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*J.H.*

D/I USAF CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-35/2: "PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA." 22 Jul 52

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

A. What is the current situation in Indochina with respect to the following:

1. The status of combat operations in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia?

What trends have there been in the past six months in the relative military strength, combat effectiveness, and tactical disposition of the French-Indochinese and Viet Minh forces?

(1) The French Air Forces

The French Air Forces in Indochina consist of the French Air Forces, Far East (Forces Aeriennes en Extrême Orient- FAEEO) and units of the French Naval Air Arm. The FAEEO have a strength of 403 aircraft of which 372 are assigned to squadrons under three tactical commands. Four fighter squadrons, which are based primarily in the Hanoi and Haiphong sectors, are equipped with F8F and F6F piston type fighter aircraft. There are also two light bomber squadrons equipped with B-26 Invaders, two transport, one reconnaissance, and six artillery and observation and liaison squadrons. For support, the FAEEO are dependent primarily on MDAP for supply of combat and transport type aircraft, aircraft munitions, armament and aviation fuels. The French Naval Air Arm in Indochina has a current strength of 25 aircraft all shore based. The CVL Arromanches left Indochina for France on 18 May for overhaul and is expected to return in the latter part of August. Until its return, there will be no carrier based aircraft in Indochina waters.

A chart giving disposition of units, type of aircraft assigned, and personnel is attached as Inclosure (1).

(2) Air Facilities

There are approximately 77 airfields and airplane bases available

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to the FAEEQ. Sixteen airfields meet the standards necessary to operate combat aircraft. Of these, twelve have permanent surfaced runways, five of which have a runway length of over 5,000 feet and are capable of sustaining medium bomber/jet fighter aircraft operations. The remaining airfields have over 4000 foot runways and are suitable for operation of light bomber/piston fighter type aircraft and limited jet fighter operations. The most important airfield complex is located in the critical Tonkin Delta area. Here are based approximately 60% of all the FAEEQ combat aircraft and it is from these airfields that most of the close support and supply missions have been flown. Two airfields Do Son and Kien An, have recently been put into commission by the French to relieve the congested situation existing in this vital area. The two Hanoi airfields and the one airfield at Haiphong have been overcrowded with aircraft with no adequate space for dispersal of aircraft, since the airfields are surrounded by rice paddies. The French-Vietnamese Forces possess no adequate radar or early warning systems capable of giving quick warning to Army, Navy and Air installations in the Tonkin area. There is, at present, one radar warning site located at Cat Bi<sup>2</sup> airfield (Haiphong), providing less than five minutes warning. Another of slightly better range is reported en-route from France. As a result of the movement of some transport and liaison type aircraft to Do Son and the use of Kien An and the three remaining delta airfields for combat operations, this situation should be considerably improved.

All airfields in this area are within range of possible air attack from Chinese Communist airfields in the bordering areas of Yunnan and Kwangsi Provinces and from Hainan Island. If the Tonkin Delta airfields should fall into Viet Minh hands, Hue Airfield 300 miles to the south would be the next good operational airfield available to the French Air Forces. In central

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Indochina, the most important operational base is Tourane with 6400 foot runways and full facilities. Tan Son Nhut airfield near Saigon is the most important in southern Indochina and is the home base of the FAEO.

Of the eight auxiliary seaplane stations available to the French Naval Air Arm, Cat Lai Seaplane Station, 6 miles East of Saigon and Cam Ranh Bay near Phan Rang are the only suitable seaplane landing areas.

### (3) Combat Effectiveness

The capabilities of the FAEO are excellent in operations of a tactical ground support nature, which constitute their present basic mission. French pilots are presently well-qualified to perform tactical support missions of low-level and dive bombing, including use of rockets, bombs, and gunnery. During the past six months, vital enemy supplies from Communist China, key points along the supply routes, and other key targets have been effectively attacked. Through attacks against selected key targets, the movement of supplies is made as costly to the Viet Minh as possible. The FAEO are also efficient in conducting paratroop operations and supply by airdrop. Transport activities, photo and visual reconnaissance, observation and liaison are successfully carried out. Important French/Vietnamese outpost garrisons west and north of Hanoi, because of their isolation and poor lines of communication, are supplied almost entirely by airdrops. Most of the outposts have cleared "drop Zones" in the vicinity, and a few have short airstrips capable of handling liaison aircraft. The use of paratroops as a tactical maneuver has proven highly successful in the type of war being fought in Indochina. The FAEO would be relatively ineffective in air defense operations because of the lack of modern air interceptor aircraft, radar defenses and early warning, and fighter direction equipment. This combat capability has been increased by the implementation of a training

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program in fighter combat tactics, air to air gunnery and air interception techniques. Completion of Do Son and Kien An airfields has increased the FAEEO capability by providing additional operational bases and thereby greatly relieving the congested facilities and providing more dispersement of aircraft in Tonkin.

Shortage of personnel imposed by troop strength limitations precludes the full utilization of aircraft currently available in Indochina. The FAEEO is understrength in pilots, having 332 pilots for over 400 aircraft. Supply and maintenance staffs are short in aircraft technicians.

The combat effectiveness of the shore-based French Naval Air Arm is good, within the limits of aircraft and facilities available, in performing its mission of patrol, reconnaissance, destruction of enemy shipping and support of ground operations.

b. What are the present French-Indochinese capabilities to:

- (1) Expand their area of control and inflict heavy losses on the Viet Minh, assuming the present nature and degree of Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh;
- (2) Hold presently occupied territory in Indochina against the Viet Minh operating with the present nature and degree of Chinese Communist assistance.

There has been no air opposition to the FAEEO or the French Naval Air Arm in operations against the Viet Minh. There is no evidence of an operational Viet Minh air force, although some unconfirmed reports have been received indicating that Viet Minh personnel are undergoing aviation training in the Sino-Tonkin border area under the Chinese Communists. The Viet

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Minh have received no known air assistance in the form of manpower or material from the Chinese Communists. It is possible, however, that there may be a few air advisors among the several thousand advisors already with the Viet Minh forces. If the Viet Minh forces are to have air support during the period of this estimate, or the Chinese Communists should invade Indochina with ground units and desire such support, this would have to be provided by the CCAF, using regular units or "volunteers." Without opposition, the FAEEO, within its present area of operations, is able to carry out effectively its current mission of tactical air support, subject only to limitations of personnel and equipment. However, the FAEEO is incapable of significantly expanding its air operations.

- (3) Resist attacks by the Viet Minh operating with substantially increased Chinese Communist assistance.
- (4) Resist attacks by combined Viet Minh-Chinese Communist Combat forces?

Since the Viet Minh has no known air force in being and no immediate prospect of developing such a force prior to mid-1953, any air resistance to the FAEEO would presumably arise through the commitment of elements of the Chinese Communist Air Force to support of the Viet Minh forces. It is currently estimated that the Chinese Communist Air Force has available to it, approximately 2000 combat aircraft of various types. Included in the combat figure are approximately 1300 jet type fighter aircraft. Of this total, approximately 800 aircraft (including 450 jets) are believed to be based in China proper, primarily in the Peiping, Shanghai, and Canton areas. The nearest known units to Indochina are two air regiments, totaling 7% MIG-15 fighter aircraft, located at Canton. In south China, there are 18 airfields capable of supporting combat aircraft within 315

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nautical miles (the combat radius of the MIG-15 with two 70-gallon wing tanks) of the Tonkin Delta air installations. Five of these airfields have surfaced runways of 6000 feet or more and are suitable for sustained medium bomber/jet fighter operations. The remaining ten airfields have surfaced runways between 4000-6000 feet in length and can support sustained operations of light bomber/piston type fighter aircraft and limited jet fighter operations. Recent information indicates that Nanning airfield in southern China is abandoned and that the Chinese Communists have not performed any construction work on this facility. Although the condition of the runway probably would allow aircraft to land and take-off, the air facilities are not suitable for any sustained operations. In event that the Chinese Communists were to attempt an air attack on Indochina, an operational base in the Nanning area would be essential. Lack of any activity at this airfield also indicates that there probably has been no major build-up of airfields near the Indochina border. The only evidence of construction in the area is that of a four-lane road being built from the town toward the airfield. The completion of this additional method of logistical support to the airfield may mean that the Chinese Communists have future plans for the rehabilitation of this airfield. It is believed, moreover, that all Chinese Communist airfields in South China could be repaired within a short period of time.

The commitment of a Chinese Communist force of comparable size and composition to that now committed by the FAEEQ would not be decisive, but would materially reduce the freedom of movement now enjoyed by the FAEEQ. Loss of freedom of the air would force the FAEEQ to change materially its combat and supply tactics. Tactical support and bombing would be similarly affected since a large percentage of available aircraft would have to be employed in air

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intercept and combat patrol missions.

The addition of a Chinese Communist air force to Viet Minh forces comparable in size to the French Air Forces, but including MIG-15 jet fighters would result in loss of air superiority to the French, at least in the Tonkin Delta area. The FALCO now possesses no aircraft capable of effectively intercepting jet type aircraft. If the Viet Minh/Chinese Communist ground forces commit MIG-15's, they will undoubtedly do so by a surprise concentrated air attack on the Army, Navy and Air Installations in the Tonkin Delta area. The French-Vietnamese Forces do not possess an adequate air warning system to give quick warning of such an attack, and the effect would be to neutralize the French Air Forces in Tonkin and at least partially destroy the vital installations in that area.

B. What is the current nature and level of Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh?

There is no known Chinese Communist air technical and materiel assistance being provided to the Viet Minh at the present.

C. What is the current nature and level of French support to the Associated States of Indochina?

The Associated States of Indochina have no Air Force in being, although a small beginning has been made in training native pilots. On 1 April 1952, a Vietnamese Flying School was created, equipped with 30 liaison type aircraft, and provided with a training staff of four French Air Force Officers and 22 non-commissioned officers. Graduates will be used in artillery spotting units. The initial class of 15 Vietnamese cadets is undergoing a 6 month course and a second class of 30 Vietnamese cadets is expected to begin training in October 1952. In view of the difficulties in organizing,

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equipping and training a native air force, and the preoccupation of the French Air Forces in their present combat operations in Indochina, it is unlikely that an effective Vietnamese Air Force will be created within the period of this estimate.

D. What is the current nature and level of US support to the French and Indochinese?

Most of the present capability of the FAEEC is due to the MDAP assistance received during the past two years. Present MDAP policy provides for the replacement of aircraft and spare parts as needed to maintain the level now reached by the FAEEC and to supply all the ammunition and POL needed for combat operations as required. The lack of an air defense capability by the FAEEC has been a constant weakness that MDAP assistance has not alleviated. The French have repeatedly requested from the US jet aircraft for air defense in Indochina. These requests have been refused mainly because of their lack of air facilities to operate such aircraft, and insufficient maintenance and fuel storage facilities for sustained jet operations. Recent developments and improvements along these lines in the Tonkin delta area, including opening two new airfields, have changed the complexion of this question in recent weeks.

On 30 April 1952, a recommendation for reconsideration of the question of jet aircraft to Indochina through MDAP was proposed by Air Force MDAP officials. The proposal forwarded favors giving a squadron of F-86 to the FAEEC by reallocating remaining FY 1952 funds. It is felt by this group that attacks by the CCAF, especially jet, could knock out a large part of the MDAP air effort already made in Indochina. If this threat is to be met by the French, an aircraft capable of forcing combat on the MIG-15 is needed. The F-86, believed the most suitable for the role, is available

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for purchase, with delivery beginning in July 1953. If the FAEEEO should acquire jets from the US, along with an early warning radar net also under consideration, the critical air defense weakness of the FAEEEO now existing could, in time, be substantially alleviated.

II. FACTORS AFFECTING FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA.

A. French-Indochinese Capabilities and probable courses of action.

1. How will French and Indochinese will and intention to resist be affected by the following:

a. Political, economic, and military developments in Western Europe, and within metropolitan France and the French Union?

Any political, economic, or military development within metropolitan France, other Western European countries, or the non-Indochinese parts of the French Union would probably have a favorable psychological impact upon French and Indochinese will and intention to resist if such development resulted in a continuation of sufficient outside support to contain the Communist threat to Indochina. In addition, any development in these areas which indicated a genuine French intention to strengthen native institutions would tend to strengthen the Indochinese will and intention to resist Communist pressures. However, any developments in these areas which indicated a continuation of or a reversion to, traditional French colonial policies and attitudes would meet with a strongly adverse reaction among the highly sensitive Indochinese peoples and would correspondingly deter their will and intention to resist Communist pressures. Any development in Metropolitan France, other Western European countries, or the French Union, which indicated that Indochina would not receive outside support at least sufficient to contain the Communist threat would probably have a seriously adverse affect upon the will and intention to resist of both the French and Indochinese.

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- b. Political and economic trends within Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, including attitudes toward French imperial control and toward the Chinese Communists? (To what extent are the Chinese Communists regarded as conquerors and to what extent as liberators from white control)?

Within Vietnam (and, to a lesser extent, within the less advanced states of Laos and Cambodia) there is a gradual trend toward increased recognition of the Communist threat and toward increasing native participation in the French-led resistance movement. However, despite substantial changes in traditional French colonial policies in the direction of sponsorship of native autonomy, continuing suspicion of French policies and motives will remain, during the period of this estimate, as a deterrent to unqualified Indochinese support for their own French-sponsored governments and for the French-led military struggle against the Communist-led Viet Minh forces. It is estimated that identifiable direct Chinese Communist participation in combat against the French-Vietnamese forces would result in an acceleration of the present gradual increase in Indochinese support for the anti-Communist struggle. In view of the paucity of reliable intelligence, this estimate is based largely on the considered judgment that, in view of the traditional Indochinese hostility toward Chinese invaders and in view of the increasing identification of the Chinese Communists in the minds of politically conscious Indochinese with aggressive international Communism, the threat posed by Communist China will be regarded as over-riding the continuing opposition to French colonialism.

- c. Possible tripartite warnings to the CC to keep their troops out of Indochina?

The issuance of a tripartite warning which showed promise of

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being effective in keeping Chinese Communist troops out of Indochina would increase French and Indochinese will and intention to resist the Viet Minh forces, provided that US material support of the French-Vietnamese forces continued at such a level that eventual victory over the Viet Minh did not appear hopeless.

- d. Changes in the level of US economic and military assistance and in the nature of the US commitment for the defense of Indochina?

(See a, b and c above).

- e. A cease-fire in Korea?

A cease-fire in Korea, without effective Western action to deter Chinese Communist military action against Indochina and/or without assurance of continued substantial US material support, would encourage defeatism among the French and Vietnamese and might lead them to seek a negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh forces.

- f. An expansion of the Korean war?

An expansion of the Korean war would probably have little effect upon the French and Vietnamese will and intention to resist, unless such expansion was of such a nature and magnitude as to remove from Indochina the threat presently posed by the presence of large numbers of Chinese Communist forces near the China border and by Chinese Communist logistical aid to the Viet Minh forces.

- g. Political, military, and economic developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia?

Political, military and economic developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia are of significance to the French and Indochinese will and intention to resist to the extent that such developments increase or decrease the likeli-

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hood that the anti-Communist position in Indochina will be out-flanked. For example, Communist acquisition of control of Burma would constitute at least a potential threat to the anti-Communist position in Indochina, and would probably tend to discourage French and Indochinese will and intention to resist.

2. What trends in French-Indochinese capabilities to resist or reduce Viet Minh-Chinese Communist pressure are probable?
  - a. In trained manpower, organized forces, and material supply (including US aid)?

No significant changes in the French-Indochinese capabilities is expected to occur during the period of this estimate. The FAEEC are expected to receive sufficient logistical support under MDAP to maintain the present level of operations. There is a current shortage of pilots and trained maintenance technicians, and the ability of the French to supply sufficient personnel to support additional aircraft is questionable. No appreciable increase in air defense capabilities by Mid-1953 is evident, as the FAEEC are not expected to acquire F-86 jet aircraft prior to mid-1953.

- B. 1. What trends in Viet Minh-Chinese Communist capabilities are probable through mid-1953 assuming a continuation of the present situation in Korea:
  - d. In terms of Chinese Communist ability to commit combat forces in Indochina?

The Chinese Communists now have, and will continue to have through mid-1953, sufficient air strength in jet and piston aircraft to enable them to launch damaging attacks against French-Vietnamese installations in Tonking, without appreciably lessening the present scale of Communist air operations in Korea. However, prior to a CCAF commitment to operations

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in Indochina, there would have to be improvement of South China airfields, stockpiling of supplies at these airfields, and redistribution of aircraft. Although these preparations could be made by mid-1953, there is no reliable evidence that they have yet begun.

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2. What effect would an expansion of the war in Korea or a cease-fire in Korea have on Communist capabilities in Indochina?

An expansion of the war in Korea would presumably include expanded Communist air operations, and therefore place a further limitation on Communist capabilities to commit air strength to Indochina. In the event of a cease-fire in Korea, the Chinese Communists would be capable of employing, for air operations in Indochina, all or any part of their present air force in being when released from its Korean mission, subject only to logistical and air facilities limitations in the Indochina-China border area.

4. How will Chinese Communist courses of action in Indochina be influenced by the following:
- a. Over-all Communist interests and policy in the Far East?
  - b. A change in French-Indochinese capabilities?
  - c. A change in the strength and effectiveness of the Viet Minh?
  - d. A tripartite warning to keep their troops out of Indochina?
  - e. Changes in the Korean war?
  - f. Other contingencies such as the release of Nationalist internees in Indochina, combat operations by Chinese Nationalist troops in Southeast Asia, or against the China mainland, etc.?

It is considered that over-all Communist interests and policy in the Far East will be the most important determinant of Chinese Communist intentions as to courses of action relative to Indochina. The most effective

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deterrent to Chinese Communist aggressive action in Indochina will be a Western (essentially US) warning which convinced the Soviet bloc that such Chinese Communist aggression would result in unacceptable retaliation against Communist China itself. Changes in the relative strength and effectiveness of the French-Indochinese forces and the Viet Minh forces, changes in the Korean war, and other contingencies will not have determining influence (though they could have some contributory significance) upon Chinese Communist courses of action relative to Indochina.

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Inclosure (1)

**Strength and Disposition, French Air Force, Far East Assigned to Tactical Commands**

<u>Type</u>	<u>No. of Squadrons</u>	<u>Assigned Aircraft</u>
Fighter	4	83
Light Bomber	2	35
Photo Reconnaissance	1	12
Artillery Obs. & Liaison	6	168
Transport	2	74
		<u>372</u>

FAEEO Tactical Disposition

TACTICAL COMMAND - North-Hanoi

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Type Aircraft</u>	<u>No. of Aircraft</u>	<u>Location</u>
Fighter Sq. 1/8	F8F	20	Boc Mai Airfield (Hanoi)
Transport Sq. 2/62	C47	12	" " " "
	Ju-52	12	" " " "
Liaison Sq. 53	Martinet	6	" " " "
	Penguin	8	" " " "
	Cricket	12	" " " "
	Hiller	4	" " " "
Photo-Recon. Sq. 80	F8F	12	Gia Lam Airfield (Hanoi)
Artillery Obs. Sq. 23	Cricket	24	" " " "
Transport Sq. 2/64 (Detach)	C-47	10	" " " "
Transport Sq. 1/64 (Detach)	Ju-52	8	" " " "
Fighter Sq. 3/6	F8F	20	Cat Bai Airfield (Haiphong)
Bomber Sq. 1/19 (Detach)	B-26	10	" " " "
Bomber Sq. 1/25	B-26	12	" " " "
Artillery Obs. Sq. 21	Cricket	24	Do Son Airfield (Haiphong)

TACTICAL COMMAND - Center- Hue

Bomber Sq. 1/19	B-26	10	Tourane Airfield
	RB-26	1	" " "
Fighter Sq. 2/9	F6F	7	" " "
Liaison Sq. 54	Martinets	4	" " "
	Cricket	12	" " "
	Penguins	3	" " "
Transport Sq. 1/64 (Detach)	Ju-52	2	" " "
Transport Sq. 1/64	Ju-52	12	Nha Trang Airfield
Artillery Obs. Sq. 22 (Detach)	Cricket	2	" " "
Vietnam Flying School	Cricket	30*	" " "
Transport Sq. 1/64 (Detach)	Ju-52	2	Vientiane Airfield

\* These thirty (30) aircraft are to be used as trainers, however, all are fully equipped for primary mission of combat operations.

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TACTICAL COMMAND South - Saigon

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Type Aircraft</u>	<u>No. of Aircraft</u>	<u>Location</u>
Fighter Sq. 2/9	F6F	16	Tan Son Nhut Airfield(Saigo
Transport Sq. 2/64	C-47	12	" " " " "
Transport Sq. 1/64 (Detach)	Ju-52	4	" " " " "
Bomber Sq. 1/19 (Detach)	RB-26	2	" " " " "
Artillery Obs. Sq. 22	Cricket	10	" " " " "
Liaison Sq. 52	Martinet	8	" " " " "
	Cricket	11	" " " " "
	Penguin	6	" " " " "
	Hiller	2	" " " " "

NOTE: Fourteen (14) Ju-52 aircraft have been equipped for dual purpose with external bomb racks plus a "D-30 Bronzavia" sight permitting use as a bomber with external maximum bomb load of 2000 pounds.

Personnel Strengths

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Pilots	220	112	332
Other Aircrew	69	275	344
Other (French)	291	5699	5990
Other (Indigenous)	-	2305	2305
Totals	580	8391	8971

NAVAL AIR ARM

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Type Aircraft</u>	<u>No. of Aircraft</u>	<u>Location</u>
Patrol Bomber Sq. 8F	PBY	10	Saigon
Patrol Recon Sq. 8S	PBY-5A	2	(1) Haiphong (1) Saigon
Recon Sq. 9S	Sea Otter	8	Cat Bai
Liaison	C-47	1	Saigon
	Morane	4	Haiphong

NOTE: The CVL Arromanches, currently undergoing overhaul in France, is expected to return to Indochina waters the latter part of August with a complement of approximately 44 aircraft, 30 pilot officers, and 310 aircrew personnel.

Personnel Strength

Officers	57
Enlisted	758
	815*

\*Includes 35 pilots (officers and NCO's)

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