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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

EVIDENCE OF CONTINUING VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST WAR PREPARATIONS

SUPPLEMENT

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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SC No. 03777/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
24 January 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Evidence of Continuing Vietnamese
Communist War Preparations

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[REDACTED] The size of the 325th's four subordinates is not known, but if each is of regimental size, the total number of troops involved could be about 6,000. The average size of PAVN regiments already confirmed in South Vietnam is 1,500 men.

4.

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[REDACTED] If this analysis proves out, it would provide almost conclusive evidence that a sizable unit of North Vietnamese regulars moved into South Vietnam, or along its border, during the lull in US bombings.

5. The PAVN 325th Infantry Division has for more than a year been engaged in forming and training new regimental units specifically for infiltration. The presence in South Vietnam of three regiments trained and staffed in large part by the 325th regulars has already been confirmed by prisoners of war from these regiments. They infiltrated into South Vietnam in late 1964 and early 1965. One other regiment infiltrated in mid-1965 and there are also reports--as yet unconfirmed--that one additional regiment infiltrated in late 1965. It has now been some six months since the last unit firmly identified as associated with the 325th Division began its infiltration to South Vietnam; thus the garrison in North Vietnam would have had sufficient time to have trained several new regiments. It is probably these newly formed units which [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] have now moved into position along the South Vietnam-Cambodia border.

Stepup in Flow of Supplies and Road Repairs In
Southern DRV

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6. There is also conclusive evidence [REDACTED] that the flow of supplies toward Viet Cong-held areas of South Vietnam has been speeded up during the lull in US bombings. [REDACTED]

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7. [REDACTED]

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8. It has been estimated that by 24 December the North Vietnamese had achieved sufficient flexibility in the routing of internal traffic throughout the country to partially ease the distribution problems that developed during the first few months of the air strikes. The round-the-clock effort currently under way will allow the North Vietnamese to make an almost complete recovery from the effects of the strikes. Prior to the cessation of the bombings, the North Vietnamese were transporting more supplies into the southernmost provinces than were needed for internal requirements. With the increased effort being put forth since the cessation of the air strikes, the level of supplies moved at least to staging depots in southern North Vietnam and Laos has undoubtedly increased markedly.

9. The North Vietnamese and Chinese are also continuing their efforts to repair the key transportation routes between their two countries.

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[REDACTED] in early January, another Chinese Communist military construction unit moved into northwest North Vietnam from Communist China. Aerial photography of 21 December disclosed extensive construction activity in the vicinity of Yen Bai in an area where a previously detected Chinese unit was located. Similar activity has been observed along the Hanoi - Ping-hsiang rail line in northeast North Vietnam where other Chinese engineer units are known to be operating.

North Vietnamese Air Defense Developments

10. [REDACTED]

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Perhaps the most dramatic development since 24 December has been the increasingly aggressive and effective effort by the North Vietnamese and Chinese Communists against high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft operating over North Vietnam. During this period a total of five reconnaissance drones have been flown over North Vietnam and Southwest China. All five apparently were shot down either by surface-to-air missiles or by MIG jet aircraft flown from Chinese or, in one case, North Vietnamese bases.

11. The first drone to be shot down during this period was on 24 December. Chinese Communist jet fighters, based at Meng-tzu, penetrated some 40 nautical miles into North Vietnamese territory to bring down this drone. Another drone, downed on 1 January, was credited to jets operating out of North Vietnam. The third drone lost, on 3 January, was pursued by Chinese jets and may have been damaged by them, since it did not return to its recovery area.

12. This increased effectiveness of the Chinese Communist - Soviet - North Vietnamese air defense units has resulted in a considerable loss in US intelligence-gathering capabilities. Low-level

reconnaissance has been generally confined to post-strike damage photography and has provided little strategic intelligence. Presumably this increased aggressiveness was brought on at least in part by a desire by the Communists to conceal military developments being pushed during the stand-down in US air strikes. That such a build-up is occurring is borne out by the fact that, since 23 December, eight Soviet AN-12 heavy transports have been noted flying into North Vietnam. Each of these aircraft is capable of carrying some 10 tons of cargo on such a flight. The nature of the cargo carried by these aircraft is unknown, but the fact that it is being sent all the way from the Soviet Union by aircraft suggests that it is priority military equipment, probably related to North Vietnam's air defense system. Prior to the cessation of US air strikes, flights by Soviet heavy transports into North Vietnam had only averaged about one a month.

13. Also during the lull in the bombings, Chinese Communist aircraft have become much bolder in crossing the North Vietnamese border. On 8 January one flight of an unknown number of Chinese jet fighters, probably based at Meng-tzu, was noted penetrating into North Vietnam a distance of approximately 25 nautical miles. The following day, 9 January, at least one probable Ningming-based jet fighter was reflected in similar activity, this time flying some 25 nautical miles into the northeastern portion of North Vietnam.

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the North Vietnamese air force is taking advantage of the lull in US air operations to increase training flights. The average number of North Vietnamese jet sorties during the bombing lull is about 35 per day, up some 14 per day over previous periods. It is apparent that during the lull in US air activity, Hanoi is attempting to increase its pilot proficiency in such areas as regular navigational flying, ground-controlled intercept, and air-to-air attacks.

14. One of the major defects in North Vietnam's air defense system has long been the lack of a sufficient number of airfields capable of

handling jet aircraft. Of the five airfields long enough to be used by jets, only two, Phuc Yen and Kep, have been used as operational jet bases. During the bombing lull, however, there has been tenuous evidence [REDACTED] that jets have, for the first time, been flying into and out of two additional fields, Gia Lam near Hanoi and Kien An near Haiphong. In addition, [REDACTED] an unusual number of transport flights by North Vietnamese aircraft to Dien Bien Phu airfield. Dien Bien Phu had been out of commission since June of 1965 due to damage inflicted by US air strikes. On 20 January, at least 11 North Vietnamese transports flew round-trip flights between Gia Lam and Dien Bien Phu, suggesting that the damage has been repaired. Although there is no evidence to confirm it, it is possible that the transport activity into Dien Bien Phu means that it will be expanded to handle jet traffic.

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15. The activation of Kien An airfield for jet fighters and the possible expansion of Dien Bien Phu would considerably increase the range of North Vietnamese jet fighters. It would also increase substantially their ability to react to US air strikes entering North Vietnam both from the coast and from the direction of Laos. All of the air defense activity noted since the cessation of US air strikes suggest that the North Vietnamese intend to make any future air strikes more costly for the US.

Viet Cong Action

16. Analysis [REDACTED] since the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam has revealed no significant changes, and it appears that the Communist military forces in the South remain in a combat posture, ready to resume operations at the end of Tet.

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17. [REDACTED]

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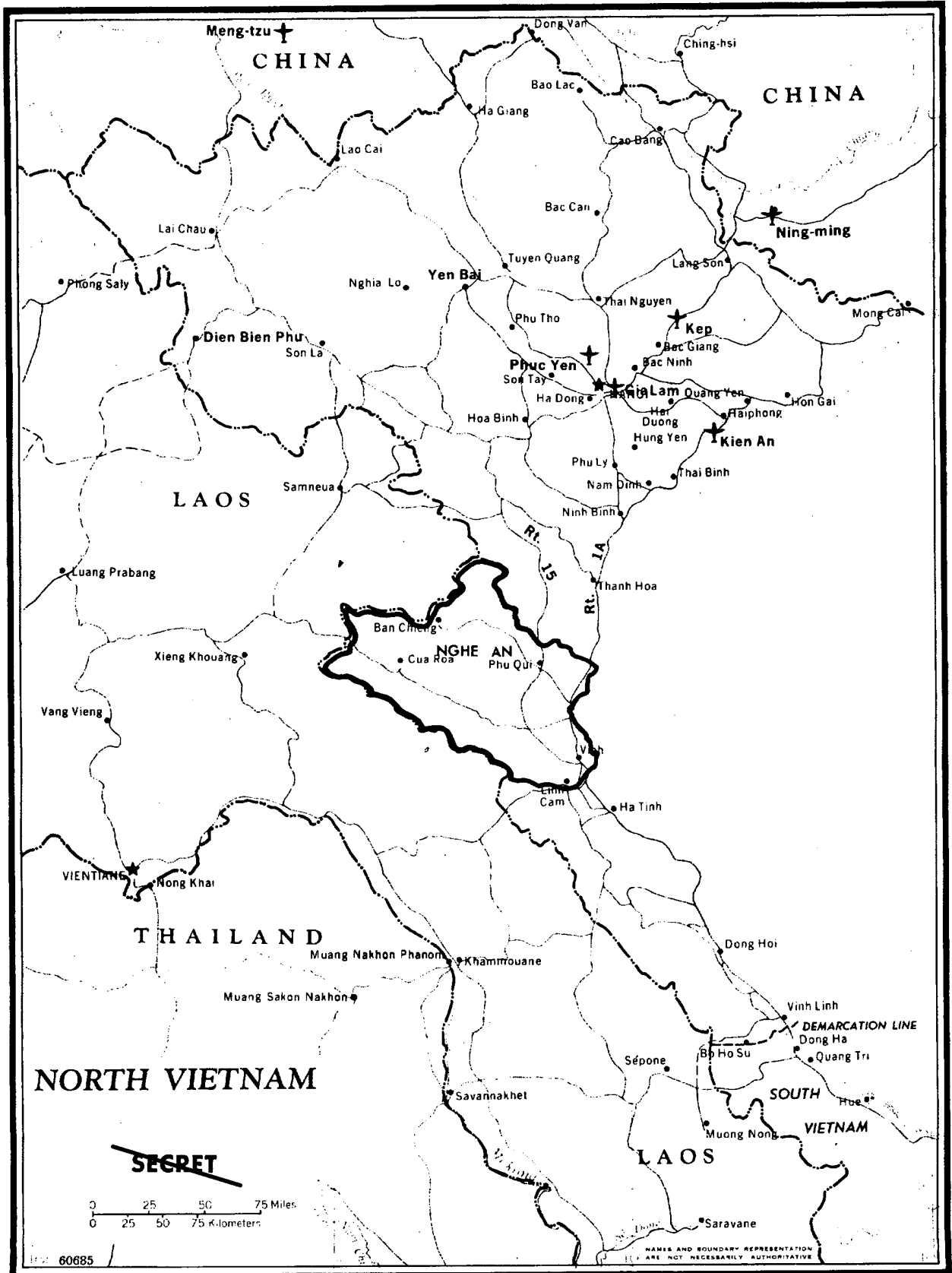
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Fulfillment of these orders was evidently thwarted by the timely reinforcement of the Michelin area with US troops, but a nearby Special Forces camp in Binh Long Province was attacked by five Viet Cong companies on 17 January.

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NORTH VIETNAM

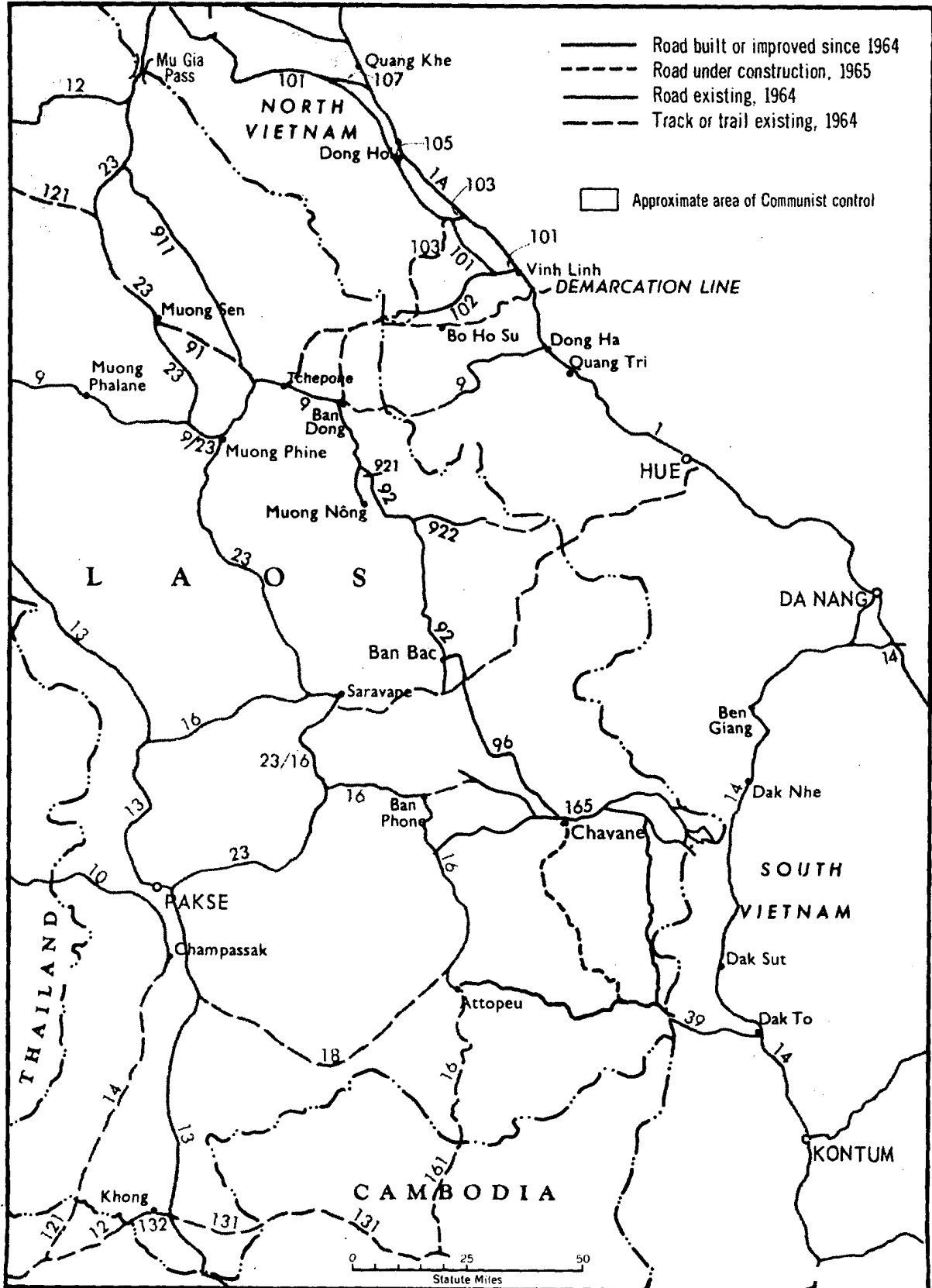
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