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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
6 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 19
(As of 5:30 P.M. EST)

1. Major new fighting has broken out near the US combat base at Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province.

2. Early on 7 February, North Vietnamese forces launched a heavy ground attack against the allied special forces camp at Lang Vei, located some five and one-half miles southwest of Khe Sanh astride lateral Route 9. According to initial field reports from MACV, the attacking force employed seven tanks in the assault, one of which was knocked out by allied counterfire. No further information is available on the progress of the battle or allied/enemy casualties resulting therefrom.

3. Incomplete reports also indicate that Khe Sanh itself came under an intense 15-minute artillery, rocket, and mortar attack on the night of 7 February (Saigon time). The extent of casualties and damage sustained by the Marine bastion was not reported.

4. The special forces camp at Lang Vei is garrisoned by approximately 380 South Vietnamese paramilitary personnel and 14 US Army special forces advisers. The base is regarded as an important link in the overall Khe Sanh area defense posture, since it guards the southwestern approaches to Khe Sanh from Laos.

5. There have been recent reports from US military sources in South Vietnam that pilots flying reconnaissance missions in the vicinity of

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of Laotian Route 9 had observed tank-type vehicles moving eastward along this roadway toward the Quang Tri Province border. Tanks were also reportedly employed in the 24 January attack by Communist forces against the Laotian encampment at Ban Houei Sane, an outpost near Route 9 on the Lao side of the border.

6. There have been reports for several years that tanks were present in the Lao panhandle, but there has so far never been a confirmed instance of their use in combat. DRV forces are known to have a complement of Soviet-type T-34 and T-54 tanks and have held at least two armoured regiments in their OB for some years.

DRV Flight Activity

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8. The IL-28 is a twin-jet, subsonic bomber which can carry payloads of two to six thousand pounds of bombs depending on the mission profile. A low-level, high speed mission could be carried out from Phuc Yen on targets in the vicinity of the DMZ.

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Other Military Activity

10. No significant changes have been reported in the situation in the I and II Corps area, or in the delta, since the 12 P.M. Situation Report. Sharp fighting is apparently still continuing both in the Cholon sector of Saigon and in Hue.

11. Enemy action increased in Tay Ninh Province on 6 February. A probing attack was launched against Tay Ninh city. Action in the Tay Ninh, Binh Long province area is widely anticipated, since it has been a relatively slack area so far during the current offensive.

Political Developments

12. The police in Saigon have taken Phan Khac Suu into protective custody, apparently with his consent. Police Director Loan told an American observer that two Viet Cong cadres captured in Saigon had claimed that the National Liberation Front intended to kidnap Suu to use him as bait in persuading South Vietnamese liberals to accept North Vietnamese peace conditions.

13. Loan said that Suu went to police headquarters willingly and is free to go whenever he so desires. Two associates of Suu's claim, however, that, he accepted police protection somewhat grudgingly and only after police insistence. Suu is an outspoken oppositionist, but he poses no threat to the government and his position on negotiations has been in full accord with the government's.

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