

~~TOP SECRET~~

EO
13526
3.3(h)(2)
EO
3.5(c)
3.5(c)

2c

98

SC No. 07433/68

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
5 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 15
(As of 7:00 A.M. EST)

1. Allied forces appear to have regained the initiative in many of South Vietnam's urban areas. Most of the major provincial capitals were reported relatively quiet throughout the night of 4-5 February and into the morning. Bitter fighting still continues in Hue, however, as well as in isolated sections of Saigon and in several large cities and district towns. The Communists also hit at Khe Sanh after a long period of relative quiet.

2. There have been no significant political developments since those reported in the 5 February Central Intelligence Bulletin.

Khe Sanh

3. Early on 5 February, US Marines drove back some 200 to 300 North Vietnamese regulars during an assault on the defensive position atop strategic Hill 861. The attack was staged in conjunction with a four-hour artillery, rocket, and mortar barrage on the main base camp of Khe Sanh.

4. Communist losses totaled 100 killed in contrast to American casualties of seven killed and 44 wounded. No major damage to the base was reported and the airstrip remains open.

3.5(c)

~~TOP SECRET~~

I Corps

5. Bitter, door-to-door fighting was reported continuing in Hue as US and South Vietnamese soldiers exert increasing pressure on pockets of enemy resistance in several sectors of the city. Progress is slow, with determined Communist elements clinging to isolated strongpoints in the citadel and on the south bank of the Perfume River.

6. Heavy fighting erupted in the market place of Trieu Phong, a district capital just to the north of Quang Tri city, at mid-morning today. Additionally four, possibly eight, Communist battalions are reported moving toward Quang Tri city from the southwest, and it is possible that a new attack is upcoming in this area, although there is no other confirmation of the report.

7. Other reports state the Communists are planning to strike the provincial capitals of Tam Ky and Quang Ngai city and several district towns sometime before 10 January. Although such reports of imminent enemy action may be part of a Communist scare campaign, the enemy still retains the potential to mount at least limited attacks, supported by mortar and rocket forays throughout I Corps.

8. There are no developments on the massing of North Vietnamese forces, including the entire 2nd Division, in the Da Nang area reported in our Sitreps of 3 and 4 February.

II Corps

9. During the night of 4-5 February and up to mid-morning today, there was relatively little enemy offensive activity throughout the central part of South Vietnam. Allied forces continue to flush out areas where small elements are holed up in several cities such as Tuy Hoa, Ban Me Thuot, and Dalat. In Kontum and Pleiku, the situation was reported "very quiet." Sporadic, light mortar attacks were directed at a few cities last night but damage and casualties were reported light.

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

3.5(c)

~~TOP SECRET~~

10. Communist military forces in the western highlands, under the direction of the B-3 Front, continue to pose a substantial threat to key cities and major allied outposts there. Three regiments of the North Vietnamese 1st Division have been 3.3(h)(2) relocating to the Dak To area in central Kontum Province. This maneuver was further confirmed by two prisoners purportedly from the North Vietnamese 32nd Regiment which, according to the captives, is about to launch a three-pronged attack on Dak To, together with the 66th and 174th regiments. A rocket and mortar attack there on 3 February was reported earlier. Other Communist main force units remain active in the vicinity of Kontum and Pleiku cities, and another major round of fighting could develop there.

III Corps

11. No new attacks were reported in the III Corps area last night or early this morning.

Saigon

12. South Vietnamese National Police and ARVN soldiers continue to report sharp clashes with groups of Viet Cong within the city of Saigon. The heaviest fighting last night was in Cholon, the Chinese quarter in the southwest corner of the capital, but firing incidents have been reported in nearly every section.

13. US intelligence sources in Saigon feel that a relatively small number of Viet Cong are responsible for the most recent terrorist activities. At noon on 5 February (local Vietnam time) US officials estimated that less than 100 Viet Cong "action agents" remained in the city with probably three-four battalions on the boundaries of the western precincts.

14. Strong enemy main forces, in addition, still appear to be deployed within striking range of the capital. There is further evidence that the Viet Cong 9th Division has moved towards Saigon from northwest III Corps, a movement which was reported earlier based on captured documents and defector

- 3 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

3.5(c)

~~TOP SECRET~~

3.5(c)

statements. The US Command disclosed last night that prisoners from all three regiments of the 9th Division have been captured in recent days in the general area north and west of Saigon.

15. Information has come in from a number of prisoner interrogations which tends to support the theory that, in general, the Communists may have believed that the people of Saigon and other urban areas were "ripe for revolution." Low level cadre, for example, apparently were not provided with withdrawal plans since their superiors told them there could be no question but that a "general uprising" would be sparked.

16. Nevertheless, the Communist high command was prudent enough not to commit all of their reserves to the first assault. Thus, it is possible that the viewpoints expressed by the prisoners mainly represent exhortative propaganda pumped into them by the hardcore cadre, and are not true representations of the real Communist estimates and intentions.

IV Corps

17. US forces remained in contact with an estimated 100 Viet Cong within the provincial capital of Vinh Long early this morning. Fighting also continued within or on the outskirts of a number of other provincial capitals and district towns in the delta.

18. At Go Cong a small Viet Cong force released over 100 prisoners from the provincial jail; Tra Vinh continues to be surrounded by some 2,000 of the enemy.

- 4 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

3.5(c)