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Central Intelligence Bulletin

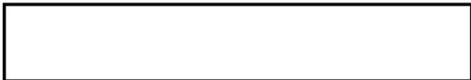
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Allied forces this weekend continued to press 30 battalion-sized or larger search-and-destroy operations against known or suspected Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army troop concentrations and base areas, but without significant enemy contact.

Two ARVN airborne battalions on 20 January inflicted losses of 102 killed and 10 captured on elements of an estimated Viet Cong battalion during a local security operation 10 miles west-northwest of Saigon. Government casualties included one killed and 14 wounded.

There was speculation that the enemy force may have been massing for a possible attack against nearby Tan Son Nhut airfield. Captured documents, prisoner interrogations, [redacted] have consistently pinpointed Tan Son Nhut as a primary Viet Cong target in the Saigon area.

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Communist-initiated military activity during the weekend was highlighted by a series of simultaneous and apparently coordinated attacks on 21 January against five South Vietnamese police posts and at least one civilian hamlet in the southeastern portion of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Seven South Vietnamese policemen and civilians were killed and eight wounded, according to preliminary casualty reports.

Military Developments in North Vietnam: The North Vietnamese air defense system displayed increased aggressiveness against US strike aircraft during the weekend.

Eighty airborne SA-2 surface-to-air missiles were sighted by US pilots during 20-21 January, bringing to 122 the total number sighted for the three-day period 19-21 January. One US aircraft may have been downed by an SA-2; however, no other confirmed hits were reported.

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In addition, US pilots observed between 48 and 51 MIG aircraft in flight on 20 and 21 January. Four separate aerial engagements, involving an estimated 13 to 16 MIGs, occurred, but no aircraft losses were reported on either side.

Four US aircraft were downed over North Vietnam on 20 January, one to a probable SA-2 missile burst and the others to unknown causes.

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*Nicaragua: Several persons were killed and scores wounded in Managua last night after an opposition rally turned into rioting.

Fernando Aguero, candidate of the National Opposition Union (UNO), and his followers had planned for a week or more to touch off violence yesterday in hopes of prompting OAS intervention and postponement of the elections scheduled for 5 February. The UNO wants the elections delayed one year to correct voter registration rolls which it charges are padded in favor of the government's candidate, General Anastasio Somoza. Although Somoza could probably win a fair election, the charge is believed justified, even by some members of his own party.

In a campaign speech yesterday afternoon, Aguero appealed unsuccessfully to the National Guard to overthrow the government and set up a junta. Violence broke out after the rally when oppositionists apparently fired on National Guardsmen attempting to disperse demonstrators with fire hoses.

By early evening the Guard appeared to be gaining control of the situation despite heavy sniper fire in the downtown area where Aguero and a small band of followers had barricaded themselves in a hotel.

The US Embassy has received one report indicating that the UNO plans to call a general strike today, and some violence may occur in other areas of the country.

It is still too early to tell what effect, if any, this outbreak will have on the elections.

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* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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Ecuador-Peru: The Ecuadorian Army reportedly is in the process of tripling the strength of its 4,000-man force normally stationed along the border with Peru.

Former conscripts are being recalled to duty and approximately 60 percent of the troops stationed in the Quito military garrisons have been moved to border areas.

[redacted] students at the Ecuadorian War Academy were released from classes and assigned to various military units.

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The mobilization stems from the belief of Ecuadorian military leaders that Peru will stage some military action along the border about 29 January in connection with the commemoration of its successful armed action against Ecuador in 1941.

Although the presidents and political leaders of both countries have assured US officials of their desire to prevent any border incidents which might have international repercussions, irresponsible elements in both countries, particularly in Ecuador, could arouse the public with inflammatory speeches and some provocation might occur.

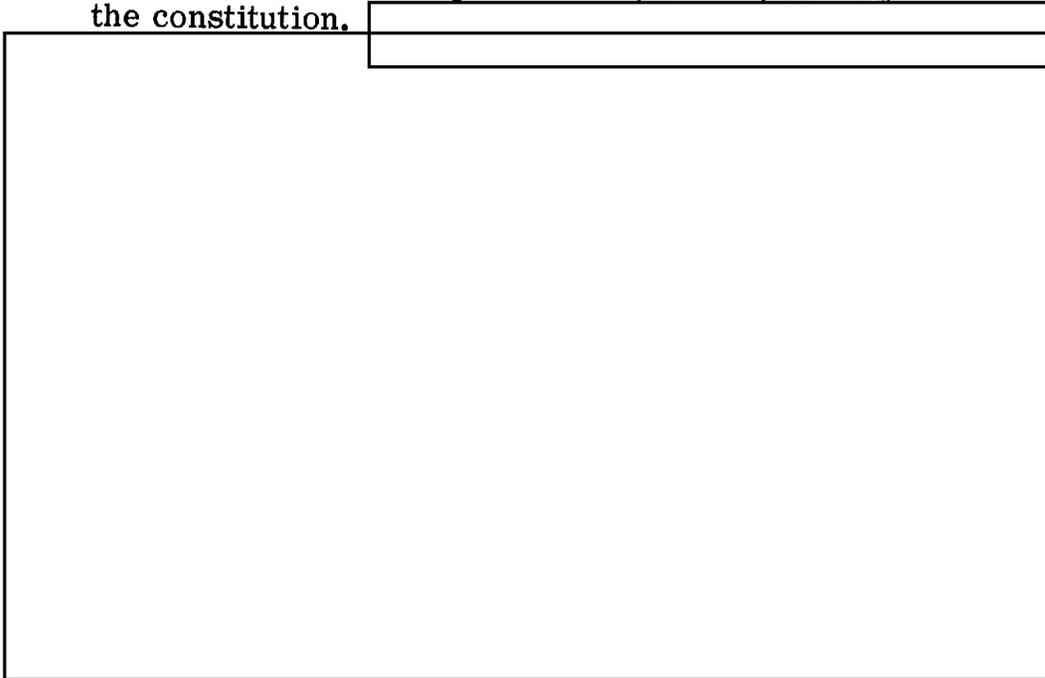
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Chile: The Chilean Foreign Ministry has indicated that a firm decision on President Frei's proposed trip to the US is not expected before this evening. A Foreign Ministry official stated that high government officials believe there is about a 50-50 chance he will make the trip. Christian Democratic Party elements fear that Frei's domestic position would be weakened if he takes the trip without congressional permission, as required by the constitution.



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