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MEMORANDUM

INFORMATION

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

February 20, 1973

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Noted by HAK

MEMORANDUM FOR:

MR. KISSINGER

FROM:

WILLIAM L. STEARMAN *WLS*

SUBJECT:

Ceasefire Developments
(February 20, 4:30 p.m. EST)

State Dept. review completed

MORI C05082152

The following is a report on current ceasefire developments in South Vietnam and on the present situation in Laos and Cambodia. This report includes information received from State, Defense and CIA as of 4:30 p.m. EST February 20, 1973.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

Vietnam

ARMY REVIEW COMPLETED

Military

-- The military situation did not change significantly, although there are some initial reports that ARVN is making further progress in the battle around Sa Huynh in southern Quang Ngai Province.

-- The focus of activity in MR II continues to be primarily along Highway 14 between Pleiku and Kontum Provinces.

-- The level of activity in MR's III and IV is reportedly light.

-- There were 33 major and 145 minor violations reported during the 24-hour period ending 0700 EST February 20.

Political

-- Initial Vietnamese political reactions to the President's new "popular Front" have been predictably mixed. The oppositionist An Quang Buddhists are somewhat disturbed by the implication that attendance at the February 17 meeting by four An Quang associated senators meant that An Quang was formally represented.

-- Nguyen Ngoc Huy, respected head of the moderately oppositionist Progressive Nationalist Movement, has told our Embassy officials that he has agreed to participate, but remains deeply distrustful of Thieu's intentions.

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Ceasefire Control

Four Party Joint Military Commission

-- Reports from U.S. Region Chiefs indicate that ARVN commanders and Province Chiefs are aware of the joint appeal on the enforcement of the ceasefire, but have received no official instructions in regard to the appeal or its dissemination.

-- Team sites in Regions I, II and III were visited by the Ad Hoc Committee inspection teams yesterday.

ICCS

-- As a result of the FPJMC Chief's meeting of 19 February, an ICCS team from Region V was to conduct an investigation of the downing of a U.S. helicopter on 16 February; however, reports indicate that only the ICCS Region V Canadian representative accompanied the FPJMC investigating team to the crash site.

POWs

-- There are 19,808 enemy POWs interned in five operational camps in South Vietnam.

-- As of February 20, a total of 6,600 POWs have been repatriated to the Communist side. An additional 10,980 VC POWs were previously released by the GVN under the "New Life" program.

-- On February 20 the ICCS POW Teams observed the out-processing of 604 PRG prisoners from Phu Quoc Island. POW teams also observed the release of 320 RVN prisoners at Loc Ninh and 204 PRG prisoners at the Stell Bridge (Quang Tri) release post.

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Withdrawal and Redeployment of U.S. /FWMAF

-- From an in-country total of 23,516 U.S. troops on January 27, 9,385 (about 40%) were reported withdrawn by 20 February.

-- From an in-country total of 35,396 ROK troops on January 27, 15,852 (about 45%) were reported withdrawn by February 20.

Laos

-- The Prime Minister's office announced that a ceasefire agreement had been reached and would be signed at 2300 EST on February 20, to take effect at 2400 EST on February 21.

-- The official text of the agreement has not yet been released. It is presumably based on the Communist proposal of February 19 calling for an immediate ceasefire and bombing halt to be followed by discussions on a political settlement and withdrawal of foreign forces. Reports of rightist discontent with Souvanna's concessions continue.

-- Enemy forces attacking in the Bolovens Plateau have recovered hillside positions two miles north of Pakse and a concerted attack on the town is expected prior to the ceasefire. In the central panhandle, North Vietnamese attacks have forced friendly irregulars to pull back from the immediate area of Muong Phalane. To the north, Communist artillery has slowed government units seeking to move toward the edge of the Plaine des Jarres, and with the reported move of major new NVA elements into the area, Vang Pao's tenuous foothold east of the Plaine is endangered.

-- A DRV press attache in Vientiane has told a journalist that after an agreement Chinese troops would be withdrawn from Laos along with all foreign troops. PRC Second Secretary, on the other hand, has indicated that, in pursuance of bilateral agreements, the PRC will complete the road being built to Ban Houei Sai on the Thai border.

Cambodia

-- The press is reporting that Lon Nol wants Sirik Matak to take over as Vice President so that the Marshall can take his medical treatment abroad. However, there is still no indication when the log jam concerning the Vice Presidency will be broken, with Lon Non and Hang Thun Hak still reported opposed to the idea.

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-- Press reports indicate that some 2,000 teachers have gone on strike in Phnom Penh to reinforce their demands for a cost of living allowance. In Battambang, demonstrations and some looting are reported by the press. These actions are in response to the Government's boost in fuel prices and price rises for most other commodities.

-- Lon Nol addressed the nation by radio to request calm and to urge that protests be channeled through authorized channels.

-- FANK now appears to have sufficient troops to clear enemy units from around Neak Luong and to reopen Route 1 between Phnom Penh and the Mekong.

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