

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
8 November 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Viet Cong Central Committee
For South Vietnam

1. The Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) is the supreme Viet Cong political-military coordinating organization in South Vietnam. It is directly subordinate to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in North Vietnam. Firm details on the organization and membership of COSVN are lacking.

2. COSVN is charged with the implementation of policy lines, plans, and instructions provided by CEC in Hanoi, and with reporting on the situation in the South, including the successes or failures of Viet Cong military and political activities. COSVN apparently has considerable latitude, within strategic guidelines laid down by Hanoi, for conducting the war in the South as well as the Communist subversive effort.

3. A Central Office for South Vietnam was known to be in existence during the latter stages of the Indochina war against the French, but was of less importance than the present COSVN.

Subordinate at that time to the Communist Party central committee in northern Vietnam, the Central Office was responsible for coordinating the Viet Minh struggle against the French in the southern region of Vietnam (former Cochinchina) and Cambodia, where the Viet Minh organization was never as strong as in the north. The old Central Office was located in the Viet Minh War Zone C

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bordering Cambodia in northwestern Tay Ninh Province, about 75 miles northwest of Saigon--the same location of the present Viet Cong COSVN. The Central Office was apparently disbanded in 1955--or possibly moved north to consolidate with the Lao Dong central committee in Hanoi--because of the shift in Communist activities in the South from military action to subversion. In the period 1955-1960, Communist activities were directed through two broad geographical agencies, Intersector 5 in the northern half of South Vietnam, and Nambo in the southern half.

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4. In order to cope with the rapid intensification of the Viet Cong military insurgency against the Saigon government, Hanoi re-established the Central Office for South Vietnam during 1961, but with far wider authority.

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According to captured Viet Cong prisoners, personnel from the Lao Dong central committee in Hanoi were first infiltrated to reinforce COSVN in May 1961.

5. Directly subordinate to COSVN at present are five geographical regions, or interprovincial zones, embracing all of South Vietnam, plus a special Saigon/Gia Dinh organization for the capital area. These zones roughly parallel the organization of the Viet Cong military command structure, although there continues to be tenuous evidence of the existence of the Intersector 5--and possibly Nambo--committees as intermediary echelons between COSVN and the five subregions. Below the level of the five regional zones, the Viet Cong COSVN chain of command descends to party committees at the province, district, and village level. The village committees are responsible for hamlet activities.

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6. The work of COSVN is apparently conducted by functional staffs, the most important being party committees for political activities and military affairs. There have been varying reports as to the identity of the very top Viet Cong leaders in the Central Office. A Lieutenant General Hai Hau has been reported as head of the party committee and a Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra alias Nam Trung as head of the military headquarters and the commanding general of the Viet Cong. The military affairs committee or headquarters is reportedly composed of three staffs: a military staff, a political staff, and a rear services staff. Other specialist staffs of COSVN are believed to include a military intelligence section, a security section, a communications-liaison section responsible for postal services and transportation, and a propaganda and training section. There are sub-sections for such activities as civilian and military proselyting.

7. In addition, COSVN is responsible for the Viet Cong's National Liberation Front, through which the Communists attempt to enlist support from the general populace in South Vietnam. The party committees under COSVN at the regional, provincial, district, and village levels are responsible for controlling the Liberation Front committees at their respective echelons. These party committees form the cadre apparatus of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP)--the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party in the North. The top overt representative of the PRP in the public apparatus of the Liberation Front is Vo Chi Cong, a member of the Liberation Front central committee. The acknowledged chairman of the Liberation Front, Nguyen Huu Tho, is not known to be a member either of COSVN or of the PRP.

8. According to documents seized in western Tay Ninh Province in December 1963, there are almost 3,500 personnel attached to COSVN, including both political and military cadres. COMUSMACV estimates that about 60 percent of them belong to military organizations--security troops, reconnaissance and intelligence troops, and other combat support units. The remaining 40 percent, about 1,200 persons, are assumed to compose COSVN's political staffs and organizations.

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9. There is no COSVN headquarters installations as such. Rather, the headquarters components--personnel, as well as administrative, training, and bivouac facilities--are dispersed throughout War Zone C, a rugged, jungle-covered and partly mountainous terrain extending some 40 miles along the Cambodian border and including perhaps 200-300 square miles within Tay Ninh Province. As is the case with Viet Cong regular military units, COSVN headquarters personnel and support units frequently move from one facility or camp, or village or hamlet complex, to another. Administrative staffs, which could be personnel of COSVN, have been photographed in Liberation Front propaganda on covered sampans along the banks of rivers or streams.

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11. At least two South Vietnamese ground operations have been launched against COSVN in War Zone C with minimal effect.

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A quick ground follow-up of the air strikes uncovered numerous Viet Cong installations, including a communications training center, but proved inconclusive in determining whether large numbers of personnel had been killed.

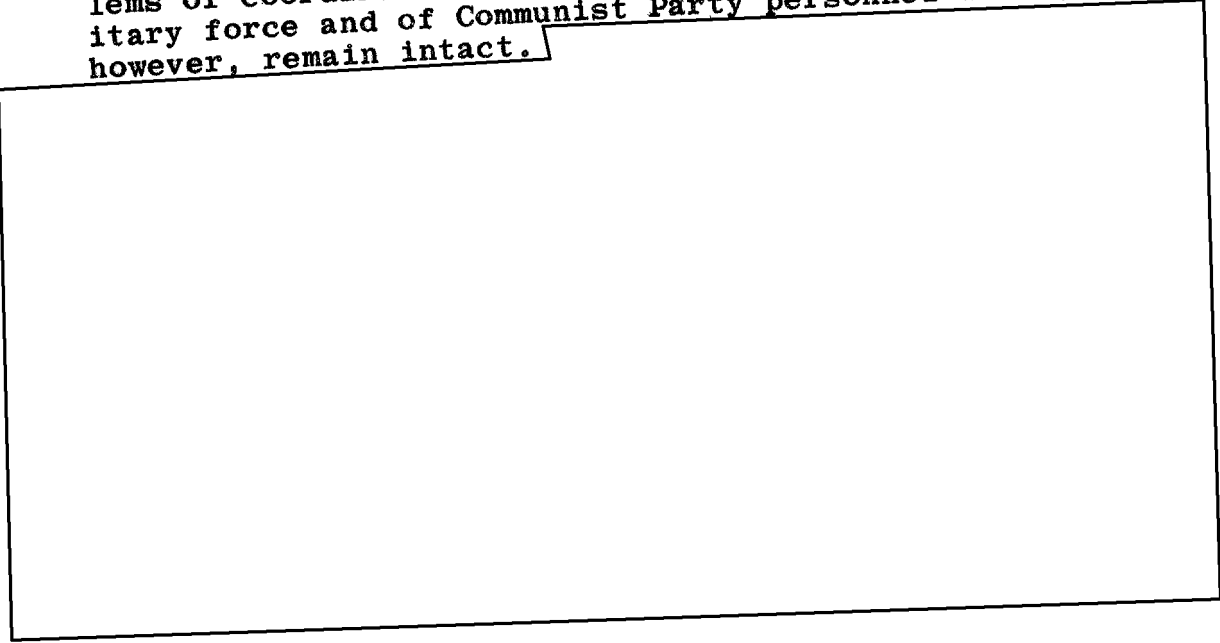
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12. In addition to the difficulty of effectively destroying COSVN at this time, successful elimination of the COSVN complex in Zone C would not necessarily cripple the Viet Cong. To be sure, they would suffer a major psychological blow, and some additional problems of coordination. The bulk of the Viet Cong military force and of Communist Party personnel would, however, remain intact.



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THE VIET CONG CENTRAL COMMITTEE
FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

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