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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

COMMUNIST COUNTERACTION AGAINST THE REVOLUTIONARY
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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20 November 1967
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3.5(c)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 November 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Communist Counteraction Against the
Revolutionary Development Program in South Vietnam

Summary

The pace of Communist counteraction against the South Vietnamese Government's Revolutionary Development (RD) programs has increased markedly this year. In part this is due to the larger number of RD workers in the field and hence to the growing confrontation with the enemy. It also results, however, from an increased commitment of Communist resources against the program. In recent months, the Communists have begun to hit hard at the Chieu Hoi ("Open Arms") and refugee resettlement centers, apparently judging them to be weakly protected links in the government's pacification effort as well as points at which a maximum impact can be registered on the populace. The Communists view successful counter-RD action as a means of retaining their prestige with the populace and of keeping the populace intimidated and vulnerable to continued exploitation.

The principal enemy military effort against the RD program appears to be conducted by Viet Cong local force units. In recent months, however, enemy main forces have been used increasingly in operations and attacks against US units in sparsely populated areas of South Vietnam. The strategy is to prevent the shifting of allied containment forces from these areas for security duty related to the RD program in the more populous areas. These Communist offensive operations are also designed to draw in as reinforcements allied units from the more populous areas and thus ease pressure on local Viet Cong units in those areas.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates, the Vietnamese Affairs Staff, and the Clandestine Services.

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The Communists have also apparently undertaken some reorganization of their administrative apparatus in order to help them compete more successfully with the RD program's appeal in contested areas.

The enemy can be expected to continue, or even step up, his anti-RD actions. His success in any given area will depend on the friendly security situation prevailing there. The GVN has a long way to go to improve security and establish adequate conditions for pacification.

-2-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3.5(c)

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Anti-RD Military and Terrorist Activity

1. Since late 1966, an increasing number of reports [redacted] supported by captured documents, have indicated deep concern by the Communists over the possibility of government success with the Revolutionary Development (RD) programs. These reports reflect not only the Communists' uneasiness over the grass roots activities of the RD teams themselves--which represent the first well-organized challenge to the enemy apparatus at the hamlet level--but over such related programs as the Static Census Grievance Cadres, the refugee program, and the Chieu Hoi campaign.

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2. During 1967, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) troops in South Vietnam have stepped up their activities directed at countering the RD program. They have struck primarily at the RD teams and supporting troops--especially the Regional and Popular Forces. They have also conducted forays against Chieu Hoi centers and resettlement hamlets in the hope of causing their abandonment.

3. When they have failed to dislodge the people from these centers, the Communists have attempted to reactivate or establish covert cells within them. Communist forces have tried to infiltrate covert supporters into the RD cadre ranks or into the village/hamlet administrative organization. They have also employed extensive terrorism against the National Police, Hoi Chanh (ralliers), and village/hamlet officials. The enemy is almost certainly aware that there is a definite relationship between successful RD programs, in particular the cadre and Chieu Hoi aspects, and an increased flow of information to the RD workers about his activities.

4. The threat posed to the local Viet Cong political apparatus by the government's nation-building efforts has forced the Communists to devote a greater percentage of their over-all energies to combatting these programs. Success in anti-RD operations has also assumed greater psychological

-3-

3.5(c)

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3.5(c)

importance for the enemy as he has become somewhat less able to conduct successful large-scale military operations. Successful counter-RD actions help the enemy to retain his prestige with the rural populace and to inflict continued attrition on the weak low-level GVN leadership.

5. During 1966 there were about 25 significant enemy attacks against the RD teams or People's Action Teams. As a result of these and other enemy initiated incidents, a total of 593 cadre members were killed by the Viet Cong. The majority of the incidents took place in areas where inadequate security was a major factor. In many cases, teams that were exposed to enemy activity had been placed in hamlets where the securing forces were understrength, inadequate, or simply nonexistent. Some provincial officials did not understand the significance of deployment or the correct use of the teams and often tended to use them as static security units.

6. During 1967 there has been a marked increase in incidents directed against the RD cadres. In the first nine months of the year, there were about 900 incidents against the RD teams alone, and approximately 487 cadres have been killed thus far. The increase is due in part, of course, to the increased number of RD workers in the field and hence to the growing confrontation with the Communists. In all but three months of this year, however, the largest number of anti-RD incidents have occurred in I Corps, scene of the most intensive enemy combat.

7. The principal enemy military effort against the RD program appears to be by Viet Cong local force units. Hamlet and village guerrillas in contested areas support anti-RD operations and often work in conjunction with the local forces. Prior to April 1967, there were few reports of the use of enemy main force troops against RD teams, but main force employment in this mission has reportedly increased sharply since then, especially in the coastal areas of I, II, and southeastern III Corps. In keeping with the enemy's previous tactics in other fields, specific anti-RD agencies are apparently being established. Such an agency has been reported in the III Corps province of

-4-

3.5(c)

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Long Khanh, while "special action" companies and/or sapper units appear to have been assigned a specific counter-RD mission in other areas.

8. The Communists' over-all strategy in the employment of their main forces is also tied in with the anti-RD program. By conducting persistent and threatening maneuver operations and occasional attacks, the main forces hope to keep the bulk of the US combat units in South Vietnam deployed against them in sparsely populated areas such as the Demilitarized Zone, the western highlands, and northern III Corps. This strategy is designed to prevent the shifting of the allied containment forces to security operations in connection with the RD programs in the lowlands and delta areas.

9. Communist offensive activities in the highlands and other remote areas are also designed to draw in as reinforcements allied units which have been operating against the enemy in more populous areas. In the current fighting at Dak To, for example, US elements which had been attempting to improve security in coastal Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa provinces were, by necessity, redeployed to the highlands as reinforcements. The absence from the coastal area could contribute to an easing of pressure on the local Viet Cong units. The same strategy, with some variations, was used against the French from 1946 to 1954.

10. Information from a variety of sources suggests that the security situation in several strategic provinces has somewhat deteriorated over the past several months. Areas involved are ones in which allied forces scored a number of victories over enemy units in mid-1966. Since that time vigorous efforts to consolidate allied gains have been under way. The enemy may have regained control of portions of the population in at least Quang Ngai, Phu Yen, and Khanh Hoa provinces which had been lost to the government during the past year.

Communist Internal Reorganization

11. At least partially to ensure the continuation and development of their anti-RD activities, the Communists have made several shifts in their internal apparatus. They appear for one thing to be putting increased emphasis on guerrilla warfare and military/

-5-

3.5(c)

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civilian proselyting activities in the countryside. Moreover, they have made a number of changes in the organization or territorial area responsibilities of their provincial administrative structure. Some of these changes are evidently designed to streamline and reduce the administrative overhead and release more men for military service. Other reports refer to a movement of cadres from higher to lower echelons to strengthen grass root organization and revitalize the leadership at the lowest levels in an effort to compete with government gains. It may be the enemy's intention to decentralize a degree of authority and allow lower level officials and organizations to be more flexible in certain situations.

12. Over the past year, there have been indications that a number of the enemy's district village cadres have been demoralized by allied military pressures, by the prospects of fighting what they believe will be a protracted war, and by the government's Chieu Hoi program. [redacted] alleged that North Vietnamese cadres specializing in antipacification activities were being infiltrated to replace the "demoralized" cadres and those lost through normal attrition. "Purges" of cadre have reportedly occurred in many provinces.

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13. The amount or degree of support the Communists have in an RD area, combined with their estimate of what resources the GVN will put into the area, usually determines whether or not the Communists will withdraw their overt apparatus in the hamlets and villages. Secret party and Liberation Front members are reportedly being designated in rural areas to serve as stay-behind forces should the government establish itself. In some areas, partly to counter RD programs and to retain the sympathies of the peasants and landowners, the Communists have reportedly had to reform--or occasionally reduce--some of their taxes.

Communist Proselyting

14. The Communists have shown a remarkable organizational resilience and flexibility and, within certain limits, appear to be highly adaptable to differing local situations. There has been and still

-6-

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remains a lack of detailed information on Communist political action/armed propaganda units. These elements apparently change their modus operandi to conform to local situations; however, captured documents and interrogation reports have yielded some information on these cadres and units and suggest that the enemy promotes and maintains a strong psychological warfare effort.

15. Agit/Prop Teams (AP)--also referred to as task teams, assault propaganda teams, political action units, and armed propaganda units--appear to be the Communist organization which comes closest to the concept of the GVN's RD teams. The APs are probably targeted against contested or GVN-controlled villages and hamlets. Generally, they enter a hamlet--usually at night--assemble the residents, and spread leaflets and banners, collect information, and conduct propaganda and civilian/military proselyting activities.

16. In their proselyting, the AP teams attempt to recruit villagers for military units, urge those with relatives working for the government to persuade their relatives to desert or act as agents in place, and occasionally extract money or goods from the villagers. Where security conditions permit, the AP teams are often accompanied by cultural or entertainment groups, whose shows are geared to discrediting the government and extolling the Viet Cong.

17. The AP units apparently seldom engage in terrorism. This is probably left to district committees using local guerrillas or "special cell" members. The professional entertainment, propaganda, and/or proselyting cadres who may be part of these agit/prop units rely almost exclusively on propaganda and persuasion. Nevertheless, the presence of their weapons, although for defensive purposes, can still serve to coerce or intimidate local people into cooperating.

18. The Communists usually make a distinction between full-time AP units and those organized on an ad hoc basis to carry out a propaganda mission against a specific target. The majority of propaganda activities conducted by the Viet Cong in government-controlled or sharply contested areas are probably carried out by the latter units. Although propaganda disseminated in

-7-

3.5(c)

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this manner may lack a certain degree of professionalism--but not necessarily effectiveness--it gives the Viet Cong an instant response to a local incident, something the government often lacks.

Prospects

19. The recent increase of enemy activity in the more strategic and heavily populated provinces along the central coast and in the delta south of Saigon has been primarily directed against RD or RD-related programs. Enemy attacks on refugee and Chieu Hoi centers are now becoming fairly routine occurrences. These attacks, clearly indicative of the enemy's growing concern over the RD programs, suggest, in addition, that he has completed his assessment of the allied strategy on pacification and is beginning to hit at what he regards as probable weak spots in it. Small-unit tactics, including harassment by fire and terrorism, can be expected to continue against these targets and against the RD cadres, the National Police and the government's village and hamlet administrators. The enemy moreover appears capable of accelerating these activities.

20. The degree of success the Communists can achieve in their anti-RD efforts will depend, in the final analysis, on the over-all friendly security situation in a particular area. Such security is dependent upon the meshing of programs and forces in an area as well as upon the fortitude, motivation, and training of the government's civilian and military leadership at the lower levels. The GVN still has a long way to go in both respects before really adequate conditions for pacification are created.

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NOTICE NO 116-67

COVER SHEET

DISSEM AUTHORIZATION

MEMO NO 1666/67

DATE 20 November 1967 Due Dates:

D/OCI Review
Dissem 20 November 1967

SUBJECT: Communist Counteraction Against the Revolutionary Development Program in South Vietnam

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: Self-initiated

PURPOSE:

ASSIGNED TO: Goldin/FE

GRAPHICS

COORDINATE ONE/SAVA/DDP
OUTSIDE OCI

DISSEMINATION

Preliminary (DDI, D/OCI, and their staffs)

Category _____ Recommended to D/OCI

Category E Finally Authorized By:

Specified Other _____

NO Release to Commonwealth Liaison Reps
Washington ~~SECRET~~

YES Release to DDI Reps Abroad

Cat. E (Routine internal and external)

Cat. D (Routine internal CIA only)

Cat. B (Subcabinet and internal CIA)

Cat. A (Elite--External top officials only and internal CIA)

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