

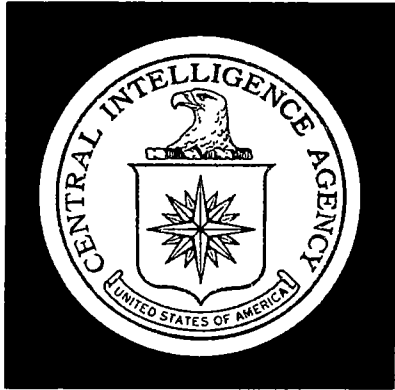
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MCO

MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

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8 February 1968

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Information as of 1600
8 February 1968
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HIGHLIGHTS

Communist activity throughout South Vietnam has been comparatively quiet. The Buddhist moderates and Saigon University faculty members have joined other groups in pledges of support for the government. North Vietnam's Foreign Minister Trinh has given another interview setting forth Hanoi's position on negotiations.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

The Communists throughout most of South Vietnam have been comparatively quiet over the past 24 hours (Para. 1). The situation in Khe Sanh eased somewhat on 8 February (Para. 2). The aftermath of the withdrawal of allied forces from Lang Vei is discussed (Paras. 3-4). Extensive maneuvering of Communist forces in northern Quang Tri Province has been noted in communications (Para. 8). Heavy fighting continues in Hue (Para. 9). Scattered enemy action has been reported elsewhere in I Corps (Paras. 10-11). Except for activity in Da Lat and near Kontum, the military situation in II Corps is relatively quiet (Paras. 12-16). Fighting continues in parts of Saigon and elsewhere near the capital (Paras. 17-18). Elsewhere in III and IV Corps, there were instances of new Communist attacks against military installations and urban centers, but no large-scale actions (Paras. 19-22).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

Vice President Ky is still critical of President Thieu but apparently intends to cooperate (Paras. 1-2). Prime Minister Loc may be attempting, through promises of political favors, to foil a possible National Assembly move to oust him (Paras. 3-4). Thieu will address the assembly on 9 February, partly to defend his declaration of martial law (Para. 5). The moderate Buddhists and the Saigon University faculty have added pledges of support for the government to those issued by several other groups (Para. 6).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Communist activity through most of South Vietnam has been comparatively quiet over the last 24 hours. There are signs, however, that a new round of widespread action may be coming in the next few days.

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newed Communist activity in the northern provinces and the western highlands. There are other reports indicating fresh attempts in the coastal provinces, in the delta, and in Saigon.

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I Corps

2. The situation in the Khe Sanh area had quieted down somewhat by noon on 8 February. North Vietnamese forces gained control of the Lang Vei Special Forces camp the afternoon of the 7th. The camp's defenders were trying to evacuate the area under cover of intensive friendly aerial and artillery bombardment. Six of the 24 Americans and over three fourths of the 450-man Vietnamese garrison have not yet been accounted for.

3. Two relief columns had converged on the scene late in the afternoon of 7 February for a raid on the camp. Neither column actually entered the compound, but both did help extricate some of the surviving friendly personnel. The relief forces were composed of Special Forces personnel helilifted from Khe Sanh and the BV33, the Laotian volunteer battalion. At last report, friendly reaction forces held some positions near Lang Vei, but the Laotian volunteer battalion was not on the scene--the battalion commander and 40 of his troops were said to be at Khe Sanh.

4. The 6,000 refugees who approached to within a quarter mile of the Khe Sanh base have returned to the Lang Vei area. Less than one half of the refugees have now been identified as Lao; the rest are apparently local Vietnamese or montagnards.

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5. Some two miles southwest of Lang Vei, air strikes were reported to have disabled two Communist tanks on the morning of 8 February. This brings the total of enemy tanks destroyed or damaged in the battle for Lang Vei to seven.

6. The identity of the Communist unit which attacked Lang Vei has not been confirmed; it may have been elements from the 66th Regiment of the North Vietnamese 304th Division. A senior noncommissioned officer, who defected from the 66th one week ago, stated that when he left the unit, it was near Lang Vei awaiting orders to attack the camp.

[REDACTED] elements of the 304th Division generally south of Khe Sanh/Lang Vei in recent days.

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7. It is possible that elements of the 101D Regiment of the 325C Division were involved.

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[REDACTED] On the same day, the 325C Division headquarters shifted to a position some six miles west of Lang Vei.

8.

[REDACTED] The North Vietnamese 27th Independent Battalion has been ordered to block Route 9 and encircle the US artillery site at Cam Lo. This is to begin on 8 February, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] An element of the battalion was directed first to destroy allied tanks and then request assistance, if necessary, from the North Vietnamese 320th Division. The 320th Division is currently in the north-central sector of the province north of the US strongpoints at the "Rockpile" and Camp Carroll. The 27th Battalion has previously been noted making extensive battle preparations, including the procurement of antitank mines, and rocket and mortar ammunition.

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9. Heavy fighting continued in Hue on 8 February. On the south side of the Perfume River, US Marines were advancing more rapidly than before in clearing the residential area. The South Vietnamese in the citadel area north of the river were progressing more slowly.

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10. South of Da Nang, four allied battalions initiated [redacted], " on 4 February to relieve pressure from enemy forces which pose a threat to the city. Communist forces believed to be in the sector include major elements of the 2nd North Vietnamese Division and other regimental-size elements.

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11. According to an after-action report prepared to MACV advisers, the Communist forces which attacked Tam Ky city, Quang Tin Province, included elements of at least three battalions and eight local force companies, totaling about 1,600 men. Enemy killed, according to body counts by Vietnamese and advisers, exceeded 500. This suggests at least a one third reduction in the enemy force. A prisoner from one of the local force companies has claimed that many members of his unit had no individual weapons, but instead carried a bag of hand grenades to be used in the assault. This is the first indication of any lack of weapons by enemy units during the Tet offensive. Reports from US advisers elsewhere in South Vietnam have indicated that the enemy was well-armed and well-equipped and, in some instances, utilized weapons not previously employed in certain sectors of the country.

II Corps

12. Except for activity in Da Lat and near Kontum, the military situation in II Corps is comparatively quiet. [redacted] that a new phase of Communist activity is about to commence throughout the II Corps area, and particularly in the western highlands. [redacted]

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[redacted] for attacks on villages and key allied military targets in western Pleiku and Kontum provinces, possibly beginning on 8 or 9 February. These Communist [redacted] have also revealed that the current phase of operations is referred to as "phase two" and that another phase is about to begin.

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13. Fighting continues northeast of Kontum city. Vietnamese and US officials in Kontum now believe that the immediate Communist objectives in attacking Kontum were to kill the province chief, capture the province headquarters, and inaugurate a new "revolutionary administration." Interrogations of captured prisoners indicate that enemy troops had been ordered to take and hold Kontum city. All of this miscarried, despite the fact that enemy troops were in the city from 30 January to 2 February. The 24th North Vietnamese Regiment apparently spearheaded the attacks against various US and South Vietnamese Army installations and bore the brunt of the fighting while local Viet Cong units infiltrated the city and occupied most of the residential areas. Approximately 700 Communists were killed in the attack at the cost of some 40 friendly dead.

14. Operations against the Communists are continuing in Da Lat. No major areas of the city are controlled by the enemy, but there is concern that many Viet Cong are with the estimated 13,000 refugees flooding the city. Some consideration is being given, for security reasons, to moving all Revolutionary Development teams in the surrounding area into district headquarters.

15. According to a North Vietnamese Army prisoner taken in the battle at Da Lat, it was the Communist intention to capture and hold the city for at least two months. They were ordered to use propaganda to get the population to rally to the Communists. The source admitted that this effort was unsuccessful. He believed that the people would have rallied if the Communists had taken the city.

16. Elsewhere in II Corps, there are reports that the Viet Cong 18B Regiment is maneuvering into new positions west of Nha Trang. In Darlac Province, the American G-2 adviser reports that the North Vietnamese 33rd Regiment has been joined by the 95B Regiment from Pleiku Province and that another attack by these forces can be expected.

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III Corps and Saigon

17. As of 8 February there were some several hundred Viet Cong still operating in Saigon's fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth police precincts, all of which are located in Cholon. The Communists have constructed barricades in some areas and sharp fighting is expected before they are cleared. The Saigon police believe that the Viet Cong are trying to hold these positions in the expectation that reinforcements will be arriving soon and that they are unaware of allied blocking operations in surrounding Gia Dinh Province.

18. Heavy fighting was reported on the northern and southern outskirts of Saigon where allied forces have contacted battalion-size Communist units. Two US Army infantry battalions are to conduct a sweep across the southern half of Saigon to clear the Viet Cong from this area.

19. Elsewhere in the III Corps area, mortar attacks were conducted against Phu Cuong, and against US Army base camps at Cu Chi and Lai Khe. Patrol skirmishes took place in a number of provinces, but no large-scale fighting has occurred. Recently intercepted message have referred to "severe" attacks which the 7th Division, elements of which have apparently moved into central III Corps, would launch to "contain" the US base at Lai Khe.

20. Mortar fire was directed at Tay Ninh city for the second time during the night of 6-7 February. Some Communist elements penetrated the old market area near the center of the city before being repulsed. Another enemy element was ambushed outside the city by friendly forces who had been forewarned of the attack by a Vietnamese security service source.

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IV Corps

21. Vi Thanh, the capital of Chuong Thien Province, which has remained generally unscathed in the recent Communist offensive, received a number of rounds of 75-mm. recoilless rifle fire on the night of 6-7 February. Several rounds fell on the MACV compound and one American was killed. An expected ground attack failed to materialize, but a Provincial Reconnaissance team killed 10 enemy in a small engagement.

22. Elsewhere in the delta, military activity yesterday was generally light. Viet Cong gunners did unleash a heavy mortar attack on Cao Lanh, some 75 miles southwest of Saigon. US Army troops fought a sharp battle with Communist troops near My Tho. The capital of Go Cong Province also came under mortar fire. The atmosphere in several provincial capitals and towns in the delta continues to be tense as sizable enemy forces remain in outlying areas. In Moc Hoa, the capital of Kien Tuong Province, the population was reported particularly fearful because Communist forces which attacked the town on 2 February warned that they would return in 10 days to liberate the city.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Vice President Ky apparently still sees President Thieu with a critical eye, although he has reportedly indicated to his closest advisers that he intends to cooperate with Thieu during the current crisis and has no thought of consolidating his own power. On 7 February Ky told a [redacted] [redacted] close Ky associate, that he felt Thieu has shown his customary lack of initiative and aggressiveness in handling the crisis.

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2. Ky is apparently less worried than are some of his aides about what they regard as an attempt by Thieu to restrict Ky's duties on the Vietnamese-US task force, which Ky heads. [redacted]

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[redacted] Thieu rewrote the draft paper setting up the task force to give it a shorter tenure by changing such phrases as "recovery of the people" to "relief of the people." A number of Ky's advisers were reportedly upset at the implications of these changes, but Ky told them, [redacted] that he believes the task force should not be more than a temporary organization and need not have a long-range charter. Ky also reportedly rejected suggestions that he use the present situation to get rid of Prime Minister Loc and change the constitution to permit his own installation as prime minister.

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Prime Minister Loc

3. For his part, Loc seems to realize that he is under considerable fire for his inability to cope with the crisis. He is apparently attempting to foil possible efforts to remove him. [redacted]

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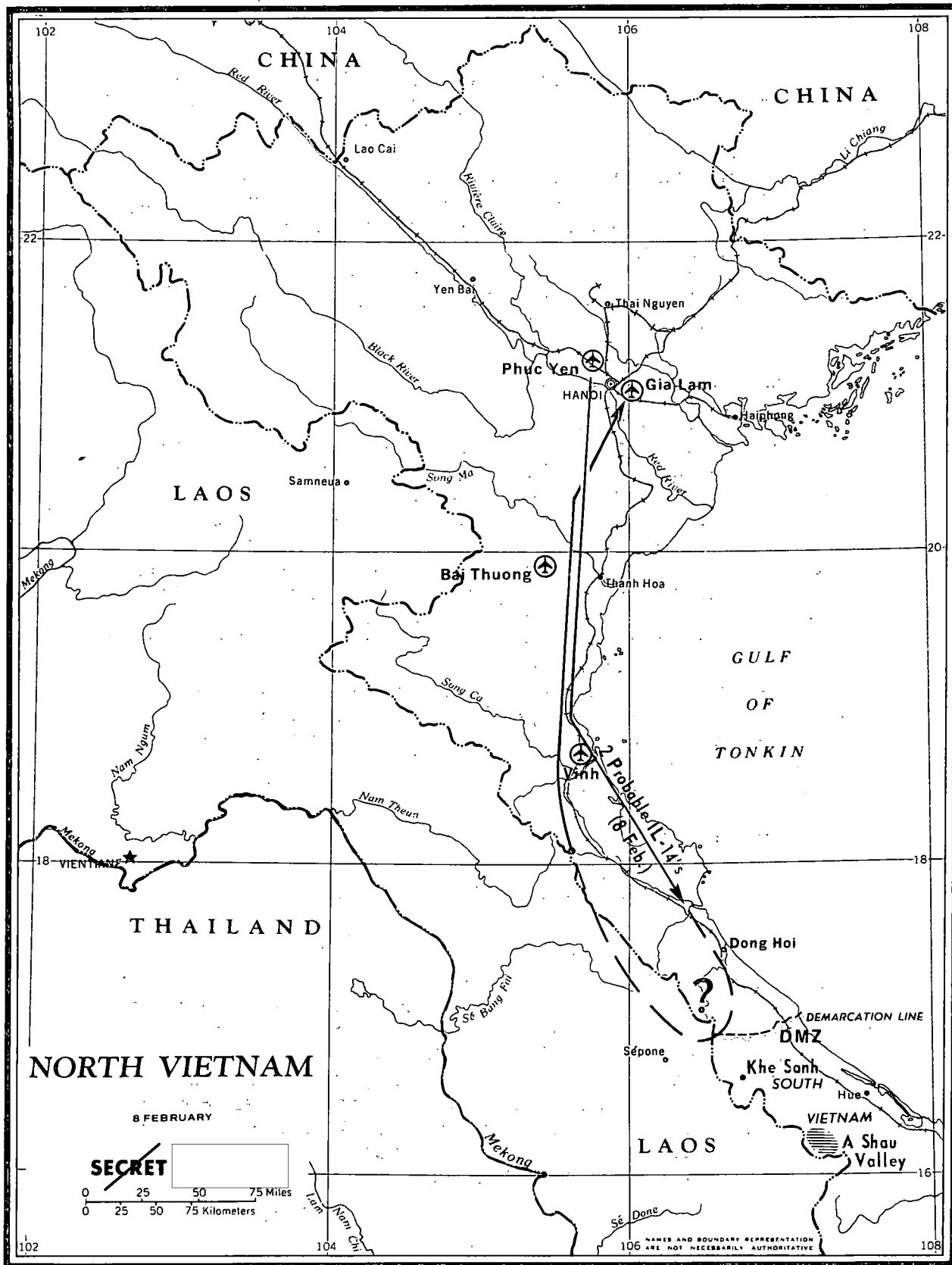
[redacted] that Loc approached Senator Nguyen Van Ngai on 6 February with a request that Ngai not give him difficulty in the Upper House. He reportedly accompanied this with an offer of several return favors, promising to appoint 50 competent members of Ngai's Revolutionary Dai Viet Party to government posts. He reportedly also promised to seek Ngai's opinions on any future national policy decisions and to try to obtain weapons and money to arm Dai Viet Party members against the Viet Cong.

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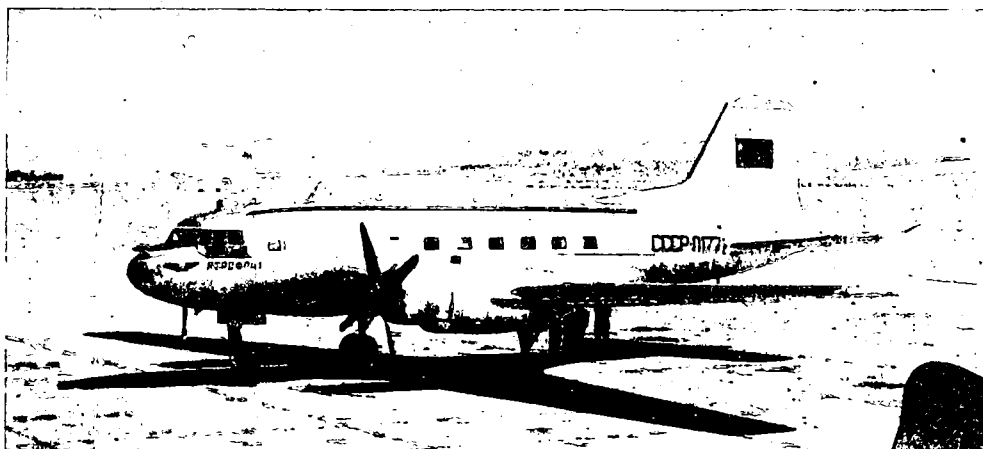
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CRATE (I1-14)

COACH (I1-12) and CRATE (I1-14) are low-wing, twin reciprocating engine aircraft used for passenger transportation. They are similar in appearance to the Convair 240 and Martin 202. Externally, the differences in appearance between COACH and CRATE are minor with the primary difference being in the shape of the vertical stabilizer.

After COACH became operational in 1947 it encountered structural and performance difficulties which required extensive modification. CRATE was introduced into service in 1954 as an improved variant and has, in general, replaced COACH in service. The range of COACH is somewhat less than that for CRATE.

CRATE is widely used in the Soviet air forces but the majority of these aircraft in the USSR are in civil air transport. They have been supplied to most Communist countries and to a number of non-Communist countries. Only a limited number of COACH aircraft remain in service.

A variation of CRATE, designated I1-14M has an increased passenger capacity from up to 24, which was achieved by lengthening the fuselage.

The performance figures given below are applicable to CRATE aircraft.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE

Year in service	1954
Power plant number/type	2/Piston
Gross weight (lb)	36,300
Normal cargo (lb)	4,750
Maximum cargo (lb)	8,100
Number of passengers/paratroops	24/21
Range/radius with normal cargo (nm)	1,600/720
Cruise speed (kt)	130
Service ceiling (ft)	24,400

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5. The operational characteristics of the IL-14 do nothing to clarify Hanoi's purpose in sending transport aircraft into the vicinity of the Demilitarized Zone. Unlike the AN-2s, this cargo plane has seldom, if ever, been used by Communist states in a tactical role. If North Vietnam is using its IL-14s in their normal capacity as transport aircraft, they would appear to be too large to land at any airfields known to exist in the area surrounding the zone.

6. It is possible that Hanoi has decided to use these planes to drop important men or material by parachute in support of the Communist offensive in northern South Vietnam. This thesis is suggested by the brief flights apparently made into this region during the hours of darkness. [REDACTED]

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during the past three days have mentioned building fires which could serve as beacons for IL-14s involved in paradrop activities.

Rumors of Surface-to-Surface Missiles in DRV

7. A report from Hanoi has supplemented limited photographic evidence of a suspect Styx surface-to-surface missile site near Thanh Hoa on 19 December.

8. The Indonesian ambassador to Hanoi says that in late December he was informed by the French representative that the Soviet Union had provided surface-to-surface missiles to North Vietnam which could be used against American ships.

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9. The Frenchman explained that North Vietnam had pressed Moscow for the missile after the sinking of the Eilat, pointing out that their need for such a weapon was certainly greater than that of Egypt. The weapon used to sink the Eilat was the Soviet-made Styx missile, which has a range of 20-30 miles. It is primarily a vessel-launched missile, but is thought to be adaptable to land launching.

10. In a later conversation, an East European ambassador implied to the Indonesian that the USSR had provided North Vietnam with Styx missiles.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In an effort to relate the fighting in South Vietnam directly to Hanoi's expressed interest in negotiations, North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh staged another interview on 8 February with the AFP correspondent in Hanoi. After condemning the stubborn US attitude and hailing the Tet offensive, the foreign minister took up the subject of talks after an unconditional halt to the bombings. In response to a specific question, Trinh said such talks could include "problems in connection with the settlement of the Vietnam problem on the basis of the 1954 Geneva agreements," and "other questions which would be raised by the two parties."

2. In the new statement, Trinh stresses that there is no change in Hanoi's conditions for a peaceful settlement. He is more forthcoming than before, however, about North Vietnam's willingness to discuss the whole problem of Vietnam, not just the war in the North. Trinh specifically rejected the San Antonio formula because it poses conditions for a halt to the bombings. He maintained that because the US does not want to "carry out talks to settle the Vietnam problem, it must be held responsible for its own obstinacy."

3. The new effort to publicize Hanoi's willingness to talk in the midst of the intensified fighting of the past week reinforces the impression that the Vietnamese are pursuing to some extent their "fight-talk" strategy described in many captured documents. The foreign minister obviously wants to keep alive the impression that, as far as Hanoi is concerned, the door to negotiations is still ajar. This same impression has been generated on a less official level in a series of interviews which North Vietnamese diplomats and overseas Front representatives have granted in the past few days.

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4. In the most recent of these press interviews, the Liberation Front man in Algiers on 7 February emphasized the determination of the Communists to continue the fighting until they had obtained their objectives. He opened with the standard version of Communist successes last week and said that even the US had admitted that the Viet Cong had committed only a small portion of their military force to the Tet offensive. He dwelt at length on the "extensive" popular support which the Viet Cong military assaults allegedly mustered throughout the country. The "alliances of peace" in Saigon and Hue, he said, were working with the Front to force the withdrawal of US troops and the overthrow of the Saigon government.

5. In addition to their own propaganda touting the success of the Tet offensive, the Communists in South Vietnam are also contacting Western (non-American) correspondents in Saigon in an effort to publicize their cause. Two such interviews with Viet Cong officials have been published in the past few days--one with Observer correspondent Mark Frankland and another with an unidentified AFP stringer. The Viet Cong are not identified, but the impression is given that the interviews were held in the heart of Saigon. The tone of the Communists is cocky and extremely hard line.

6. In an interview with AFP, the Viet Cong boasted that the Tet offensive was the beginning of the "general offensive" and that the Communists intended to "reconquer the capital just as we are going to reconquer the country." Following a line characteristic of Hanoi's recent commentary, the local official tried to absolve the Communists from any blame for war-related destruction and death to the civilian population by claiming that it is the US that is burning cities and bombing with antipersonnel rockets. All the Viet Cong are doing is "pushing back the attacks on its sectors." One of the most favorable and useful aspects of this article, from the Communist viewpoint, is the description of the relaxed and unrestricted way that Communist civilians and troops in uniform move "freely" about in the Saigon area.

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7. Correspondent Frankland describes his Viet Cong contact as an official assigned to organize plantation workers in the Saigon area. It is doubtful that this individual was very high rank. Some of his remarks are definitely out of step with known party positions. He freely admitted, for example, that North Vietnamese troops were in the South and said that they were there because it was the duty of the North to help the South. In other areas, however, his comments were a reiteration of the Front's hard-line approach to the necessity for continued fighting until the US agreed to negotiations on Communist terms.

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