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Mandatory Review

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Political

Prime Minister Ky reportedly has responded to criticism leveled at him by Gen Thi, commander of 1st Corps, who implied that Ky's national program lacked positive action. Ky accused Thi of undermining the government by allowing students and other groups to demonstrate in central Vietnam.

A serious morale problem, caused by poor leadership, exists in the junior and field grade officer ranks according to Gen Khang, commander of the Capital Military District, and if not corrected could result in more serious trouble. Khang stressed that the war itself had little to do with the lowered morale and that there still exists a considerable reservoir of will and determination to carry on the struggle against the Viet Cong.

Some Viet Cong reportedly expect an armistice and negotiations next year. Vietnamese intelligence and security services say that the Communists' Kien Hoa Provincial Committee has instructed its district committees to prepare for an armistice in 1966 by selecting cadres for a training course in the Cambodian border area on how to operate as "legal" residents. They are to be responsible, after the cease fire, for organizing another "proletarian revolution." Intellectuals are also to be recruited and organized to begin the revolution in urban areas. In Phu Yen and Binh Dinh Provinces, the Viet Cong as of mid-November were said to be planning large-scale military campaigns with the intention of seizing all of Phu Yen to improve their bargaining position in negotiations with the US, which they claimed would take place in Geneva next year.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Tran Van Do believes that it would be difficult to maintain South Vietnamese fighting morale if the Communists should decide to negotiate. The people would at once conclude that the war was over, and the Communists would take advantage of the discussions to solidify their position. His statements are in line with those of other leaders, many of whom are apprehensive about negotiations. The continuation of Viet Cong "subversive insurgency" during

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and after an armistice would be logical. Moreover the period immediately preceding an armistice will probably be a violent one as participants seek to bargain from a position of strength.

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The Viet Cong "Christmas cease-fire" offer has stimulated speculation in some quarters that it is a step toward "peace" through an extended truce and negotiations. The Communists have, however, used past holiday lulls to regroup for attacks. This year's Viet Cong-proclaimed truce during TET (31 January to 6 February) was followed by the assault on Pleiku.

Buddhist officials in Da Nang have accused US troops of desecrating the Khue Bac Pagoda, and a protest was reportedly sent to Ambassador Lodge on 8 December following the assembly of about 500 persons to demand reparations. The pagoda was supposedly damaged on 29 October by US troops firing at a sniper. Subsequent incidents -- as alleged by a Unified Buddhist Association (UBA) representative -- involved the destruction of a statue of Buddha and confiscation of food during searches. Some local officials believe the latter offenses could have been committed by hoodlums or Viet Cong. The situation acquires added importance because of the imminence of the UBA Congress; Thich Giac Ngo, the principal bonze of the damaged pagoda, is said to have threatened public suicide.
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