

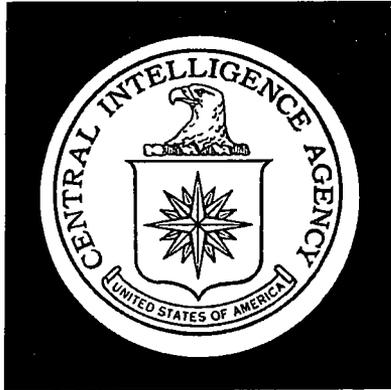
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
23 February 1968

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HIGHLIGHTS

There continue to be many signs of enemy preparations for new offensive actions. Communist forces apparently have made significant headway in the delta provinces since the opening of the Tet offensive.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: No significant enemy military actions occurred on 21-23 February. Continuing maneuvering of major forces and stepped-up shellings near the Demilitarized Zone suggest, however, new attacks may soon be made, particularly against several major urban areas (Paras. 1-4). People's Self-Defense Committees are being formed in some northern areas of the country to assist the military in defense of the cities (Paras. 5-6). A new enemy 107-mm. rocket has been identified in III Corps (Paras. 7-10). Indications are increasing that new attacks against the Saigon area are imminent (Paras. 11-16). The situation throughout most of the 16 provinces of IV Corps appears to be deteriorating (Paras. 17-23).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The government has now rounded up about 20 prominent persons in Saigon and placed them in "protective custody" (Paras. 1-3). The future plans of the People's Congress to Save the Nation were outlined by Senator Tran Van Don at a press conference on 21 February (Paras. 4-6). [redacted]

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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: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Communist shelling of allied field positions in northern Quang Tri Province has been stepped up in recent days with nearly 1,000 rounds fired on 22 February--the heaviest rate in several weeks. The first references to "N-Day" were noted [REDACTED] in the Khe Sanh area. Additionally, intensive enemy interest in certain areas of the western highlands continues.

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2. There were no major significant enemy military actions on 21-23 February. The continued maneuvering of major Communist forces suggests, however, the enemy may soon make another move against Saigon and certain other cities throughout the country.

Threat to Northern Cities Persists

3. In addition to other indicators, a flurry of prisoner [REDACTED] reports suggest the major cities in the northern section of the country, including Da Nang, Quang Tri, and Hoi An, may be prime targets in the immediate future of renewed Communist military activity.

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4. [REDACTED] some 200 Viet Cong sappers have already moved into Da Nang with the mission of attacking allied military posts in coordination with a large-scale attack on the city. The attacking force is to include the three regiments of the North Vietnamese 2nd Division supplemented by other main force and local force units in the coastal areas. Reportedly the date and time of the attack on Da Nang has not yet been decided. An assault on Hoi An, the provincial capital of Quang Nam Province, is scheduled to precede the attack on Da Nang.

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Self-Defense Militia Units Forming in I Corps

5. South Vietnamese authorities have begun organizing People's Self-defense Committees in some sections of northern I Corps. Of 3,000 weapons allocated for the five provinces of I Corps, 700 have already been issued.

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6. Militia units are being organized in the major cities as well as in district towns and hamlets and include well-screened volunteers. The self-defense committee in each province or city will be headed by the province chief or mayor, respectively. Each unit will be "sponsored" by a nearby South Vietnamese military unit which will provide necessary training.

New Enemy Rocket Round Captured

7. US forces discovered an enemy arms cache containing nearly 40 107-mm. field artillery rockets in western Tay Ninh Province early this week. Rockets of this caliber had never before been captured in South Vietnam and they were not previously known to be in the weapons inventory of Communist countries.

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8. [REDACTED] the main advantage of the 107-mm. weapon is that it is somewhat lighter than the other rockets currently being used by the Communists and thus easier to transport into firing positions.

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9. The 107-mm. rocket weighs 42 pounds compared with 87 and 102 pounds for the 140- and 122-mm. rounds, is slightly more than a yard long, has a range of about five miles, and is spin stabilized. The weapon is believed to be of Chinese Communist manufacture; one of the captured rounds was dated 1967.

10. There is some evidence that 107-mm. rockets were used in the attacks on 18 February against Tay Ninh city and Quan Loi and in the 21 February attack against Dau Tieng--all located in northwest III Corps. A newly arrived enemy rocket unit may have conducted these attacks, but this is unconfirmed.

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Saigon

11. Although Saigon remains relatively quiet, sporadic clashes continue on all sides of the city.

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12. On 22 February [redacted] located the headquarters of the 273rd Regiment of the Viet Cong 9th Division, near the Saigon city limits, less than two miles east of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Since 23 January this unit appears to have moved some 100 miles southeast from the Cambodian border area. The 9th Division's 271st and 272nd regiments have also been identified in the area immediately north of Saigon.

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13. [redacted]

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[redacted] elements of the North Vietnamese 7th Division have also moved eastward into the Binh Duong Province northwest of Saigon, and elements of the 5th Viet Cong Division have moved into the Bien Hoa area to the northeast of Saigon. In Binh Duong Province a number of unidentified units have appeared. The [redacted] characteristics of these elements suggest that they were formerly associated with the B-3 Front in the central highlands. Certain of these units have been noted discussing enemy operations, particularly artillery attacks, on US forces at Lai Khe and Ben Cat and combined operations with the North Vietnamese 7th Division.

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14. [redacted]

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[redacted] over 5,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops started moving southward from Phuoc Long Province on 20 February. The troops will [redacted] fill the gaps created by enemy casualties during the first Tet offensive and will be used to mount another major thrust on Saigon and province capitals "after 22 February."

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[redacted] the Communists have tanks along the Cambodian border which will be used in a second general offensive. The presence of the tanks is considered unlikely, but it is possible that the enemy is moving still more troops toward central III Corps.

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15. [redacted]
 the Viet Cong will mount a second large-scale
 attack on Saigon before 1 March. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Communists will not make
 concurrent heavy attacks on nearby provincial
 capitals but will concentrate on penetrating
 Saigon in force, if only for 24 hours, regardless
 of the cost.

16. [redacted] the
 major tactical objectives will be the Tan Son
 Nhut and Bien Hoa airbases, in order to eliminate
 allied air superiority, and the 4th Precinct,
 Saigon's northern port area. In the 4th Precinct
 the Communists hope to capitalize on the large num-
 bers of people who reportedly are already strongly
 anti-GVN and anti-American because of their poverty
 and extensive Viet Cong proselyting.

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The Delta Provinces

17. The situation in the IV Corps remains
 serious. The enemy continues to shell major urban
 areas and is reported massing for future assaults
 on key cities. The Viet Cong appear to be giving
 particular attention to Go Cong, Ben Tre, Cao
 Lanh, and Vinh Long, all provincial capitals.

18. In addition, a number of reports in-
 dicate that, as a result of the South Vietnamese
 Army's desire to provide maximum security in the
 urban areas, the Viet Cong now control most of
 the countryside and are increasing their efforts
 against isolated outposts and unprotected villages
 and hamlets. Because of the lack of government
 authority in the countryside, the Viet Cong re-
 portedly are having greater success in their
 recruiting efforts. Some US observers believe
 that the Communists may now have attained a
 stronger posture than before the Tet offensive
 despite the heavy losses they suffered in the
 first wave of attacks.

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19. Route 4, the main supply link between Saigon and the delta, is now reportedly open as far south as Soc Trang in Ba Xuyen Province, but most of the other major roads remain closed except when opened temporarily by a military operation.

Go Cong Province

20. A detailed report from Go Cong Province indicates that the Viet Cong are now stockpiling arms, ammunition, food, and medical supplies in preparation for another attack on the province capital. The Viet Cong Military Region 2 headquarters has reportedly ordered half of the Dong Thap Regiment from Long An Province into Go Cong to take part in the next assault.

21. The main roads in Go Cong remain closed, except when opened temporarily by military operations, and food produce cannot be moved to Saigon. The people in the province capital are said to be "scared" and many are now building family bunkers. Viet Cong propaganda asserts that the offensive now being waged in South Vietnam will continue for three months, after which a coalition government will be established.

22. [REDACTED] the Go Cong Province chief is mounting military operations outside of the capital, but generally in areas of little enemy activity and there have been few battles. The chief has ordered helicopter gunships to fire on any sampans moving anywhere in the province except in the immediate vicinity of the province and district capitals.

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23. The situation in Go Cong does not appear to be radically different from that in many other delta provinces. With South Vietnamese forces immobilized for the most part in static defensive positions within and on the immediate outskirts of the key towns, the countryside appears to be coming gradually under Viet Cong control.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The government continues to round up various individuals in order to place them in "protective custody." About 20 persons are currently reported to have been thus detained by the Saigon police. Among the latest to be "invited" to police headquarters are Vietnamese Confederation of Labor officials secretary general Tran Huu Quyen and Vo Van Tai, the controversial leader of the recent electrical workers' strike, as well as Thich Ho Giac, an associate of the militant monk Thich Tri Quang, who is also under detention.

2. Also detained was Ho Thong Minh, former defense minister under President Diem, who apparently was picked up on the basis of information alleging that he intended to contact the Viet Cong and work to bring about a coalition government. Minh, who until recently has been living in exile in Paris, is known to have been flirting with antigovernment elements and National Liberation Front representatives. Last autumn he reportedly had ceased his antigovernment activities.

[redacted] Minh left Paris on 27 January with the intention of contacting Liberation Front representatives in Phnom Penh and then President Thieu in Saigon in an effort to play an intermediary's role between the government and the Front.

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3. [redacted]

[redacted] the Communists have very little regard for such people as Ho Thang Minh and others who have take a peace-at-any-price stance. [redacted]

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More on the People's Congress to Save the Nation

4. On 21 February, the leaders of the People's Congress to Save the Nation held their first formal press conference. The committee, headed by Senator Tran Van

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Don, issued a communique which called on all people to share in the effort to save the nation and move toward the completion of a "unified political front" to oppose the Communists. The message also called on the government to unify its efforts, revitalize its anti-Communist policies, and create conditions for the participation of the whole nation in the drive against Communism.

5. In a question and answer session, Tran Van Don indicated that the committee has not yet decided on a definite program of action, but that the first priority is the creation of an anti-Communist front. Detailed planning would come later. Don also fielded several other sensitive questions relating to whether the Congress was a Ky organization (it is not).

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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