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29 NOV 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT: Status of Routes Used for the Movement of Men and Supplies from North Vietnam into Laos

The attached memorandum on the above subject has been prepared in response to your request. Also attached is a copy of a recently published Intelligence Memorandum which discusses new route developments in Laos.

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Deputy Director
Research and Reports

Enclosures:
1. The attached memorandum
2. Published ORR Intelligence Memorandum dated 25 Oct 65

Distribution: (S-1705)
Orig. & 1 - Addressee

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STATUS OF ROUTES USED FOR THE MOVEMENT OF MEN AND SUPPLIES FROM NORTH VIETNAM INTO LAOS

1. The US/GVN air strikes against overland transport facilities and routes in North Vietnam have not prevented the North Vietnamese from providing logistic support for the Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam. Losses in transport equipment have been more than made up by increased imports from other Communist countries. The capacity of specific transport routes has been reduced by the bombings but on most routes is still in excess of the present level of logistic movements. The North Vietnamese have shown, moreover, that they have a remarkable capability to keep supplies moving in the face of repeated attacks on the transport routes. They have diversified and increased the number of routes in the transport system in the southern part of North Vietnam. In Laos they have improved their truck routes by building bypasses and extending the road network. Truck transport is also being supplemented by the use of primitive forms of transport and the use of inland or coastal water transport. These improvements and improvisations have given the Communists the capability to move increased amounts of men and supplies into Laos and South Vietnam during the coming dry season. Even with an intensification of air attacks the capacity of the overland transport system would not be reduced below the level required to provide logistic support at existing scales of combat. The system is, however, inadequate to support rapid and full-scale deployment of division-size forces moving as units to South Vietnam. The overland transport system would also be increasingly hard-pressed to support logistically a sharp escalation of the scale of combat by augmented PAVN forces in South Vietnam.

The Transportation Network

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2. The principal roads over which supplies have been moved from North Vietnam to Communist forces in Laos are routes 6, 7, 8, 15, 1A, and the 101/102/103 complex near the Demilitarized Zone. [redacted]

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[redacted] The attached map shows that only routes 15, 1A, and the routes to the Demilitarized Zone would be used for supplies being moved into the Panhandle of Laos and to Communist forces within South Vietnam. The capacity of each of these roads (except routes 102 and 103) before the bombing started was at least 100 tons per day during the wet season and more than 300 tons during the dry season. The bombing has undoubtedly reduced their through dry-season capacity substantially, but

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example, it is estimated that at least eight days would be required to truck the personnel and the basic load of a conventional and completely self-sustained PAVN division within Laos alone from Mu Gia Pass to Ban Borung Nam on the Se Kong at the end of route 92. At this location the division would be about 30 miles from the border of South Vietnam in Kontum Province. It would then have to infiltrate into South Vietnam over low capacity routes. When the division enters into conventional warfare* it would require 63 tons of supplies per day or a minimum of 21 truckloads. An unnumbered road between routes 923 and 165 is now in the final stages of construction. When this road is completed the network will be motorable to the border of South Vietnam and will have a theoretical capacity (without US/GVN bombing and armed reconnaissance) sufficient to support the daily supplies for 4 PAVN divisions (250 tons) engaging in conventional warfare. Nevertheless, PAVN divisions as units still will not be able to move to South Vietnam quickly, and within South Vietnam only primitive means of transport are expected to be available to the Communists, as a consequence of US/GVN air superiority.

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* Conventional warfare is a level of combat committing each battalion to military action at least once in every three days. The PAVN and Viet Cong battalion equivalents in the Communist Main Force in South Vietnam are currently estimated to be in combat a maximum of once in every 15 days. This level of activity is higher than usual, and may not be sustained.

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