

MEMORANDUM**NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL****SECRET****URGENT INFORMATION**

January 5, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER**FROM:**Phil Odeen *PO***SUBJECT:**VSSG Study on Hanoi Intentions and US/GVN
Actions

On the basis of Tom Latimer's memo on the possibility of a major multi-front enemy offensive, Dick Kennedy suggested an urgent VSSG effort to "pull together all the intelligence information, making a clean assessment and laying out options for the next few months in Vietnam." You agreed and suggested a meeting within two days of your return.

VSSG Study

On December 16, I initiated a VSSG assessment of enemy intentions and potential for this dry season, as well as a study of control and main force situation and progress with RVNAF force improvements. The CIA draft on the enemy strategy and threat is due Friday, January 7, and the DOD draft paper on the friendly situation will follow next week. I believe these studies will provide the background to determine the steps we need to take.

We will prepare a summary of the CIA conclusions for you as soon as they are received. This assessment of the threat is an essential first step, but actions that we should take and/or encourage the GVN to take is the more important aspect. Once the VSSG Working Group has completed its paper, by mid-January, the VSSG principals can meet to discuss what actions should be taken.

An Assessment of the Threat

On the basis of evidence to date, we do not fully share Tom's concern that Hanoi may mount a major multi-front campaign in 1972. Personnel infiltration is somewhat above levels of last year (Table 1) but well below the levels prior to Tet 68. Supply infiltration is the lowest in several years.

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Table 1

| | <u>NVN Infiltration Starts</u> (Oct - Dec Total) |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1967-68 | 150,000 (est.) ^{a/} |
| 1968-69 | 40,000 |
| 1969-70 | 20,000 |
| 1970-71 | 50,000 |
| 1971-72 | 60,000 |

a/ Note: Comparable data for 1967-68 are not available, but the infiltration total of 240,000 is at least double the level of any year since.

Within SVN the major threat area appears to be MR-II and especially the Central Highlands area. This year's infiltration pattern for other areas is about like last year's. The clear exception is the VC/NVA B-3 Front, the headquarters that controls the Central Highland area. About one-third of all of the troops moving south (19,200 of the 60,000) are ticketed for the B-3 Front. This includes the 320th NVA division which is moving there from NVN. Only 5,000 to 10,000 troops annually have been sent to the B-3 Front over the past three years.

We have just received a CIA study of the situation in the MR-II Central Highlands. In addition [redacted] the senior U.S. advisor in that area, is presently in Washington. I met with him briefly yesterday, and he is scheduled to spend an hour with us on Thursday. Based on his comments and the CIA study, we will provide you with a brief assessment of the situation in MR-II.

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In summary, a major VC/NVA push in the Central Highlands is clearly in the cards. But there is no hard evidence indicating that anything like Tet 1968 will occur in other areas. In fact, the evidence is to the contrary. I expect the CIA study being prepared for the VSSG will give us a more systematic and analytic assessment of prospects.

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