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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# MEMORANDUM

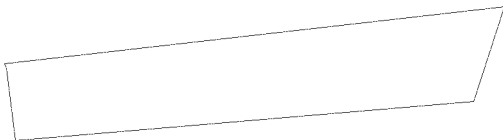
## *The Situation in Vietnam*

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Information as of 1600  
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[redacted]

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HIGHLIGHTS

The enemy threat in the Quang Nam - Quang Tin Province area has been increased by the move of another North Vietnamese regiment into the area.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
Casualties were high on both sides on 27 December as US and Communist forces battled in widespread sections of the country (Paras. 1-6). The North Vietnamese 31st Regiment has moved into Quang Nam Province and may join with other Communist units in the coastal areas of central I Corps (Paras. 7-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
Two lower house blocs are attempting to expand their membership and arrange alliances with other political groups. There are indications of efforts to form a national Buddhist political party (Paras. 1-6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
A number of bypasses for the Doumer Bridge across the Red River are in place or under construction (Paras. 1-2).

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

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

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Large numbers of allied and Communist troops were killed or wounded as the result of stepped-up fighting on 27 December.
2. Elements of a battalion of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade killed at least 31 enemy and captured 18 weapons in a day-long battle in Phu Yen Province. The battle followed an airborne assault on suspected Communist positions some 24 miles north of the provincial capital of Tuy Hoa. The enemy troops, an estimated two companies, possibly from the 6th Battalion of the North Vietnamese 95th Regiment, were in well dug-in positions. The enemy finally withdrew after nine hours of US air and artillery bombardments. American losses were reported as 12 killed and 37 wounded.
3. US forces in this engagement were part of the two-battalion Operation BOLLING which has been sweeping central Phu Yen Province since 18 September. The operation thus far has accounted for 218 enemy killed; 1,725 Communist suspects have been detained. Elements of the 95th Regiment, a subordinate of the North Vietnamese 5th Division, are scattered throughout the area and apparently have been refitting and preparing for future military offensives, possibly before the Tet holidays in late January.
4. An 82-mm. mortar barrage of some 180 rounds was directed at a base camp of the US 25th Infantry Division at Dau Tieng, some 42 miles northwest of Saigon in northwestern Binh Duong Province, late on 27 December. The mortar attack was accompanied by small-arms fire and resulted in one killed, 42 wounded, and two helicopters damaged. Some of the rounds, may have been armed with delayed fuses. These shells exploded as long as two hours after the intense five-minute shelling and caught the camp's defenders by surprise and added to the casualties.

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5. The attackers were probably members of the 1,500-man 101st Regiment, a subordinate of the North Vietnamese 7th Division. Elements of this unit have been spotted in the northwestern corner of Binh Duong Province after recently relocating from northern Tay Ninh Province. This repositioning of 7th Division units has enabled the enemy to harass rear areas of allied units participating in the sweep operation now under way in northern Tay Ninh Province.

6. Another five Americans were killed and 32 wounded on 27 December during a two-hour skirmish in central Binh Duong Province when a company from the US 199th Infantry Brigade engaged a Communist force of undetermined size while searching an enemy bunker complex. Two additional companies reinforced the US patrol and drove off the enemy, who left 34 bodies behind.

New Enemy Regiment Southwest of Da Nang

7. On 26 December, radio direction finding located the headquarters of the North Vietnamese 31st Regiment southwest of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province. The 31st, a former subordinate of the North Vietnamese 341st Division which was active in the Demilitarized Zone area earlier this year, has been noted moving southward in the Laotian infiltration corridor in recent weeks. Late last month it was located in Laos just west of the A Shau Valley. The unit now appears to be en route to join the North Vietnamese 2nd Division and local Viet Cong forces in the Quang Nam - Quang Tin border area. If the 31st does join the 2nd Division, the enemy's capability to launch attacks in the Que Son - Hiep Duc area will be greatly increased. The 2nd Division's regular regiments have been under heavy pressure from allied forces for the past four months.

8. It is possible that the 31st will operate just to the north of the 2nd Division in the immediate Da Nang area. [redacted]

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[redacted] a "well armed" North Vietnamese regiment with a strength of 2,000 men had moved into an area some 25 miles west of Da Nang. [redacted] probably referring to the 31st Regiment, further stated that the new unit had orders to coordinate with Viet Cong forces and conduct a joint campaign in the Dai Loc - Da Nang area prior to the Tet holiday in late January.

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9. The recent movement of major elements of the headquarters of Military Region 5 northward from their Do Xa base area to the Quang Nam - Quang Tin border is another indication of impending action in this general area. An early attack by the 31st Regiment in particular should not be ruled out. When the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment moved from the highlands down to the III Corps area this fall, it launched an all-out assault near Song Be without making the prolonged "battlefield preparations" which usually characterize enemy offensives. Also, the fighting in the Dak To area began soon after the arrival of the North Vietnamese 1st Division in western Kontum Province in late October.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Both the Buddhist-leaning Progressive Bloc and the Catholic Independence Bloc in the lower house are making efforts to expand their membership. The Progressives may be involved in efforts to found a national Buddhist political party.

2. The Progressive Bloc convened a meeting on 20 December, [redacted] to persuade members of other lower house groups, particularly the Independence Bloc, to join the Progressives in forming a new group which would be called the Popularist Bloc. The new bloc is reportedly intended to offset the influence of the pro-government Democratic Bloc. Only 18 of an expected 40 deputies appeared for the meeting, however, and several of these seemed disillusioned at the pro-Buddhist nature of the proposed new bloc. One of the Progressive Bloc leaders is reported to have said that the actual purpose of the meeting was to form a Buddhist political bloc in the lower house. He claimed the certain support of 20 to 25 deputies.

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3. Militant Buddhist Thich Thien Minh and Senator Ton That Dinh also reportedly appeared at the meeting. [redacted] Minh and Dinh are both involved in efforts to establish a national Buddhist political front, and a third source reports that Dinh and Senator Dang Van Sung are attempting to form a Buddhist socialist party. The purpose of this party would be to counter growing Catholic influence, which Dinh and Sung are said to regard as more threatening because of the recent election of three Catholics to the Senate's board of officers.

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4. Dinh and Sung are apparently acting as representatives of their Farmer-Worker-Soldier Bloc in these efforts. [redacted] Dinh is negotiating with the leaders of both the militant and the moderate Buddhist factions and that these leaders appear interested in forming a joint political bloc under a nonclerical leader and in becoming associated with an organization headed by Tran Van Don, Farmer-Worker-Soldier Bloc president.

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5. As for the Independence Bloc, its efforts to ally itself with other lower house groups may meet with resistance from some of its members.

[redacted] the bloc is attempting to get working agreements with members of the All Vietnam Bloc and the Youth Group and has been holding talks with the Democratic and Farmer-Worker-Soldier blocs in an effort to bring together what are considered the right-wing groups.

6. Nothing decisive has resulted from these moves, however. Some of the Independence Bloc's staunch Catholic members would object to alliances with non-Catholics and are therefore being kept in the dark about negotiations for alliances and will only be informed after the fact. The bloc is also reported to regard its predominantly northern Catholic make-up as something of a drawback in attracting new members, particularly Buddhists, and in maintaining an independent image.

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1. Photography of 15 December shows three causeway-pontoon bridges in place or under construction across the Red River just north and south of the recently bombed Paul Doumer Bridge. The causeways run out from the banks and are constructed of rock and gravel laid across exposed sand bars. Pontoon sections are added where necessary to complete the crossings. Two causeway-pontoon bridges about a mile and a half south of the Doumer Bridge are operational. The third bridge, located about three quarters of a mile northwest of the Doumer Bridge, is under construction.

2. The new Red River crossings are believed capable of supporting a moderate level of truck traffic. The causeways should be serviceable for several months until undermined and washed out when the present seasonally low water in the Red River returns to normal about June. There are 12 other alternate Red River crossing facilities, half of them within five miles of the Doumer Bridge.

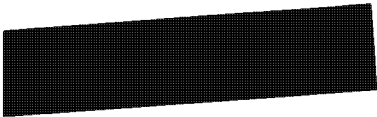
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