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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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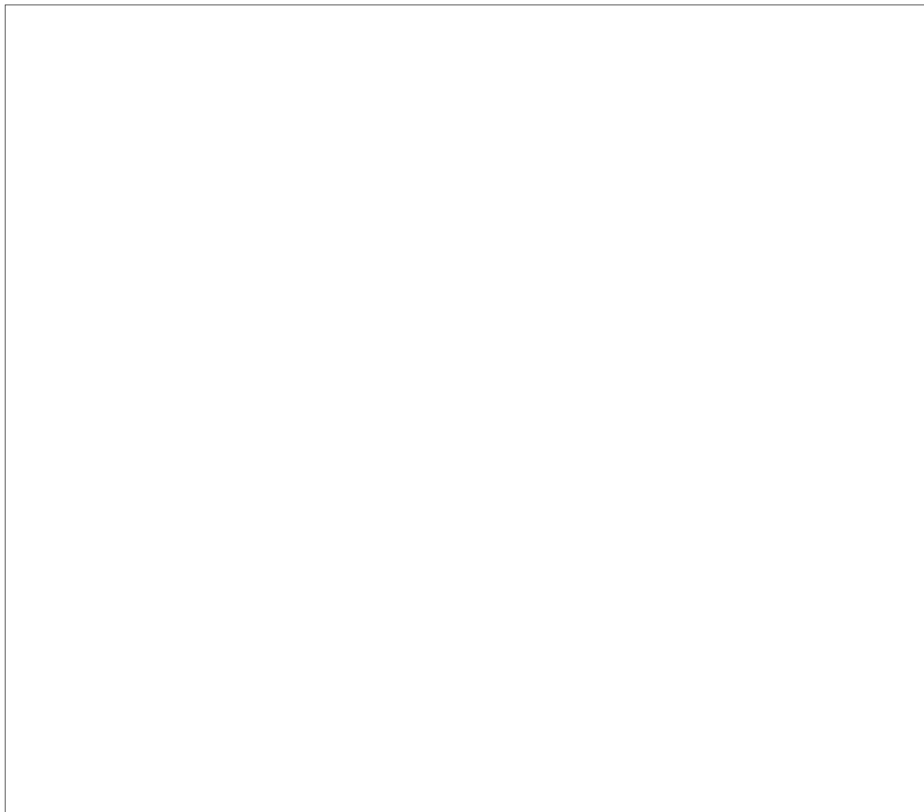
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20 November 1967

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WARNING

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Information as of 1600
20 November 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Fighting has broken out again southwest of Dak To, and US forces took serious losses in one engagement. In the air war, intensive North Vietnamese air defense measures have resulted in the loss of 18 US aircraft in the past five days.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Renewed fighting occurred southwest of Dak To. South Vietnamese paratroopers have concluded a three-day sweep northeast of the US base (Paras. 1-4). The disposition of Communist main force units in III Corps suggests further attacks (Paras. 5-8). Operation SHENANDOAH II has ended in northern III Corps (Paras. 9-10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Prime Minister Loc is complaining that conflicting statements and directives from the President and vice president is hampering him (Paras. 1-2). A Quaker relief ship has been denied landing rights at Da Nang (Paras. 3-4).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Eighteen US aircraft have been lost in the past five days to aggressive North Vietnamese air defense measures (Paras. 1-5).

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[Redacted] elements of the probable 304th Infantry Division are in the process of moving southward (Paras. 6-9). The 31st Regiment of the 341st Division has been located in the Laos panhandle just north of Route 922 (Paras. 10-12).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

[Redacted]

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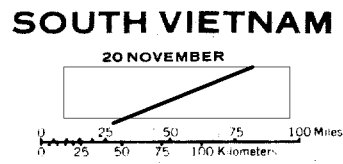
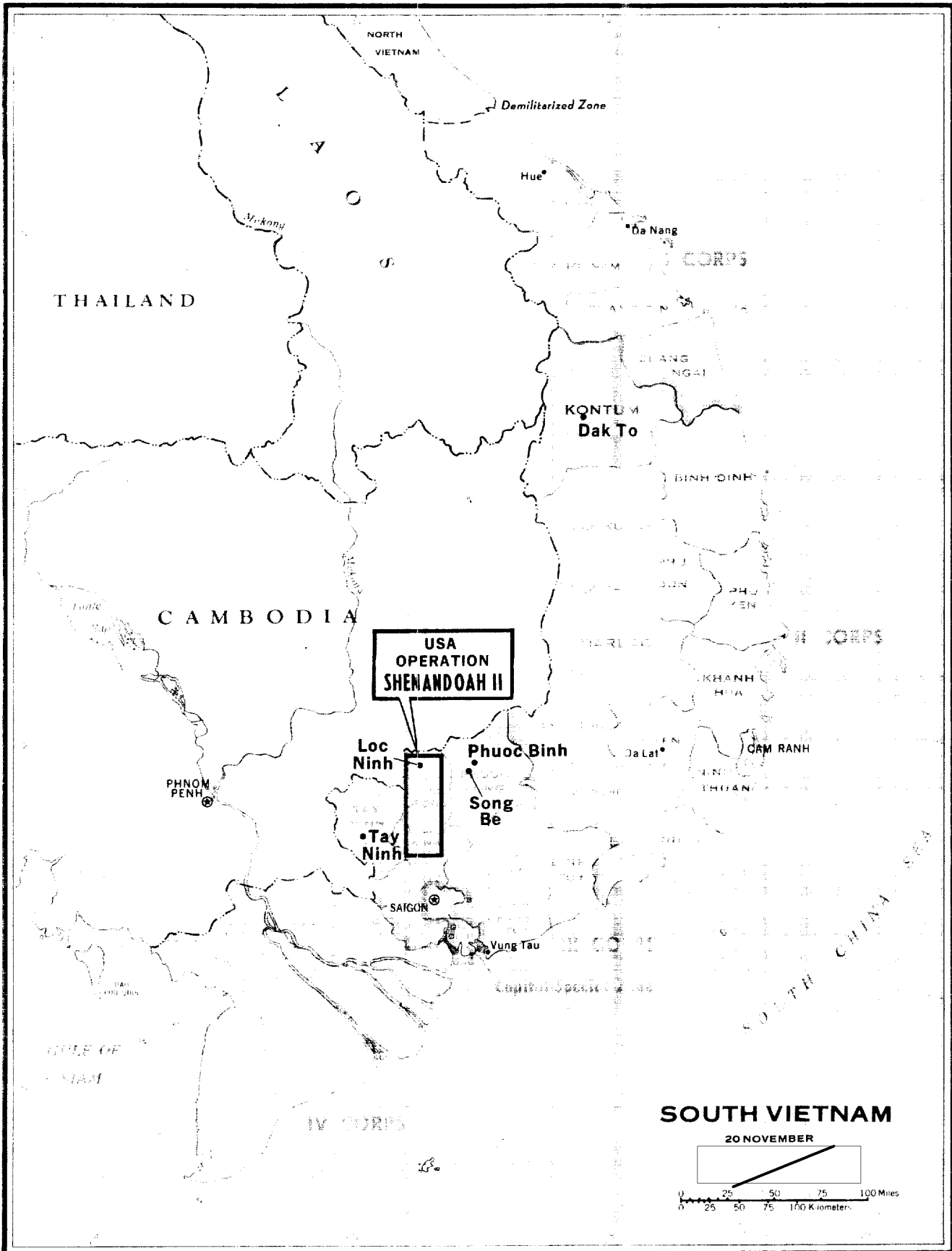
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Renewed fighting in the hills several miles southwest of Dak To on 19-20 November has been described as the most vicious in the two-and-one-half-week-old highlands campaign.

2. The largest of several new engagements in the area began on 19 November when two company-size US reconnaissance patrols ran into elements of the North Vietnamese 174th Regiment in well-prepared positions and bunkers. A third US company joined the fight and was immediately hit by another enemy force. Preliminary casualty reports, based on incomplete information, show heavy American losses of 40 killed, 42 wounded, and another 32 missing. There is no word yet on enemy casualties.

3. Also on 19 November, two battalions of South Vietnamese paratroopers engaged an enemy force northeast of Dak To. The enemy was identified as a subordinate of the North Vietnamese 24th Division which has been involved in the recent fighting north of Dak To. This engagement culminated a three-day drive along three miles of ridge line and accounted for 51 enemy soldiers killed. Our losses were 34 killed and 161 wounded.

4. Since the current campaign began in southwestern Kontum Province on 3 November, US forces have killed 868 enemy soldiers and captured nearly 150 weapons. American losses for the 18-day period now stand at 197 killed, 750 wounded, and 41 missing. The South Vietnamese say they have killed some 350 Communists, raising the overall number of enemy dead in the immediate Dak To area to more than 1,200.

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The Situation in Northwest III Corps

5. The disposition of main force enemy regiments in the III Corps area north of Saigon suggests that further attacks can be expected in this region.

6.

[Redacted]

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a command group of the Viet Cong 5th Division remains near the US Special Forces camp at Song Be in west central Phuoc Long Province. This group controls the Viet Cong 275th and North Vietnamese 88th regiments and conducts extensive reconnaissance activities. In addition, the 272nd Regiment--a subordinate of the Viet Cong 9th Division--has been noted moving recently to a position along the Phuoc Long border just west of Song Be. Together these units make up a division-size force which could threaten Song Be or Phuoc Binh, the nearby provincial capital.

7. The other two subordinates of the Viet Cong 9th Division, the 271st and 273rd regiments, are believed to be positioned along the Cambodian border in northern Tay Ninh and Binh Long provinces, where they are resupplying and reorganizing. Mortar attacks against allied positions have increased in this area during the past week. New fighting in the Loc Ninh area of northern Binh Long Province could erupt with little warning.

8. The headquarters of the North Vietnamese 7th Division and its subordinate 101st and 141st regiments have not been fixed recently, but probably remain in their normal operating areas in northern Tay Ninh Province.

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[Redacted] enemy forces may be positioning rice caches for planned offensive operations in this area. Likely objectives would be district towns and Special Forces camps and possibly Tay Ninh city. The 9th Division's third regiment, the 165th, was located [Redacted] on 15 November near a district town in southern Binh Long Province.

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Operation SHENANDOAH II Ends

9. The 51-day multibattalion search-and-destroy operation, SHENANDOAH II, ended on 19 November. The operation accounted for 956 enemy soldiers killed. The sweep began in north-central Binh Duong Province some 38 miles north of Saigon and was extended to include all of Binh Long Province when Communist forces mounted a series of large-scale attacks in the Loc Ninh area.

10. American casualties totaled 107 killed and 322 wounded. Enemy losses also included nearly 400,000 pounds of rice and more than 100 weapons.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Quaker Relief Ship Barred From South Vietnam

3. The yacht Phoenix, chartered by Quakers to deliver medical supplies to South Vietnam has been denied landing rights at Da Nang and will be escorted to international waters on 22 November. The final decision was made by President Thieu and Vice President Ky after they learned that the Quakers would try to distribute their supplies to the militant Buddhists. The government contends that the Quaker plan violates the conditions under which entry visas were granted to them in Hong Kong--namely that the supplies would be turned over to the Vietnamese Red Cross for internal distribution. The US Embassy believes that the government apparently decided that religious and social groups other than the militant Buddhists would get a share and that this may have influenced the Quakers to attempt to hand the supplies directly to the militants.

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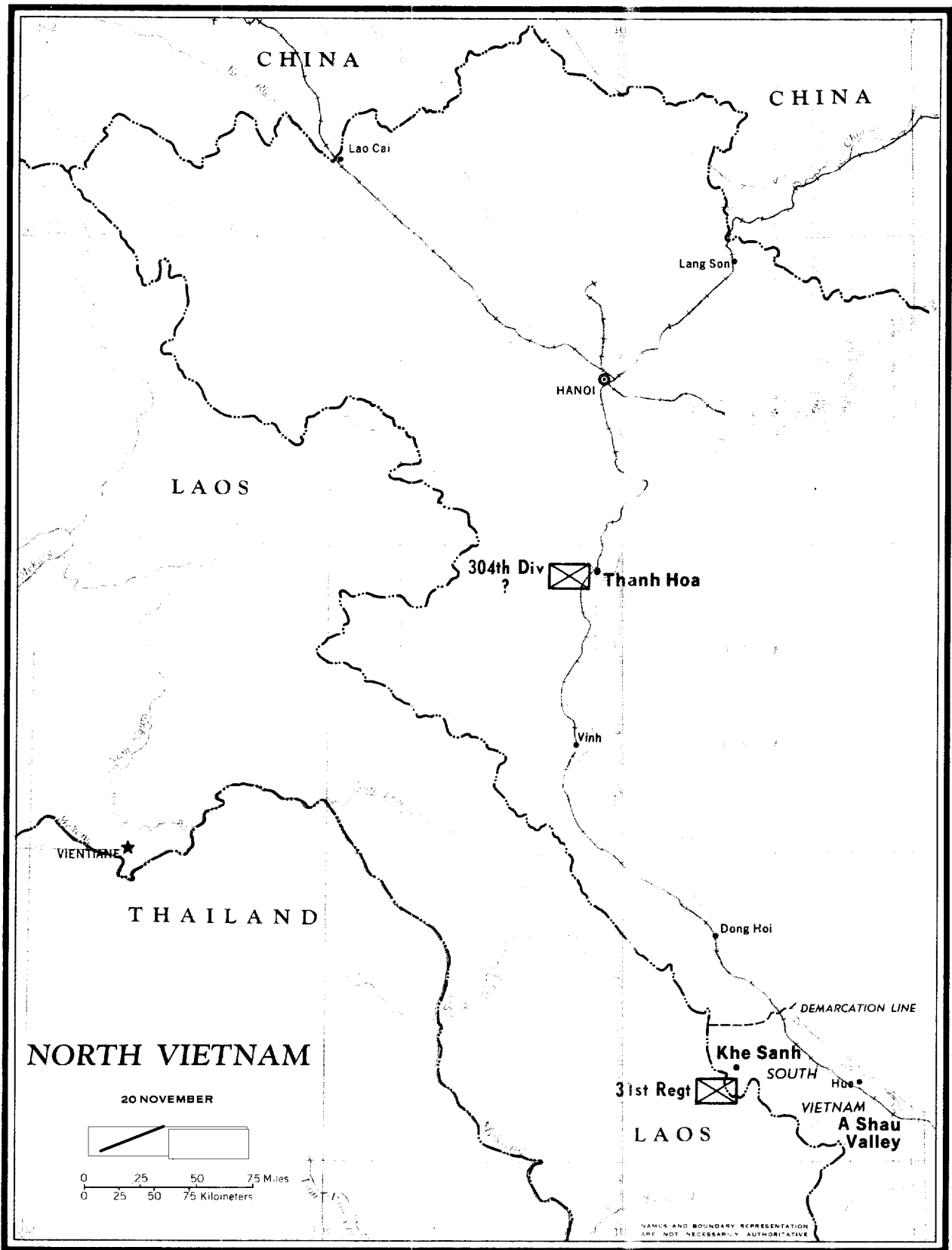
4. An official spokesman told the press on 20 November that, since the medicines on the Phoenix had been brought to South Vietnam only because Hanoi refused to let them be landed in the North, the South Vietnamese Government was denying entry to the Quakers. Since this bare-bones explanation will probably leave the government open to criticism, the embassy is urging that another statement be issued which will present the government's action in a better light.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Three more US aircraft were shot down by North Vietnamese air defense units on 20 November. This means that 18 US planes have been lost in the past five days. The heavy losses occurred in a period of intensive air operations which began on 16 November against targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. In the preceding week, inclement weather had held air activity and losses to a minimum.

2. Communist air defense successes in recent days appear to have been the result of a more vigorous application of normal tactics, rather than any new weapons or procedures. [redacted]

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[redacted] indicate a particularly high level of surface-to-air missile (SAM) and antiaircraft artillery (AAA) fire. SAMs accounted for 10 of the 18 US losses, while conventional gun fire was responsible for two.

3. The success on the part of the SAMs, which customarily have been far less effective than AAA, is probably attributable to the great number of missiles fired. [redacted]

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[redacted] controller commanding an operational SAM site northwest of Hanoi on 19 November, but there was no indication that [redacted] personnel had assumed an active role in the SAM system in general or that any new techniques were being employed.

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4. North Vietnam's MIG fighters accounted for two, probably four, American planes, a significant accomplishment in view of the limited number of fighters remaining in country. [redacted]

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[redacted] The group of fighters which has attacked US strike groups with such success during the past five days probably consists of about eight aircraft, four of which may be MIG-21s.

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NVA Division May Be Deploying in North Vietnam

6. [Redacted] elements of the probable 304th NVA Infantry Division and possibly the entire division are in the process of deploying southward. The 304th has been based in the Thanh Hoa area of central North Vietnam.

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[Redacted]

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8. It is too early to determine whether elements of the 304th Division will move into Laos and thence into South Vietnam or whether they will move southward toward the Demilitarized Zone. It is also too early to determine whether the entire division or a single regiment is on the move.

9. The 304th Division long has had a training role for units headed for South Vietnam. The 66th NVA Regiment, for example, which is involved in the Dak To fighting was a subordinate. Other elements trained by the 304th Division have recently moved through the A Shau Valley area of South Vietnam where they became part of the 6th Regiment.

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31st Regiment in Laos

10. Airborne radio direction finding on 19 November located the headquarters of the 31st Regiment of the 341st North Vietnamese Division just north of Route 922 in the Laos panhandle. This is a move of approximately 100 kilometers from the regiment's 11 November location near the junction of Routes 911/912.

11. The ultimate destination of the 31st Regiment is not known. It would appear that the unit is headed for either the A Shau Valley area of Thua Thien Province. It could take up a flanking position near the Khe Sanh outpost.

12. The unit had formerly confined its operations to the eastern part of the Demilitarized Zone area. Elements of the regiment were active, for example, around Con Thien and against South Vietnamese units farther east. The deployment of the regiment into the Laos panhandle after a period of refitting and rest in North Vietnam suggests that another unit has taken its place in the eastern DMZ. It is possible the 31st Regiment is preparing, in conjunction with other NVA units, for coordinated combat activity along the whole length of the Demilitarized Zone.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS



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