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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

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24 November 1967
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C O N T E N T S

(Information as of noon EST, 22 November 1967)

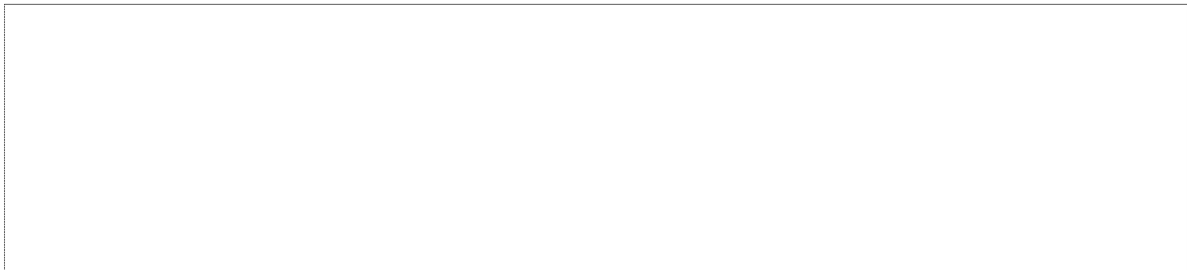
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FAR EAST

The Communist campaign in the Dak To area of South Vietnam's central highlands, now in its third week, has developed into the most intensive and prolonged fighting since the Ia Drang Valley battle two years ago. This major operation and extensive Communist military preparations throughout the central highlands appear intended to demonstrate the Communists' determination and capacity to outlast the allied forces and to inflict heavy casualties on them.

The National Liberation Front stole the march on Saigon by announcing 72-hour truces during the Christmas and New Year holidays and a seven-day lull during the lunar new year in late January.

In Saigon, President Thieu and National Assembly leaders are still preoccupied with organizing the new government. The continuing problems caused by tensions between Thieu and Vice President Ky were reflected in Prime Minister Loc's private complaint about the confusion created by conflicting directives issued by the two leaders.

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VIETNAM

The third week of fighting in the area surrounding the US strongpoint at Dak To resulted in a large number of friendly casualties as Communist main force units renewed their vigorous efforts to pin down American troops in southwestern Kontum Province.

Heavy fighting developed when US patrols encountered elements of several North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments--the 32nd, 66th, and 174th--in the hills southwest of Dak To. The current Communist tactics have been to engage American units and then withdraw to well-prepared defensive positions in favorable terrain where they can concentrate maximum firepower.

This confirms that one of the primary goals of the Communist forces in the current winter-spring campaign is to pin down and destroy major allied units in the central highlands. The heavy jungle canopy, the lack of landing zones for helicopters, and the steepness of the mountains make American troop movement and supply efforts in this area the most difficult yet faced in South Vietnam. The Communists' apparent intention to wage a long campaign is reflected in the discovery of many enemy caches of ammunition, the presence of an extensive series of bunkers and other well-constructed defensive positions, and the presence of as many as 8,000 enemy troops in the area.

Elements of the NVA 24th Regiment have now spread the battle area north and east of Dak To, while other enemy units are apparently expanding their efforts to engage and tie down friendly forces as far south as central Darlac Province.

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extensive preparations are presently under way by the North Vietnamese units throughout the central highlands in an effort to extend allied forces on a wider front. All of the Communist forces are under the control of the B-3 Front, the over-all command authority in the western highlands.

As the campaign progresses, an increase can be expected in attacks on US Special Forces camps and other remote outposts, in ambushes staged against allied supply convoys along strategic Routes 14 and 19, as well as in mortar and rocket attacks on vital allied installations in Pleiku and Darlac provinces.

Activity in the Laos Panhandle

Reports from the Laos panhandle indicate that Hanoi has resumed large supply shipments to South Vietnam following the end of the rainy season. Through the first 18 days of November, at least 195 trucks were observed moving south on Route 23 just south of the Mu Gia Pass. On Route 912, the second road from North

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Vietnam into Laos, over 300 trucks were spotted by aerial observers in late October. It is also clear from photography that heavy stockpiling has been going on in the Mu Gia Pass area since at least September in anticipation of dry weather.

Politics in South Vietnam

President Thieu has reportedly begun organizing his personal office staff. The key position in the office of the presidency will be that of secretary general, and it appears that Nguyen Van Huong, a close adviser and the manager of Thieu's presidential campaign, is slated for the post. Thieu's present military and administrative staff will be retained, but apparently will come under Huong's supervision. Several specialized advisory councils will also be attached to the President's office.

The two houses of the National Assembly continue to move ahead with their internal organization. In the upper house, work is proceeding slowly on internal rules. Members have voted, however, to allow formation of blocs with a minimum membership of 15, as opposed to the original proposals that would have allowed the formation of only two blocs in the 60-man body. In the lower house, validation of the membership is almost completed and discussion of internal rules may soon begin. The lower house has devoted considerable discussion to the plight of 17 students who were drafted for demonstrating against the election, and has agreed to create a ten-man committee to discuss the matter further with the government. The principal officers of this committee are outspoken opponents of the government, who may hope to embarrass it over an issue inherited from the previous military regime.

On 18 November, the Communists ordered their military forces to observe a cessation of all military attacks for 72 hours during both the Christmas and New Year holidays and a seven-day lull during the lunar new year (Tet). This action steals the march on President Thieu's informal proposal of a few weeks ago for 24-hour

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cease-fire periods at Christmas and New Year, and only 48 hours for Tet. The Viet Cong announcement also makes the Christmas and New Year cease-fire periods 24 hours longer than the corresponding periods they called for last year.

Hanoi's Air Defenses

North Vietnamese air defense units were unusually successful in downing 18 US aircraft in intensive operations in the Hanoi/Haiphong area between 16 and 20 November. The effectiveness of the Communist defense appears to have been the result of a more vigorous application of established

tactics rather than of any new weapons or procedures.

An exceptionally high level of surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) fire was reported. Although many of the missiles were fired at random, they nonetheless accounted for ten of the US losses while the usually more effective AAA downed only two planes.

Hanoi's MIG force, estimated to consist of only about eight aircraft still operating from bases in North Vietnam, shot down four US planes during this period. Unknown causes claimed two additional aircraft.

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