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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

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8 December 1967
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C O N T E N T S

(Information as of noon EST, 7 December 1967)

Far East

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Recent developments in the area surrounding Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province suggest that the Communists may be preparing for another major offensive. The recent friction generated over the attempted resignation of Police Director Loan and the conviction of some generals that the new government is inefficient and vulnerable to Communist infiltration appears to have eased for the moment.	

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FAR EAST

Military activity in South Vietnam remained at a relatively low level last week but there were indications that Communist forces are preparing a new offensive in northwestern Quang Tri Province near the Demilitarized Zone. There was further evidence of closer coordination between Viet Cong and North Vietnamese operations, with Viet Cong harassing attacks at widely scattered points aimed at relieving allied pressure on Communist main force units.

With the approach of holiday truce periods, Soviet spokesmen have renewed efforts to persuade the US to prolong the projected bombing pause. They have privately intimated that Hanoi would promptly agree to talks if the US refrained from setting a terminal date for the pause. The North Vietnamese, however, have not joined this effort and there is no indication that the Soviets are acting at Hanoi's behest.

Cambodia's heightened concern that the war might spread into its territory was evident in Phnom Penh's reaction to President Thieu's statement reserving the right to pursue Communist forces into Cambodia. A Cambodian statement denounced Thieu's warning as an attempt to "bring the war into Cambodia on false pretexts" and again denied that there are Communist forces on Cambodian territory.

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VIETNAM

Recent developments in the area surrounding Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province suggest that the Communists may be preparing for another major offensive.

US reconnaissance patrols staging from the US Marine garrison at Khe Sanh have encountered numerous small enemy forces in the mountains northwest of their base. Additionally, the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei and other nearby friendly field positions have been repeatedly attacked by mortar and recoilless rifle fire in recent weeks. This increase in Communist-initiated activity may be a prelude to a large-scale offensive.

Heavy monsoon rains have disrupted overland allied supply lines and have limited the tactical movements of Long range reconnaissance patrols. Route 9--the only access road into Khe Sanh and Lang Vei from supply points to the east--is presently closed to vehicular traffic and will not be reopened until the current monsoon rains taper off in January. The movement of men and materiel is now limited to airlifts when weather permits.

In the Mekong Delta, US troops and South Vietnamese Ma-

rines achieved a significant tactical victory over the Viet Cong 502nd local force battalion early this week. About six miles east of Sa Dec some 235 enemy soldiers were killed in a fierce day-long battle. Forty-one South Vietnamese and 13 Americans were killed.

The engagement resulted from an allied probe deep into Viet Cong - controlled territory--the first in this particular area since 1961. US military officials credited the strong leadership and aggressiveness of the South Vietnamese Marines with turning what threatened to be a costly ambush into a successful encounter that cut deeply into the strength of the enemy unit.

Politics in South Vietnam

The recent friction generated over the attempted resignation of Police Director Loan and the conviction of some generals that the new government is inefficient and vulnerable to Communist infiltration appears to have eased for the moment.

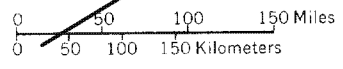
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The moderating influence so far exerted by Vice President Ky, who reportedly headed off a more serious crisis by persuading Loan to withdraw his resignation and by asking the other generals to give the government a chance, may have a stabilizing effect.

The government has announced that some 20 leaders of the 1966 Buddhist struggle movement, which centered in Hue and Da Nang, will be brought to trial on 19 December. The 20 include several army officers and Nguyen Van Man, the former mayor of Da Nang. The trial is likely to raise a furor among opposition elements, particularly the militant Buddhists and opposition deputies in the Lower House.

The Lower House has joined with the Upper House in calling for a review of the government's mobilization decree. Both houses have claimed that the decree's promulgation was unconstitutional because it lacked legislative approval and have invited government representatives to appear before them to defend it.

A new political party is apparently in the making. Senator Nguyen Gia Hien, leader of the Catholic Greater Solidarity Forces, has reportedly reached agreement with General Nguyen Duc Thang to integrate some of his local supporters into Revolutionary Development teams in return for furnishing Thang some needed data on which to base future development planning. Hien's own cadres would be permitted to do party organizational work. It is expected that moderate Buddhist, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai cadres will eventually be added to broaden the new party's base.

Soviets Press for
Bombing Halt

Soviet diplomats on several occasions during the past week indicated unofficially that an indefinite cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam at this time would lead to talks with Hanoi. These reports appear to be the beginning of a campaign to persuade the US to extend any projected pause in the bombing of North Vietnam during the holidays. They are similar to Soviet efforts conducted prior to the Christmas truce period last year. Further Soviet approaches along this line are expected although there is no indication that Moscow is acting at Hanoi's behest.

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