contravention of the Geneva Accords -- to the world, the GVN's guilt in launching a military attack against part of the supposedly sacrosanct DMZ

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would probably be interpreted as greater than Hanoi's guilt in making improper use of this plot of ground. However, we are convinced [REDACTED] that the Ile du Tigre is clearly North Vietnamese territory and is not located within the DMZ.*

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* No specific mention of the Ile du Tigre is made in the 1954 Geneva Accords or any of the protocols, appendices and annexes to those Accords. The precise boundaries of the DMZ are spelled out in a Ruling issued on 15 September 1954 by the Joint Central Commission for Viet-Nam in accordance with Articles 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 32 of the Geneva Agreement, paragraph I of the Agreement's Annex, and a supplementary Ruling of 13 August. (The text of the applicable ruling is given in the Department of State's International Boundary Study No. 19, "Viet-Nam 'Demarcation Line'," 10 September 1962.) The Northern Boundary of the DMZ commences with "An East-West line running from the mouth of the /Ben Hai/ river (2.8 km north of Cua-Tung) (251-850) to the village of Yen-Giu-Eac...." Hence the point on the coast 2.8 km north of Cua-Tung may be taken as the northeasternmost point of the DMZ. The Ile du Tigre is 14.5 miles east and 9 miles north (or, on a direct line, about 17 miles northeast) of this point. The Geneva Agreement and its related amplifying documents make no mention of any seaward extension of the DMZ. However, even if the "territorial waters" of the DMZ were presumed to be covered by a three mile -- or even a twelve mile -- extension of its land boundaries, the Ile du Tigre would still not fall within its purview.

We understand that the GVN asserts that the island is within the DMZ. In the light of circumstances set forth above, this ascertainment would seem to have no basis.

CATEGORY III - PUNITIVE OPERATIONS

12. General description. These are semicovert resistance/sabotage actions designed to damage and/or destroy facilities or installations critical to the economy, industrial development, and internal security of the DRV. These actions include raids by company or battalion size military or paramilitary forces, airborne or seaborne, sabotage by small teams of important targets, and the active organization, recruitment and employment of resistance movements within North Vietnam. Such actions are to be as covert as possible, but the duration of such operations and size of the forces required for their execution may result in their becoming basically overt attacks on the Hanoi regime.

13. Specific operations under consideration:

- a. (33) 6-man seaborne team strike (by UDT) on dredges and buoy tender in Haiphong harbor channel.
- b. (35) 4-6-man seaborne team strike on Ben Tuy POL dump (near Vinh) designed to destroy it by use of incendiary rockets.

14. The probably reaction to Category III operations must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The attack on the channel of

Haiphong harbor (33) would probably evoke a vociferous response. For some time the Viet Cong have been building their strength in the Rung Sat area along the Saigon River (Saigon's outlet to the sea). As a retaliatory gesture, Hanoi might order the VC to harass shipping coming into Saigon. However, this is something the VC are likely to do anyway, if they acquire the ability. Hence a successful attack upon Haiphong would not in itself generate any new threat to Saigon, though in retaliation the VC would probably intensify their efforts in this area.

15. A successful ground attack against the Vinh POL storage depot (35) would probably produce a barrage of Hanoi, and Peiping, propoganda. Hanoi might try to launch a retaliatory Viet Cong attack in the south (e.g., an attack against the storage facilities at Nha Be near Saigon). The RVN operation might produce some neutralist grumbling and nervousness, but so long as the attacks were launched by RVN forces on the ground at the time of the attack (regardless of how they arrived in the target area), we doubt if there would be any Free World reaction likely to cause the US serious difficulty.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

ANNEX

30 December 1963

NORTH VIETNAM OPERATIONS PRESENTLY
UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION

(Numbers keyed to Appendix
3 to Annex C to COMUS
MACV/ [REDACTED] OPLAN 1.5(c)
34A-64) 3.4(b)(1)

CATEGORY I

29. (Airops 1)

Interdiction of Rte 7 by Abn Sp Fcs, 15-man team (App 25 to Anx E to OPLAN 34-64) and/or Air Ops #1, 15-man team.

Airdrop 15-man team for hit-and-run attack on Route 7 bridge (VG 486 276) southeast of Cua Rao. Team to exfiltrate into Laos.

Description of targets: bridge, 23' x 10', wood
bridge, 46' x 10', concrete

30. (Airops 6)

Interdiction of Rte 8 by Abn Sp Fcs, 15-man team (App 24 to Anx E to OPLAN 34-64) and/or Air Ops #6, 8-man team.

Airdrop long term 8-man team to operate against bridges and traffic on Rte 8 between WF 3088 402 and 400 455.

Description of targets: Bridge, masonry, arch
Bridge, 20' x 7',
masonry, arch
Bridge, 33' x 10',
masonry, arch

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Ferry Point, State of
bridge, 30' x 9' mason-
nry, arch, undetermined
Bridge, 36' x 10', masonry,
arch
Bridge, 157' x 7', masonry,
arch
Ford

31. Interdiction of Rte 12 by Abn Sp Fcs, 15-man team (App 23 to Anx E to OPLAN 34-64)
43. (Marops 4) *Mar Ops #4, Amphibious raid, 4-man team, bridges
Sabotage Ly Hca bridge (XE 615 505). 4-man team
Description of target. An 8 span, deck type bridge, of steel and concrete construction, extending SE/NW across the Rao Da. The bridge is single lane, approximately 480 x 15 feet, with a central span approximately 19 feet wide.
Defense. A guard tower is located at the SE end of the Ly Hca bridge and it should be noted that a Swatow Patrol Boat base is located near Badon in the Song Giang approximately 10 NM from the Rao Da.
45. (Marops 7) *Mar Ops #7, Amphibious raid, 12-man team on Security Post
Sneak attack on security post at mouth of Dong Hoi River (XE 732 338). 12-man team.

CATEGORY II

- 32. SEAL Team strike on Vinh Son, 12-man team (App 7 Anx E to OPLAN 34-64)
- 34. Amphibious raid Ile du Tigre by 2 Marine Cos, 1 Rcn Co, UDT/SEAL, accompanied by mining of Quang Khe (App 1 & 5a to Anx E OPLAN 34-64)
- 42. (Marops 3) *Mar Ops #3, Amphibious raid 10-man strike force, 4-man boat crew on Security Post.

Raid on security post (XE 593 552) and four coastal defense guns (XE 596 553). 10-man team
- 44. (Marops 5) *Mar Ops #5, Amphibious raid, 10-man team, bridges

Sabotage Route 1 bridge (XE 599 542).

Description of target: 44' x '3', deck type bridge
- 54. (Airops 2) *Air Ops #2, Abn drop 10-man team on RR.

Airdrop 10-man long-term team for hit-and-run attack on Lang Son-Hanoi railway (between XJ 505 825 and XJ 509 811). Team to remain in area for long-term operation.

Description of targets:
 - Bridge, 65'
 - Culvert (previous bridge, 23')
 - Culvert (previous bridge, 23')

55. (Airops 3)

* Air Ops #3, Abn drop 5-man team on RR

Airdrop long term 5-man team to operate against Yen Bay - Lao Kay railway northwest of Yen Bay. Exact area depends on drop area used.

Description of targets:

Approximately 100 targets ranging from culverts to 3 track railroad siding.

CATEGORY III

33. (Marops 15)

SEAL Team strike on dredges on buoy tender in Haiphong Channel (App 15 to Anx E to OPLAN 34-64) and/or Mar Ops #15, 6-man team.

Sneak attack to destroy channel buoys and navigational aids. Mining Haiphong harbor approaches. Sink dredge or ships. 4 UDT swimmers and 2-man boat crew.

Description of target: Two 300-ton, bucket type, barge loading dredges (approximately 25 x 160 feet) and numerous buoys and navigational lights.

Defenses: In addition to military and security activity in the area it has been reported that the harbor and channel are regularly patrolled by naval patrol craft.

35. (Marops 2)

SEAL Team strike on Ben Thuy by 4-man force (App 9a to Anx E to OPLAN 34-64) and/or Mar Ops #2 6-man team.

Incendiary rocket attack on Vinh Ben Thuy
POL dump. (WF 761 648) 6-man team.

Description of target: Walled POL storage
area contains 5 large and 6 small revetted
vertical tanks, 2 semiburied tanks, 5 small
horizontal tanks and 13 storage/support
buildings. Petroleum pier observed on Song Ca
River south of POL storage area.

Defense: There is likely to be a night patrol
along the length of the river until reaching
the port of Ben Thuy, which is above the
target.

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