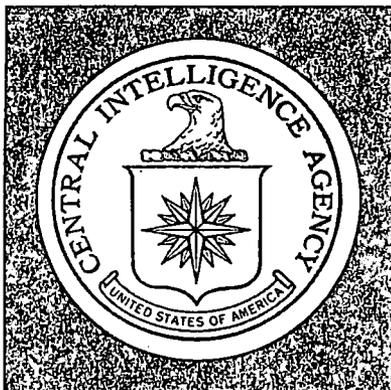


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

~~Top Secret~~

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27 February 1968

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Information as of 1600
27 February 1968

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HIGHLIGHTS

No significant large-scale enemy attacks occurred in South Vietnam on 27 February, but the Communists directed mortar and artillery fire at several key installations. Communist forces have dug trenches in the immediate vicinity of the Khe Sanh base and have even dug under the base's defensive wire barrier.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Airborne observers in the Khe Sanh area report that enemy forces have dug trenches in the immediate vicinity of the US Marine strongpoint (Paras. 1-2). The North Vietnamese 320th Division is shifting eastward (Paras. 3-5). There are tenuous indications that elements of the 29th Regiment have moved to the Hue area (Paras. 6-8). The Viet Cong are consolidating forces under new battalion and regimental headquarters (Paras. 9-11). New attacks are possible in the Central Highlands (Paras. 12-17). Enemy harassment continues in the Saigon area (Paras. 18-20). Elements of the 5th and 9th divisions continue to threaten Saigon (Paras. 21-23). Armored vehicles have been encountered in Tay Ninh Province (Paras. 24-25). Two battles were reported in the delta on 26 February (Paras. 26-27).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

[redacted]

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[redacted] Viet Cong attacks in Hau Nghia Province have succeeded in undoing much of the work accomplished by the Revolutionary Development program (Paras. 4-6). The city of Da Lat appears to be well on the road to recovery, but the formerly complacent population has suffered a serious psychological blow (Paras. 7-8). Officials in Vinh Long Province are turning in an

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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. Although no significant large-scale enemy ground attacks were reported on 27 February, Communist forces continued to shell allied bases and installations near the Demilitarized Zone in the western highlands and in the Saigon area. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Khe Sanh

2. [redacted] in the Khe Sanh area [redacted] enemy forces have dug trenches in the immediate vicinity of the US Marine strongpoint. On 25 February an observer saw an enemy trenchline that came within 50 meters of the east end of the airstrip. Extensive trenchworks were also noted within 100 meters of the southwestern perimeter of the base. At two points Communist trenches now extend under the base's defensive wire barriers.

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North Vietnamese 320th Division Shifts Eastward

3. There are indications that the North Vietnamese 320th Division is assuming control of enemy operations in northeastern Quang Tri Province. This area, which includes the allied strongpoints at Con Thien, Gio Linh, the "Rockpile," Camp Carroll, and Dong Ha, had generally been the responsibility of the North Vietnamese 324B Division before major elements of that unit moved south early this year to the Quang Tri city area.

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4. [redacted] small elements of the 320th Divisions's 64th Regiment were to participate in an attack near Dong Ha on 27 February. This is the first indication that the 320th intends to operate this far east. The Dong Ha base did come under a heavy mortar, artillery, and rocket barrage on the 27th. American casualties were relatively light, but there was extensive damage to equipment. Several weeks ago a North Vietnamese prisoner reported that elements of the 320th Division's 52nd Regiment were also shifting eastward toward Gio Linh.

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5. The headquarters of the 320th Division and a third regiment, probably the 48th, remain in north-central Quang Tri Province. This force, in coordination with the North Vietnamese 27th Battalion, continues to pose a threat in the area of Con Thien, Camp Carroll, and Khe Sanh. [redacted]

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[redacted] the recent mortar, artillery, and rocket attacks on Camp Carroll were intended to "create tension," probably to divert allied 175-mm. fire support from the Khe Sanh area.

Hue

6. [redacted] elements of the 29th Regiment, North Vietnamese 325C Division, may have moved south-east from the vicinity of Khe Sanh to the Hue area. Tactical messages which previously were identified as originating from the North Vietnamese 6th Regiment now appear to serve the 7th and 9th battalions of the 29th Regiment.

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7. It has been suspected for some time that the 6th Regiment was reinforced by other units in the recent fighting in the Hue area. The presence of the 29th Regiment in Hue, however, has not been confirmed by prisoners or captured documents.

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8. It is possible that a newly infiltrated group of North Vietnamese troops was sent to take part in the battle for Hue. Documents and a prisoner recently captured near Hue refer to a "24th Regiment." This could be the 1,000-man force trained by the 350th Division in North Vietnam and known to have infiltrated into southern Quang Tri Province in November 1967.

Viet Cong Battalion and Regimental Headquarters

9. A number of reports from various intelligence sources over the past few months indicate that the Communists have been consolidating existing Viet Cong district companies into battalions and existing battalions into new regiments. This provides the enemy with an improved command control capability and probably accounts for some of the success which the Communists have had in recent weeks in coordinating attacks over widespread areas.

10. Two recent examples of new headquarters groups being formed have been reported in the southern I Corps. In Quang Tin Province, a prisoner reports that three Viet Cong district companies were consolidated into a 74th Battalion late last month. The 74th Battalion in turn reportedly has been grouped with the 72nd Local Force and the 70th Main Force battalions to form a regimental-size entity designated the "Quang Tin Provincial Force." All three battalions in this force participated in a coordinated attack on Tam Ky, the Quang Tin provincial capital, during the initial Tet offensive.

11. Captured documents indicate that the enemy has also formed a new regiment, designated the 328th, in Quang Ngai Province. The regiment consists of the formerly independent 38th Local Force Battalion, the 81st Main Force Battalion, and two separate Viet Cong companies. The 328th Regiment is believed to have coordinated with the 401st Sapper Regiment in the 30 January attacks on Quang Ngai city.

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The Western Highlands

12. Mortar and rocket attacks on 26 February against Camp Holloway Airfield at Pleiku and against South Vietnamese Army headquarters installations at Kontum, coupled with sharp enemy ground probes near Dak To and Ban Me Thuot, support indications [REDACTED] of another round of impending Communist offensive activity in the western highlands.

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13. Elements of the 1st North Vietnamese Division are continuing tactical reconnaissance and battlefield preparation activity in the Dak To/Ben Het/Tan Canh area of western Kontum Province, [REDACTED]

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The enemy troop concentration includes combat maneuver elements of the division's 66th and 32nd regiments, supported by the 40th Artillery Regiment which recently shifted from Cambodia to firing positions southwest of Ben Het. The recent unusual move of the 1st Division headquarters element to the 66th Regiment headquarters area northwest of Ben Het--the first time since prior to the November 1967 battle for Dak To--provides further evidence of impending enemy offensive activity in this area.

14. An offensive thrust by North Vietnam's 1st Division against allied positions in western Kontum would probably be designed to tie down allied garrison troops in defensive positions and to draw allied reinforcements from nearby district and provincial towns, thereby enabling other elements of the B-3 Front to attack heavily populated urban areas to the south.

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15. The present deployment of all three battalions of the 1st Division's 174th Regiment midway between Kontum and Pleiku cities suggests that this may indeed be the enemy's intention. Other B-3 Front forces available for operations against the provincial capitals of Kontum and Pleiku include elements of the 24th and 95 "B" Regiments and three Viet Cong sapper battalions.

16. Meanwhile, in western Pleiku Province, [REDACTED] intensified reconnaissance and preparations for artillery or mortar attacks against allied bases at Plei Djereng and Le Thanh, possibly on 27-28 February.

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17. [REDACTED] the southward move of a probable battalion-size subordinate of North Vietnam's 32nd Regiment from the Dak To area to northern Darlac Province. From its current location this unit could either move eastward to reinforce the 5th Division or southward to reinforce the 33rd Regiment. The recent shift of the 33rd Regiment headquarters from the Ban Me Thuot area northward suggests, however, that it may link up with this battalion in joint offensive activity against the Darlac provincial capital.

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Harassment of the Capital Continues

18. Communist artillerymen launched a series of rocket and mortar attacks in the Saigon area on 27 and 28 February. At least nine 122-mm. rockets struck Tan Son Nhut Air Base causing minor damage to 12 Air America planes and one building. A number of small-scale mortar barrages were directed against selected targets within the capital, such as the New Port area, the headquarters of the Saigon military governor, and several housing areas.

19. Interrogation of prisoners captured during the Tet offensive against Saigon has revealed some of the routes used by the enemy to infiltrate the city. A number of enemy units are currently believed to be in the general area of these approach routes.

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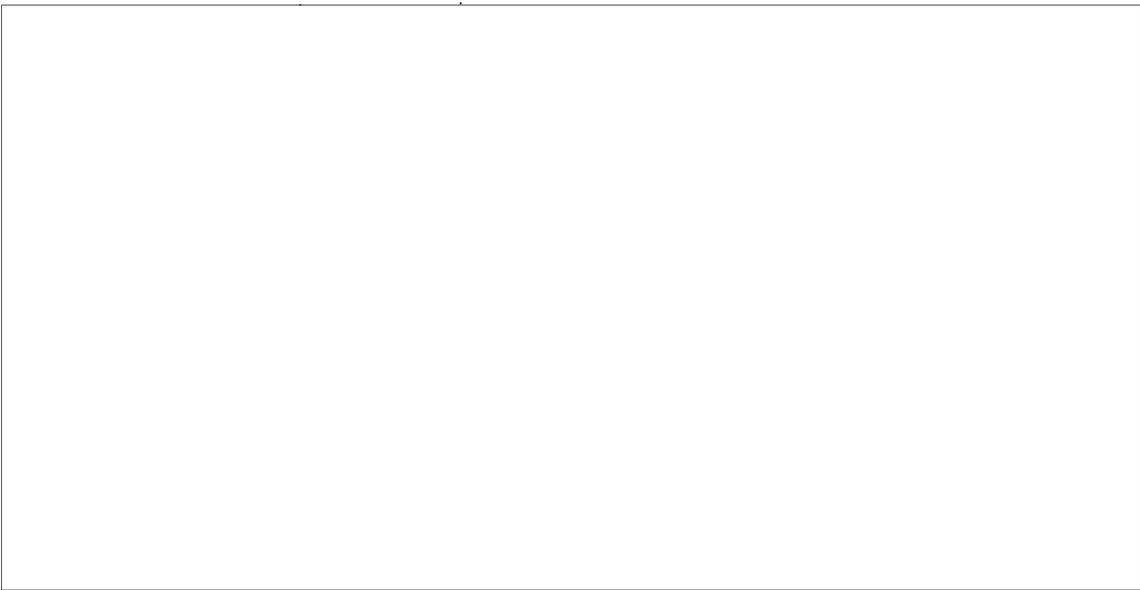
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20. The major identified routes are clustered to the west and southwest of the city and only a few lead directly from the north, northeast, and south. The majority of located Communist units are currently situated within 7-10 miles of the outskirts of the capital city and are generally closer to the city than the staging areas for most of the enemy units which infiltrated Saigon for the Tet attack.



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23. The 274th Regiment, a subordinate of the Viet Cong 5th Division, has been noted in extensive and detailed reconnaissance activity near US and South Vietnamese base camps at Xuan Loc and Suoi Ram as well as in the Bien Hoa area. An unidentified element of this division, possibly from the same regiment, was ordered by its headquarters to continue planning for an artillery attack on the Bien Hoa Air Base on the night of 27 February. A rocket attack was reported at the Bien Hoa Airfield early on 28 February (Saigon time). Twelve Americans were killed and several aircraft and buildings were destroyed. The field remains fully operational.

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Armored Vehicles in Tay Ninh

24. Late on 26 February a US Special Forces patrol near the Cambodian border some 13 miles west of Tay Ninh city clashed with an estimated battalion-size enemy force which was reinforced by four tracked vehicles. Thirty enemy were killed when one of the vehicles blew up after being hit. The vehicle may have been transporting ammunition or explosives.

25. The vehicles have not yet been identified. It is more likely that they are half-tracks or armored personnel carriers than tanks, although the latter possibility cannot be ruled out. If they are tanks, it would be the farthest south such vehicles have been used by the enemy. Soviet designed PT-76 tanks were used against Lang Vei several weeks ago. Cambodian forces are known to have light tanks and half-tracks in the area adjacent to the border.

The Delta Provinces

26. Two significant engagements between allied and Viet Cong forces occurred in the delta provinces of Phong Dinh and Vinh Long on 26 February. Eighty-three Viet Cong were killed in battles fought just outside the cities of Con Tho and Vinh Long. A number of other recent clashes near provincial capitals in southern IV Corps area means that the Communists are continuing to maintain pressure in the vicinity of major urban areas of the delta.

27. The new South Vietnamese IV Corps commander, Major General Nguyen Duc Thang, is reportedly preparing a plan to combat the Viet Cong in the delta. Thang's plan, which will be called Operation COUNTER-ATTACK, is to assign specific attack missions to every armed South Vietnamese unit for a 15-day period. The primary targets will be local guerrillas and their lines of communication and supply bases. Enemy concentrations nearest the major cities will be hit first and subsequent attacks will move out from the urban areas in all directions.

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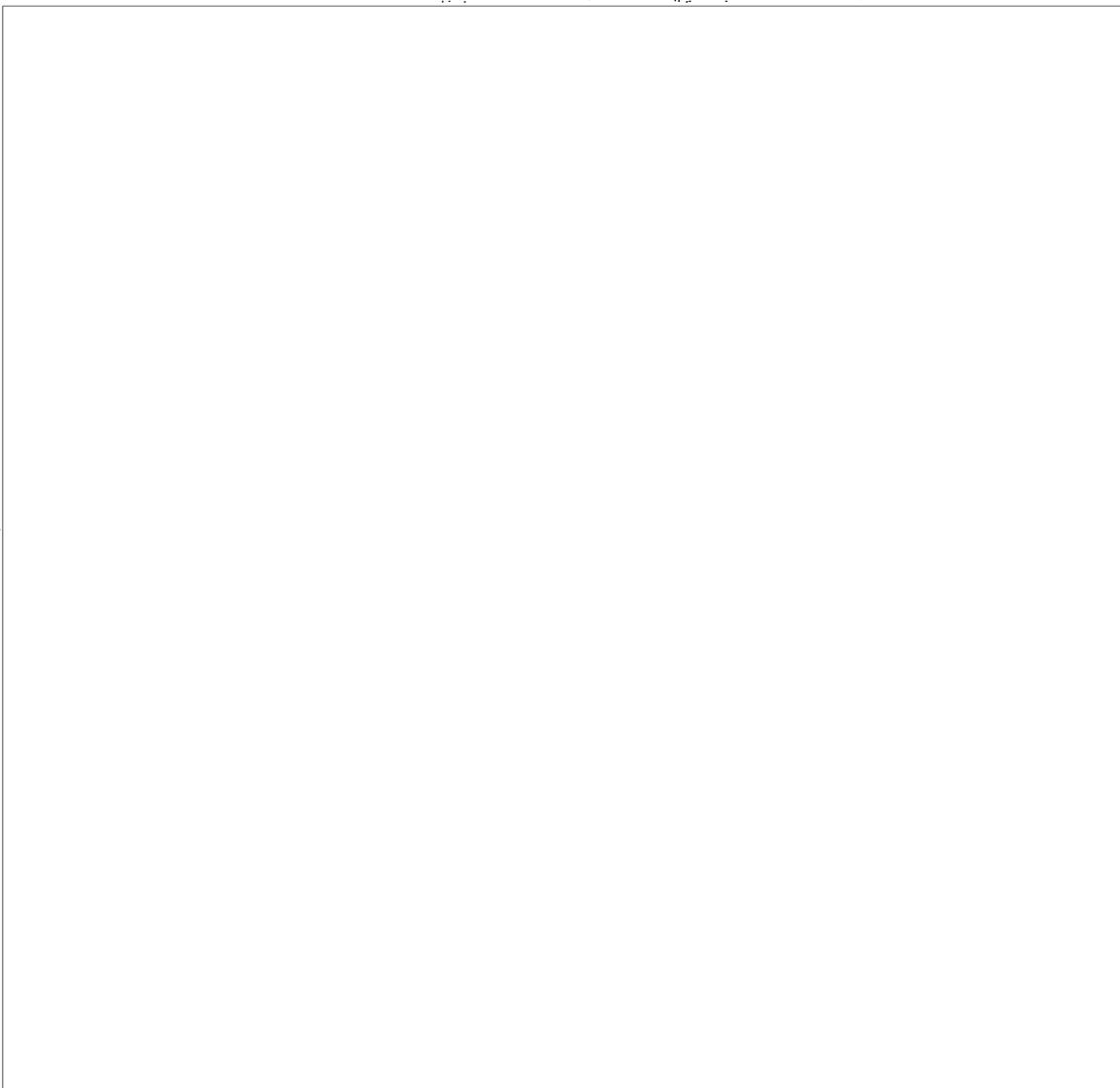
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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Aftermath of the Tet Offensive in Hau Nghia

4. The Communist Tet offensive in Hau Nghia Province has clearly set back the Revolutionary Development program. The full extent of the recession is as yet not known because of the inability of officials and advisers to get into many villages. The judgment of US observers, however, is that the Communists have dealt the Revolutionary Development effort at least a severe "psychological" blow.

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5. Local officials in Hau Nghia are reported to be so unnerved from the Tet attack and so fearful of another onslaught that their effectiveness has been impaired. Most officials are now back on the job, except in Cu Chi District, but they are dragging their feet on a recovery program. The provincial recovery committee, for instance, cannot agree on how to assist some 2,800 homeless in the province, let alone make plans to handle the thousands who fled to safer areas and who will need assistance when they return.

6. Although Hau Nghia has historically been hostile toward the Saigon government, the pacification effort had appeared to be yielding results in some parts of the province. During the Tet attacks, however, it was apparent that much of the local populace was cooperating with the Viet Cong. Since the Tet offensive, at least five outposts have fallen through treachery and one district headquarters narrowly missed a similar fate. US officials believe that it is impossible to judge now whether local inhabitants and members of the army cooperated with the Communist Tet offensive out of fear or out of commitment, but provincial attitudes are presently a source of concern to the government. It is believed, however, that there would have been far more popular assistance for the Viet Cong had it not been for the Revolutionary Development work carried on during the past two years.

Situation in Da Lat

7. The recovery effort in Da Lat appears to be moving ahead efficiently, according to US observers, but the psychological impact of the Viet Cong attack has probably been greater here than in many other areas of the country. Da Lat had long been South Vietnam's most tranquil city. Observers now report that, although popular morale is not particularly low, the people have lost confidence in the government's ability to withstand further attacks.

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8. The Tuyen Duc Province chief, Lt. Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Bich, showed himself unable to cope with the crisis and unwilling to cooperate with senior military officers in the city during the attack. Other local officials, however, were more efficient. Da Lat's mayor has organized a refugee committee which coordinates municipal services and private volunteer assistance, and the municipal council chairman has mobilized a Da Lat Citizens' Committee. This group has collected donations, arranged for the transport of supplies from other areas of the country, and assisted in the distribution of supplies to refugees. As of 21 February, the 20,000 refugees in camps in the city comprised approximately 25 percent of the population. Only an estimated 5,000 of these, however, were homeless.

Situation in Vinh Long

9. Local officials in Vinh Long appear to be taking an uninspired approach to the problems facing them. Americans characterize their performance in the recovery field as adequate. Much of the problem results from the fact that the province chief, who was wounded in early January, is still confined to a wheelchair. His deputy is reportedly competent, but has not provided good leadership. Other officials are described as lethargic.

10. There are approximately 15,000-20,000 refugees in camps in Vinh Long city, and US observers report that few civilians have made an effort to start rebuilding or even to reopen their shops. Apparently little has been done to assess the damage done to the Revolutionary Development program throughout the province. Plans are being made to move teams back out to the hamlets, but military forces have not been actively pursuing the Viet Cong. One American observed that it appears government officials are just hoping the Communists will go away.

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