

Top Secret (24)

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

ARMY review(s) completed.

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4 April 1967

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Approved For Release 2007/03/07 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001800010024-0

Approved For Release 2007/03/07 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001800010024-0

Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

[] captured documents continue to reflect Communist plans for offensive action in northern Quang Tri Province.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Communists continue active south of the DMZ in northernmost Quang Tri Province (Paras. 1-4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: There are increasing indications that Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu will be left to decide between themselves who will be the military presidential candidate (Paras. 1-3).

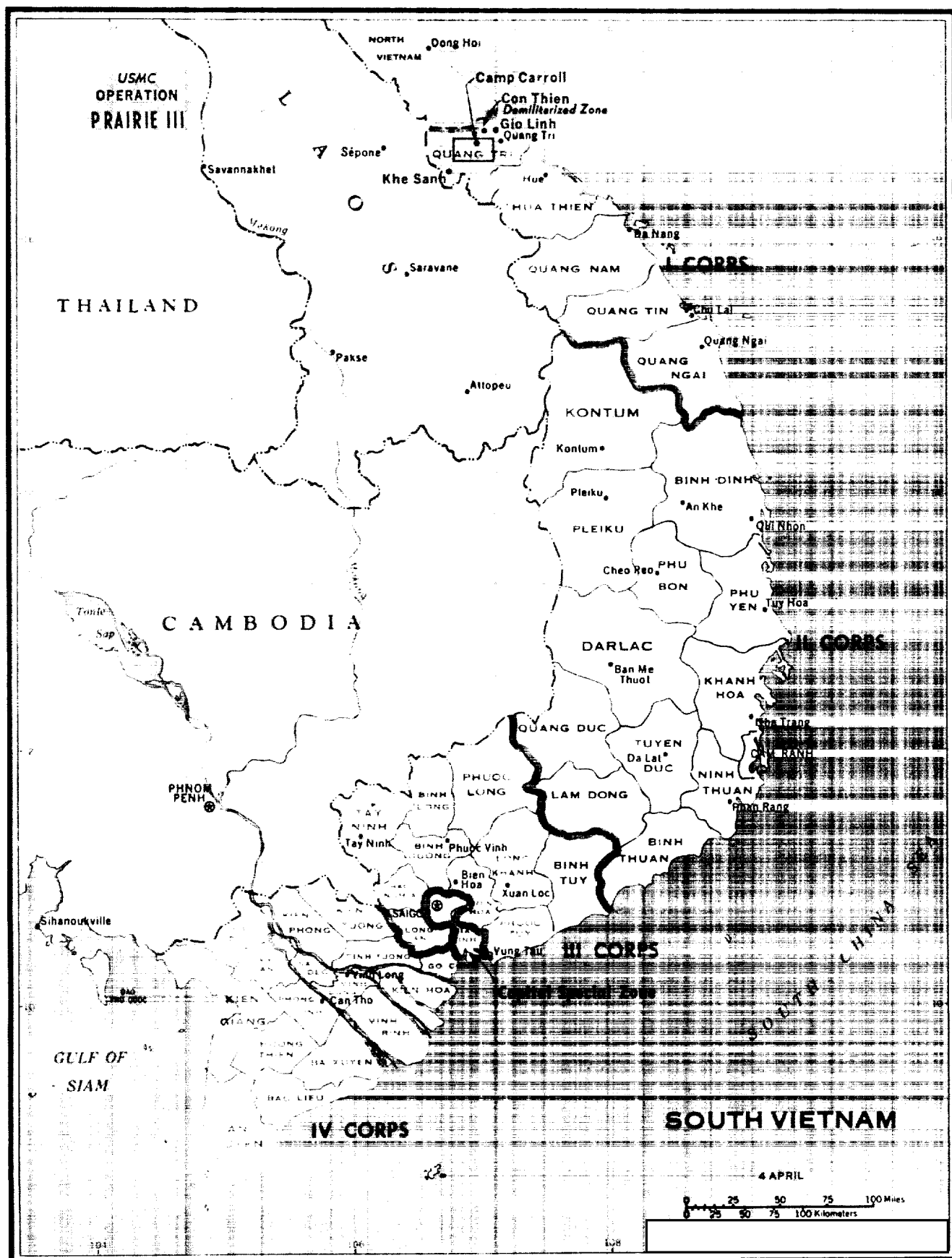
III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There are tenuous indications that the North Vietnamese "Mid-65" Division may be moving to South Vietnam (Paras. 1-2).

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

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

ANNEX: Revolutionary Development in Quang Tri Province

Communist pressure against allied forces and government organizations in Quang Tri Province has intensified since the beginning of 1967. The Communist effort to counter Revolutionary Development is primarily military and lacks some of the propagandizing that has accompanied the enemy's anti-RD program in other areas of South Vietnam. Despite Communist harassment, residents of some hamlets are identifying with RD teams and participating in RD programs.



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Large Communist forces are continuing to pursue a strategy of maneuver and attrition against US Marine and ARVN units operating near the DMZ in South Vietnam's northernmost province of Quang Tri.

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4. Information derived from documents captured in late February following an engagement between US and North Vietnamese Army forces near Khe Sanh reveals possible future enemy strategy in the northern provinces. The documents, apparently notes taken during Communist political indoctrination lectures, refer to enemy plans to mount a large-scale operation designed to "tie down 15 battalions of allied forces." By forcing the allies to spread their forces thin, the enemy would hope to be able to attack smaller units successfully.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

[redacted] the congress would prefer not to have to make the decision for the military presidential candidacy between Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu. Most of the approximately 45 members of the congress believe the two contenders themselves should come to an amicable understanding; the candidate would then be supported by the other man and by the congress as a whole. It appears that the military members of the Directorate would also prefer such a solution.

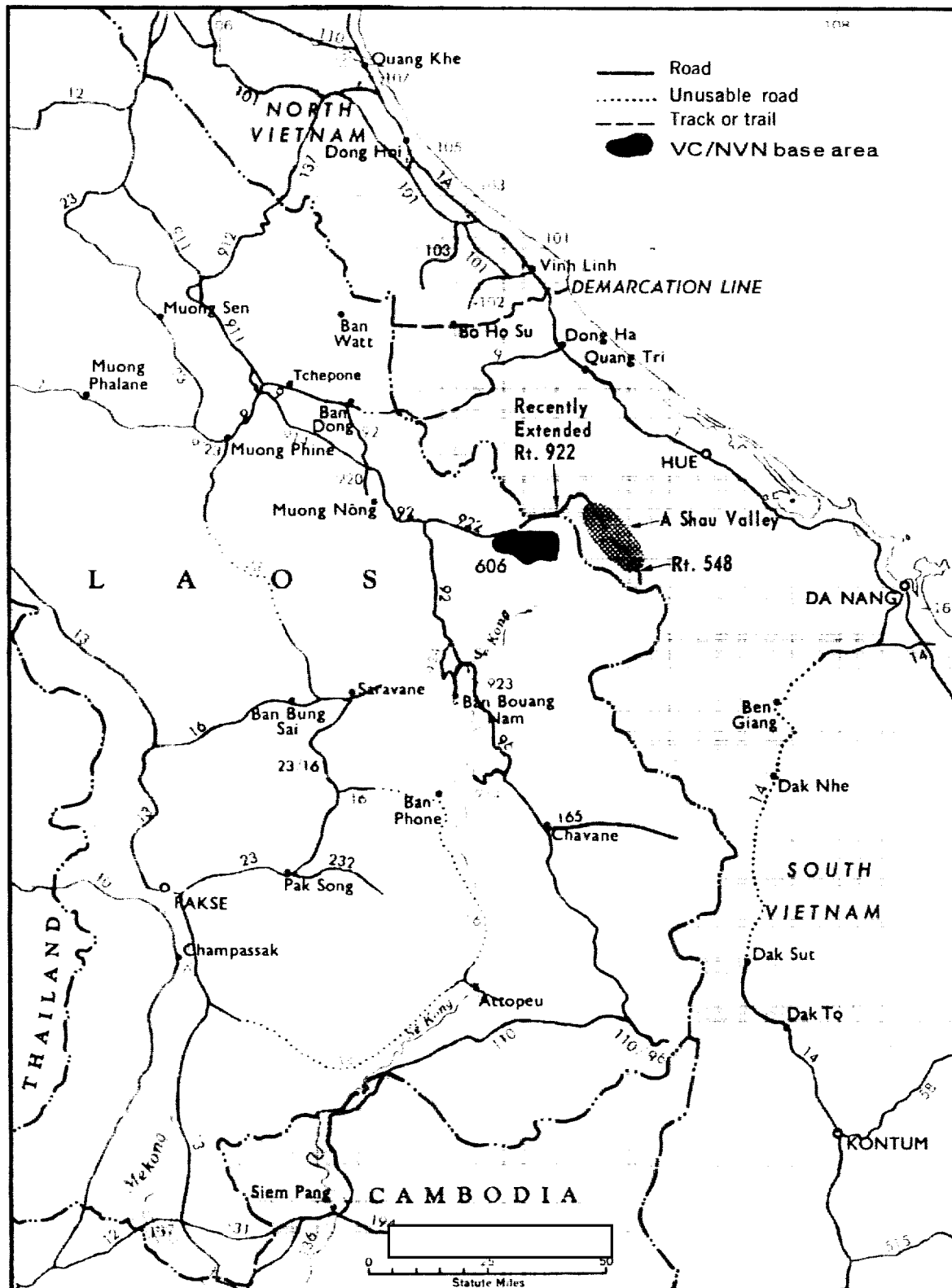
2. If the process of settling on a military presidential candidate is informally left up to the two men without the intervention of the Directorate or the congress, it would appear that Ky has a distinct advantage over Thieu. Thieu is naturally reticent and reportedly wary of appearing to abuse his present high position for his own political advantage. Ky, on the other hand, has acquired a definite proclivity for public life, projecting his image as a socially conscious domestic leader whenever possible. Ky has admitted on several occasions that he wants the job, while Thieu characterizes himself as reluctant to assume the rigors of public life, unless it is clearly the will of the military establishment to draft him.

3. Ky has the added advantage of having activist supporters: General Loan, for example, who wields considerable influence over election campaigning. Ky's daily contacts as premier are more often outside the military establishment than are Thieu's. It is probably Ky's intention to try to develop a broad base of public support in hopes of convincing Thieu that Ky has a greater vote-getting potential.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Reports from MACV suggest that a large enemy force is moving from North Vietnam via the western part of the Demilitarized Zone to Laos, then south on trails to the junction of Routes 9 and 92 into Base Area 606, and then into the A Chau Valley in South Vietnam via Route 922.

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Vehicle traffic, possibly in support of this move, has been reported along Route 922 in recent days as far as A Luoi, some 15 miles inside South Vietnam.

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2. There have been recurring reports of North Vietnamese units using Base Area 606 in recent weeks. In early March, for example, a friendly guerrilla team in this area reported the presence of an estimated enemy regimental-size force near the Laos/South Vietnam border. Route 922 has only recently been extended into South Vietnam and its use for the infiltration of either men or supplies has been expected.

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ANNEX

Revolutionary Development in Quang Tri Province

1. Communist pressure against allied military forces, government administrative centers, and Revolutionary Development (RD) teams in northernmost Quang Tri Province has intensified since the beginning of 1967 as part of a general military offensive involving primarily North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units. The Communist effort to counter Revolutionary Development in Quang Tri is primarily a military one, and lacks some of the political propagandizing which has gone hand in hand with the enemy's anti-RD program in other areas of South Vietnam such as the delta. To prevent the government from extending its control into the Quang Tri countryside, NVA elements have been conducting forays against hamlets and villages where the RD teams have been operating.

2. In the Communist command structure, Quang Tri Province, along with adjacent Thua Thien Province, is known as the Tri Thien Special Region, and [REDACTED]

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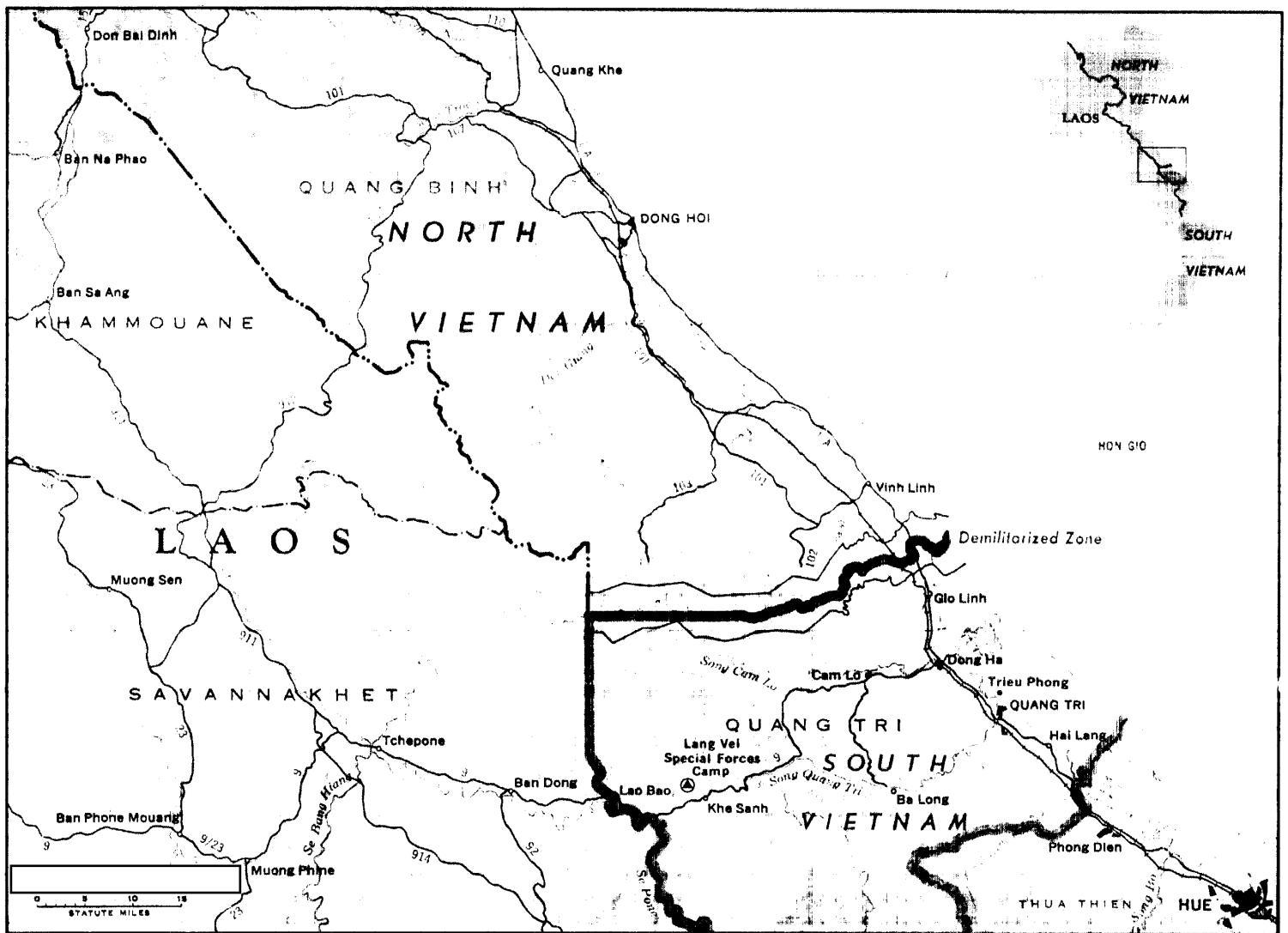
[REDACTED] may be administered as a part of North Vietnam's Military Region IV. The principal NVA forces in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) - Quang Tri Province area at present are the 324B Division, with three subordinate regiments, and at least one regiment of the 341st Division. These units appear to cross back and forth across the border. In addition, one independent regiment and three to five separate battalions normally operate in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. The total strength of these forces is approximately 10,300. The strength of the Quang Tri local forces, irregulars, and political cadre is estimated to be about 5,000.

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3. To provide security for the approximately 270,000 people in Quang Tri Province, the government has some 6,400 Regional Forces (RF), Popular Forces (PF), National Police, and Civilian Irregular Defense Forces (CIDG). Two regiments of the ARVN 1st Division are also located in the province.

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Under the RD plan, the regiments are to provide the shield behind which most of the provincial forces, except for the CIDG, are to operate. In western Quang Tri, the Lang Vei Special Forces camp with its CIDG and PF defenders serves as the capital of Huong Hoa District and is responsible for Vietnam-Laos border surveillance. Elements of the US 3rd Marine Division have been operating continually in the DMZ - Quang Tri area since mid-1966 to prevent enemy infiltration across the DMZ and to destroy enemy troop and logistical concentrations in the area.

4. Although no part of Quang Tri Province is a National Priority Area for RD, the entire coastal plain is classified as a priority area for offensive military operations. In 1967, the RD effort is to be concentrated in Mai Linh District which surrounds Quang Tri city--the provincial capital, and in Trieu Phong District bordering Mai Linh on the north. Military sweeps, a major RD reorganization, and the Tet celebration delayed the start of the RD teams' work in the 1967 priority area until after the Tet (lunar new year) holidays in February.

5. As of 1 March, there were 15 Vietnamese RD teams (754 workers) and four montagnard RD teams (222 workers) operating in the province. While the Vietnamese RD teams will concentrate in the priority RD area, the montagnard RD teams will presumably work in the vicinity of the Lang Vei Special Forces camp in the highland district of Huong Hoa or in montagnard refugee camps along the coast.

6. The reaction of the RD teams to increased enemy military pressures against them has, so far, been satisfactory. Only one report has been received of an RD team's abandoning its activities without attempting to defend itself; this incident occurred on 17 March when the team faced the prospect of engaging an NVA battalion. In several other instances RD teams, often paired with PF, have defended themselves against enemy attacks.

7. In spite of this satisfactory performance, however, the stepped up pace of enemy activity appears to have resulted in a lowering of morale among RD workers. Figures on attrition for February show

that, while only two workers were killed and seven captured, three workers resigned and 58 deserted. All of the deserters appear to have been from Vietnamese teams, making their desertion rate for the month about seven percent. Since RD workers were not allowed any time off for the lunar new year, a number of these deserters may have merely decided to go home for the holidays.

8. Despite Communist harassment, there have been indications that residents of some hamlets are identifying with the RD teams and participating in RD programs. In one hamlet, residents informed the team of the presence of an armed NVA soldier who, as a result, was captured by the team. In another hamlet, 78 persons are being trained by the RD team as hamlet defense personnel, under a recent government directive authorizing the teams to establish a "People's Self Defense Force." The Quang Tri Province chief has agreed to provide some weapons to the defense force upon the completion of its training. In this same hamlet, a female member of the RD team has organized and is teaching a kindergarten class for 50 of the hamlet youngsters.

9. In Quang Tri Province, two ARVN battalions are conducting operations in direct support of RD. The mission of the battalions is to sweep the RD target areas, cordon them off, and search for remaining guerrillas and members of the Communist infrastructure. The battalions are still under the control of their parent regiment, but the regimental commander has been designated Deputy Sector (Province) Commander for RD, a position which engages him in provincial RD affairs and makes him responsive to the Province Chief. In addition, the ARVN units have increased their civic action capability by forming civic action teams at both the sector (province) and division levels. The Regional Forces and Popular Forces have reportedly been assisting local self-help programs.

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10. In general, the National Police are limited to the main towns and are not yet effective in the rural areas. Because of the large NVA military strength in the province, the Police Field Forces are being used to support normal police activities not associated with the RD plan.

11. The Vietnamese Information Service and the provincial technical staff are the government agencies performing least satisfactorily in support of RD in Quang Tri, as well as on a nationwide basis. Both groups appear to be lacking in motivation and initiative, and their activities are thus unimpressive.

12. The provincial RD Council, newly reorganized, is not yet functioning to the degree anticipated. This is in part due to the fact that the caliber of provincial officials, with some exceptions, is rated as low. Their effectiveness has been further hampered by political jousting between various provincial officials owing allegiance either to the Revolutionary Dai Viet Party (RDVP) or the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD). Both parties appear to view the RD teams as an instrument for gaining local influence, particularly since the teams play a role of organizing village and hamlet elections. The RDVP, the stronger and better organized party in Quang Tri, reportedly gained some influence over the earlier People's Action Teams (PATs) in the province, but the extent of its influence over the present RD effort is not known.

13. The first monthly survey made in accordance with the new Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)--a unilateral US field assessment of progress in hamlet development and population security--was completed on 20 February. Although a trial period is necessary before the statistics compiled can be considered as having some validity, the initial results of the evaluation in Quang Tri Province suggest that too many hamlets have been placed in the "consolidation" category (C) and should be rated as "under construction" (Category D) or "contested" (E).

14. Following are the initial statistics:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Hamlet</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Number of Hamlets</u>
A	Completed*	Secure	0
B	Developing	Secure	15
C	Under Consolidation	Under Securing	142
D	Under Construction	Under Securing	121
E	Contested	Contested	49
VC Control	-	-	<u>111</u>
	Total number hamlets assessed		<u>438</u>

*Completed hamlets under an 11-point criteria are the Ap Doi Moi ("Real New Life Hamlets"), Ap Binh Dinh (Pacification Hamlets), and Ap Cung Co (Consolidation Hamlets). The Ap Tan Sinh (New Life Hamlets), under the old six-point criteria, are also included in the completed category.

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