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NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VAN TIEN DUNG
ON DRV MILITARY STRATEGY

An article by North Vietnamese Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Van Tien Dung, published in the June magazine of the DRV army organ QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, presents an analysis of the air-defense war which is notable for its directness and detail. Dung echoes his past articles in vigorously defending Vietnamese "people's war" tactics. He describes foreign assistance as "very important" and says it has never been so great, but he argues forcefully against uncritical acceptance of foreign military doctrine or dependence on modern weapons alone. The article is generally consistent with positions Dung has taken before on foreign aid, modern weapons, and indigenous military theory; what prompted the exposition of his views at this time and, specifically, what bearing the article may have on developments in DRV relations with the Soviet Union are left unclear.

Dung's article is also notable for its emphasis on the close link between the war in the North and the war in the South. Dung insists that the "war of destruction" against the North will end only after the "war of aggression" in South Vietnam is completely defeated--a thesis only rarely voiced by DRV leaders in the past. Dung's stress on this point now raises questions about his attitude toward DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh's suggestion last January that U.S.-DRV talks might follow a halt in the bombing.

Hanoi media gave Dung's article extensive publicity, broadcasting it in installments in the domestic service from 13 to 16 June. NHAN DAN published it on the 15th and 16th, and the VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY transmitted it on 28 and 29 June. Prior articles by Dung publicized in Hanoi media since September 1964 are listed in the appendix to this report.

CALL FOR BASIC RELIANCE ON PEOPLE'S WAR, BACKED BY BLOC AID

In his latest article Dung repeats the standard DRV position that North Vietnam must rely mainly on its own strength in the war, while at the same time "striving to struggle for international assistance." The DRV's response to U.S. air attacks, according to Dung, has been based on the traditional Vietnamese strategy

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of people's war. He maintains that the party's "creative application" of people's war in the new circumstances of the "war of destruction" has not only marked an advance in the party's theory of people's war but has also "brought some sharp changes in current military theory applied by many developed countries of the world today--especially the theory concerning the role of an air force, missiles, and various means and methods against modern weapons and means."

Dung asserts that while "reality has shown that we must and can, to a limited extent, equip our people's armed forces with modern weapons and means such as jet aircraft and missiles," at the same time it has also demonstrated that "jet aircraft and missiles are not omnipotent" or suitable to all conditions. Therefore, he says, the party has not just built up its air force and missile units but has developed air-defense artillery of all sizes and has enhanced the effectiveness of infantry arms to cope with U.S. planes. He adds polemically that "this is not an unusual phenomenon, but for some time and even today it has caused great surprise to many military theoreticians who have blindly revered modern weapons and techniques."

Dung claims not only that the DRV has developed an original strategy of air defense, but that the DRV armed forces have created "efficient, clever, and versatile" combat methods and tactics. "Even our air force and missile units," he says, "can creatively develop our original Vietnamese combat methods which are suitable to Vietnamese conditions and are not dogmatic and imitative." Dung does acknowledge that the armed forces have "learned the techniques and experience of the fraternal countries," and he says "we must study and grasp some scientific and technical knowledge to be able to properly use the new weapons and methods." But he argues that "the basic problem deciding the success of air defense lies first of all in the thorough understanding and execution of the party's guideline on the direction of people's war with a view to creating original offensive and defensive methods for our air-defense forces."

A 19 December 1964 NHAN DAN article had contained one of Dung's most extensive defenses of traditional Vietnamese military doctrine against unnamed domestic and foreign opponents who, he argued, put undue emphasis on the DRV's need for modern weapons. In the 1964 article Dung pointed out the need to modernize the DRV armed forces, but his main quarrel was with those who "advocate purely military and technical actions, praise modern techniques and weaponry, and reduce the importance of the political factor, the

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morale factor, and the masses." He was particularly critical of those who rejected Vietnamese experience and sought guidance from foreign military doctrines.

In his 1964 article--written prior to the air war and the inception of large-scale bloc military aid--Dung expressed much stronger opposition than he does in his more recent writings to reliance on foreign countries for weapons as well as strategy. Rather than acknowledging, as he does now in effect, that socialist countries will help supply necessary modern arms, in 1964 he advocated reliance on the DRV economy "to solve the problems of weaponry and armaments for our army." He explained that "with the spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and with the help of socialist countries, we are gradually realizing the socialist industrialization of our country in North Vietnam" and that "our industry will create the conditions under which it can supply and modernize our army."

Dung's December 1964 article seemed pointed at the Soviets, appearing a month after Pham Van Dong's visit to Moscow to meet the new Soviet leaders and two months before Kosygin's visit to Hanoi for talks on Soviet-DRV relations and Soviet assistance. But he also directly reprimanded Vietnamese "comrades" who "follow the fighting techniques of an army which is well equipped with modern weapons" and who are therefore "busy with calculations of how to fire a gun, how to calculate the force of a main army in the confrontation with another main army, and so forth." He condemned them for "failing to see the realistic economic, topographical, material, and technical factors in using weapons and armaments of our own army and forces" and for "wanting to use the fighting standards of a foreign regular army and apply them to our army, and hence neglecting our own precious experiences of the past and the present in South Vietnam." While admonishing that "we should learn from the experiences of our fraternal armies," Dung said the learning should be "selective."

In the more than two years since the start of the U.S. air strikes at the DRV, Dung has--though with less candor and less polemically than in his latest article--discussed the question of the role of modern weapons and laid claim to the use of "unique" Vietnamese air defenses. For example, in a 5-6 August 1965 NHAN DAN article he reasoned as follows in explaining why a relatively weak North Vietnam was able to "defeat" the United States' modern tactics and technical means:

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Our armed forces and people have heightened the absolute revolutionary spirit and have used the collective strength and collective intelligence to discover and apply the highly skillful, creative, and clever tactics that are unique to Vietnam. These tactics rely on the strength of the combative spirit and have fully used and developed to a high degree all kinds of our weapons and means to limit the strong point and exploit the weak point of aircraft, warships, and various kinds of modern techniques, such as the U.S. Air Force's guided missiles.

In an article in the February 1966 HOC TAP Dung also alluded briefly to the dangers of dogmatism in military doctrine, declaring that "it is necessary to base oneself continuously on the principle of using a weak force to defeat a stronger one and to overcome all tendencies to rely on weapons, to use a strong force to strike at a strong force, and to apply fighting techniques mechanically and dogmatically." In the same article Dung compared the party's "military science of people's war" with the United State's "rotten bourgeois military art" and claimed that it was the "science" of people's war which allowed DRV pilots with no previous combat experience to down U.S. planes and helped the militia shoot down U.S. jets with rifles.

ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. WAR AGAINST THE NORTH

Maintaining that successful prosecution of the war depends upon a correct understanding of the enemy's plans and capabilities, Dung proceeds to discuss the U.S. position in some detail. In general terms, he says that since the United States is fighting an "unjust" war against an independent country belonging to the socialist camp, it has become "politically isolated" and has been forced to limit its military actions and to resort to "deceptive political and diplomatic tricks." In fact, he says, the "basic weakness" of the U.S. Air Force is its inability to "freely develop its strength," which is "restricted" by the political isolation of the United States. While Dung does not spell out the view that the United States is inhibited by the power of the bloc, he suggests this in stating that "the present balance of the international forces" is one of the factors forcing the U.S. Air Force to "escalate step by step" and preventing it from "attacking the North massively and swiftly through strategic, large-scale, and surprise bombing."

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Dung also cites the DRV's "strong resistance" and alleged limitations on the U.S. military capacity as factors inhibiting the U.S. air war. He repeats the optimistic view, periodically expressed in DRV statements, that the number of U.S. aircraft is "limited, aircraft losses have surpassed productive capacity, ...the number of bombs and shells is insufficient, ...professional pilots have gradually been lost and the shortage of pilots has become serious, and, in particular, the U.S. Navy has to employ the pilots of the U.S. strategic defense forces... ."

Dung had addressed himself to similar questions in his August 1965 NHAN DAN article and concluded, among other things, that

the U.S. imperialists have the habit of boasting that they are rich in money, weapons, ammunition, and planes. But their Strategic Air Force is limited. The U.S. imperialists' losses in planes and pilots have reflected their heavy defeat in the military field.

LINK BETWEEN THE WARS IN THE NORTH AND IN THE SOUTH

In his latest article, Dung says more explicitly than he has in previous writings that there will be no end to the air strikes against the North until after the United States is completely defeated in the South.* Since the "enemy" has not "resigned himself to being defeated in the South," the argument runs, "he certainly does not yet renounce his plots and acts of destroying the North." Dung's past writings have reflected the view that the war in the South governs the course of U.S. actions against North Vietnam and have conveyed strong opposition to any tendency to divorce the two conflicts. In his article published in NHAN DAN 5-6 August 1965, Dung said that along with fighting in the North, "wholehearted support" should be given to the South and that the defeat of the United States and "liberation of South Vietnam" would bring about the defeat of the U.S. war against the North.

Dung maintains in his latest article that the problem of insuring communications and transportation is the "central task" of all the

* This position has rarely been spelled out by DRV leaders. It was, however, taken by DRV Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap in an article for the October 1965 issue of the party journal TUYEN HUAN (PROPAGANDA AND TRAINING), as well as by Hong Chuong, editor of the party theoretical journal HOC TAP, in a September 1965 HOC TAP article.

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party and people. And he claims that "in defiance of enemy attacks, we have considerably increased the assistance of the great rear to the great front... ." North Vietnamese spokesmen rarely claim so directly that the DRV is increasing assistance to the South. For example, an article under the pseudonym Truong Son, also published in the June 1967 QUAN DOI NHAN DAN magazine, attributed to Western news reports the statement that North Vietnam was giving "greater and more effective assistance" to the South. And an 18 April 1967 Lao Dong Central Committee circular for May Day, published in NHAN DAN on 23 April and carried by VNA on the 28th, said somewhat ambiguously that "in North Vietnam the armed forces and people are... increasing their economic and national defense potential to defeat the U.S. war of destruction, and at the same time are making every effort to increase the forces for the South Vietnam revolution."

In his 19 December 1964 NHAN DAN article, Dung had attacked opponents who he apparently believed were too concerned with the safety of the North and who may have counseled against too great involvement in the South. Dung declared then that

we oppose those who want peace but who refuse to countenance war; those who only consider the situation of North Vietnam without considering South Vietnam, too; those who only see the rear without seeing the front also; and those who only pay attention to building up and training the army without grasping the notion that the army must be ready for combat and must also fight hard. We should criticize and overcome attitudes which reflect pacifism and relaxation in combat determination and readiness and vigilance.

ATTACK ON "PEACE ILLUSIONS," FORECASTS OF MILITARY VICTORY

Dung's stress on the notion that the "war of destruction" will end only when the Americans are defeated in the South seems incompatible with the 28 January suggestion by DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, in his response to a question from Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, that U.S.-DRV talks might follow an unconditional halt in the U.S. air strikes against the North. Dung says "we must never slacken our vigilance, we must combat all illusions and tendencies toward taking temporary action and adopting a wait-and-see attitude, and we must protect and strengthen our forces...in order to conduct a protracted fight." In a preceding passage, Dung says that "recently the enemy at times has de-escalated, and in the future he may at times de-escalate, and he has also stopped

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bombing at various periods." And he goes on to claim that the "enemy," because of his military setbacks, was forced "to conduct psychological warfare and to spread the illusion about peaceful negotiations."

Dung's remarks may simply reflect a difference in emphasis, deriving from his role as a military leader, rather than indicating opposition to Foreign Minister Trinh's suggestion. It could be argued that Trinh's proposal was merely a gesture aimed at world public opinion and that the DRV leadership was in basic agreement in assuming that the United States would not stop bombing the DRV while the war continues on its present course in the South. But the thrust of Dung's remarks seem polemical; and it should be noted that his writings have consistently warned against "illusions" about negotiations and have stressed, more than is usual in DRV statements, that a military victory over the United States is possible. One of Dung's bitterest attacks on the idea of negotiations was in his August 1965 NHAN DAN article:

U.S. military activities can intimidate only chicken-hearted people. Their "good will for peace" can deceive only those who do not have a revolutionary spirit or have a semirevolutionary spirit, but cannot deceive and intimidate our people who know too well the intimate thoughts of the imperialists and who have gloriously defeated any aggressor. At this time, to let ourselves be trapped by the "peace negotiations" of the Americans is to let them continue to massacre our people, partition our country forever, and prepare for further enlarging the war.

While this statement does not rule out negotiations at some later date, subsequent articles by Dung seem in effect to foreclose the possibility of a negotiated settlement at any time by stressing that the communists can win a military victory in South Vietnam. This view had been expounded by Dung in an article in the 17 March 1966 QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, broadcast in the domestic service on 20 March and belatedly transmitted by VNA on 21 May. Dung contended in that article that the South Vietnamese "army and people" had created "dependable conditions" which would "lead to a military victory...under any circumstances." The article was devoted to an analysis of the balance of forces in Vietnam contrived to prove this point, and it concluded that confidence in Vietnamese ability to defeat the United States both militarily and politically "is firmly based on scientific knowledge and has been confirmed by facts."

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Dung expressed similar views in an article in the party journal HOC TAP in April of this year. Asking rhetorically whether the Vietnamese "people" would defeat the United States militarily, Dung stated that "the military victories of the people's war in the South and throughout the country have made it unmistakably clear that in Vietnam the U.S. imperialists have sustained and are sustaining heavy military defeats and will surely face complete defeat." He added that the Vietnamese experience demonstrated a "truth of our era": that a small nation "is fully able to defeat U.S. imperialism militarily... ."

Dung's insistence that air strikes will end only with a U.S. defeat in the South comes against the background of periodic repetitions in Hanoi propaganda of the Trinh formula linking a cessation of bombing with possible U.S.-DRV talks. The formula appeared most recently in VNA's 6 June account of a 29 May Trinh interview with Japanese journalists.* Most notably, the editorial in the April HOC TAP-- on the occasion of the second anniversary of the DRV's four points-- quoted Trinh's statement and declared that it "clearly repeated the unchanged stand of our government and people and reflected our government's good will for peace." An article by Trinh in the same issue of the journal did not directly spell out the substance of his January remark, but Trinh complained that the United States was calling for reciprocal action before it would agree to stop bombing, despite the fact that "on 28 January we pointed out once again our extremely correct stand and attitude." Trinh's remarks in the HOC TAP article on the efficacy of negotiations under proper circumstances stand in sharp contrast to Dung's stress on a military victory. Trinh wrote:

When the time and place for peace negotiations are right, the revolutionary vanguard must weigh and skillfully coordinate various aspects of the struggle for peace. As Lenin taught us, it is necessary to have a clear-sighted patience and to be extremely objective, to ponder many factors at home and in the world, and, at the same time to take into account also the experience acquired by various revolutionary movements.

Dung's statement in his latest article that "the military, political, and diplomatic offensives of the people's war in both parts of

* DRV media have not mentioned an interview with a correspondent of the Austrian CP organ VOLKSSTIMME, published in the 2 July issue of that paper, in which Trinh is reported to have recalled the formula.

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our country are coordinated more and more smoothly and closely, and have developed vigorously," seems noteworthy in the light of differing treatments of Trinh's January formula in North and South Vietnamese communist media. The South Vietnam Liberation Front did not acknowledge the substance of Trinh's proposal. On 31 January VNA carried a LIBERATION PRESS AGENCY interview with Vice Chairman of the NFLSV Central Committee Presidium Huynh Tan Phat in which Phat purported to support Trinh's statements but in fact completely ignored the exchange on U.S.-DRV talks. The only known appearance in Front propaganda of the formula linking DRV-U.S. talks with the unconditional cessation of the air strikes was in Liberation Radio's broadcast of the text of Ho Chi Minh's February letter to President Johnson. Front comment on Ho's letter did not raise the question of negotiations.

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APPENDIX

ARTICLES BY GEN. VAN TIEN DUNG PUBLICIZED BY HANOI SINCE SEPTEMBER 1964

Column two indicates those DRV media which are known to have carried the articles; it cannot be taken as an exhaustive listing of all media in which every article appeared. The references to "radio" indicate dissemination by the Hanoi radio in Vietnamese.

TITLE	MEDIA	AVAILABLE TRANSLATION
<u>1967</u>		
"Some Great Experiences of the People's War Defeating the U.S. Imperialists' War of Destruction"	QUAN DOI NHAN DAN magazine, June radio, 13-16 June; NHAN DAN, 15-16 June; VNA, 28-29 June	FBIS Daily Report, 16, 20, 22 June
"Being Greatly Victorious in the Military Field, the Southern Armed Forces and People Will Surely Defeat the U.S. Imperialists' Aggressive War"	HOC TAP, April radio, 13-14 April; VNA, 18 April; NHAN DAN, QUAN DOI NHAN DAN	FBIS Daily Report, 19 April
<u>1966</u>		
"We Shall Certainly Win" [on the alleged downing of the 1000th U.S. plane]	NHAN DAN, 3 May VNA, 7 May	FBIS Daily Report, 9 May
"Having Been Defeated Politically, the U.S. Imperialists are Being Defeated Militarily in South Vietnam"	QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, 17 March radio, 20 March; VNA, 21 May	FBIS Daily Report, 5 April and 23 May

TITLE	MEDIA	AVAILABLE TRANSLATION
<u>1966</u> (continued)		
"Our Armed Forces and People Have Won, Are Winning, and Will Surely and Completely Win Over the U.S. Aggressors"	HOC TAP, February	FBIS Daily Report, 15 March
<u>1965</u>		
"Apply Principles of Combat leadership and Settle the Relationship Between the Demand For Annihilation of the Enemy and Protection of Our Positions and the Demand for Maintenance and Improvement of Our Forces"	QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, 15 December	JPRS 34052, 8 February 1966
"We Are Determined to Defeat the War of Destruction of the U.S. Imperialists"	QUAN DOI NHAN DAN magazine, August	FBIS Daily Report, 17 September
	NHAN DAN, 5-6 August	
"Thoroughly Understand the People's War Line of the Party in Order to be Determined to Defeat the U.S. Imperialist Aggressors"	HOC TAP, August	JPRS 32202, 30 September
"Let Us Fulfill the Task in 1965 of Consolidating Our Militia and Self-defense Corps and Building a Reserve Force"	QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, 23 January	JPRS 29025, 8 March
<u>1964</u>		
"Adhere to the Party's Viewpoint in Buildup and Combat Readiness of the Armed Forces"	NHAN DAN, 19 December	JPRS 28472, 26 January 1965
"Discussion of Experiences in Building the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Our Party"	HOC TAP, September	FBIS Daily Report, 16 October