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Case # NLI 910-109  
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2 December 1968

SUBJECT: Possible ChiCom Adventure

Following points may be related:

a. Soviet area coordination/communication center in Phnom Penh is loaded with middle level agents who express worry that China is going to expand initiatives in SEA.

b. Increased Burmese and Thai nervousness about ethnic Chinese dissident groups and their encouragement by Peking, and the increased vitriol in anti-Burmese, anti-Thai propaganda.

c. Chinese road building in N Laos.

d. Increasing NVN-PL military activity in North and Central Laos may be coordinated with c. above.

e. Increased NVN attacks in SW Laos may be aimed at opening trans-Mekong Laos to PL-NVN troops supplied thru Cambodia-Mekong routes. This action would put NVN and Chinese on the North, Northeast and Southeast flanks of Thailand.

f. Sihanouk is getting worried about the Chinese and NVN "camels in his tent," looking for an accommodation with the US.

g. Withdrawal of Chinese laborers from NVN makes them available for use elsewhere.

h. The instability of the ChiCom governmental structure is becoming more evident, with the Red Army now providing the principal bond of order and administration in China, heightening its influence.

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i. ChiCom reinforcement of the Northeast Frontier Provinces of India, and Indian reinforcements there in the last two months.

Except in Tibet, which has been quiet for some months now, the ChiComs are stirring. A cross-border military adventure now from interior lines, would find India, Burma, Thailand and Laos unable effectively to respond. It would divert internal ChiCom pressures to external "threats," would let the Red Army have a good "exercise" and, unless done against S. Korea, the GRC or Soviet Mongolia, would be unlikely to draw more than protests and alerts in response. The US is in no mood for broader involvement in Asia, and only to defend US forces in Thailand against overt attacks would broader involvement in SEA gain sure public support in the US.

Accordingly, the current NE Monsoon season looks like a good time for a ChiCom cross-border excursion into SEA, particularly in NE Burma and NW Laos. Although their progress in SEA insurgency is going along well enough, and there is no apparent reason for such an excursion, the probability is, in my view, nonetheless considerable.

1.5(e)  
3.4(b)(1)

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