

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

NSA review completed

Information as of 1600  
5 October 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
No significant enemy contact has been reported since the afternoon of 4 October when US forces participating in Operation IRVING killed 43 and captured 60 following the shootdown of an American helicopter about 25 miles northwest of Qui Nhon (Para. 1). US Marines combed through Communist bunkers just south of the DMZ on 5 October following heavy air and artillery attacks on the area (Para. 2). South Vietnamese troops taking part in Operation LAM SON 318 reported killing 18 Communist soldiers on 4 October in an area of northern Quang Tri Province (Para. 3). Another North Vietnamese regiment is reported to have infiltrated into Quang Tri (Paras. 4-5). A small arms cache was found by US soldiers in the delta province of Long An on 4 October (Para. 6). A total of 17 tons of rice and 25 tons of peanuts were seized early on 5 October by US forces about 27 miles north of Saigon (Para. 7). Two US operations--KAMUELA and LITTLE ROCK--ended on 4 October in Binh Duong Province with light casualties reported (Paras. 8-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

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The ailing leadership of the Buddhist Institute took another turn for the worse and it appears that the national Buddhist congress is off again (Paras. 2-3).

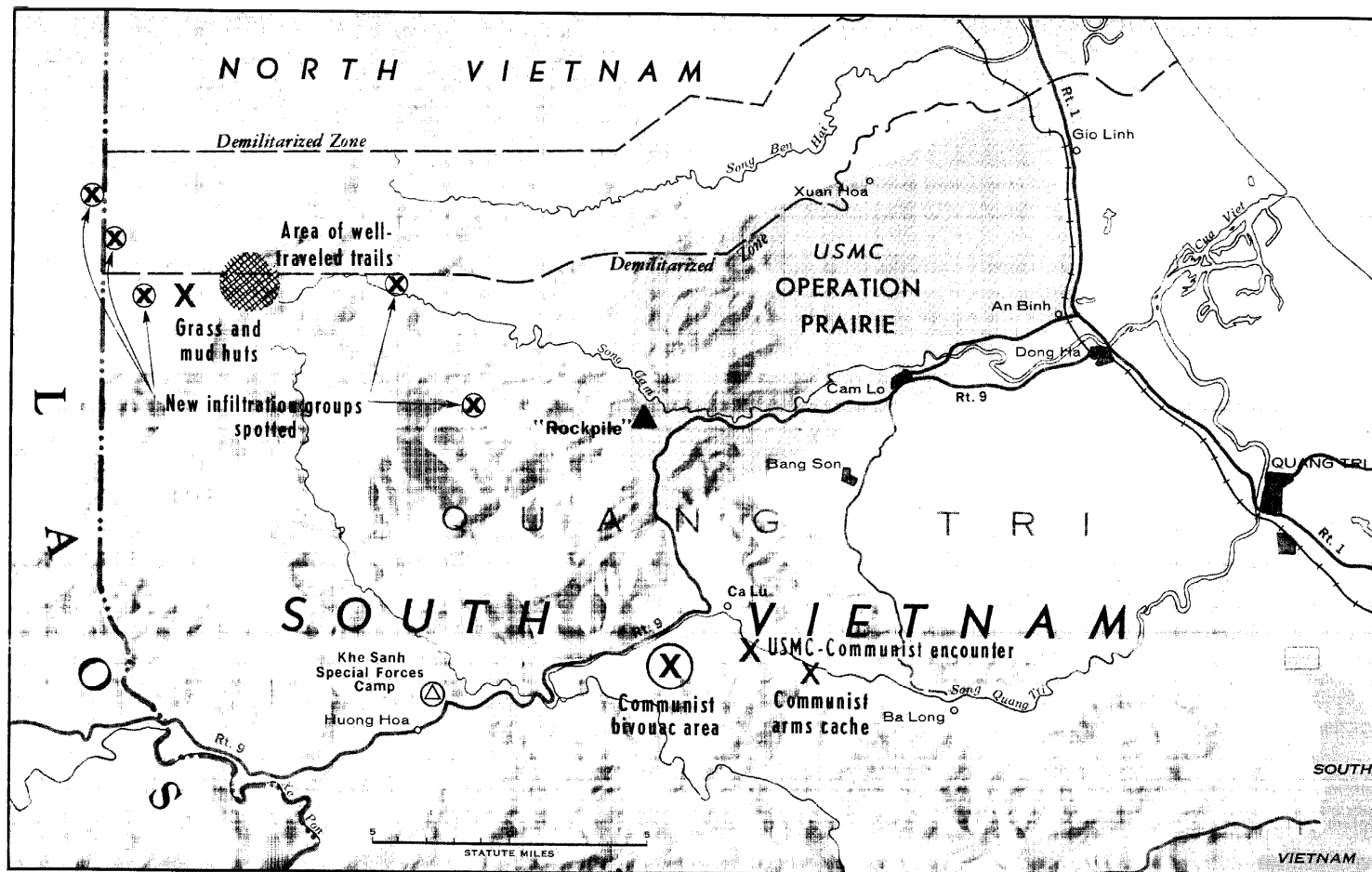
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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:  
Intercepted North Vietnamese communications indicate that one US aircraft lost on 5 October, was possibly downed by a DRV jet (Paras. 1-2).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:  
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Chen Yi yesterday reiterated Peking's standard opposition to any settlement in Vietnam short of complete US capitulation (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division, participating in the 15-battalion, joint US-South Vietnamese-South Korean Operation IRVING, reported killing 43 Communist troops the afternoon of 4 October in a five-hour battle about 25 miles northwest of Qui Nhon. The fighting broke out in a mangrove swamp after enemy gunfire downed an American observation helicopter. Communist losses also included 60 captured and 208 suspects detained. American casualties were reported as two killed and 13 wounded. No significant contact with enemy forces has been reported since this encounter.

2. US Marines taking part in Operation PRAIRIE just south of the Demilitarized Zone, today combed through Communist bunkers and fortifications after calling in air and artillery support to soften up the enemy installations. The marines reported finding mortar shells, Chinese-made hand grenades, and nearly 2,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition.

3. Also in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnamese Army troops have reported establishing contact yesterday with an estimated Communist regiment approximately 18 miles northwest of Quang Tri city. The friendly force, part of Operation LAM SON 318, is sweeping an area adjacent to US Operation PRAIRIE. Initial casualty reports show four South Vietnamese killed and 16 wounded. A total of 18 Communist soldiers have been killed so far in the action.

More Reports of Infiltration into Quang Tri Province

4. Evidence continues to mount that the Communists are infiltrating large numbers of men into Quang Tri, South Vietnam's northernmost province

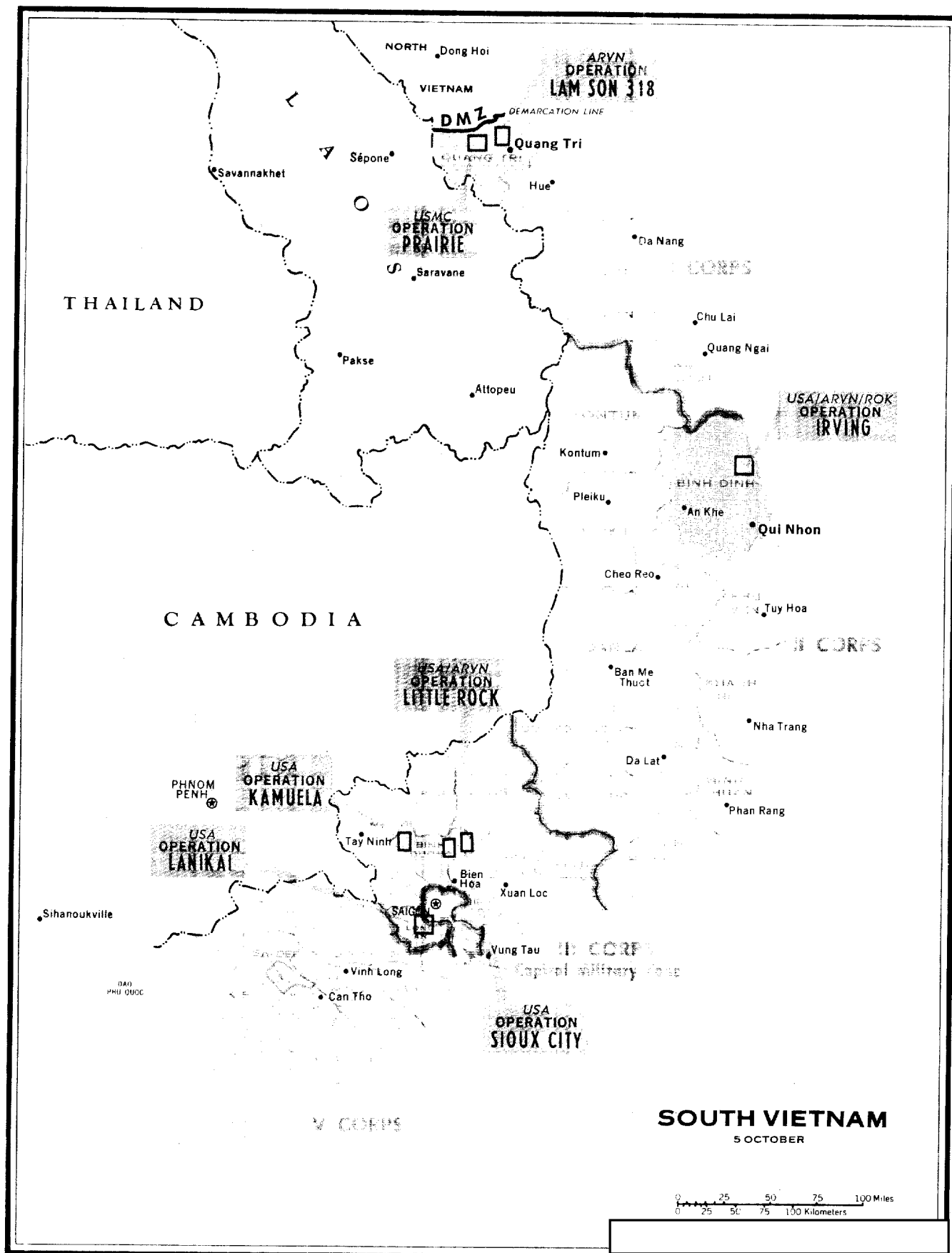
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[redacted] an additional regiment has moved into western Quang Tri since 18 September. During the period 18 to 25 September, a number of units were reported along a known infiltration route west of the area of US Operation PRAIRIE.

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5. There have been numerous previous reports of heavy infiltration into the area west and south of Operation PRAIRIE. Information is too fragmentary, however, to make a confident estimate as to the size of these units, although they are now believed to be in excess of two regiments. US Marines operating in this area have reported numerous sightings of Communist forces and several supply camps and bivouac areas have been uncovered.

6. A company of the US 25th Infantry Division, participating in Operation LANIKAI 20 miles south west of Saigon in the delta province of Long An, reported killing 14 Viet Cong on 4 October with the help of armed helicopters. The US soldiers also found an arms cache which included 3,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, 50 hand grenades, 21 mines, 48 mortar rounds, and assorted weapons.

7. Elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade participating in Operation SIOUX CITY about 27 miles northeast of Saigon, seized a massive cache of guerrilla stores including 17 tons of rice and 25 tons of peanuts early on 5 October. The captured foodstuffs were distributed to South Vietnamese civilians by the American paratroopers.

8. Operation KAMUELA, a two battalion search-and-destroy operation ended on 4 October in northwestern Binh Duong Province with light casualties reported. Five Americans were killed and 16 wounded in this operation which began on 19 September. Viet Cong losses included 13 killed and three captured. A total of 175 tactical air strikes supported this operation.

9. The combined US and South Vietnamese operation LITTLE ROCK ended on 4 October in a portion of Binh Duong Province about 20 miles north of Saigon. This operation swept an area believed to contain several Viet Cong base camps on an old rubber plantation. However, only four Viet Cong soldiers were reported killed and three weapons captured. American casualties were five killed and 26 wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Buddhist Leadership Problems Continue

2. Militant-moderate differences within the Buddhist Institute have widened again, and a formal split is a distinct possibility. The latest bone of contention stems from the agreement made by Institute Chairman Tam Chau on 2 October to reoccupy the premises of the national pagoda. The pagoda grounds were vacated by the Buddhists after Saigon riot police entered them in a successful search for the man who shot and killed a national policeman. Prior to the ceremony in which Tam Chau accepted the pagoda's return from the government, 11 imprisoned monks were released to his custody.

3. Militant members of the Institute were not present for either the return of the prisoners or the acceptance of the pagoda grounds. The militant response to Tam Chau's dealings with the government has been inflexible. The Institute

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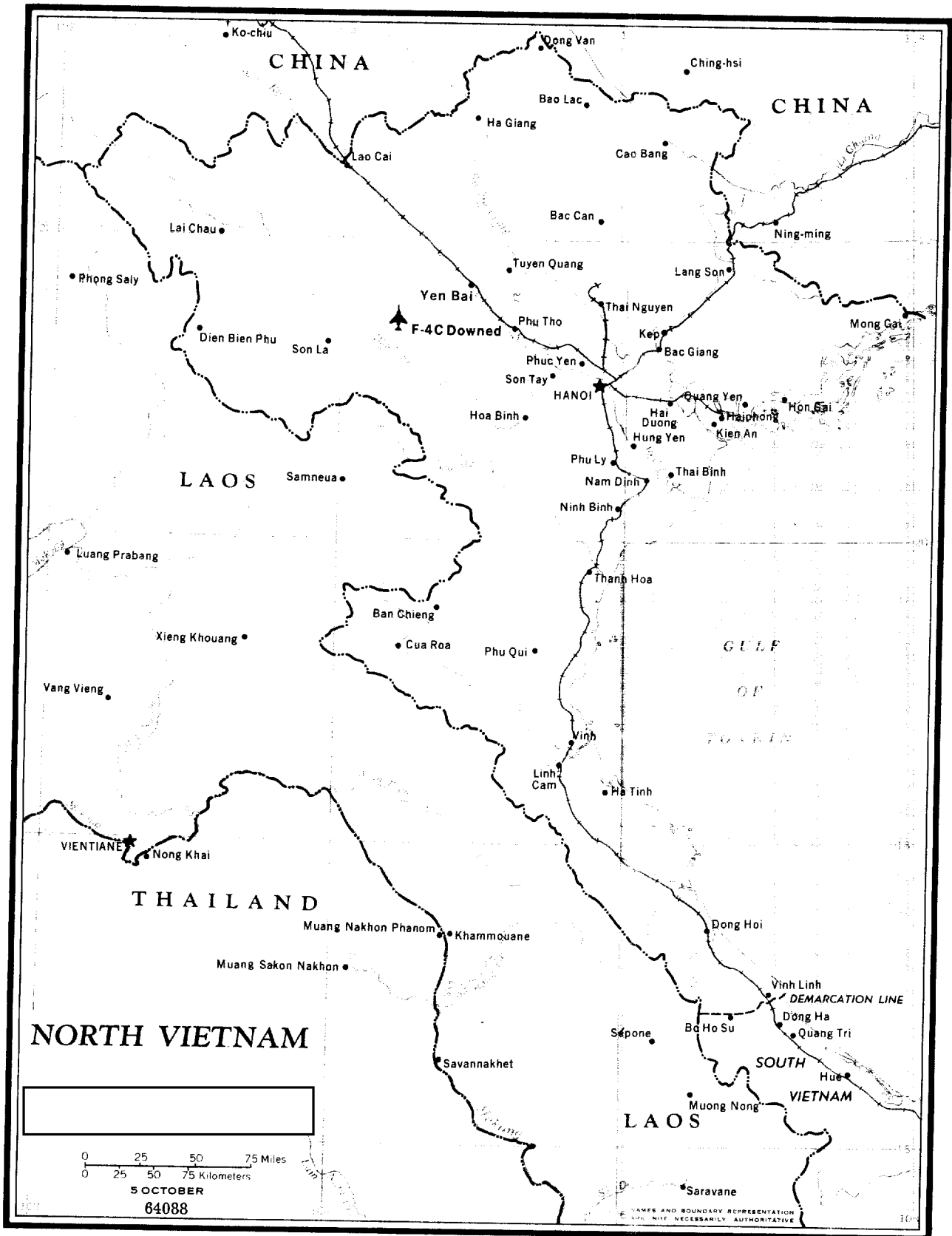
deputy chairman, Thich Phap Tri, issued a communiqué disassociating the rest of the Institute from Tam Chau's action. South Vietnamese newspapers reportedly quoted Phap Tri and the Institute secretary-general, Thich Huyen Quang, as saying that the extraordinary national congress of the Unified Buddhist Association, scheduled for 21 October, will not be held.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. A US Air Force F-4C was lost to unknown causes on 5 October about 30 miles southwest of Yen Bai. The aircraft was providing fighter escort for a flight of EB-66 electronics countermeasure aircraft when it was hit by an undetermined type of fire at high altitude. Both crew members were forced to eject and one was subsequently picked up by helicopter despite heavy ground fire. The other radioed that he had been seriously wounded and was surrounded by enemy troops.

2. The rescued airman reported that he had received a MIG warning from the EB-66 shortly before the F-4C was hit, but that at no time prior to his ejection had he sighted any DRV fighters. SIGINT confirms that at least four Phuc Yen - based MIGs were in close proximity to the US aircraft at the time of the shoot-down. The pilot's description of the plane's behavior after it was hit, however, suggests that it could have been downed by artillery or missile fire. The last confirmed loss of a US plane to DRV fighters was on 5 September 1966.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi repeated on 4 October Peking's standard opposition to any settlement in Vietnam short of complete US capitulation. Speaking at a banquet for a visiting Tanzanian friendship delegation, he stated that the "crux" of the Vietnam problem was that US forces "must immediately withdraw from Vietnam lock, stock, and barrel." He added that, "without achieving this, it is absolutely impossible to talk about the Geneva agreement, to say nothing of the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question." Chen declared that all proposals for a settlement which did not include the withdrawal of US forces were "only a cover" for expansion of the war. Chen stated that the Chinese had "made all preparations" to support Vietnam. He charged that imperialists and reactionaries had "spread rumors and vicious slanders" about the cultural revolution.

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5. Meanwhile, intercepted Cambodian messages indicate that Phnom Penh is still trying to curtail rice smuggling. Substantial amounts of rice have recently been seized by control posts in two widely separated areas along the South Vietnam border. Border outposts were instructed earlier this year to interdict contraband traffic and other seizures have been reported.

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