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# Communist Objectives, Capabilities, and Intentions in Southeast Asia

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ANNEX

COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAM'S MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS NETS  
AND COMMAND STRUCTURES IN LAOS AND SOUTH VIETNAM

*Submitted by the*  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

*Concurred in by the*  
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

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ANNEX

Communist North Vietnam's Military Communications Nets  
and Command Structures in Laos and South Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Overall Communist operations in Laos and South Vietnam are coordinated and directed from Hanoi. The North Vietnamese Communist leaders probably regard the Communist political and military organizations in both Laos and South Vietnam as integral parts of the North Vietnamese Communist Party (the Lao Dong) and of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). Communist guerrillas in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong (VC), are led by members of the PAVN who went underground at the time of the regroupment of military forces called for by the Geneva agreements of 1954 or by returnees from the 90,000 PAVN troops who were regrouped in the North. The key leaders of the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX), the Communists' political organization in Laos, and of the Pathet Lao, the Communists' military arm, are members of the Lao Dong.

2. The above considerations are borne out by the communications networks originating in Hanoi. One of these, controlled by the PAVN High Command, serves both the Pathet Lao and PAVN forces in Laos. Another, controlled by the Lao Dong Central Executive Committee, serves the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. In addition, there are intimate command and operational relationships between the Pathet Lao and PAVN units in Laos, and in South Vietnam there seems to be no clear or meaningful distinction between mem-

bers of the Viet Cong and of the PAVN. Thus, Communist political-military efforts in Laos and South Vietnam appear to be two parts of a single campaign under the control and strategic direction of the North Vietnamese Communist leaders and with the direct support of the Lao Dong and the PAVN.

II. LAOS

3. Since the Kong Le coup in August of 1960 evidence of the presence in Laos of North Vietnamese technicians, cadres, and, more recently units of up to battalion size, has been accumulating. [ ]

[ ] The frequency and nature of the evidence of the presence of PAVN units of approximately battalion size in certain areas of Laos strongly suggests the following PAVN troop strength distribution: (see attached map).

Muong Sai .....	Two Bns (500 men each) and Hqs.
Sam Neua .....	One, perhaps two, Bns.
Muong Soui .....	One Bn and Hqs.
Khang Khay .....	Two Bns and Hqs.
Lak Sao .....	Possibly one Bn.
Nhommerath/Mahaxay .	Two Bns and Hqs.
Tchepon/Muong Phine .	Two Bns and Hqs.

4. In general, these PAVN units are strategically located astride the significant routes between Laos and South Vietnam. These locations are chosen to provide a maximum of natural advantage for offensive or defensive

operations, and for the movement of units and supplies into and out of Laos as needed. They are also well located to back up or to support key areas held by Pathet Lao and/or Kong Le and Kham Ouane units. The evidence also indicates that these PAVN concentrations include such support as engineers, armored cars, field and AA artillery, and signal corps troops. In December, 1961, PT 76 light amphibious tanks were identified.

5. [ ]

[ ] there is a relationship between the various groups of North Vietnamese troops in Laos and corresponding PAVN divisional and military region headquarters adjacent to them in North Vietnam. Troops in Muong Sai are connected with the 316th Division at Dien Bien Phu and Headquarters, Military Region Northwest, at Son La. Troops and advisors in Sam Neua Province appear to be associated with the 335th Infantry Division. Troops in the area of Xieng Khouang Province, as well as those in the Lak Sao and the Nhommerath/Mahaxay areas, appear to be connected with Headquarters Military Region IV, at Vinh. Troops at Tchepone are believed to be connected with the 325th Infantry Division at Vinh Linh.

6. The communications networks which have been identified in Laos and North Vietnam [ ] over a long period of time, provide additional insights into the command structure of the Communist forces in Laos. (See map.) The relevant networks are: (a) the Mainline PAVN network; (b) the operational network firmly identified; and (c) the operational network tentatively identified. Until December 1960, direction for the Pathet Lao and communications for the North Vietnamese "advisors" were provided by a joint DRV/Pathet Lao network, but as early as January 1961 the control station of this network moved from North Vietnam into Xieng Khouang Province and almost im-

mediately was surpassed in importance by a new network which began to appear in association with it. This new network is now known as the "operational network." The structure of this communications system clarifies the pattern of troop dispositions [ ]

7. The "all-arms" nature of the PAVN forces, together with [ ] references to an obviously senior headquarters in areas where more than one battalion is believed to be operating, indicate the presence of some sort of headquarters above the battalion level to coordinate the combined Communist effort. These coordinating headquarters appear to be a combat group (or task force) headquarters commanding two or more PAVN and Pathet Lao infantry battalions with supporting arms. We believe there are five such combat groups in Laos: 1 in Muong Sai, 2 in Xieng Khouang Province, 1 in the Nhommerath/Mahaxay area and 1 in the Tchepone/Muong Phine area. There is, in addition, a reserve element in Sam Neua Province.

8. The organizational arrangements described above, [ ]

[ ] provide a flexible and efficient means for directing, supporting, and reinforcing the Pathet Lao military effort in Laos. They also enable the PAVN role in the struggle to be easily and quickly expanded or reduced.

9. [ ]

[ ] The "neutralist" Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces are dependent upon the Communists for supplies and equipment. They are, at least at times, under operational control of the PAVN/Pathet Lao headquarters, but they appear to be excluded from many operations and areas and in general to be shunted aside.

### III. SOUTH VIETNAM

10. For administrative and operational purposes the Communists have divided the territory of South Vietnam into two major subdivisions: Intersector V (extending from the 17th Parallel to the borders of old Cochin-China) and Nam Bo (corresponding roughly to the area formerly known as Cochin-China). Commanding each of these regions is a party organization known as the regional committee. The chain of command for both the VC military and political organization extends from the regional committee down to the interprovincial, provincial, district, township, village, and hamlet echelons. The VC political arm, the National Liberation Front, is organized among ethnic, social, economic, and religious groups. It could provide the nucleus for a rival government.

11. A staff group of the Lao Dong Party Committees—the Military Affairs Section—known to exist at least down to the District Committee echelon, is the channel through which orders for all major VC military operations are passed and implemented. The specific details of the operations are left up to the discretion of the local VC commanders, who may or may not be members of the Military Affairs Committee. The VC divide their forces into three specific categories which they call concentrated forces, guerrillas, and self-defense militia. The VC appear to regard the concentrated force, which may exist anywhere from the village to the regional command echelon, as their most effective striking force. The guerrillas are less well equipped and trained. The self-defense militia are home-guard troops, responsible for village defense. Most of these are poorly equipped and only partly trained. The largest unit [redacted] [redacted] is the battalion.

12. Military units of the above three types are probably subordinate to the various party echelons and probably may operate anywhere

within the geographic limits of the party echelons jurisdiction. In this sense, the Regional Committee's and the Interprovincial Committee's battalions may operate anywhere within the boundaries of the Region and Interprovince, respectively. As such, the VC can send its interprovincial forces to assist provincial forces in a given operation and provincial forces to assist district units. Each province has what the VC refer to as "concentrated platoons" and "base platoons" with the former believed to be mobile striking forces and the latter base defense units. Included in the province's military apparatus are such special services as intelligence, quartermaster, medical and munitions. A network of couriers, operating under the Communications and Liaison Sections of the Party Committees, probably is the vehicle through which the day-to-day VC tactical operations in South Vietnam are coordinated. Overlapping both the military and political aspects is the Armed Propaganda unit which conducts sermons at gunpoint among the local population. The loyalty of the VC military establishment is assured by means of a generous sprinkling of members of the Party itself or Party-affiliated groups among the various military units.

13. The Viet Cong communications system within South Vietnam has expanded greatly in scope and sophistication since late 1959 and now comprises at least 48 stations and 65 communications links. Most of this expansion has been in the Nam Bo area. [redacted]

14. The present communications structure, [redacted] indicate that VC activities in South Vietnam are subject to the direct control of the Central Executive Committee of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi.

Lateral communications also exist between the Intersector V Regional Committee and the Nam Bo Regional Committee (NBRC). In addition, there are extensive communications within each of the two major subdivisions.

15. The VC have also set up a network of broadcast stations, identified as Liberation News Agency (LNA) stations, which serve as organs of information for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. The first of these stations became operational on or about 21 January 1961 and subsequently identified itself as the Main Office of the LNA. This station was found to be co-located with the NBRC and appears to be in control of all LNA stations presently active. Since 21 January 1961 five additional broadcasting stations have been activated, four of which are serving branches of the LNA and are co-located with the major VC headquarters in South Vietnam. A sixth station, which was activated on 2 January 1962, has not as yet been identified. All transmissions of these LNA stations are in plain language Vietnamese, with the exception of the Main Office, which also transmits information in French.

16. An early January 1961 message indicated that the VC High Command was planning to unify the organizations of the Nam Bo Region and Intersector V by setting up a Central Office in the South which would be in direct control of all Sectors and Interprovinces in South Vietnam. More recent

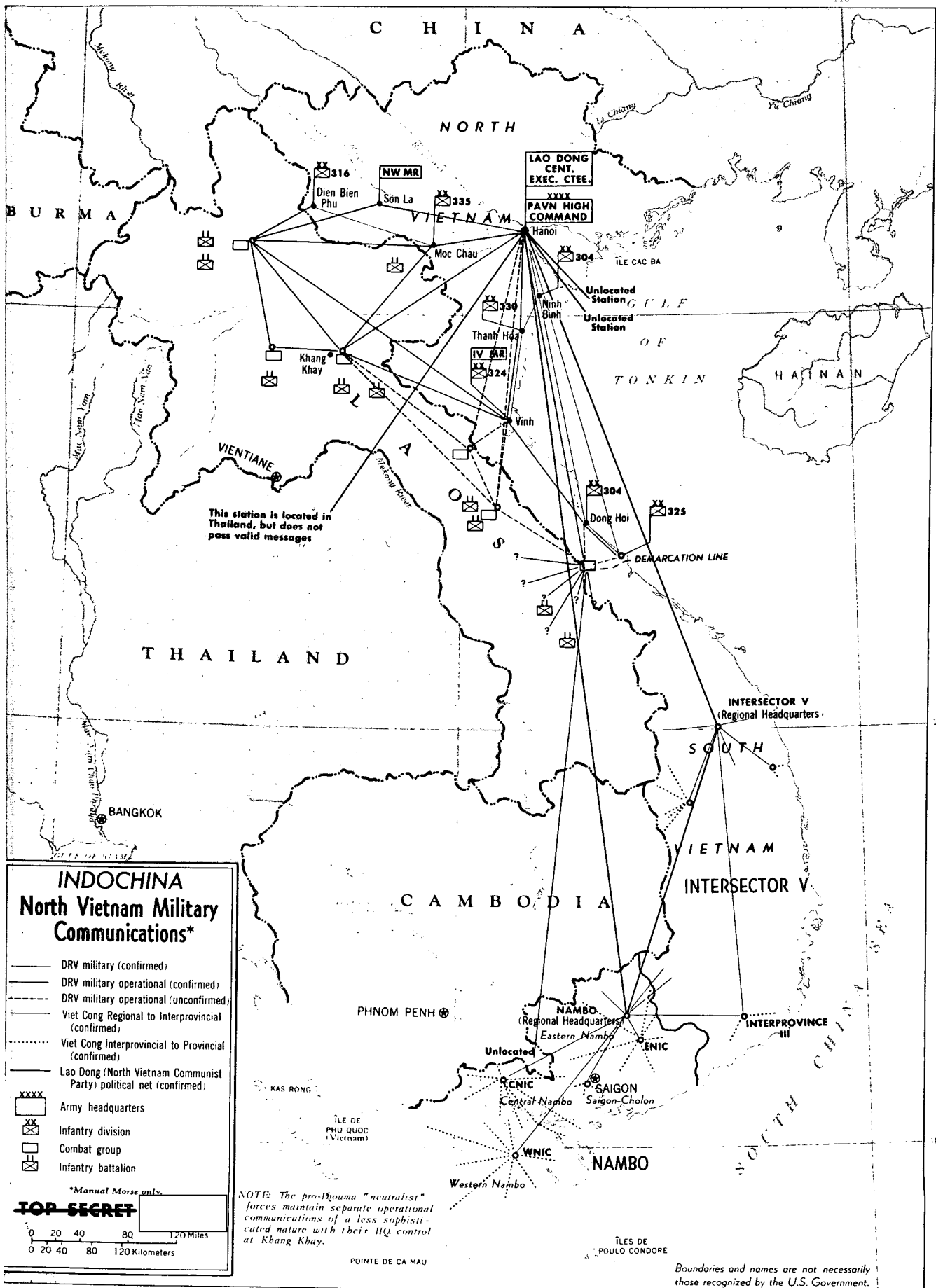
evidence suggests that this office may have been set up.

#### IV. THAILAND

17. [redacted]

#### V. CAMBODIA

18. [redacted]



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