

NSC Staff Summary

~~SECRET~~

~~SENSITIVE~~

25X1

25X1

Summary of CIA Memorandum Entitled  
Enemy Strategy and Capabilities in Indochina Through May 1972

MORI/CDF per C02827639

The memorandum is divided into two parts:

- a) A brief overview of Hanoi's probable political and military intentions through the remainder of the dry season;
- b) A more detailed presentation of Hanoi's military capabilities in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos including the current movement of NVA troops and supplies to the various Indochinese military fronts.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

I. OVERVIEW

Hanoi's probable political intentions. As in the past, North Vietnamese military strategy will be designed to make political gains in South Vietnam, Paris, and the U.S. In this respect, Hanoi has almost certainly come to believe that military successes in Laos and Cambodia are not only needed to protect supply lines but can be important in furthering its political objectives in South Vietnam. Hanoi's most immediate political objectives are discrediting Vietnamization and eliminating the U.S. commitment to the GVN, including continued U.S. military supplies for the RVNAF.

Hanoi is likely in 1972 to focus on the latter. In this connection, they undoubtedly view the U.S. Presidential election as an opportunity. Although aware of diminished anti-war pressures in the U.S., Hanoi will attempt to create a political climate which (Hanoi hopes) will make it difficult for any candidate to be elected without committing himself to a complete cessation of U.S. military support for the Thieu regime.

President Nixon's trip to Peking provides another point of focus. The Chinese have reassured Hanoi, to some extent, but have not allayed all North Vietnamese suspicions. Hence, Hanoi will almost certainly attempt to demonstrate politically and militarily coincidental with the President's trip that North Vietnam controls its own destiny and will not be swayed by the major powers.

Diplomatically, Hanoi will probably hold to the PRG's "7 points" at least through February if only to forestall any softening in the Chinese position in connection with the President's visit. It also seems logical to assume,

Attached to

25X1\*

SECRET  SENSITIVE

2

however, that Hanoi is searching for a more effective diplomatic posture with which it hopes to revitalize U. S. domestic opposition to the war. Any new DRV formulation will exploit the POW issue more fully than before, possibly by offering more explicit assurances regarding prisoner return.

Hanoi's military intentions and capabilities. Hanoi's military pressures will attempt to create and sustain an impression of undiminished capacity for carrying on the war. In the main, North Vietnamese actions will attempt to generate headlines without running great risks of costly defeats.

NVA personnel infiltration into South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia is running somewhat ahead of last year's pace, but the enemy logistic effort is lagging considerably behind. However, the absolute tonnage difference is not great and could be made up in a matter of weeks if the Communists soon initiate a higher input level.

Hanoi cannot launch a nationwide military offensive throughout South Vietnam on anything approaching the scale of Tet 1968. We concede to Hanoi a general capability to mount impressive highpoints of military activity that would fall far short of the levels of offensive action postulated in the April 1971 SRG study but which could still have harmful military or psychological effects. Short of this, Hanoi has many options that cannot be viewed with complacency.

In terms of the various Indochina regions, the following enemy intentions appear likely:

-- Laos. In north Laos, the Communists will continue to press Long Tieng. If they take it, they may move further west and to Vang Vieng or to the junction of Routes 7 and 13. They will harass Luang Prabang but will probably not launch a direct assault. In the south, the NVA will consolidate their control of the Bolovens Plateau and may put pressure on Pakse or other Mekong river towns. Again, however, a direct assault on these town is believed unlikely.

-- Cambodia. The Communists have a wide range of options. They are expected to attack in one or more areas along Route 6; in the Tonle Toch region east of Phnom Penh; or in the area northwest of Phnom Penh. They might temporarily seize a provincial capital and increase pressure in the Phnom Penh environs, but a direct assault on the capital is unlikely.

25X1

SECRET  SENSITIVE

SECRET  SENSITIVE

3

-- South Vietnam. Widespread main force action is not expected. There will almost certainly be heavy attacks in the central highlands of MR II, and possibly some offensive action just south of the DMZ. Otherwise, four types of enemy action seem likely:

-- Some of the larger cities are likely to be shelled and attacked by sapper units.

-- A provincial capital -- especially in the western highlands -- might be seized temporarily in order to shake confidence in the ARVN and to garner headlines.

-- The usual seasonal upsurge in terrorist incidents and other small scale actions.

## II. LOGISTICS AND MANPOWER

Logistics. Soviet military assistance for Hanoi increased in 1971, primarily in terms of air defense equipment. Shipments of foodstuffs from Hanoi's allies also rose sharply to offset losses from last year's floods. The North Vietnamese continued to increase their logistical buildup (protected by increased AAA defenses) in the Panhandle of North Vietnam.

Manpower. Hanoi has sufficient manpower to support the war at present or greater levels. An estimated 150,000 were called up in 1971 (about the same as in 1970). Reportedly, the January '72 callup will be bigger than usual. Men called up early this year could begin infiltration in this dry season.

Logistics: Start of the 1971/72 Season. As is normal, truck traffic from North Vietnam into the Laotian Panhandle has increased sharply in November and December, except that the apparent volume of traffic is significantly lower than last year.

On the other hand, traffic between southern Laos and northern Cambodia is about 3 weeks ahead of the enemy's 1970 timetable. The logistic system in northern Cambodia now has a much greater capability than it had last year at this time.

SECRET  SENSITIVE

25X1

SECRET  SENSITIVE

4

Organizational Changes in Southern Laos. The recent formation of additional Binh Trams (supply bases) and transportation groups could have substantially increased the enemy's capability to move supplies in the southern part of the Laotian Panhandle.

Logistical Input Trends. So far the Communist dry season resupply effort has been lagging well behind that of last year; however, the significantly upgraded logistic system could be used to make up this short fall in a few weeks.

Personnel Infiltration. So far in this dry season, about 60,000 troops have been detected in the infiltration pipeline -- compared with 50,000 for the same period in the 1970/71 dry season. Infiltration this dry season could go well over last year's total. About a third of those detected this year are destined for the B-3 Front (western highlands) which represents an unprecedentedly heavy movement to this area.

In general, enemy force levels in December 1971 were slightly lower in South Vietnam, compared with 1970, and somewhat greater in Cambodia and Laos.

#### Overview for the Remainder of the Dry Season

Logistics. --With the exception of the inputs needed to sustain a countrywide offensive in South Vietnam and Cambodia, the logistic requirements for all remaining options could still be met during this dry season.

Manpower. North Vietnam probably will have to provide about 100,000 infiltrators to maintain its current force levels -- and fighting postures -- in South Vietnam, southern Laos, and Cambodia. Infiltration could be stepped up to increase Hanoi's strategic options -- excluding only a sustained countrywide offensive in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

#### Enemy Capabilities -- Regional Analysis

##### Northern South Vietnam

GVN Military Region I. The Communists could dramatically increase their forces in northern MR I (by as many as 3 divisions) if they opted for offensive operations and were confident the ARVN wouldn't make thrusts into Laos or North Vietnam.

25X1

SECRET  SENSITIVE

25X1

SECRET [ ] SENSITIVE

5

GVN Military Region 2. Given the heavy reinforcement of the B-3 Front, we can expect some level of offensive activity in the central highlands. Logistic problems probably rule out a sustained offensive in the coastal provinces of MR-2 -- unless large numbers of ARVN forces are diverted from this area.

Southern South Vietnam

GVN Military Region 3. Logistic and manpower shortcomings limit the enemy's ability to launch a sustained offensive in MR-3. The Communists will probably conduct probing attacks along the MR-3/Cambodian border in the hope of exploiting weaknesses in ARVN defense -- as at Snoul last year.

GVN Military Region 4. The enemy's logistic and manpower weaknesses virtually rule out any major offensive action in MR-4; although he could increase harassment.

Cambodia. Here the Communists have a strong position. In the absence of a significant ARVN presence in Cambodia, the Communists could overrun any given government position.

Northern Laos. A major logistic and troop buildup gives the Communists a strong position in this area. They will continue moving west as their logistic capability is extended.

25X1

SECRET [ ] SENSITIVE