

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry Kissinger *HK*
SUBJECT: Situation in the Countryside in Vietnam

This memorandum reviews briefly the current situation on the ground in Vietnam and discusses the enemy's strategic options for the dry season.

Recent Pacification Developments

Rainy Season Results - The overall control results (the VSSG measure of pacification progress) are shown on the following chart. (Tab A)

Control is the ability of either the GVN or the Viet Cong to have unimpeded day and night access to the rural population. If the GVN has access in daytime and the VC at night, the hamlet is influenced by both sides.

The control percentages are for South Vietnam's rural population of 10.8 million. Because all of the urban population of 7 million is under GVN control, GVN control in the countryside of 60% at the end of August is equivalent to GVN control of 76% of the total population.

According to the chart, the GVN continued to register control gains through the just-ended rainy season:

-- GVN control, which had begun to level off in the 45% to 50% range in late 1969 and early 1970, rose throughout the summer from 50% at the end of April to 60% at the end of August.

This gain was primarily due to the enemy's force diversions from South Vietnam to Cambodia and South Laos, but improved GVN performance also played a role.

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GVN control was up 14% in MR 3 (around Saigon) and 13% in MR 2 (the highlands). Three enemy regiments were diverted from the highlands to South Laos and at least four were transferred from MR 3 to Cambodia.

In MR 1 the GVN made steady progress (9%) and in the Delta GVN control advanced 7%.

Dry Season Prospects - Because of continued U. S. redeployments from MRs 1 and 3, no substantial dry season control gains are expected in these areas and improved RVNAF performance should prevent losses.

In MR 2, however, losses are expected due to poor GVN performance, U. S. redeployments, and stepped up enemy activity.

Therefore, if the GVN is to achieve countrywide control gains over the dry season, MR 4 gains will have to offset MR 2 losses.

The prospects for Delta gains are enhanced by the recent appointment of a new MR 4 commander who plans to use his maneuver units to occupy the enemy's key delta base areas. But the enemy can be expected to strongly oppose these actions, so the overall outcome is uncertain.

The Enemy's Recent Strategy

The Enemy's 1970 Plans - According to a high-level defector who attended COSVN's late 1969 PRP Congress, the enemy targets in 1970 were:

-- The Delta where the enemy's forces were to retake the initiative because "the Delta is South Vietnam's most populous area and the party must control as many people as possible when a ceasefire is declared,"

-- The highlands, "the areas which possess the greatest military advantage and border on North Vietnam's rear support areas,"

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-- The cities, the centers of political action to exploit the contradictions between the Thieu government and the people; ("during the ceasefire the cities will witness decisive demonstrations, including the demand for the overthrow of the Thieu government.")

The enemy's goals were to:

-- Break the back of the pacification program and Vietnamization, and

-- After the ceasefire is declared, excite the people to overthrow the Thieu government and establish, initially, a coalition government.

Enemy Military Activity - All evidence suggests that, in accordance with his plan, enemy military activity in 1970 has been focused against the pacification program:

-- The enemy has launched very few battalion-size attacks in 1970 compared with 1968 and 1969:

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Weekly average of battalion-size attacks	1.98	0.6	0.3

-- But small scale attacks have not declined:

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Weekly average of small scale attacks	70.6	71.8	70.0

-- And incidents of harassment/terror/and sabotage, a primary anti-pacification tactic, have increased:

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Weekly average of H/T/S incidents	401.7	388.7	446.0

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Enemy Force Structure Changes - Moreover, the enemy has systematically downgraded his forces to aid his counter-pacification effort. We have evidence, again in conformance with captured directives, that many (at least seven) enemy regiments and additional separate battalions have been broken down into small units to attack pacification.

a clever strategy

Target Priorities - The distribution of attacks throughout South Vietnam in 1970 shows that the enemy is adhering to his planned target priorities:

-- In 1968 and 1969 one-third of the enemy's effort was concentrated in MR 3. But in 1970 he shifted to a political strategy and only one-sixth of his total attacks occurred there.

-- In contrast, the share of total enemy attacks that has taken place in MR 2 has risen steadily from one-sixth in 1968 to one-fourth in 1969 to almost one-third in 1970.

-- Enemy attacks in MRs 1 and 4 have remained roughly one-fourth each of total attacks.

The Enemy's Dry Season Strategy Choices

We have seen the enemy's protracted war strategy played out for over a year now. It must be as clear to him as it is to us that pacification has not been turned back in MRs 1, 3, and 4. In MR 2 the enemy has achieved important successes and has good opportunities. But, the inescapable conclusion is that countrywide, pacification has not been turned back.

Despite this failure and despite the unexpected developments in Cambodia, there is as yet no evidence of a fundamental change in the protracted war strategy the enemy embarked on in 1969. The most recent directive, COSVN-27, dated August 28, 1970, (well before your ceasefire initiative) instructed that during the dry season attacks were to be accelerated on all fronts to aid in achieving the goals of complete U.S. withdrawals by June, 1971. We can only make some informed guesses on the enemy's military plans:

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-- (1) The enemy's first objective will be to restore and protect his supply lines in South Laos and Cambodia. Having moved 26,000 tons of supplies through Sihanoukville between December, 1966, and April, 1969 (in contrast to the CIA's previous estimate of 3,000 to 7,000 tons), the enemy must now insure that he can increase his South Laos throughput by at least one-third. He must expand his logistic network in South Laos and set up a new logistic structure in Cambodia and deploy forces to protect both.

-- (2) The second dry season task facing the enemy is the requirement to prevent the loss of his base areas in MRs 3 and 4. He must protect his threatened military assets in this, the most densely populated area of South Vietnam, to insure the credibility of his ultimate political demands and tie down RVNAF resources.

Besides these essential tasks, the enemy will almost certainly attempt to go on the offensive. His offensive choices boil down to attacks:

-- in western Cambodia,

-- in MR 2 to turn back pacification, threaten Vietnamization, and/or hold territory in anticipation of a political settlement,

-- in Northern Laos to intimidate and possibly overrun the RLG.

The Enemy's Strategy and Ceasefire

Further adjustments in the enemy's strategy, for example possible enemy acceptance of a ceasefire, probably await the resolution of three major uncertainties.

The first is Cambodia and only after the dry season and a possible Cambodian enemy offensive will it be clear to Hanoi whether its position has been seriously hurt by the emergence of the Lon Nol government.

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The second uncertainty is U.S. withdrawals. After another 100,000 U.S. troops have left by May 1, 1971, Hanoi will be in a position to see what it will take to defeat Vietnamization and decide whether it is willing to pay the price.

Lastly, the enemy is probably not yet convinced that the "fraud" of pacification cannot be turned back, even though he must now have serious doubts.

None of these uncertainties should remain after the dry season. It is possible that, whatever the dry season outcome, the enemy could well try to negotiate a ceasefire against accelerated U.S. redeployments and a fixed U.S. withdrawal date:

-- If the enemy does poorly in the dry season and is on the verge of losing his base areas in the Delta, he could seek a ceasefire to halt his decline and switch the struggle into the political arena before the September, 1971, Presidential election. He might try this, particularly if he believed he could obtain the concession of accelerated and complete U.S. withdrawals and prevent a possible collapse in VCI morale or their exposure to GVN reprisals.

-- If the enemy does well in the dry season, his case at the bargaining table will be strengthened. Paradoxically, however, this would probably make it less likely that he would seek a ceasefire because his military prospects would encourage him to continue fighting rather than bear the risks of a ceasefire. But he would still want to remove the threat posed by the continued presence of U.S. combat forces. If he thought a ceasefire would help do this, he would give it serious consideration.

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CHART 1

PERCENT RURAL POPULATION CONTROL (VSSG CONTROL INDICATOR)

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

