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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: NOV 2001

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
24 March 1965

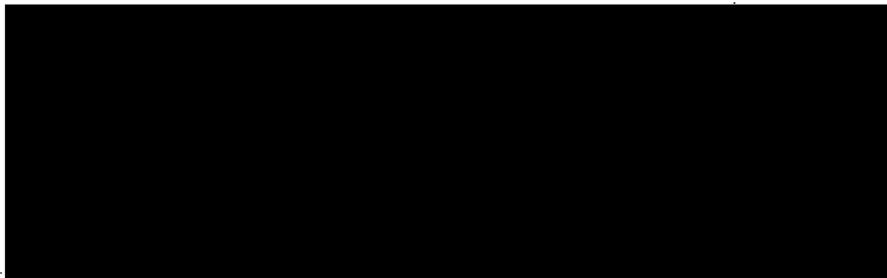
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24 March 1965

MEMORANDUM

Beginning with the next issue, the Vietnam Situation Report will be published in the late afternoon, seven days a week. This schedule will provide more detailed and authoritative coverage of events in Vietnam than is possible with the present early morning deadline. Moreover, it will fit better with the normal daily cycle of reporting from Saigon.

The Central Intelligence Bulletin will continue its present high level of detailed coverage of Vietnam. It will therefore serve to update the Vietnam Situation Report in the morning and to present preliminary analysis of any significant reports received during the night.

The Vietnam Situation Report and Central Intelligence Bulletin will each independently maintain continuity of reporting over the 24-hour period.

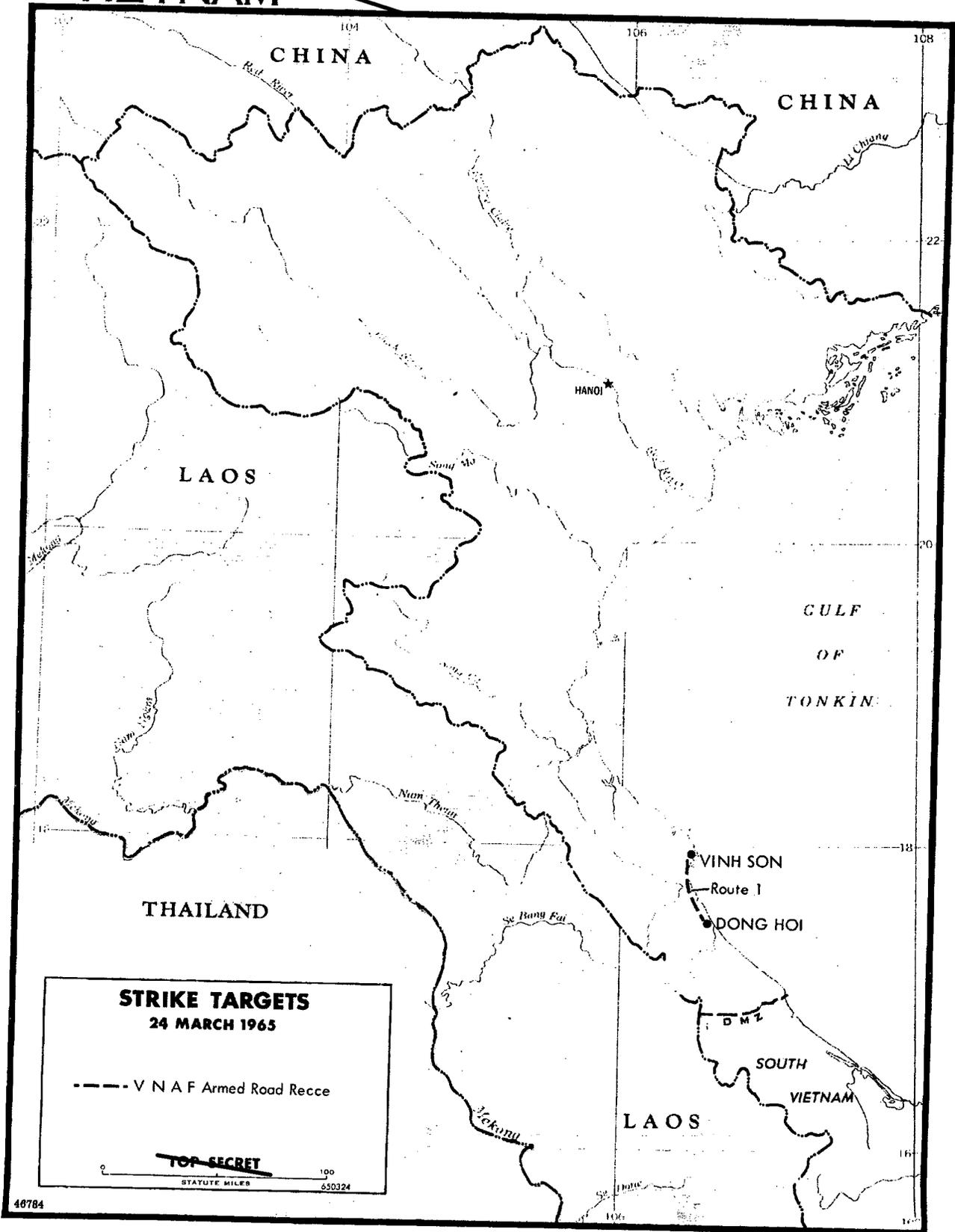
The next issue of the Vietnam Situation Report will be issued this afternoon, 24 March.

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NORTH VIETNAM

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STRIKE TARGETS
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
24 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

South Vietnamese Air Strikes of 24 March

1. Eight Vietnamese Skyraider aircraft were scheduled to perform an armed road reconnaissance for targets of opportunity on Route 1 between Dong Hoi and Vinh Son at approximately 1600 local Vietnam time (0300 EST) on 24 March. Ten to twelve US aircraft were to fly in support of the mission.

2. All aircraft returned safely to their bases. No information is yet available on the results of the strike.

3. [REDACTED] North Vietnamese [REDACTED] once again reflected anticipation of the strike and Chinese and North Vietnamese radars tracked the strike aircraft. No Communist air reaction has been reported.

4. Preliminary photographic analysis indicates that the 23 March South Vietnamese air strike against the Vinh Linh radar site, just north of the Demilitarized Zone, destroyed seven buildings and damaged two others. Although the radar antenna appears undamaged in photography, [REDACTED] it ceased operating shortly after the strike began.

Communist Political Developments

5. Hanoi has responded to the latest series of air attacks with a Foreign Ministry note sent on 23 March to the cochairmen and all the signatories of the 1954 Geneva Agreements as well as other unspecified states. The note reiterated demands that the US stop its aggressive acts and withdraw from South Vietnam. Chinese and Soviet papers replayed the North Vietnamese note without comment.

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6. In a hard-hitting speech on 23 March Soviet party leader Brezhnev attacked US "acts of aggression" against North Vietnam and asserted that the Soviet Union "is already" assisting the DRV. Brezhnev's ambiguous reference to Soviet citizens expressing their readiness "to take part in" the DRV's struggle seems primarily intended for propaganda effect. Nonetheless, this is first time that a Soviet leader has even hinted at the possibility of Soviet "volunteers."

7. Brezhnev reaffirmed the Soviet Union's interest in good relations with the US. However, he warned that the USSR would never tolerate an encroachment on the legitimate interests of its friends or allies. In an oblique reaction to recent Chinese charges of a Soviet sell-out on the Vietnam issue, Brezhnev concluded that "we shall never make these interests a subject of a deal with anyone." Nevertheless, Indian diplomats in Moscow were told that the USSR is "entirely ready" to support negotiations on Vietnam but is leaving the initiative in this matter with Hanoi--which is "not yet" prepared for such a step.

8. Remarks from bloc quarters about the possible use of "volunteers" in the war in Vietnam are now being echoed by the Viet Cong. In a 22 March statement, Liberation Front president Nguyen Huu Tho called for foreign help in the form of weapons and other war materials. He also warned that the Front will ask for "troops and youths" from abroad if the US continues to send forces to South Vietnam and further "expands" the war. There is no evidence that an actual decision to accept volunteers has been made, but the statement will further encourage worldwide support from leftist groups, some of which have pledged to help the Viet Cong with "deeds."

Bloc Military Developments

9. [REDACTED] several high priority, but as yet unidentified, construction projects have been under way since 9 March on the outskirts of Hanoi. Hundreds of army trucks and trailers have been hauling sand, gravel, crushed rock, or cement to these sites in a maximum around-the-clock effort that is apparently straining transport capacity in the Hanoi area. Unusual numbers

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of bulldozers and graders have been noted at the sites and hundreds of laborers are working on a 24-hour basis.

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10. A [REDACTED] source who walked past one of the sites described it as approximately 150 by 200 yards with heavy steel girders being assembled in star-shaped and arrow-shaped patterns.

11. A [REDACTED] ICC representative, presumably describing the same activity, said that a large, flat, steel-beam structure was being assembled which looked like 50-foot-long spokes of a wheel lying flat. Concrete buildings were also under construction within the sites. [REDACTED] also noted crates with Russian markings on some of the trucks indicating that Soviet equipment or material is probably being used in these projects.

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12. It does not appear from the descriptions given that these sites are surface-to-air missile installations. The measurements and the construction details do not fit any recognizable Soviet or Chinese weapons system. An intensive search of available aerial photography of this location is now being made. One of the suspect areas was examined in 17 March aerial photography but no determination could be made as to the nature of the construction. Photography of 19 March was cloud covered. Additional photo analysis is under way for other sites.

13. [REDACTED] the Soviets told [REDACTED] recently that machinery for shipment of supplies by rail to North Vietnam has now been set up and is functioning. A US correspondent was also authoritatively informed that "arms and equipment" were on their way to the DRV.

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14. No unusual Communist military moves have been detected in the past 24 hours.

15. Hanoi issued a special Party directive on 3 March cautioning local officials against interrupting economic activity with unwarranted civil defense precautions. The directive, issued by the Party's Secretariat and sent to at least two Provincial Party Committees in the Northwest, is highly

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critical of the unauthorized and "indiscriminate" initiation of air raid alarms "unnecessarily upsetting the spirit, production, and work of the people.

16. Air defense alerts, says the directive, are to be issued only by the local air defense director acting under the established instructions of the central authorities. Dispersal of the civilian population should occur only in areas "in jeopardy of attack," and news dissemination should be carefully controlled by the appropriate propaganda organizations to "avoid creating panic."

17. The directive suggests Hanoi's confidence that its population can largely be kept on the job, despite air raids, with a minimum of interruption and dislocation.

Developments in South Vietnam

18. No major new political or military developments have been reported in South Vietnam in the past 24 hours.

19. During the past week Viet Cong-initiated armed attacks, terrorism, and sabotage declined to the lowest levels since the end of the Tet holiday on 6 February. Total reported incidents for the week dropped to 399 from 536 the previous week and 584 the week before. Last week according to MACV, Viet Cong forces throughout South Vietnam appeared to be avoiding contacts with large ARVN units. There were no large-scale Communist attacks, and only two district towns were fired on, in contrast to the 13 and 14, respectively, shelled during the two previous weeks. The decline in intensity of guerrilla activity was also reflected in the significantly reduced number of casualties and weapons losses sustained by both sides.

20. The slackening of recent Viet Cong activity appears to be part of a normal pattern of Communist actions. Generally, a decline over a period of three or four weeks is followed by a sudden renewal of activity, suggesting that the lulls are used to rest, regroup, and plan new attacks.

[REDACTED] the Liberation Front Radio continues to call for more determined strikes against

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the enemy. South Vietnamese intelligence reports continue to note large Viet Cong concentrations and to anticipate significant Viet Cong attacks in various areas.

21. MACV has revised its holdings of Viet Cong regular strength upward with the acceptance of three new Viet Cong battalions, bringing the total identified battalions to 53 and total confirmed regular Viet Cong strength to 38,460.

22. According to a South Vietnamese security service official, the Viet Cong are drawing from their forces in the Mekong Delta to reinforce units in Central Vietnam. Reportedly a total of eight battalions of Viet Cong regular and provincial forces have moved north from their base areas in the delta region, leaving behind only small numbers to support local guerrilla forces. Six of these battalions have reportedly been traced during the last two weeks as far north as Binh Tuy Province. There have also been indications that one unit may be as far north as Phu Yen Province. In addition to the alleged movement of Viet Cong units to Central Vietnam, the Communists are, according to the source, recruiting among the male population in the delta for military service in Central Vietnam. Certain political cadres in Phong Dinh Province reportedly have been alerted to move to the north, but their destination is unknown. Preparations to expedite the movement of some of these cadres through Cambodia reportedly are underway.

Cambodia-South Vietnam

23. Another border skirmish between South Vietnamese troops and Cambodian militia in the south delta area, the second in two days, occurred yesterday, [REDACTED]

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The Vietnamese forces, supported by mortar fire from the South Vietnamese side of the border, reportedly wounded three Cambodians before withdrawing. An incursion on 21 March in the same area resulted in five Cambodian casualties, including two killed. An on the spot investigation of the 21 March incident was made by an ICC team at Cambodia's request.

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