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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
13 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 11

VIETNAM

1. Heavy fighting continued in the Xuan Loc area for the fifth consecutive day. Effective air and artillery support has reportedly caused heavy Communist losses. [redacted]

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[redacted] the bulk of the Communist attacks have thus far been conducted by the North Vietnamese 341st Division. This unit is made up of young and inexperienced troops which might partly account for the high casualty rates claimed by government forces.

2. Route 1 connecting Xuan Loc with Saigon is still blocked by Communist forces. The regional commander, General Toan, is not attempting to break through the blocking force, but is pounding enemy troop concentrations with heavy air and artillery strikes. Toan is considering using the "Vietnamese B-52", the C-130, to bomb Communist troops massed around the city.

The Long An Battlefront

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3. Strong counterattacks by elements of the South Vietnamese 7th Division have forced two regiments of the North Vietnamese 5th Division to pull back from their efforts to cut Route 4 southwest of Saigon. [redacted]

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[redacted] all three of the division's infantry regiments have been committed to a major effort to block the rice lifeline in Long An Province. This effort

NSA review(s)
completed.

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[REDACTED]

could soon be augmented by elements of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division, which are located in adjacent Kien Tuong Province.

The Delta Scene

4. Major Communist military activity remains concentrated in Vinh Long Province. Route 4 is still blocked north-east of Can Tho, but government troops expect to have the road cleared later today. The Communists have two regiments committed to the interdiction of Route 4 in this area, and these forces also are responsible for the recent shellings of Can Tho. Government troops manning the defense line around Can Tho report heavy Communist losses as the result of continuing sharp clashes.

Pressure Increases on Phan Thiet and Phan Rang

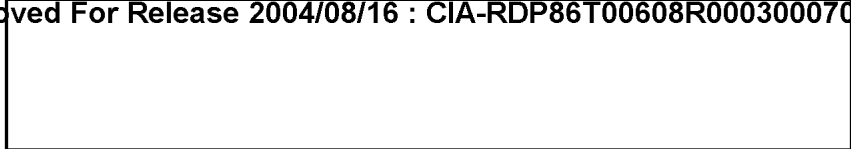
5. The government's Military Region 3 Forward Headquarters at Phan Rang reports that Communist forces are less than 10 miles from the city and moving into attack positions west and southwest of the airbase. Officials believe the forces are part of North Vietnamese 320th Division. Some 40 tanks and several 130-mm. field guns have also been observed moving south on Route 1 towards Phan Rang. The defense of Phan Rang includes some 800 troops of the South Vietnamese 2nd Division which was hastily regrouped after its departure from old Military Region 1 last month and 300 territorial forces. The Airborne Brigade presently there is being sent back to Saigon and will be replaced by a Ranger group of some 900 men. The Phan Rang Airbase has 1,500 men of the 6th Air Division with 20 fighter-bombers, 22 helicopters and two gunships.

6. The loss of a government position just four miles northeast of Phan Thiet on April 12 further reduces the government defenses of the city. The city was shelled again on April 12 as a regiment of the 2nd Division was sent in to bolster the defenses.

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[REDACTED]

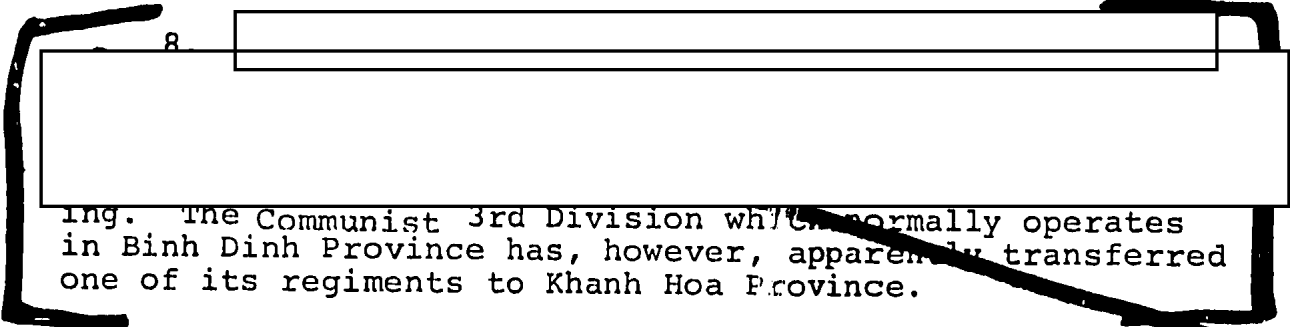


Communist Forces Relocating on Central Coast

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7. Recent reporting indicates the Communists are strengthening their military position along the central coast by shifting combat and logistic units from farther north.

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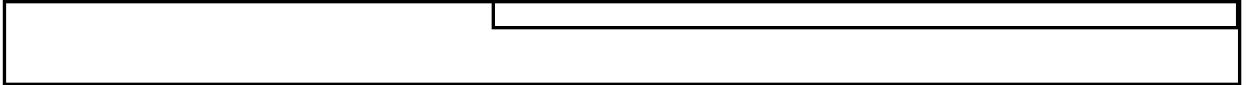


8. The Communist 3rd Division which normally operates in Binh Dinh Province has, however, apparently transferred one of its regiments to Khanh Hoa Province.

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9. The North Vietnamese 320th Division which has been active in the Tuy Hoa area of Phu Yen Province also is showing signs of movement.

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10. [Redacted] the command element of the Communist headquarters responsible for transporting troops and supplies to South Vietnam was relocating to the Nha Trang area.

The Political Situation

11. South Vietnamese officials while buoyed by the large amount of military assistance requested of Congress, remain skeptical that the sums will be appropriated. The 19th of April generally is being regarded as a sort of "doomsday" for South Vietnam and the pending debate on the aid requests between now and then could have a significant impact on the military and political situation in South Vietnam.

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12. President Thieu's principal economic adviser, Nguyen Van Hao, has stated that President's Ford's address to the Congress implied that the US wants South Vietnam to "do all it can to stabilize the military situation" and that "some military victories" before April 19 would improve chances of Congressional approval of the aid package. Such an attitude probably in part explains the large numbers of troops and amounts of equipment the South Vietnamese are committing to the battle for Xuan Loc.

Communist Reactions

13. Communist reaction to the President's speech continues to decry the additional requests for military assistance and the forced evacuation of Vietnamese orphans and civilians. Hanoi and the Viet Cong media, however, have begun to focus more sharply on the evacuation of Americans from South Vietnam. Both have charged that the "protection of the safety of Americans" is a pretext for military intervention and warn that such a scheme will be "severely punished." The Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, in a statement broadcast Sunday, maintained that the best protection the US could afford its personnel was to "immediately withdraw" them from South Vietnam. The broadcast stated that such withdrawals "will certainly not encounter any difficulties or obstacles" if begun immediately but that the Viet Cong "are determined not to allow the US... to send warships and marines to intervene in South Vietnam."

The New Cabinet

14. Prime Minister-designate Nguyen Ba Can presided over the first working session of his new cabinet Saturday preparatory to swearing-in ceremonies scheduled for sometime tomorrow. The important portfolios of defense, interior and foreign affairs apparently have been filled and approved by President Thieu. Tran Van Don, Buu Vien and Vuong Van Bac, who hold the three positions respectively, are all holdovers from the previous cabinet. Don and Bac are generally regarded as independents and probably can be best characterized as members of the loyal opposition.


Opposition Maneuvers

15. Meanwhile, opponents of President Thieu are continuing to maneuver behind the scenes in anticipation of his possible removal or resignation. One scheme, advocated by a combination of Buddhist and Catholic politicians in the Senate, calls for the election of Buddhist leader Vu Van Mau to the Senate presidency immediately following Thieu's abdication. Such a scenario envisions the resignations of incumbent vice president, Tan Van Huong, and the present Senate president Tran Van Lam. Following their departure, Mau as the new Senate president, would become the de facto president of South Vietnam.

16. The new government essentially would take the form of the current regime except that military matters would be handled by a committee consisting of the chairman of the Joint General Staff, the defense minister and a new position entitled commander of the front. The senators believe that General Vien, the current JGS chief, could be persuaded to stay on in that position. The new defense minister would be Nguyen Cao Ky, and the front commander would be General Nguyen Duc Thang, former commander in the delta.

CAMBODIA

17. The newly reshuffled leadership in Phnom Penh appears resolved to hold on as long as possible. In announcing the formation of a new "supreme council" and the imposition of martial law over the weekend, both Sak Sutsakhan and Long Boret -- the president and vice-president of the council respectively -- pledged a policy of "strengthening the military and political position" of the government with the aim of achieving a "peaceful solution through negotiations. Although there is an indisputable element of valor in the desire of the remaining leaders to see things through to the end, the government's position will become untenable within two weeks as it simply runs out of the wherewithal to continue fighting. The absence of any dramatic new Communist battlefield initiatives in the past few days may be fueling any sense of false optimism that exists.

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