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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# MEMORANDUM

## *The Situation in Vietnam*

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Information as of 1200  
13 February 1968

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HIGHLIGHTS

The situation is generally quiet. [redacted]

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[redacted] extensive preparations for North Vietnamese offensive operations all across the Demilitarized Zone and southward to Quang Tri city. New attacks in the western highlands are likely, and rumors of renewed Communist assaults against Saigon continue to circulate.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

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[redacted] reflects preparations for new enemy offensive operations in northern I Corps (Paras. 1-7). Morale in Quang Tri city is declining because of the enemy threat (Para. 8). Strong Communist resistance in Hue continues (Paras. 9-10). Other urban centers in I Corps are quiet, but reports of impending Communist attacks continue to be received (Para. 11). A general lull in enemy activity prevails in II Corps, but there are signs of preparations for new enemy offensives in several areas (Paras. 12-18). Saigon has been generally quiet but rumors forecast renewed fighting (Paras. 19-23). Government forces fought Communist troops near My Tho on 12 February, but the night of 12-13 February was generally quiet in IV Corps (Paras. 24-25). South Vietnamese police have doubts whether Communist General Tran Do has been killed (Para. 26).

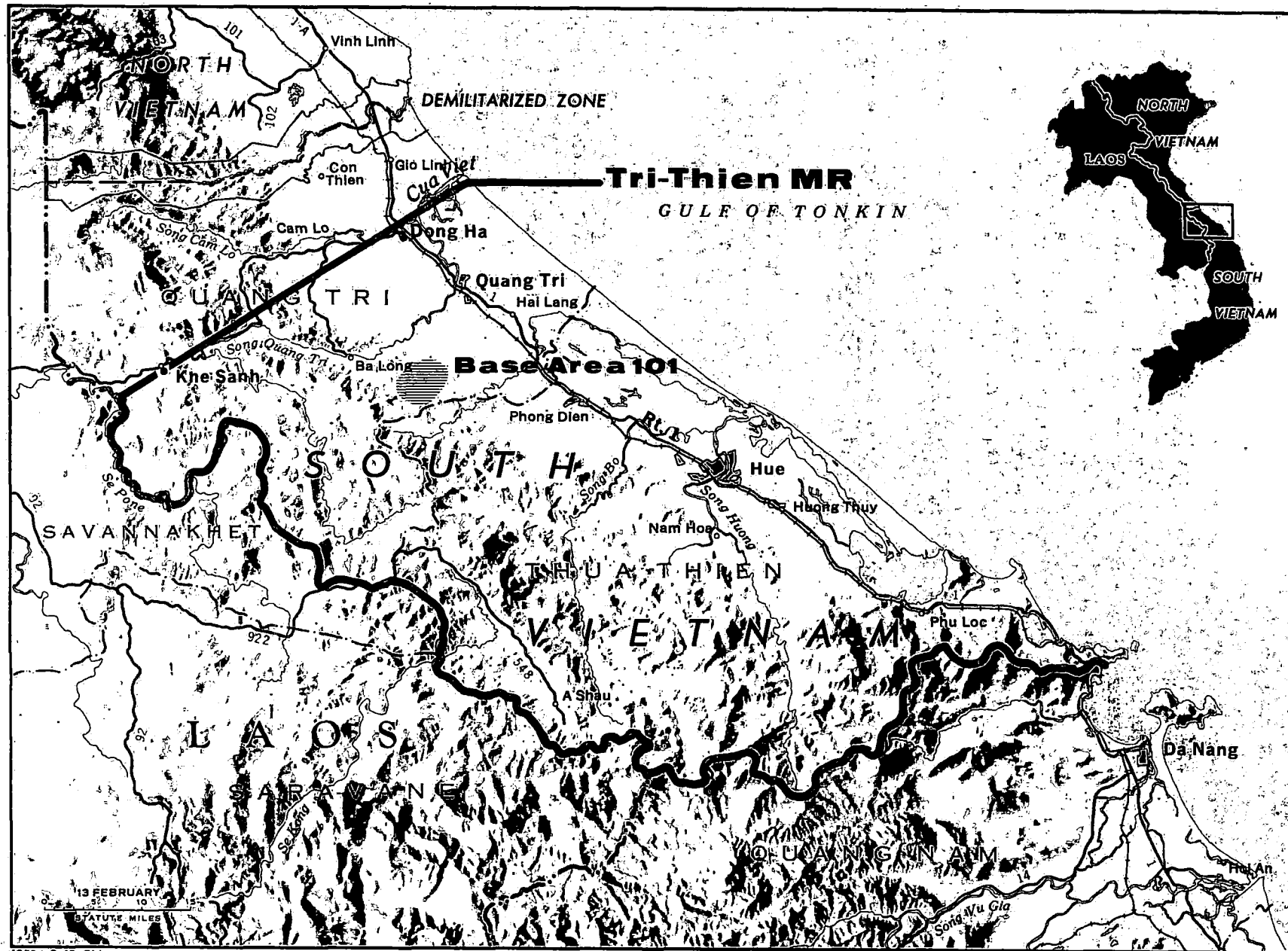
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

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[redacted] Vietnamese officials charge that some participants in the 1966 Buddhist "struggle" assisted the Viet Cong during their attack on Hue (Paras. 5-6). A montagnard Lower House deputy from Darlac Province has been captured by the Viet Cong (Para. 7).

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I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No major new enemy initiatives have been reported during the past 24 hours in northern I Corps. Signal intelligence, however, continues to reflect extensive reconnaissance, maneuvering, and battlefield preparations by North Vietnamese forces against allied positions from Khe Sanh, east across the Demilitarized Zone, and south toward Quang Tri city.

2. Khe Sanh came under light and sporadic mortar attacks and small-scale ground probes against its perimeter defenses the night of 12-13 February. The headquarters elements and as many as eight subordinate regiments of the North Vietnamese Army's 304th and 325 "C" divisions remain in the general area.

3. Elements of the 325 "C" Division's 101 "D" Regiment southwest of Khe Sanh have sharply intensified their reconnaissance reporting on allied helicopter movements and artillery firing in support of the base. In other developments, there are indications of resupply activity from Laos in support of the 325 "C" Division's 95th Regiment northwest of Khe Sanh.

4. North Vietnamese artillery and infantry units operating in the central and eastern portions of the Zone are also being heavily resupplied. Since 2 February, the communications of North Vietnamese rear service elements have reflected the movement of large quantities and varying types of ammunition to the 164th, 204th, and 184th artillery regiments and to the 270th Regiment.

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5. The 90th Regiment 324 "B" Division has joined the division's 803rd Regiment in a move south from the Demilitarized Zone, [redacted]

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[redacted] Elements of both regiments are now believed to be located south of the Cua Viet - Cam Lo River in northeastern Quang Tri Province. The presence of these forces in this area poses an immediate threat to the US 3rd Marine Division forward operating base at Dong Ha, and also to Quang Tri city.

6. There is limited evidence [redacted] that elements of the 90th Regiment may continue their deployment farther south through the Ba Long Valley to link up with the 324 "B" Division's remaining subordinate, the 812th Regiment, in Base Area 101 southwest of Quang Tri city. This move, if confirmed, would significantly increase the enemy threat to Quang Tri city from the south and would also pose serious problems for allied positions astride Route 1 from Quang Tri city to Hue.

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7. Elements of the 812th Regiment attacked Quang Tri city during the opening phase of the Communist Tet offensive in I Corps. [redacted]

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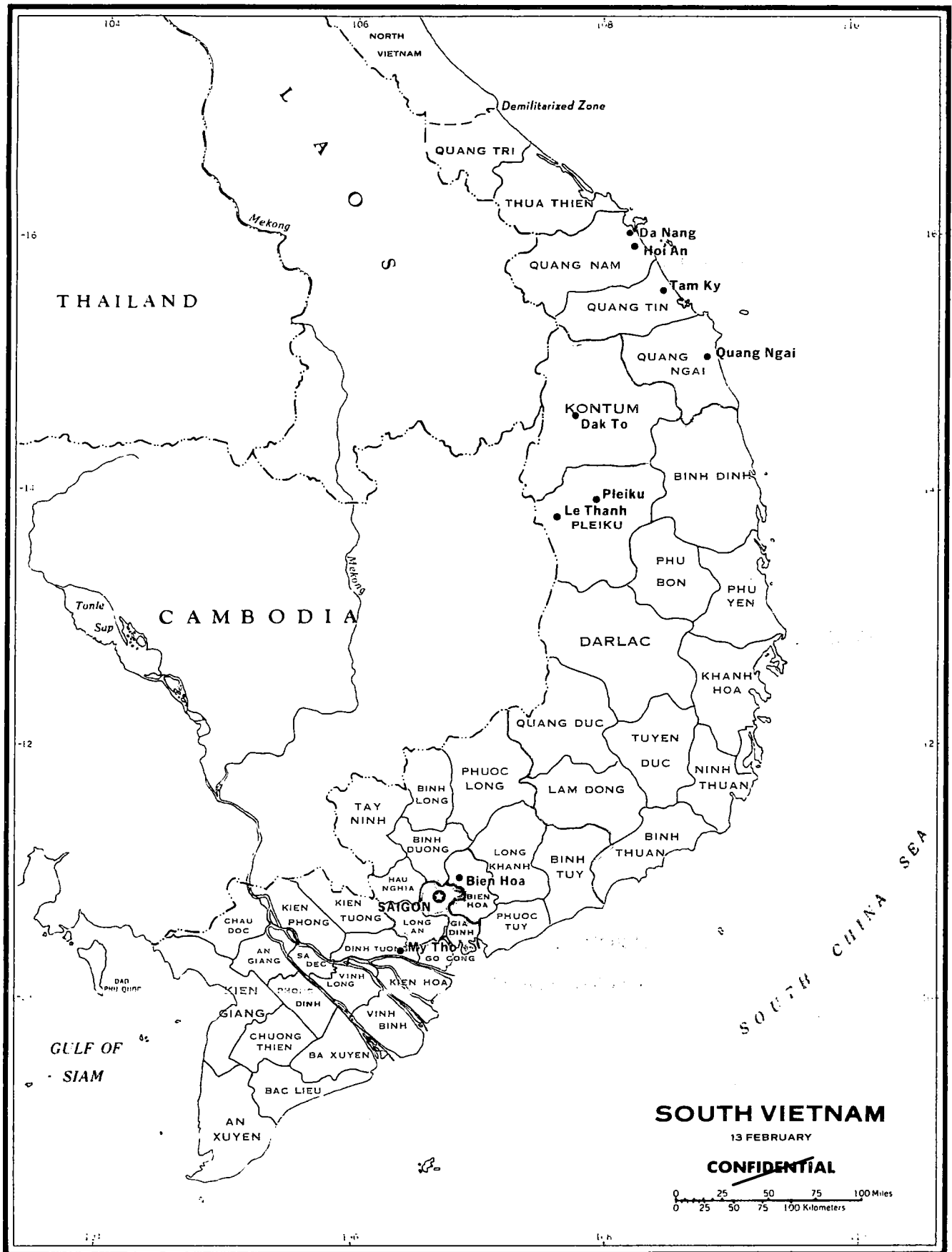
[redacted] the entire regiment has been resubordinated to the Communist's Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue command. This command authority is responsible for enemy operations in lower Quang Tri Province and in all of Thua Thien Province. The 812th Regiment is still carried in MACV's order-of-battle holdings as subordinate to the 324 "B" Division and to the DMZ Front, but its move southward in early January, coupled with the current southward movement of the 90th and 803rd Regiments, suggest that a resubordination of 324 "B" Division forces may be taking place.

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II Corps

12. A general lull continued in II Corps. South Vietnamese Rangers have apparently cleared enemy forces from Da Lat, the last city in II Corps partially controlled by the Communists.

13. In western Pleiku Province, [redacted] indicate that an enemy force, probably an element of the 1st North Vietnamese Division, is to launch a mortar attack on the Le Thanh district town. Messages passed between this unit and a probable B-3 Front authority on 12 February indicate preparations for the shelling are to be accelerated.

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14. The Communists apparently hope this attack will draw an allied reaction. The attacking force was told to "carry out the mission...in order to force the enemy to deal with you," [redacted]

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[redacted] The Communists may be planning to ambush a friendly reaction force, or they may intend to try to divert allied attention from other areas of the western highlands.

15. There are indications that the Communists may be preparing for offensive activity in the Dak To area.

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[redacted]

[redacted]

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17. The enemy may be planning to attack in the Dak To area, but the disposition of enemy forces at present suggests that the preparations have not reached an advanced stage.

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18. Major elements of the 95B North Vietnamese Regiment apparently have withdrawn from the Pleiku city area, easing the threat there. The regimental headquarters and two battalions were fixed by direction finding within the last few days between 16 and 35 miles south of the city--representing withdrawals of at least ten miles.

#### Saigon and III Corps

19. Saigon was quiet at noon on 13 February. No significant fighting had taken place within the city during the preceding 24-hour period. Groups of Viet Cong continue to be sighted, in the southwestern districts, and several sharp fights broke out on the outskirts on 12 and 13 February. In one action 113 Viet Cong were reported killed.

20. During the past few days there have been a number of low-level reports that the Communists plan additional attacks in the Saigon area. On 12 February a South Vietnamese police station located north of Saigon reported that an estimated 3,000 Viet Cong had been sighted moving south. The next day a South Vietnamese Army outpost in the same general area also reported sighting a large enemy force moving south. These reports parallel statements by civilian travelers on 11 February that two enemy "divisions" were moving on Saigon from the north and west. Communist troops in Binh Duong reportedly spread this information among the local population in the province.

21. In addition to these reports there are a number of indications that Communist troops who took part in the initial attacks on Saigon expected other forces to conduct follow-up attacks. For example, civilians in a number of villages outside of Saigon say that the Viet Cong have ordered their troops to mix in with the local population and wait for reinforcements. In at least one suburb of Saigon the rumor is that 15,000 North Vietnamese reinforcements will arrive next week.

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22. Although the above reports are from low-level sources--and some were undoubtedly circulated by the Communists primarily to keep the civilian population tense--they cannot be entirely discounted. The enemy has sizable forces within striking range of Saigon. These have not yet been committed, and the possibility of renewed large-scale fighting in the capital area is real.

23. Action elsewhere in the III Corps provinces was light. Viet Cong activity was highlighted by a 12-round 122-mm. rocket attack on the Bien Hoa Air Base. Damage was minor.

#### IV Corps

24. South Vietnamese Army forces and government irregulars had several sharp clashes with Viet Cong troops on the outskirts of My Tho on 12 February. Over 70 Communists were reported killed. Allied losses were 4 killed and 20 wounded.

25. On the night of 12-13 February, about 15 minor Viet Cong - initiated incidents were reported. The majority of the incidents took place in Dinh Tuong and Phong Dinh provinces.

#### Communist Major General Tran Do

26. The press is reporting that Major General Tran Do, deputy commander of the Viet Cong Liberation Army, has been killed by allied forces in Saigon. This has not been confirmed, and the US Embassy reports that South Vietnamese police sources now have some doubts.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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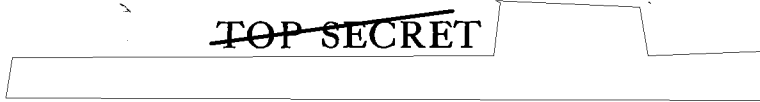
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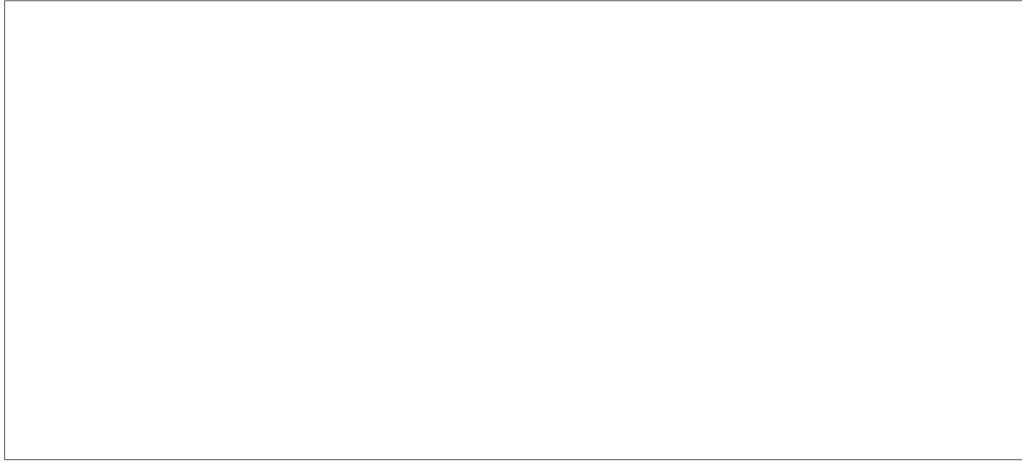
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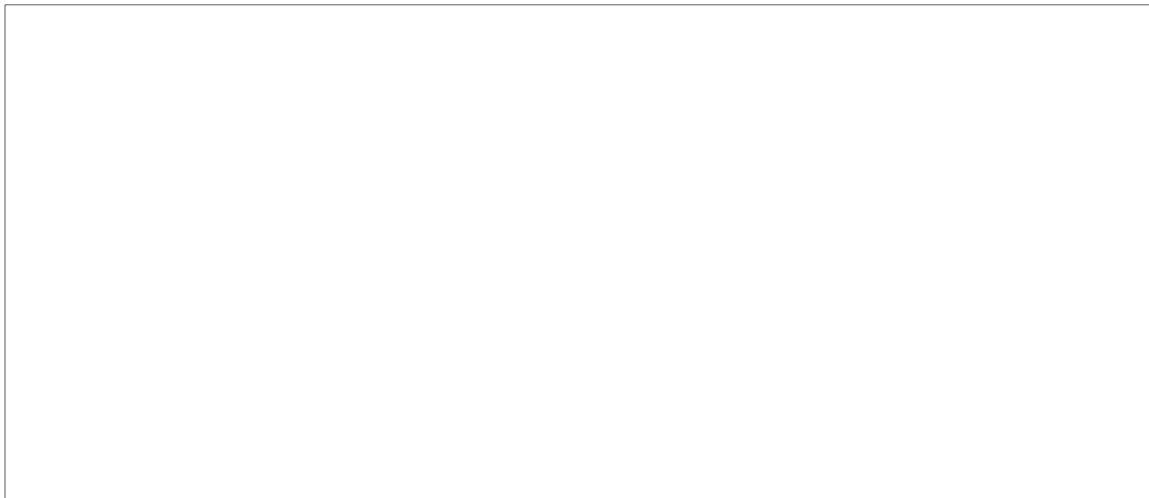
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Possible Involvement of Ex-Strugglers with Viet Cong

5. Vietnamese provincial and police officials in Thua Thien Province have charged that participants in the 1966 Buddhist struggle movement in Hue assisted the Viet Cong during their Tet attack on the city. The Thua Thien Province chief asserted in a press interview that the Communists used a pagoda near Hue as their command post for the attack and, once inside the city, operated from another pagoda. Both were centers of antigovernment agitation during the "struggle" movement. The Viet Cong "alloted large roles to the Buddhist militants and sympathetic students of Hue University," the province chief charged. He emphasized, however, that only a small number actively assisted the Communists.

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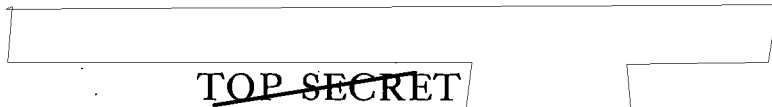


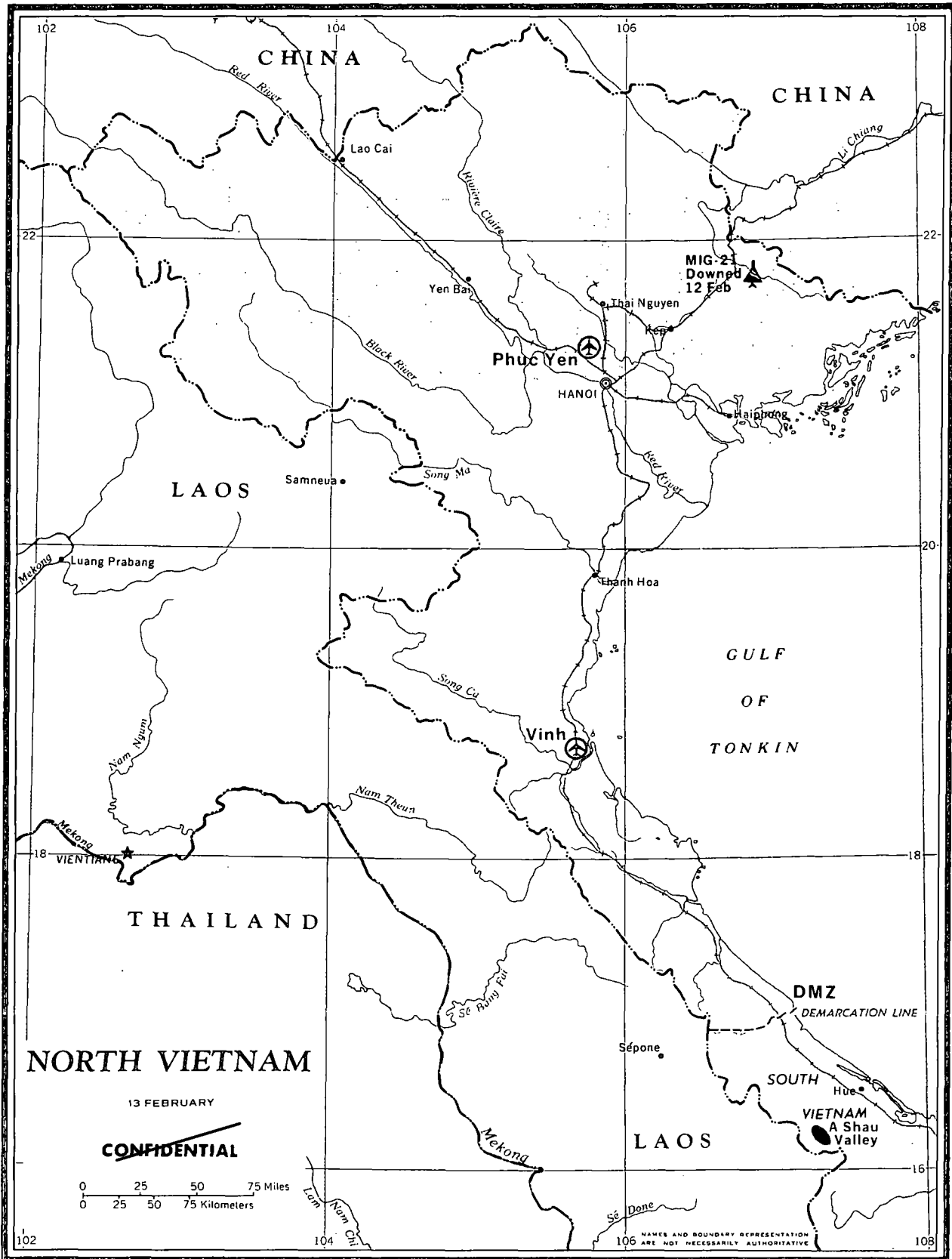
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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There were no reports of significant air activity in North Vietnam on 13 February. A North Vietnamese MIG-21 was shot down northeast of Hanoi near the Chinese border on 12 February.

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[redacted] that the pilot was a North Korean. The downed plane probably was one of several fighters providing cover for the IL-28 bombers which had flown to this area when US strike aircraft approached Hanoi.

2. There is evidence [redacted] that the three IL-14s which were reported to have flown as far south as Vinh on 12 February may have continued on to the A Shau Valley. If so, it is probable that they were involved in a resupply mission similar to the one carried out by IL-14s on 7 February.

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[redacted] during the past week indicate that at least some of the IL-14s involved in the various flights to the vicinity of the Demilitarized Zone have been modified to carry out tactical as well as logistic missions.

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[redacted]

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4. There have been previous reports of Communist gunners firing on IL-14 and AN-2 transports in the southern section of North Vietnam, despite warnings on the air defense nets. On 7 February one of the IL-14s which attempted to fly to the A Shau Valley had a fire started in its left engine by Communist gunners. On 13 February a North Vietnamese battalion north of Vinh notified its subordinates that they were not to fire on any propeller driven aircraft unless fired upon.

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New North Vietnamese Divisions Possible

5. [redacted] headquarters garrison elements from both North Vietnam's 304th and 320th divisions remained in North Vietnam when these divisions shifted to the Demilitarized Zone area.

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6. This is consistent with the deployment pattern of most North Vietnamese regimental- and division-level units now in South Vietnam. After the units departed for the South, stay-behind elements were fleshed out with recruits and transfers to form new units. In some cases, these second, third and even fourth generation units themselves deployed to the South. With headquarters elements now apparently in place, the North Vietnamese could follow precedent and re-establish the 304th and 320th divisions.

7. This could be accomplished by drawing upon recruits and personnel from other units or by subordinating existing regiments to the headquarters structure.

[redacted] an infantry regiment which remained in North Vietnam, although it had been subordinate to the 320th prior to the division's deployment.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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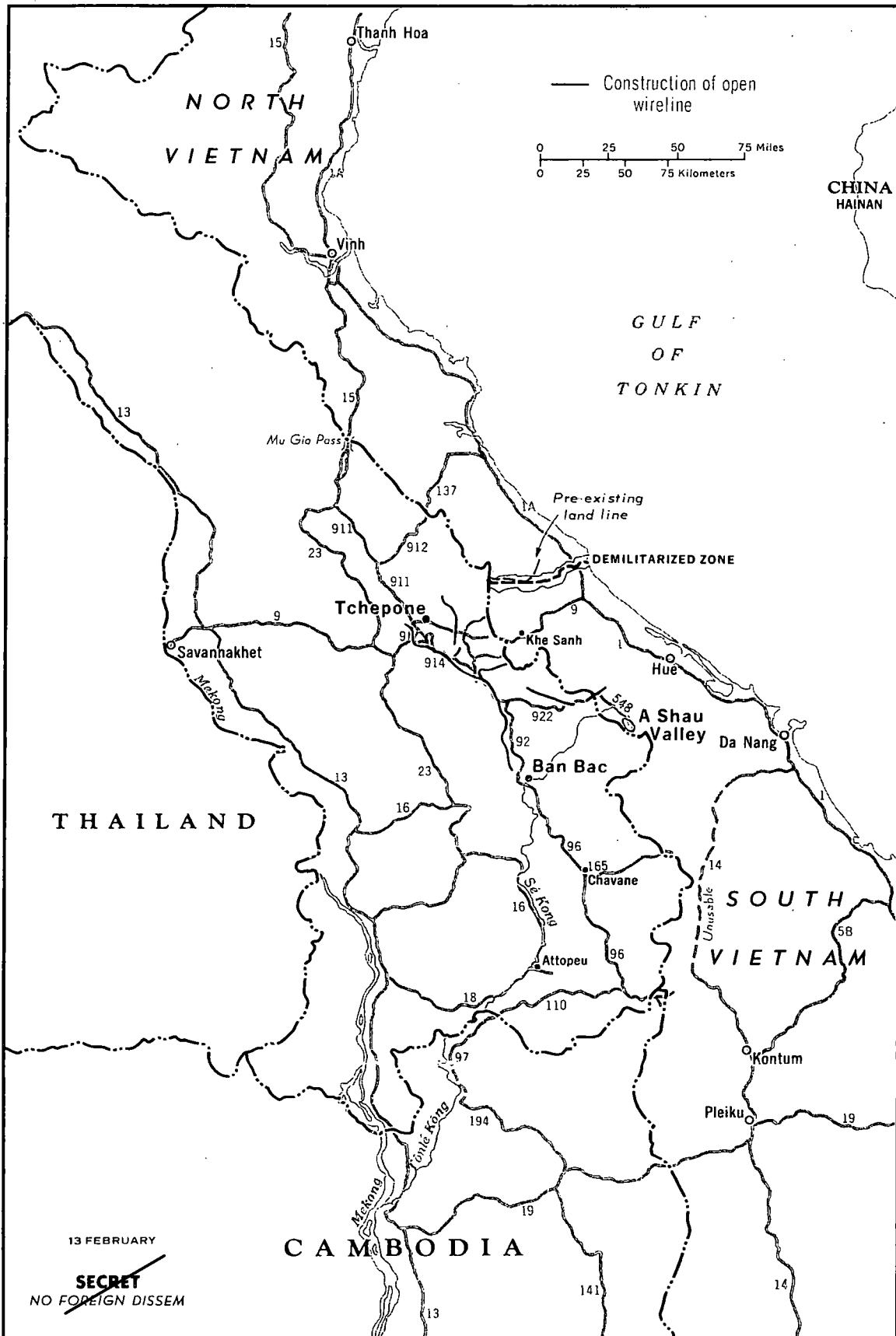
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Construction of new communications facilities into Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces from Laos is another sign that the Communists are preparing for a period of sustained offensive operations in the area.

2. [redacted]

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[redacted] the enemy is running landline along the Laos - South Vietnam border between the Demilitarized Zone and the A Chau Valley. It is not known when this activity began, but concurrent work in widely separated areas suggests that the new communications links are a priority project. The work appears to be progressing at a good pace. There is one 70-mile long trace between Tchepone and Ban Bac. There is no indication that the lines are in service.

3. Landlines into the I Corps area could provide a capability for several simultaneous two-way voice conversations over each line as well as a capability for telegraphic traffic and improved communications security. There is some evidence that one new line near the Demilitarized Zone is in an advanced stage of construction. It may tie in with existing facilities in North Vietnam. If such a connection is made, Hanoi will have direct, secure communications with at least some of the major Communist units opposing allied forces in northern South Vietnam, as well as with logistics units stationed in and around the Laos panhandle.

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## ANNEX

Background of the Tet Offensive in Pleiku

1. Recently available Communist documents dating from mid-December through early January, together with reports of interrogations of five relatively high-level cadres captured in the recent fighting, give a partial picture of the immense effort behind the enemy's Tet offensive in Pleiku Province. The documents suggest that Viet Cong plans included not only an effort to destroy government effectiveness in the provincial capital, but also to regain influence over the hamlets and the rural populace. It is not certain whether Communist objectives and expectations were the same in all areas in the Tet offensive, but similarities of technique and of goals are emerging as information from other areas becomes available.

2. The Pleiku documents indicate that preparations for the attack on Pleiku city began in earnest as long ago as November, and possibly in September, when a new provincial sapper battalion, numbered 408, was formed from other existing units. According to directives dating from 4 November 1967 and 4 January 1968, local force units taking part in the attack were put directly under the B-3 Front, the Communist command for the highlands provinces. Before the Tet offensive these units were harassing key transportation routes, training, and preparing a thorough plan of attack to be approved by the B-3 Front command.

3. Despite the latitude apparently given provincial units in planning details of the attack on Pleiku, higher authorities laid down specific guidelines. One declared that, with a superior force in a surprise attack, it should be easy to take Pleiku because it was lightly defended by South Vietnamese paramilitary forces. Roads leading to Pleiku were to be blocked and reacting US units from outside the city were to be intercepted.

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4. Primary targets in the city were paramilitary and police posts, government administrative offices, the radio station, and public utilities. While these points were under attack by military units, the Viet Cong "city unit" was to "hunt out and destroy" government officials and to "motivate" the population to stage demonstrations in support of the Communists. There is no reference in the documents to a role for North Vietnamese units subordinate to the B-3 Front, and these units appear to have been only marginally committed.

5. A group of five high- to medium-level provincial and district level officials, who were captured in the attack on Pleiku city (one was the commander of the H-15 Battalion), have indicated under interrogation that their orders and objectives were similar to those outlined in the documents. Neither the captives nor the documents specified a time limit for holding the town if their attacks were successful. The prisoners alleged that their purpose was to destroy the local South Vietnamese government and to "liberate" the province, and that, whether successful or not, they were contributing to a nationwide effort to "liberate" the country. None admitted to having any specific orders covering failure, but nearly all appeared to believe that the Viet Cong would go on fighting as before.

6. According to the prisoners, they believed that their mission in Pleiku would succeed, partly, as one declared, because two thirds of their forces in the province were still in reserve. All allegedly expected most of the population to support their efforts, both out of sympathy and because of their expected superior strength in the town. Some had specific missions to bring the town population into the streets and to march demonstrators in from the outside. All acknowledged their failure to gain popular support, but attributed this to the failure of the attack itself. Most were fuzzy about the future political goals of the Communists, but some believed that a people's coalition would be organized to negotiate a settlement with the Liberation Front.

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7. One of the documents, dated mid-December, suggests that plans for Pleiku included the "liberation" of rural areas in addition to, or concurrent with, the attack on the provincial capital. The captives have shed no light on this effort to date. The document directs "areas" of the province--districts or villages, perhaps--to muster a major part of their remaining "concentrated forces," and up to two thirds of their guerrilla units, to "liberate" or "break the enemy's grip" on specific hamlets apparently astride major lines of communication. In the process, these guerrillas are directed to organize and arm new guerrillas, with a goal of 22,500 from the province and possibly adjacent areas.

8. There is some evidence that attacks on urban areas throughout South Vietnam followed patterns similar to those specified for Pleiku city. If so, the Communists clearly failed to achieve many of their stated goals. These goals may have been only maximum Communist hopes, however, and there is nothing in the documents which indicates that failure to hold the city or to muster widespread popular support would preclude continued efforts to achieve the larger objectives of the campaign. The Communist leadership may have taken the same view as some of the prisoners--that while specific actions might prove unsuccessful, they would be contributing to a nationwide effort which ultimately would succeed. In this view, the attacks against the cities would be part of an attempt to create conditions where continued military pressures, accompanied by increased political agitation and organization, would eventually pay off for the Communists.

9. Moreover, the information about a major effort to extend Communist influence over the countryside in Pleiku Province suggests the attacks against urban centers were only one aspect of the country-wide offensive, and, perhaps, not the most important one. There is still little information on Communist activities in the countryside during the offensive. Scattered reports from other provinces, however, indicate there has been considerable Viet Cong activity, possibly including arming of conscripts, in unprotected rural areas.

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