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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
10 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 28
(As of 9:00 A.M. EST)

Khe Sanh and the rest of South Vietnam were relatively quiet during the night of 9-10 February.

Two sharp battles were reported yesterday just north of Saigon, however, in which US Army forces reported killing 278 Communists. American casualties were light. Saigon itself was quiet last night following the heavy fighting yesterday in the Cholon district.

There are some tentative signs that another major North Vietnamese unit is now in the DMZ area and the Hanoi High Command seems to be taking more direct control of activities there.

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I Corps

1. The Khe Sanh area was quiet on 9-10 February with only light sporadic mortar fire reported from the enemy. The airstrip was temporarily closed because of the crash of a C-130 transport which was hit by enemy fire as it attempted to land.

2. An undetermined-size enemy force using explosive charges destroyed part of a bridge in the strategic Hai Van pass in Thua Thien Province late on 8 February. Route 1 between Da Nang and Hue is closed to traffic until repairs can be made. An unidentified Communist regimental-sized force has been noted in this area and probably will continue to attempt to interdict this vital supply route between Da Nang and points north. The mountainous terrain in this small area on the coast lends itself to ambushes and several key bridges are prime enemy targets.

3. Early morning press reports claim that US forces in Hue now control the south bank of the Perfume River and that all installations in the new section of the city are under allied control. However, South Vietnamese forces are still battling with Communist troops entrenched in a section of the citadel across the river.

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[redacted] There is no confirmation of reports of enemy reinforcements in the citadel area, although limited amounts of men and material could have been infiltrated in to the besieged enemy.

4. Throughout the entire I Corps area south of the DMZ, only small unit actions were reported. Some of these were in reaction to allied patrols sweeping areas where Communist troops are believed to be concentrating. All major urban areas except Hue were quiet on 9-10 February.

5. A new subordinate of the North Vietnamese High Command has been active on the communications group which serves major headquarters either in or associated with South Vietnam. It could be another division-sized unit, but this cannot be confirmed now.

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6. On 10 February, the North Vietnamese 27th Independent Battalion referred to a casualty of the 1st Battalion of the 98th Regiment. The 27th Battalion has been observed planning for an attack on US positions in the Cam Lo area of north-central Quang Tri Province, together with possible "reinforcements" from another unit. This seems to indicate that the 98th Battalion--a subordinate of the North Vietnamese 316th Division--is now in the DMZ area. It is possible that the 316th Division may be the new, unidentified major entity in the DMZ area which has been in direct contact with Hanoi.

7. Since 5 February headquarters elements of the North Vietnamese 320th and 325C divisions have also been noted in direct communications with Hanoi. This is the first time the 320th Division has been noted in this type of communication since its recent move into the DMZ area of South Vietnam. The 325C Division has been in direct communication with Hanoi before, but it had not been observed on that link since 30 January.

8. In addition, the North Vietnamese 304th Division and the headquarters of the 29th, 90th, and the 803rd regiments during the last few days have all been communicating with a station of the Hanoi High Command which serves major fronts and headquarters in South Vietnam.

9. These direct communications with Hanoi by major North Vietnamese units in the DMZ - Quang Tri Province area indicate that Hanoi is assuming a more direct control of the military activity there.

II Corps

10. As of mid-day on 10 February there was no significant enemy military activity reported in central South Vietnam. All major urban areas, including the provincial capitals that were hard hit before, are now almost completely under allied control.

Saigon and III Corps

11. The situation in Saigon's Cholon district is fluid, It was quieter there last night than it has been at any time since the beginning of the Tet

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offensive 12 days ago. Despite the relative calm, however, there are indications that the area may well see more heavy fighting.

12. Only two or three relatively minor firing incidents were reported in Cholon during the night. South Vietnamese soldiers and police say that they have now cleared out the Viet Cong force which they had encircled in the 5th Precinct on Thursday night. The operation reportedly resulted in 17 Viet Cong captured and a number of weapons seized, including bazooka-type rocket launchers and AK-47 automatic rifles.

13. The current estimate of Communist strength in the Cholon area is approximately 150 men, operating in squad size units. The South Vietnamese believe that allied patrols and sweep operations have made it impossible for the Viet Cong to resupply their forces in Cholon, thus limiting the threat they pose.

14. In the central part of Saigon, US intelligence sources state that the situation is now relatively stable. Only minor terrorist incidents have occurred during the past day or so and there are some signs that life is returning to normal. About half of the stores in the secure districts were doing some business yesterday, at least five ships were being unloaded at the Saigon port, and another rice convoy was run into the city from warehouses in the northern suburbs

15. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence indicating that the Communists plan further attacks within and on the outskirts of Saigon. There have been numerous reports of Viet Cong units sighted in the suburbs around the capital. Throughout Gia Dinh, the province which surrounds Saigon, South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces reportedly are remaining in defensive positions and are unwilling to press offensive sweeps.

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[redacted] US Army troops engaged what are believed to be elements of this division in three sharp clashes yesterday in an area some 10 to 12 miles northwest of the large Tan Son Nhut airbase. Nearly 300 Viet Cong were reported killed in the fighting. American losses were light.

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16. In other action in the III Corps area, the Communists launched a heavy three-hour-long mortar and ground attack on allied military and police facilities in Tan An, the capital of Long An Province. Nine South Vietnamese policemen and four Americans were killed. Civilian casualties were estimated to be in excess of 100 killed and wounded and the enemy reportedly lost 92 men killed in the attack. One prisoner is said to be a North Vietnamese Army regular. In the past, northerners have rarely been sent south of Saigon.

IV Corps

17. A number of small scale engagements took place in widespread sections of the IV Corps area yesterday as allied forces conducted sweeps around major population centers and military bases. No heavy fighting developed, however, and there were no new Viet Cong attacks.

North Vietnamese Air Activity

18. Several late reports since the publication of the 10 December Central Intelligence Bulletin have reflected additional flight activity of North Vietnam's transports and bomber aircraft.

19. Two, possibly three, IL-28s departed Hanoi's Gia Lam airfield on the afternoon of 10 February. The aircraft flew to the Chinese border area where they circled until US strike aircraft active in the Phuc Yen area had departed. The bombers later returned to Gia Lam, where they landed.

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