

20 August 1979

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Sino-Vietnam Border Situation

1. The Chinese have withdrawn most of the 30 or so divisions that they deployed to the border area during their Vietnam incursion. The Chinese probably have about 100,000 troops still deployed near Vietnam, more than double their prewar deployment in the region but down sharply from the 500,000 stationed there during the war. China's forces have been withdrawn in a piecemeal fashion, however, and elements of many units remain in the area, perhaps in anticipation of some future military requirement. Despite continuing border incursions by Vietnam and the lack of progress in negotiations with Vietnam, China has not yet undertaken any major strengthening of its forces in the border area.

2. Vietnam's military posture near the border with China has been substantially improved since March. The Vietnamese have gradually built up their forces north of Hanoi to more than 200,000 troops, including many main line divisions and some units previously deployed in Kampuchea. These forces are well armed and sufficiently strong to cope with any attack by Chinese units currently deployed near the border. The Soviets have supported the buildup with deliveries of large quantities of equipment and materiel.

3. Another Chinese invasion of Vietnam does not seem likely in the near future. China has been downplaying the likelihood of a second invasion any time soon but apparently intends to maintain pressure on Vietnam and could quickly mobilize its forces if it

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: JUN 2002

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became necessary to teach Vietnam a second lesson. Despite the sharp reduction in their military presence near the border, the Chinese have succeeded in tying down large numbers of Vietnamese troops and caused Vietnam to put itself on virtually a war footing. Vietnam's buildup has had a serious impact on its already hard pressed economy and could result in major food shortages in the country later this year.

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