Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

NFAC No. 1181-79

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Executive Registry
79-1041

7 March 1979

National Intelligence Officers

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment RRB

25X1A

FROM: [redacted]
National Intelligence Officer for China

SUBJECT: Possible Release to Public of Cable Describing Dire Political and Economic Conditions in South Vietnam

1. Action Requested: That you raise with Secretary Vance in your next conversation the desirability of releasing to the general public a Confidential State cable describing dire political and economic conditions in South Vietnam.

2. Background: This cable, which is based on Embassy Bangkok interrogations of recently-arrived Vietnamese refugees in Thailand, paints a picture of massive popular disillusionment in South Vietnam with the Communist government, its management of the economy, its cadres, and its war with Kampuchea (Attachment). It shows almost total lack of support for the Hanoi Government, depicts an economy in "shambles," and describes bitter resentment over the drafting of young men to fight in Kampuchea. It concludes that "failure by Hanoi to treat seriously the necessities and flaws in its southern administration could, over the long term, lead to disruptions of dimensions which might contribute directly to force changes of either persons or policies in Hanoi."

3. Release of this cable, suitably sanitized to protect sources, would respond to the right of the American people to know what is going on in Vietnam today. Its description of the sorry state of the political situation and

[redacted]

25X1

DOS review(s) completed.
Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

the economy in the South when combined with what we know about similarly bad conditions in the North, could provide some explanation of why it was that Hanoi was willing to accept the cease-fire proclaimed by China in the conflict along the Sino-Vietnam border--Hanoi foresaw that a prolonged war would produce severe additional pressures on an already-strained society of a nature which the leadership was not willing to accept.

4. I can perceive no objections to the release of this cable provided that care is taken to protect the sources. Conceivably Hanoi might be moved to crack down harder on Vietnamese wishing to flee South Vietnam, but under the circumstances described it would appear that the Vietnamese authorities are not capable of exercising any more controls than are now in effect.

5. Recommendation: That you discuss with Secretary Vance the merits of releasing to the general public a sanitized version of the attached State cable. 25X1A

Attachment:
State Cable

cc: DDCI

APPROVED:

DCI Date

DISAPPROVED:

DCI Date

25X1A NIO/CH-[redacted] 5721/9196

Distribution:
Orig. & 1 - Addressee, w/att.
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Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

53/40/ CONFIDENTIAL FRP: ,2, , , , , ,8

STATE

ACTION: NONE INFO: CMASS2-E ( ), ODPS-S, RF, FILE, D/DCI, DDO-4, CS/RF, CCS, CI-3, CR/FE, CTS-2, D/FBIS-2, DDO/DO, EA-6, IAD/CAS-3, IAD/IC, IAD/SOG-4, IID, NIO/EAP, NIO/USSR, OCO/EA, OCO/OER, OER-3, ORPA/II-2, ORPA/SEA-2, ORPA/USSR-4, OSI/PPB, PCS/INT, SE, (51/W)

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INFO RUMJDH/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 4973
RUKOBT/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 9585
RUMJKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 1383
RUMJMA/AMEMBASSY MANILA 7249
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0739
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4683
RUMJPG/USLO PEKING 1495
RUMJRV/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 8178
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4714
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 2038
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 8779
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 1619
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EO 12065: GDS-2/20/85 (CONLON, THOMAS F.) OR-P
TAGS: PINS, SREF, ECON, SOCI, VM, CB
SUBJ: (C) HANOI'S THIRD FRONT: SOUTH VIETNAM

REF: A. 78 BANGKOK 22489, B. 78 BANGKOK 29931

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE MASSIVELY DISILLU-

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Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

SIONED WITH THEIR COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, ITS MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, ITS CADRES, AND ITS WAR WITH KAMPUCHEA, ACCORDING TO REPORTS OF REFUGEES WHO JUST ARRIVED IN THAILAND. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE SRV GOVERNMENT RECIPROCATES THIS DISTRUST. GSRV FAILED TO TAKE ITS PEOPLE INTO CONFIDENCE CONCERNING ITS ROLE IN KAMPUCHEA AND RETURNING OF REMAINS OF VIETNAMESE KILLED IN FIGHTING MAKES CLEAR ANOTHER ACT OF PERFIDY ON THE PART OF HANOI. "DARK SKINNED KHMER SPEAKING VIETNAMESE" ENROUTE TO KAMPUCHEA INDICATE A CONTINUING VIETNAMESE ROLE IN THAT COUNTRY. SOUTHERN ECONOMY IS A SHAMBLES. INFLATION THREATENS SURVIVAL. BLACK MARKET RICE PRICES IN HO CHI MINH CITY QUINTUPLED IN LESS THAN A YEAR. HANOI BLAMES CHINA AND FLOODS FOR HIGH PRICES. POPULACE ADDS TO THIS LIST OF EXCUSES SRV MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY, CORRUPTION, AND THE WAR IN KAMPUCHEA. WHILE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN SOUTHERN VIETNAM ARE MOST APPARENT, THE SCARS ON THE MINDS AND SPIRITS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE PERHAPS EVEN DEEPER. THOSE TINGED WITH ASSOCIATION WITH THE FORMER REGIME ARE, OF COURSE, THE LEAST TRUSTED AND ARE PERMANENTLY DAMAGED IN THE SOCIALIST SOCIETY. MAJORITY OF FORMER GVN OFFICIALS MAY STILL REMAIN AT FORCED LABOR IN "RE-EDUCATION CAMPS." AFRAID OF "DISORDERS", AUTHORITIES STARTED IN DECEMBER PICKING UP AGAIN THOSE RELEASED JUST MONTHS BEFORE. CONSCRIPTION SINCE DECEMBER ENCOMPASSES ALL MALES BETWEEN 18 AND 35. YOUTHS FIND IT PARTICULARLY IRONIC "TO FIGHT HANOI'S WAR AGAINST COMMUNIST CAMBODIA" FOR A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS INCARCERATED THEIR FATHERS AND BROTHERS. NORTHERN CADRES ARE PICTURED AS HAUGHTY, ARROGANT, INCREASINGLY CYNICAL OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT AND ITS POLICIES, AND CORRUPT. OPTIONS FOR DISAFFECTED SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE FEW AND DANGEROUS. RESISTANCE MAY BE GROWING, AND REFUGEES SPEAK OF "LIBERATED AREAS WHERE THE VIET CONG DARE NOT GO." ESCAPE, ALMOST UNIVERSALLY DESIRED, IS COSTLY, PERILOUS, AND BOATS ARE SCARCE. REFUGEES SAY EXODUS WILL CONTINUE NONETHELESS. FAILURE BY HANOI TO TREAT FLAWS IN ITS SOUTHERN ADMINISTRATION COULD LEAD TO MAJOR DISRUPTIONS WITH IMPACT ON HANOI'S

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CONTROL AND EVEN ITS LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.
THE GULF BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE

3. VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ARRIVING IN THAILAND IN FEBRUARY DESCRIBED TO US, IN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS IN SONGKHLA FEB 13-15, INCREASING DESPAIR AMONG SOUTH VIETNAMESE OVER CONDITIONS IN VIETNAM AND THE DIRECTIONS IN WHICH HANOI IS SEEMINGLY TAKING THE NATION. TO THEM THE VIETNAMESE INVASION OF KAMPUCHEA REFLECTS HANOI'S DEVOTION TO IDEOLOGY, MILITARY POWER, AND DOMINATION RATHER THAN THE PRAGMATISM, RECONSTRUCTION, AND RECONCILIATION, WHICH SYMPATHETIC SOUTHERN VIETNAMESE HOPED WOULD CHARACTERIZE THE POLICIES OF A REUNIFIED VIETNAM, COMMENTED A FORMER PROFESSOR FROM CAN THO UNIVERSITY. THE GOVERNMENT DISTRUSTS ITS OWN PEOPLE AND LIES TO THEM, HE ADDED. HANOI DENIES THAT VIETNAM HAS INVADED KAMPUCHEA. THEY CLAIM THAT KAMPUCHEA ATTACKED VIETNAM AND, "SECRETLY I HOPE THAT KAMPUCHEA WILL WIN AND OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM," A FORMER NOODLE MAKER REMARKED. REFUGEES SAY THAT, DESPITE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS, EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON. THE GOVERNMENT COMMANDEERED CARS AND BUSES (ALREADY NATIONALIZED) TO HAUL THE TROOPS TO THE KAMPUCHEAN FRONT. THEY ALSO NOW HAUL THE MANY DEAD AND WOUNDED BACK,

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REFUGEES ASSERT. THE RETURNING TRUCKS WITH THEIR CARGO SYMBOLIZE THE DESTRUCTION OF SOUTH VIETNAM, A FORMER SAIGON AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR COMMENTED, MORE VIETNAMESE TROOPS ARE STILL BEING SENT TO KAMPUCHEA. MOREOVER, HANOI IS DESPATCHING "DARK SKINNED VIETNAMESE" AND VIETNAMESE WHO LIVED IN THE BORDER AND SPEAK KHMER TO SERVE AS ADMINISTRATIVE CADRES FOR THE HENG SAMRIN REGIME.

A WRECKED ECONOMY

4. "SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION," FLOODS, CORRUPTION AND THE WAR WITH KAMPUCHEA HAVE DEVASTED THE SOUTHERN

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

ECONOMY. INFLATION NOW POSES A THREAT TO SURVIVAL. THE STANDARD OF LIVING DROPS STEADILY. THE GOVERNMENTS BLAMES THE ECONOMIC DISASTER ON THE THREAT FROM CHINA, EITHER DIRECTLY, OR THROUGH "CHINESE LACKIES" IN KAMPUCHEA. THESE ARE COMMON THEMES IN THE REFUGEES STORIES. PRICE COMPARISONS IN THE BLACK MARKET, WHERE ALL BUT THE PRIVILEGED CADRES AND WORKERS MUST BUY, BEAR THEM OUT. RICE PRICES IN HO CHI MINH CITY HAVE GONE FROM 2 DONG A KILO (2.19 DONG TO THE DOLLAR) IN JULY TO SEVEN TO TEN DONG NOW. PORK PRICES HAVE RISEN FROM 8 DONG IN JULY TO 14 DONG IN FEBRUARY. (GOVERNMENT STORE PRICE HAS RISEN FROM 1.5 DONG TO 2.) CHICKEN AND BEEF ARE NOT AVAILABLE, REFUGEES FROM SAIGON SAY. A BOWL OF PHO (NOODLES, BITS OF PORK, ONION, CORIANDER) NOW COSTS 3-4 DONG. GASOLINE, WHEN AVAILABLE, IS .5 DONG A LITER. CIGARETTES ARE NOW .5 DONG A CIGARETTE. SINCE FARMERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO TRANSPORT THEIR PRODUCE TO SELL IN HO CHI MINH CITY, PRICES ARE HIGHER IN THE CITY. RURAL PRICES, CLOSER TO SOURCES, ARE LOWER BUT HAVE SHOWN A SIMILAR PRICE SPIRAL. RICE HAS GONE FROM 1.5-2 DONG PER KILO LATE LAST SPRING TO 4 DONG; PORK FROM 6-10 TO 12-14 DONG A KILO; PHO FROM .3-.5 TO .6-1 DONG; A CAN OF MILK FROM .5 TO 1 DONG. DESPITE THE DOUBLING OR WORSE OF PRICES, SALARIES FOR THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ALLOWED TO WORK HAVE NOT CHANGED. TEACHERS MAKE 63 DONG A MONTH; A CLEANING LADY (THE LOWEST SALARY) MAKES 50 DONG; A PROFESSOR, 85; A CYCLO DRIVER, 300; A PAVN PETTY OFFICER, 75; A CAPTAIN, 120; AND A SOLDIER, 5 DONG A MONTH (PLUS FOOD AND UNIFORMS).

5. IN OUR FIRST CONTACT IN OVER A YEAR WITH REFUGEES FROM CENTRAL VIETNAM, TWO YOUTHS FROM QUI NHON, WHO JUST BARELY SURVIVED A MONTH-LONG VOYAGE, TOLD US THAT THE ECONOMY IN QUI NHON IS A DISASTER. SHOPS ARE CLOSED. YOU CAN BUY ALMOST NOTHING. ANYTHING PRODUCED MUST BE SOLD TO THE GOVERNMENT. FARMLAND WAS ALL COLLECTIVIZED EARLY IN 1978. IN THE COLLECTIVES, ONLY THOSE WHO WORK HARD AND HAVE "GOOD ATTITUDES" ARE GIVEN BONUSES. RICE COSTS 4 DONG A KILO, PORK IS 10 DONG. PEOPLE ARE TOO POOR TO SMOKE

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

ANY MORE. SUGAR, BEER, AND COFFEE ARE NO LONGER SOLD. RUBBER SANDLES COST 10 DONG. CLOTHING STORES IN QUI NHON, AS IN SAIGON AND THE MAKONG DELTA WERE CLOSED EARLY THIS YEAR. GOVERNMENT STORES TO SELL CLOTH HAVE NOT YET OPENED.

6. OTHER AREAS OF THE ECONOMY HAVE ALSO SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF "SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION" POLICIES AND THE WAR WITH KAMPUCHEA. REFUGEES REPORT THAT ADDITIONAL FACTORIES HAVE CLOSED DUE TO LACK OF RAW MATERIALS AND LABOR SHORTAGES CAUSED BY THE MILITARY DRAFT. GOVERNMENT STILL TALKS OF COLLECTIVIZING ALL FARMS BY THE END OF 1980, AND MORE COLLECTIVE FARMS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN PILOT AREAS OF TIEN GIANG, AN GIANG, DONG THAP, AND LONG AN PROVINCES. AS EARLIER REPORTED (REF B), FORCED SALE OF PRODUCE TO THE GOVERNMENT AT VERY LOW PRICES AND DISTASTE FOR WORKING ON A COLLECTIVE BASIS HAVE LED TO FURTHER DROPS IN PRODUCTIVITY LEVELS. A COLLECTIVE FARMER RECEIVES 13 KILOS OF PADDY PER MONTH (NORMAL WORKING ADULT RATION MIGHT BE 25-30 KILOS OF PADDY PER MONTH) AND 5-10 DONG A DAY FOR 8 HOURS OF WORK ON A COLLECTIVE FARM. IDEOLOGICAL EXHORTATIONS FAIL TO INSPIRE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO WORK, ONE FARMER FROM LONG XUYEN COMMENTED. REFUGEES ALSO BLAME MANAGERIAL INEXPERIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL BACKWARDNESS OF COMMUNIST CADRES FOR DECLINING PRODUCTION THROUGHOUT THE ECONOMY. CADRES ALSO HAUGHTILY IGNORE AVAILABLE EXPERTISE AMONG SOUTHERNERS, SINCE USING THEIR

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KNOWLEDGE WOULD BE AN ADMISSION OF THE SUPERIORITY OF PRAGMATISM OVER IDEOLOGY, THE AGRICULTURE PROFESSOR NOTED.

7. NEW ECONOMIC ZONES (NEZ'S),THEORETICALLY THE ONLY WAY OUT FOR THE ARMY OF THE DEPRIVED, ARE STILL FEARED AND REGARDED AS "DEATHTRAPS", ONE REFUGEE SAID. THE PROGRAM ITSELF IS IN BAD SHAPE, THE AGRICULTURE PROFESSOR SAID. PEOPLE RETURN FROM NEZ'S AND SLEEP ON THE STREETS OF SAIGON. WITH THE ADDITION OF

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

NORTHERN CADRES AND SOLDIERS, PLUS THE "STREET SLEEPERS", SAIGON IS AS DENSELY POPULATED AS IN EARLY 1975. PEOPLE ARE STILL PICKED UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND HAULED TO THE NEZ'S, BUT THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS SO PREOCCUPIED WITH KAMPUCHEA AND LARGER ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT THE AUTHORITIES NO LONGER HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO FORCE PEOPLE TO RETURN TO THE NEZ'S, ONE REFUGEE SAID. BY ANOTHER REPORT, 10,000 NORTHERNERS HAVE BEEN MOVED TO NEZ'S IN TRI TON (FORMER CHAU DOC PROVINCE). THE AGRICULTURE PROFESSOR THINKS THAT THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP CANNOT SAVE THE ECONOMY. "SENIOR OFFICIALS AND THEIR IDEAS MUST BE CHANGED," HE COMMENTED.

DISILLUSIONED AND DISTRUSTED POPULATION

8. WE HAVE DESCRIBED ABOVE THE RAVAGING OF THE ECONOMIC WELFARE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE POPULATION. THEIR MINDS, SPIRITS, AND RIGHTS AS HUMANS OR POLITICAL BEINGS ARE EQUALLY SCARRED AND LIMITED. NO PROGRESS IS REPORTED IN IMPROVING THESE AREAS. STUDENT REFUGEES REPORT THAT STUDENTS INCREASINGLY "TAKE VACATIONS" FROM THE INTELLECTUAL FARE OFFERED EXTOLLING COMMUNISM AND THE WORKER. THEY CAN SEE THE DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE LECTURES AND REALITY. A CATHOLIC PRIEST WHO JUST ARRIVED IN THAILAND DESCRIBED THE NEW SYSTEM AS CRUEL, INHUMAN, AND DUPLICITOUS. HE NOTED THAT HIS CHURCH AND FELLOW PRIESTS ARE HOUNDED AND HARRASSED IN THE HOPE OF EVENTUALLY REDUCING THE RELIGION TO A SHELL OF SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNIST ADMINISTRATION. HE WAS HIMSELF ARRESTED TWICE (AND ESCAPED) ALLEGEDLY AS A CIA AGENT. LIKE OTHERS, HE RELATED THAT THERE IS NO JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE SRV, NO TRIALS, NO COURTS, NO LEGAL RECOURSE, NO HUMAN RIGHTS, ONLY THE COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES WHO HAVE RIGHTS AND IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON THE POPULATION.

9. THOSE TINGED WITH ASSOCIATION WITH THE FORMER REGIME ARE NOT ONLY WITHOUT RIGHTS, BUT ARE STILL JAILED OR SUSPECT. RECENT ARRIVALS INCLUDE AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF RE-EDUCATION

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

SEMINARS, RELEASED ABOUT THREE YEARS AFTER INTERNMENT. THIS EXPLAINS THE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF THE EDUCATED (TEACHERS,FORMER ARVN OFFICERS OF RANKS UP TO CAPTAIN) WHO ARE NOW ARRIVING IN THAILAND. MANY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES WILL NOT ARRIVE, SINCE THE REFUGEES UNIFORMLY REPORT THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF LOWER RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND MILITARY OFFICERS ARE STILL IN THE FORCED LABOR CAMPS, I.E., RE-EDUCATION SEMINARS. REFUGEES SPOKE OF HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS STILL IN EACH OF THESE FORMER CAMPS. SRV AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT EVEN BOTHERED TO PROVIDE POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN THE CAMPS, POSSIBLY SINCE THE INTERNEES WERE TOO BUSILY ENGAGED IN HARD LABOR. THEY EVEN HAD TO WORK ON SUNDAYS, WHICH WERE CALLED "SOCIALIST DAYS." REFUGEES WITH WHOM WE SPOKE USUALLY SAID THAT ROUGHLY THIRTY TO FIFTY PERCENT OF THE PERSONS IN THEIR CAMPS HAD STILL NOT BEEN RELEASED. MORE SENIOR GVN OFFICIALS AND OFFICERS OF THE RANK OF MAJOR OR ABOVE ARE ALMOST ALL STILL IN CAMPS, THEY SAID. REFUGEES EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT MANY WOULD EVER BE RELEASED.

10. REFLECTING THE CONTINUING DISTRUST OF THE ADMINISTRATION IN THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE FORMER GVN, EVEN THOSE RELEASED, SEVERAL REFUGEES REPORTED THAT AUTHORITIES BEGAN IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY PICKING UP AND REJAILING THOSE WHO WERE RELEASED ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO. ONE REFUGEE HAD HEARD THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS "AFRAID OF DISORDERS" AND THEREFORE HAD AGAIN

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DETAINED FORMER MILITARY OFFICERS. A FORMER OFFICE DIRECTOR OF THE PRU PROGRAM RELATED THAT IN LATE DECEMBER HE RECEIVED AN "INVITATION CARD" TO REPORT TO THE PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU. HAVING HEARD THAT RELEASED OFFICERS AND FORMER OFFICE DIRECTORS WERE BEING PICKED UP AGAIN, HE FLED TO THAILAND.

11. ANOTHER GROUP WHO FEELS PARTICULARLY RESENTFUL TOWARD THE ADMINISTRATION ARE YOUTHS WHO ARE CONSCRIPTED TO FIGHT "HANOI'S WAR WITH CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS."

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

REFUGEES REPORT THAT, BEGINNING IN DECEMBER, MALES BETWEEN 18-35 WERE BEING DRAFTED INTO THE PAVN. AGE LIMIT FORMERLY WAS 18-25. YOUNG WOMEN ARE ALSO BEING SOUGHT ENERGETICALLY AS VOLUNTEERS. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT MALES UP TO THE AGE OF 45 MAY BE CALLED UP. NO ONE WANTS TO GO. THEY REGARD THE WAR AS A PROBLEM OF THE NORTH'S, IRRELEVANT TO SOUTH VIETNAM. "IT IS PARTICULARLY IRONIC," ONE REFUGEE COMMENTED, "TO BE CALLED TO FIGHT FOR THE SAME GOVERNMENT WHICH SENT OUR FATHERS AND BROTHERS TO RE-EDUCATION CAMPS." AWOL RATES REMAIN HIGH. THE REFUGEES CLAIM. ONE REFUGEE CALLED EMBOFF'S ATTENTION TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF YOUTHS SURROUNDING US IN THE REFUGEE CAMP, WHEN ASKED WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE DRAFT WAS.

CYNICAL RULERS

12. DISCUSSING THE SRV CADRES, ONE REFUGEE SAID THAT THEY ACT LIKE MASTERS, VICTORS, AND ARE ARROGANT AND VENALLY CORRUPT." SEVERAL REFUGEES TALKED OF THE NEW CLASS SYSTEM IN SOUTH VIETNAM, HEADED BY THE PRIVILEGED CLASS OF NORTHERN CADRES. ONE NOTED THE RELEVANCE OF YUGOSLAV WRITER DJILAS' "THE NEW CLASS" TO THE ROLE OF THE NEW RULERS OF SOUTH VIETNAM. SOUTHERNERS ARE STRUCK BY THE GROWING CYNICISM OF THE CADRES. CADRES ARE THEMSELVES DISILLUSIONED WITH THEIR GOVERNMENT, WHICH LED THEM TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOUTH WAS OPPRESSED AND IMPOVERISHED. THEY WERE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THE SOUTH WAS A PROSPEROUS PARADISE BY COMPARISON WITH THE NORTH. REFUGEES ALSO BELIEVED THAT THE WAR WITH KAMPUCHEA AND THE DISASTROUS STATE OF THE ECONOMY HAVE AS WELL AFFECTED NORTHERN CADRES. MOST, THEY ALLEGE, HAVE BECOME CYNICAL, NO LONGER CARE ABOUT THEIR IMAGE, OR TRY TO MAKE SOUTHERNERS UNDERSTAND THEIR POLICIES, AND ONLY WANT TO EXERCISE CONTROL AND MAKE AS MUCH MONEY AS CORRUPTION PERMITS. A FEW, HOWEVER, HAVE TOLD SOUTHERNERS IN CONFIDENCE THAT THE LEADERS IN HANOI MUST BE CHANGED.

RESISTANCE OR REFUGE

13. DESPERATION SEEMS TO BE GROWING, BUT OPTIONS ARE

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

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LIMITED AND DANGEROUS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE HEARD REFUGEES TALK OF "LIBERATED AREAS" IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WHERE THE "VIET CONG CANNOT GO." REFUGEES ALSO IDENTIFIED LEADERS OF RESISTANCE EFFORTS. A FORMER MEMBER OF THE VINH LONG PROVINCE COUNCIL, A CAP TIEN PARTY MEMBER, AND TEACHER AT CAN THO UNIVERSITY, SPOKE OF THREE SEPARATE "LIBERATED AREAS" OR "MOVEMENTS." HE SAID LIBERATED AREAS ARE IN AN NHON VILLAGE OF FORMER CHAU DOC PROVINCE, LED BY CAPTAIN SAU DEO, A NAME WHICH CROPPED UP IN SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS. SRV CLAIMS SAU DEO IS DEAD, BUT REFUGEES DO NOT BELIEVE IT. OTHER "LIBERATED AREA" WAS CO DO, WEST OF CAN THO. LEADER IN CO DO IS REPORTEDLY LE QUANG VINH, SON OF FORMER ARVN GENERAL LE QUANG CHIEN. BOTH "LIBERATED AREAS" ARE REPORTEDLY WELL ARMED. TEACHER ALSO HEARD THAT THE PHUC QUOC (RECONQUER COUNTRY) MOVEMENT IN TIEN GIANG PROVINCE (FORMER VINH LONG AND SA DEC PROVINCES) IS A NEW RESISTANCE MOVEMENT STILL WITH MANY FOLLOWERS, DESPITE REPORTS THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAVE RECENTLY ARRESTED 1000 PERSONS SUSPECTED OF MEMBERSHIP IN PHUC QUOC. THIS MOVEMENT ALSO SEEMS TO BE CONNECTED WITH THE CATHOLIC AGRICULTURAL YOUTH MOVEMENT.

14. OTHER REFUGEES SPOKE OF POCKETS OF RESISTANCE IN

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HONG NGU, DONG THAP PROVINCE, IN DONG NAI PROVINCE (FORMER LONG KHANH AND BINH THUY PROVINCES), LAO DONG PROVINCE, AND BY FULRO IN DAC LAC (FORMER DARLAC) PROVINCE. THIS REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN REPORTS OF THIS KIND, BUT THE REFUGEES INTERVIEWED CONTAINED NUMEROUS FORMER MILITARY OFFICERS, MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER REFUGEES TO BE INTERESTED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES. OTHER REGUEES, LIKE THE TWO YOUTHS FROM QUI NHON, SAID THAT THE PEOPLE DETESTED THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, BUT WERE TOO FEARFUL FOR THEIR LIVES TO RESIST.

15. AS AN ALTERNATIVE, REFUGEES CLAIM UNIFORMLY THAT ALMOST EVERYONE IN VIETNAM WOULD LIKE TO FLEE. ANYONE

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

Approved For Release 2007/03/09 : CIA-RDP83B00100R000100080018-9

WITH THE MEANS ESCAPES, ALL SAID. AVAILABILITY OF BOATS IS INCREASINGLY A PROBLEM. HOWEVER, LACK OF MONEY TO EITHER BRIBE OFFICIALS OR BUY PASSAGE ON A SMALL BOAT FOR SECRET ESCAPE INHIBITS LARGE NUMBERS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DESIRE TO ESCAPE IS MOUNTING AS THE CRUEL REALITIES OF PROSPECTS UNDER THE COMMUNISTS RULE BECOME CLEAR. THE RECENT REFUGEES TO THAILAND ARE OVERWHELMINGLY ETHNIC VIETNAMESE, ARRIVING IN SMALL BOATS, DEPARTING VIETNAM SECRETLY WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OR CONNIVANCE OF THE SRV AUTHORITIES. THEY ARE AWARE OF THE OTHER, PURCHASED ROUTE ON LARGE SHIPS, WHICH IS AVAILABLE GENERALLY TO SINO-VIETNAMESE. REFUGEE BOATS ARRIVING IN THAILAND ARE ALMOST ALL ATTACKED 3 OR 4 TIMES BY THAI PIRATES. RECORD IS 14 ATTACKS ON A SINGLE BOAT, REDUCING THE REFUGEES TO THEIR UNDERWEAR.

16. ASKED ABOUT THE FUTURE, REFUGEES SAY THAT PEOPLE DO NOT WISH EVEN TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE. THE PROSPECTS ARE TOO DIRE. MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BRDTHERS OR FATHERS WHO HAVE BEEN OR ARE IN RE-EDUCATION CAMPS. BECAUSE OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS, THEY KNOW THEY HAVE NO FUTURE. IF THEIR FAMILIES HAVE MONEY, THEY ESCAPE. IF THEY DO NOT, THE THOUGHT OF THE FUTURE IS UNBEARABLE, ONE REFUGEE EXPLAINED. A 42-YEAR OLD STALL OPERATOR FROM RACH GIA ACTED DIFFERENTLY. HAVING HIMSELF STUDIED ONLY FIVE YEARS, HE SAID THAT HE ESCAPED AND BROUGHT ALONG HIS EIGHT CHILDREN BECAUSE THE COMMUNIST EDUCATION SYSTEM WAS WORTHLESS. HE WANTED HIS CHILDREN TO GET A GOOD EDUCATION IN AMERICA. HE ESCAPED FOR THEIR FUTURE.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

17. HANOI'S POLICIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARE NEAR BANKRUPTCY. THE ADMINISTRATION CONTROLS BUT DOES NOT APPEAR TO GOVERN. THE SCOPE OF THE ALIENATION OF THE POPULATION, REFLECTED IN THESE INTERVIEWS, ALBEIT OF THE DISAFFECTED, RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT HANOI'S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE PROBLEMS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THE APPARENT SCOPE OF HANOI'S OTHER DIFFICULTIES IN KAMPUCHEA AND WITH THE PRC WOULD APPEAR TO BE COMPELLING

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REASONS FOR POLICY CHANGES TO AMELIORATE CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF VIETNAM. FAILURE BY HANOI TO TREAT SERIOUSLY THE NECESSITIES AND THE FLAWS IN ITS SOUTHERN ADMINISTRATION COULD, OVER THE LONG TERM, LEAD TO DISRUPTIONS OF DIMENSIONS WHICH MIGHT CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO FORCE CHANGES EITHER OF PERSONS OR POLICIES IN HANOI. ABRAMOWITZ

END OF MESSAGE CONFIDENTIAL

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP | DATE 7 March 77

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REMARKS:

FROM: Chief, China

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John: Suggest you go ahead & take it up with either Holbrooke or Bowdler. I see no objection but it is their cable. [illegible]

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1-67