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Memo



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam



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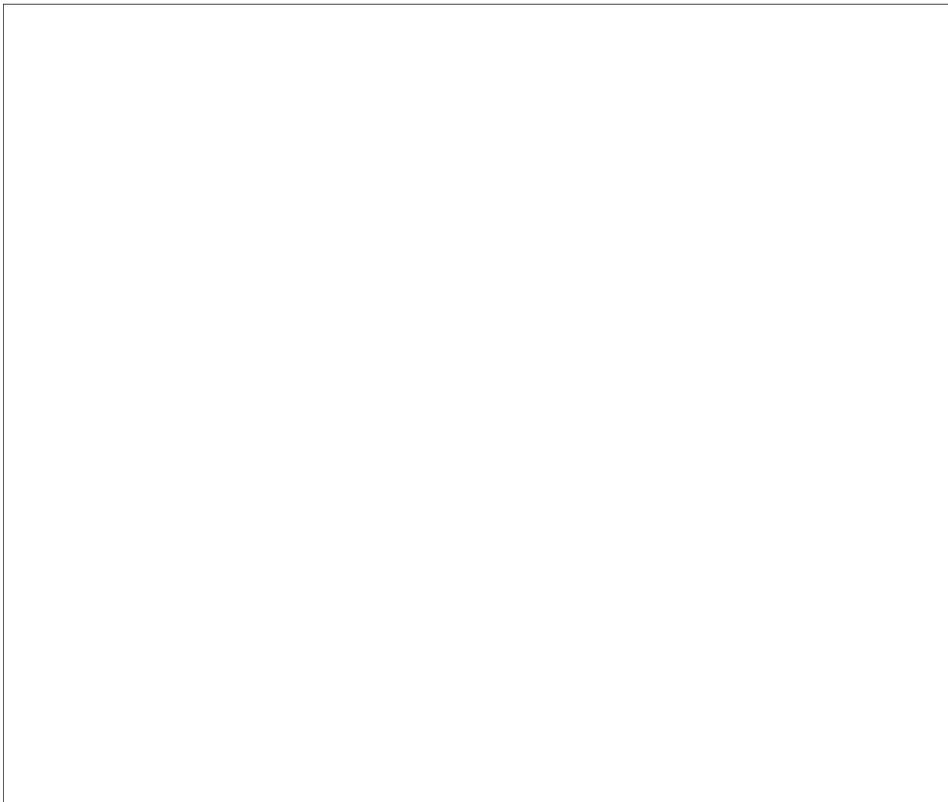
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WARNING

This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798.



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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

Allied forces clashed again with North Vietnamese regulars near Dak To on 12-13 November.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Allied troops clashed again with North Vietnamese regulars in the mountainous jungle near Dak To on 12-13 November (Paras. 1-3). Enemy forces destroyed a bridge and ambushed a South Vietnamese reaction force in Lam Dong Province on 12 November (Paras. 4-6). Enemy offensive activity continues in the III Corps area above Saigon (Paras. 7-10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Senate has voted to establish 12 standing committees and will set up an internal affairs and rules committee (Paras. 1-3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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

V. Communist Political Developments: Another report of Ho Chi Minh's illness is provided by a British correspondent recently in Hanoi (Para. 1). A Liberation Front official in Moscow has stated that the Front wants more than a bombing halt before discussing a settlement of the war with the US (Paras. 2-3).

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied troops clashed again with North Vietnamese regulars in the mountains near Dak To on 12-13 November. Communist forces in this sector appear to be operating in battalion-size units, attempting to ambush smaller US patrols from dug-in positions.

2. Information on the latest fighting is fragmentary. Press reports indicate that South Vietnamese defenders in a small village two miles north of Dak To were overrun in one action and that nine US soldiers were killed and 25 wounded in another action during the night of 12-13 November. If confirmed, these casualties would bring US losses to 105 killed and over 500 wounded in Kontum Province since 1 November. Some 600 North Vietnamese have been killed.



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Route 20 Interdicted in Lam Dong Province

4. Early on 12 November, an enemy force of unknown size blew up a bridge on strategic Route 20, some 25 miles east of Bao Loc, the capital of Lam Dong Province. A South Vietnamese reaction force, sent to the scene, was ambushed along the highway near the bridge site. At the same time, another enemy force attacked South Vietnamese military compounds at nearby Di Linh.

5. Both of these engagements continued on 13 November and South Vietnamese and American reinforcements have been moved into the area. Incomplete casualty reports list 65 South Vietnamese soldiers killed, 25 wounded, and 25 missing. Two enemy soldiers have been killed thus far. Traffic between Bao Lac and Da Lat in neighboring Tuyen Duc Province has been temporarily suspended.

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6. The recent increase in Communist military activity directed at South Vietnamese forces in this area of southern II Corps is consistent with the avowed enemy objective of destroying security forces and degrading government authority. Since last May, South Vietnamese forces have secured Route 20, denying the Viet Cong some one to two million piasters a day in tax booty. Current enemy action also draws friendly forces from southwestern Lam Dong Province, where most enemy tax collection points were located, thus allowing an opportunity for renewed collection in that area.

Enemy Activity in Northern III Corps

7. Communist action continues in the northern portion of the III Corps area. Late on 12 November the base camp of the 2nd Brigade/US 25th Infantry Division at Song Be was hit by an intense 25-minute mortar barrage. The barrage, believed to have been launched by elements of the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment, consisted of 110 rounds of 60- and 82-mm. mortar fire. Thirty-three Americans were wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. During its continuing consideration of draft rules submitted by the rules committee, the Senate on 9 November approved the establishment of 12 standing committees and decided against having a secretary general on its board of presiding officers.

2. The 12 standing committees include the following: agriculture; education, culture, and youth affairs; communications and public works; economics; labor and social welfare; budget, finance, and taxes; information and foreign affairs; internal affairs and rules; interior; defense; judiciary; and health. Each will include between five and ten members, except for the budget and finance committee, which may have as many as 15. Each committee may form as many subcommittees as necessary.

3. In discussing its presiding officers--a question deferred from an earlier session--the Senate voted to forgo election of a secretary general and establish the internal affairs and rules committee instead. The position of secretary general was one of considerable power in the Provisional National Assembly, and the senators were apparently reluctant to vest this much power in one man again. Specific duties of the committee have not yet been detailed, but it will probably be responsible for such tasks as controlling the agenda and ruling on legislative procedures.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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3.5(c)V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Additional evidence that ill health prevented Ho Chi Minh from participating in celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution was obtained by a correspondent for the London Guardian, who recently visited Hanoi. In a 12 November story filed from Hong Kong, the correspondent reported that Ho is "very weak." He said the Soviet ambassador in Hanoi called on Ho to invite him to the celebrations, presumably those in Moscow. Ho, who reportedly was confined to bed, said that he wanted to attend but that he did not have the strength to do so.

Front Official on "Talks"

2. Dang Chan Thi, the Liberation Front representative to the 50th anniversary celebrations in Moscow, has provided a further indication that the Front views any US - North Vietnamese talks following a halt in the bombing of the North as separate from any discussions on settling the war in the South. Asked in an interview with a Japanese correspondent on 8 November if the Front would agree to open talks if the bombing of the North ended, Dang replied that the "suspension of bombing alone would not lead to such a conference." He added that the first requisite for a meeting is US acceptance of the Hanoi's four points and the Front's five-point proposal.

3. Dang's statement is in keeping with those made recently by other Front spokesmen. It also reflects Hanoi's long-held contention that any postbombing talks would deal only with bilateral US - North Vietnamese relations and that in any talks involving a settlement in South Vietnam the Front, as a full participant, will take the primary role.

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