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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

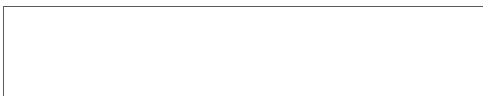
The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

Communist China continues to beef up its air defenses near the North Vietnamese border.

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM:

Sharp clashes between small units were reported in widespread areas of South Vietnam on 14 December (Paras. 1-3). A B-3 Front - associated unit is apparently assisting with the movement of supplies and reinforcements into III Corps (Paras 4-6). New Chinese automatic rifles have been captured in the delta (Paras. 7-9).

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM:

The government is making little progress in fashioning new programs for the country and is concentrating primarily on organizational matters (Paras. 1-6). The Upper House has completed debates on its rules (Para. 7). The proposed trial of 26 leaders of the 1966 "struggle" movement has aroused little public interest, but pressure is developing for light sentences (Paras. 8-9).

III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM:

There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS:

At least six more Chinese Communist fighters have moved to airfields in South China (Paras. 1-2).

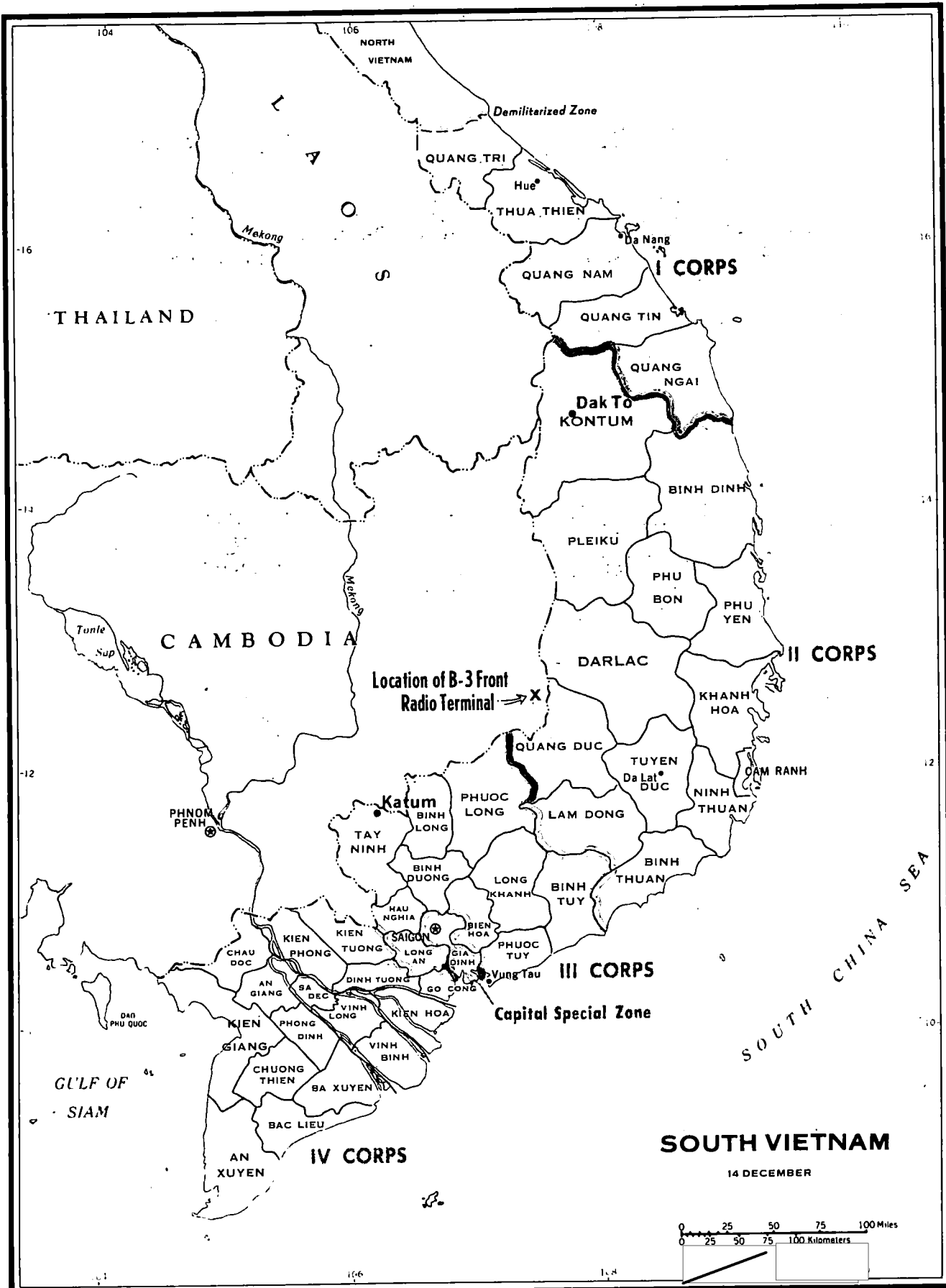
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[redacted] significant change in the air defense structure on the Sino - North Vietnamese border (Para. 3). There have been unusual communications involving the Chinese 13th Army headquarters and its subordinate units (Paras. 4-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A number of sharp clashes between small units were reported on 14 December.

2. US 1st Cavalry Division units killed 30 enemy in the coastal lowlands of Quang Tin Province. A South Vietnamese force ambushed in Binh Dinh reportedly suffered heavy losses; enemy casualties were 30 dead. In northern Tay Ninh Province, the Civilian Irregular Defense Camp at Katum was shelled on 13 December for the third time in less than a week. Allied casualties were light.

3. On 13 December North Vietnamese gunners fired 55 mortar rounds on the allied base at Dak To, killing three Americans and wounding 12.

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[redacted] enemy forces in this region have been resupplied and that additional mortar attacks are likely. Between 7 and 9 December a radio station, believed to serve the 40th North Vietnamese Artillery Regiment, was noted moving northward toward a known Communist base area in southeastern Laos and then returning to the triborder area. This movement, coupled with increased sightings of trucks moving southward in the lower Laotian panhandle, suggests that the artillery unit was on an ammunition resupply mission. In addition, reconnaissance units of the North Vietnamese 1st Division have been making [redacted] positions in the Dak To area in recent days.

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B-3 Front Coordination with COSVN

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4. [redacted] in the western highlands show increasing coordination between the B-3 Front, the over-all command authority in the highlands, and a section of the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) in northern Tay Ninh Province.

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6. This is farther south than any B-3 Front associated terminal since the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment moved from the highlands into northern III Corps. This activity suggests that subordinate elements of the B-3 Front are assisting in the movement of men and supplies destined for Communist main force units in III Corps.

New Chinese Rifles Captured in Delta

7. Chinese automatic rifles produced only a few months ago are turning up in South Vietnam. Examination of two weapons captured during a recent skirmish in the Mekong Delta area indicates they were made during the third quarter of 1967.

8. The factory that manufactured these rifles is in northern Manchuria, over 2,000 miles from the delta. Older models of the same weapon have been captured in South Vietnam for some time.

9. The rifle is a Chinese copy of the Soviet AK-47, which is the standard shoulder weapon used by Soviet and East European forces. It has a maximum cyclical rate of fire of 600 rounds per minute. Although somewhat heavy for a Vietnamese, it is considered a good weapon for use in both the jungle and delta areas.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. President Thieu has been in office a month and a half, but his government has shown few signs of developing promising new programs for the country. The government seems chiefly concerned with its own internal organization and relationships. The unsettled feud between Thieu and Vice President Ky may be complicating the process of working out future programs. Although not deliberately sabotaging Thieu's efforts, Ky has adopted a wait-and-see attitude in the apparent expectation that the President will commit serious political errors which will enhance Ky's own future political prospects.

2. Persons close to the government have complained about what they call Thieu's dilettante approach to the day-to-day problems of governing. Moreover, Thieu is evidently not providing adequate guidance to Prime Minister Loc who appears to be waiting for cues from the President. Loc's cabinet, composed largely of technicians, has yet to come up with a significant new program. It appears particularly reluctant to take any steps in the economic sphere which might draw criticism from influential circles.

3. The performance of Foreign Minister Tran Van Do has been a notable exception. He recently strengthened his ministry by placing more professional and experienced men in charge of critical divisions. He will visit Africa shortly to refurbish South Vietnam's image in that area.

4. In addition to the internal pressures which contribute to the government's lack of decisiveness, Thieu reportedly faces a rising tide of resentment from certain military officers who fear they may lose their prerogatives under the civilian government. Awareness of this resentment seems to be delaying the government's anticipated reorganization of the military establishment, and may further hinder promised reforms in the civil administration, including the anticorruption drive.

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5. Neither house of the National Assembly is in a position to enact legislation, and no legislative proposals have been proposed. Both the Upper and the Lower Houses are preoccupied with their own internal organizations--a process which may continue into early 1968. Members of both houses have been content to present resolutions criticizing the government for its mobilization decree and its handling of political prisoners.

6. Certain antigovernment elements, particularly in the Lower House, may be expected to go on trying to embarrass the government. Although a majority in each house appears basically inclined toward cooperation with the government, National Assembly members generally seem eager to demonstrate their independence of the executive branch and to ingratiate themselves with their constituents.

Upper House Developments

7. The Upper House completed debate on its rules on 13 December and is to meet on the 15th to take a final vote. Several of the latest could only be approved provisionally since they deal with Upper House - Lower House procedures and require Lower House concurrence.

Trial of Struggle Movement Leaders

8. The proposed trial of 26 leaders of the 1966 "struggle" movement, tentatively set for 19 December, has aroused little interest in Saigon. Most local papers have carried stories about the trial, but few have run significant editorials on it. Moderate Buddhist leader Thich Tam Chau has, however, sent a letter to President Thieu requesting amnesty for all those who were involved in the "struggle" movement "in order to help promote reconciliation and unity in the country." Thich Tam Giac, prominent in the Chau faction, has advocated that the trial be postponed until after the National Assembly drafts an amnesty law.

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9. Pressure from within the National Assembly, especially that from essentially progovernment members, and the appeals from the two government-supporting monks may lead the government to go easy on the defendants. The presiding officers of the court still have to be chosen and the trial date is only tentative pending their selection. The trial may even be postponed.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. At least six Chinese Communist MIG-19 jet fighters have moved from East China to airfields along the Chinese - North Vietnamese border since 7 December. This brings the number of fighters moved to South China airfields since 10 September to at least 44.

2. On 7 December, at least two of the MIGs were noted in a flight from East China to Nan-ning. A transport aircraft which accompanied them moved on to Meng-tzu on the 8th, suggesting that Meng-tzu was also the final destination of the MIGs, although they were not noted flying there. On 11 December, at least four MIG-19s moved from East China to Nan-ning. On the 13th they continued to Meng-tzu, accompanied by the same transport which accompanied the 7 December movement.

3. [redacted] No-
vember show a significant change in the Chinese air defense structure along the Vietnam border. It appears that the authority of the Nan-ning sub-district of the Canton Air District has been upgraded to at least a district headquarters, or possibly higher. Administratively, however, Nan-ning remains subordinate to the Canton Air District.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Paul Doumer Bridge is apparently un-
servicable to rail and vehicle traffic after air
strikes on 14 December.

2. Photography taken minutes after the attack
showed that the mile-long span bridging the Red River
at Hanoi was damaged at several points. None of
the bridge spans, however, appeared to have been
dropped. The bridge was last attacked on 25 Octo-
ber and two spans were dropped. Photography of 17
November indicated that the bridge had been reopened
to truck traffic. Prefabricated concrete spans rest-
ing on new piers were used to close the two-span gap.
Western observers in Hanoi reported the bridge open
to rail and vehicle traffic on 24 November.

Soviet Flight to Hanoi

3. A Soviet AN-10 military transport with 11
passengers aboard completed a flight from the USSR
to Hanoi on 14 December. This is the first such So-
viet flight since last June and the tenth of its
kind to Hanoi this year. The purpose of the flights
is not known; presumably they are flown in support
of the Soviet military aid program in North Vietnam.

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