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COORDINATED VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE EVIDENCED

IN SOUTH VIETNAM

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past week, SIGINT has provided evidence of a coordinated attack to occur in the near future in several areas of South Vietnam. While the bulk of SIGINT evidence indicates the most critical areas to be in the northern half of the country, there is some additional evidence that Communist units in Nam Bo may also be involved. The major target areas of enemy offensive operations include the western highlands, the coastal provinces of Military Region (MR) 5, and the Khe Sanh and Hue areas. This report presents details relating to the impending attacks in each of these areas, and additionally presents information concerning similar, and possibly related activity noted in the Nam Bo area.

II. MILITARY REGION 5

A. The Western Highlands

Several indicators of impending Communist offensive have been observed in the western highlands during the last week. Since 16 January, a probable Hq, PAVN B3 Front Authority has exchanged messages with a probable PAVN 1st Division element which have mentioned the beginning of "N-Day," and efforts to achieve victory in the planned attacks. Several messages on 22 and 23 January have been passed in plaintext Vietnamese and have mentioned that the plan for the "final performance" must be reported by 0600 hours on 26 January. The use of plaintext Vietnamese for messages of this type has preceded Vietnamese Communist attacks in the past. Further, in that many of these messages have referred to an impending "N-Day" (the Vietnamese equivalent of "D-Day"), some idea can be gained regarding the possible beginning date of a broad Communist offensive. A message of 24 January, for example, mentioned picking up "the military operation plan" and "guaranteeing the night of 25 January."<sup>1</sup> The immediate objectives of attacks in Pleiku Province were outlined in the first message of this series passed on 16 January. In part, this message stated: "The immediate task will be to overrun Le Thanh, Duc Co, and Tan Lap; liberate the area north and south of Route 19, and thrust strongly to the southwest of Pleiku. The next task is to liberate Pleiku and the area along Route 19 and to attack toward the east."<sup>2</sup> Portions of this message are not available, and may have referenced other target areas.

The B3 Front Authority passing these messages has been located near the Cambodia-Kontum border since it was first observed on 16 January, and most recently was located near 14-03N 107-23E (YA 573539) on 24 January.<sup>3</sup> The probable 1st Division element was located on 25 January near 13-50N 107-27E (YA 641312), in northwestern Pleiku.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, two other concentrations on B3 Front elements exist in Pleiku and southwestern Kontum Province, and have been demonstrated to be part of the impending offensive operation. In a message of 24 January, the probable Hq, B3 Front Authority reported to the probable 1st Division element the accomplishments of PAVN forces on the Pleiku, Dak To, and Phu Bon "flanks," and cautioned "all of you must prepare urgently and thoroughly and maintain secrecy so that when N-Day comes, we can open fire en masse."<sup>5</sup>

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B. Coastal Provinces of MR 5

SIGINT indicates that elements of the PAVN 2nd Division and Hq, MR 5 currently located in the Quang Nam-Quang Tin Province border area are in an attack posture.<sup>6</sup> The possible PAVN 2nd Division Forward Element has been maintaining tactical control over the division's three regiments since 31 December, a procedure indicative in the past of Vietnamese Communist offensives.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the possible Hq, PAVN 21st Regiment, PAVN 2nd Division, was located on 22 January, 9 km southwest of Tam Ky city.<sup>7</sup> Collateral information indicates that an attack by elements of the 21st Regiment is imminent in this area.

In Binh Dinh Province, communications activity indicates that the PAVN 3rd Division may be repositioning. Finally recent information suggests that Hq, MR 5 Main Force Unit Control has activated forward tactical elements in the areas of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions. Activation of such elements has, in the past, preceded offensive operations.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, a message transmitted on 23 January from Hq, MR 5 Main Force Unit Control to the possible Hq, PAVN 21st Regiment, PAVN 2nd Division, and addressed to "The signal chiefs (C-val of) all Units" reported a tense situation, and stated that all stations are urged to abide by the stipulated communications, and to call the watch regularly in order to receive orders and to report. The signal "303" was stipulated as the signal meaning "have opened fire." Although the message was observed being transmitted to only the possible Hq, 21st Regiment, the internal address to the signal chiefs of all units suggests that the message was intended for all Vietnamese Communist military units operating in the coastal provinces of MR 5 controlled by Hq, MR 5 Main Force Unit Control.<sup>8</sup>

A later message, passed on 24 January by the Hq, Rear Services Group 44 provided instructions to the tentatively identified Hq, PAVN 368B Artillery Regiment to use certain practices in passing "N-Day" messages. That message ended with "Do you understand N-Day? Reply immediately."<sup>9</sup>

III. MILITARY REGION MR TRI-THIEN-HUEA. Khe Sanh-Eastern DMZ-Hue

SIGINT has revealed a major buildup of PAVN forces in the vicinity of Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province, continued evidence of pressure against Allied positions and lines-of-communication in the general eastern and coastal areas of the DMZ, and reviewed interest in the Hue area.

Since October, an influx and massing of PAVN units in the Khe Sanh-Laos boader area has been evidenced. Included in this buildup are the possible Hq, 325C Division and its three infantry regiments--the 95C, 101D and 29th; the probable Hq, 304th Division and two suspect subordinate infantry regiments, a suspected artillery regiment, a detached element of the division headquarters, two unidentified regimental subordinates and three unidentified associated entities; the major PAVN Headquarters, Laos; an unidentified subordinate of Hq, DMZ Front; and elements of the PAVN 90th Regiment, 324B Division. The possible 325C Division and regimental subordinates have been deployed west-southwest of Khe Sanh, while elements of the 304th have been generally emplaced to the south and southeast.<sup>10</sup>

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Latest locations of the probable 304th Division include: probable Hq, 304th Division at 16-32N 106-46E (XD 881310) on 24 January; suspect infantry regiment at 16-38N 106-31E (XD 620428) on 24 January; suspect infantry regiment at 16-38N 106-47E (XD 905417) on 24 January; the detached element of the division headquarters at 16-28N 106-44E (XD 846229) on 23 January; two unidentified regimental subordinates at 16-33N 106-46E (XD 891324) and 16-29N 106-46E (XD 8724) on 19 January and 30 December respectively; and two unidentified associated entities at 16-28N 106-34E (XD 675233) and 16-29N 106-35E (XD 701238) on 19 and 22 January respectively.

Latest locations of the possible 325C Division include: possible Hq, 325C Division at 16-38N 106-37E (XD 733410) on 24 January; possible 95 C Regiment at 16-43N 106-39E (XD 777490) on 20 January; possible 101D Regiment at 16-39N 106-27E (XD 565435) on 16 January; and 29th Regiment at 16-37N 106-23E (XD 471401) on 11 January.

In addition, tactical communications of PAVN units deployed in the western DMZ have reflected reconnaissance activities of elements associated with the possible 325C Division as well as operational reports of the 8th Battalion, 29th Regiment, and elements of the 101D Regiment. The 8th Battalion, 29th Regiment, was located on 23 January in the vicinity of 16-40N 106-41E (XD 790445). In addition, two associates of the possible 95C Regiment were located in the immediate area of Khe Sanh on 24 January--the 5th Battalion at 16-40N 106-46E (XD 887438) and an unidentified entity at 16-40N 106-46E (XD 860430).

Meanwhile, in the eastern DMZ tactical communications of the PAVN 803rd Infantry Regiment, 164th Artillery Regiment and 27th Independent Battalion, as well as elements of the 270th Independent Regiment--possibly in general combat-and-service support--indicate continuing pressure along Routes 1, 9, 74, 75, and 76, the general vicinity of Cua Viet and Allied positions at Dong Ha, Con Thien, Cam Lo, Quan Ngang and Quang Tri cities. Higher echelon command-and-control communications also indicate continuing interest in the northeastern sectors of Quang Tri Province. Interest west to Camp Carroll has been reflected in 27th Battalion communications. Additionally, the tenuous deployment of the 812th Regiment to well south of Route 9 in the vicinity of 16-35N 107-08E (YD 296357) has been evidenced in recent SIGINT.<sup>11</sup> (For possibly related DRV air interest in the DMZ area, see 2/0/VCK/R05-68.)

In MR Tri-Thien-Hue (TTH), SIGINT reflected a renewed Vietnamese Communist interest in the Hue area. On 29 January Hq, MR TTH was located near 16-25N 107-21E (YD 5115), approximately 26 km west-southwest of Hue. Other units located in the general Hue area included the possible Hue Municipal Unit located near 16-18N 107-36E (YD 778030) on 8 January; one possible subordinate of the Hue Municipal Unit located near 16-25N 107-26E (YD 606171) on 17 November; Hq, PAVN 6th Regiment located near 16-26N 107-20E (YD 491173) on 12 December; and a possible battalion of the PAVN 6th Regiment located on 10 January near 16-32N 107-13E (YD 376301).<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. NAM BO AREA

Possibly related activity has been recently observed in communications serving Vietnamese Communist military and intelligence elements operating in the southern area (Nam Bo) of South Vietnam. This activity has included: significant moves of major Communist units; activation of new communications and the renewal of communications between units which had

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not been noted in radio contact with each other for extended periods of time; unusual message activity; and, Communist interest in specific areas in the Nam Bo region as expressed in recent military intelligence (MI) and reporting.<sup>12</sup>

The most significant areas of Vietnamese Communist activity in this region appear to be as follows:

A. Tay Ninh-Binh Long Province Border Area

Hq, Viet Cong (VC) 9th Light Infantry Division (LID) renewed communications activity with its subordinate regiments on 19 January for the first time since late November 1967. MI elements of the VC 9th LID also reappeared in communications during early January, and since the middle of the month have been reporting on Allied activity in the Binh Long-Tay Ninh Province border area near Soc Con Trang (11-37N 106-26E, XT 5684) and Bau Tram (11-32N 106-23E, XT 5075). The possible VC 46th Battalion has also been reporting to the Military Intelligence Bureau (MIB) COSVN on Allied activities in this area since late December 1967.

B. Southern Phuoc Long Province Area

MI elements of the VC 5th LID reappeared in communications on 29 December for the first time since September 1967. These elements, operating in the central and southern area of Phuoc Long Province, have referred to the VC 274th and VC 275th Regiments of the 5th LID in recent messages. An unidentified control authority of a radio group suspected of serving the possible Hq, VC 5th LID element operating in Phuoc Long Province was located on 12 January in the Phuoc Long-Long Khanh Province border area, approximately 50 km south of its 31 December position. On 10 January SIGINT indicated the relocation of the radio stations associated with the subordinates of this 5th LID element--the possible Hq, PAVN 88th and VC 275th Regiments. The station associated with Hq, 88th Regiment was located in southwestern Binh Long Province, approximately 90 km southwest of its 17 December location; the Hq, 275th Regiment associated station was located in southern Phuoc Long Province, about 40 km from its 23 December position.

C. Bien Hoa-Long Khanh Province Border Area

Elements of the MIS, MR 1 have indicated possible hostile interest in an Allied installation in an undetermined hamlet, possibly in the Bien Hoa-Long Khanh Province border area. Messages exchanged between the MIS and two subordinates during the period 19-23 January have discussed in detail the Allied defenses at the unnamed hamlet and "important and very urgent directives" for "X500." According to collateral "500" is a cover designator for the 1st Battalion, VC 274th Regiment, VC 5th LID.

Other recent significant activity in the Nam Bo region includes attempted communications between the possible Hq, Unidentified Front--last located on 15 January in northern Binh Long Province near the Cambodian border--and the Hq, VC 5th and 9th LID's on 23 January, the first such communications activity observed since late November and late September 1967 respectively. Developments observed on this unidentified front's communications since early January indicate that it is assuming a position of greater prominence in the Vietnamese Communist military apparatus in South Vietnam. This expanding role has included the establishment of communications between the Unidentified front and the MR headquarters in

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the Nam Bo region, Hq, MR 5 and Hq, PAVN B3 Front. Unusual message activity between Military Affairs Section COSVN and the headquarters of MR 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, and the Hq, PAVN B3 Front have also recently been observed--particularly since mid-January.

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1. 2/G12/VCM/T185-68.
  2. 2/0/VCM/R13-68.
  3. 3/0/STY/R21-68.
  4. 3/0/STY/R22-68.
  5. 2/0/VCM/R23-68.
  6. 3/0/STY/R15-68.
  7. 3/0/STY/R20-68.
  8. 2/0/VCM/R27-68.
  9. 2/0/VCM/R29-68.
  10. 2/0/VCM/R20-68.
  11. 2/0/VCM/R31-68.
  12. 2/0/VCM/R17-68, 3/0/STY/R22-68, 3/0/STY/R21-68.

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