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September 2, 1970

## MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT: Troubles in Binh Dinh Province

In an annex to its daily Situation Report, CIA reports some unfavorable trends in Binh Dinh Province (Tab A). The senior U.S. advisor there states that a continuing Communist campaign of subversion and terrorism this summer has slowed, and, in some areas, reversed progress in pacification. He concludes that an unfavorable psychological climate has developed in several areas of the province, and that GVN officials have not yet been able to adjust their tactics to the enemy's terrorist campaign.

CIA notes that the general situation in Binh Dinh today is far better than it was six years ago, and a good deal better than during the immediate aftermath of the Tet offensive of 1968. In conventional military terms, the GVN clearly has the upper hand. The Communists, however, have begun to achieve a measure of success by emphasizing a mix of political subversion and terror tactics, and by staying away from conventional attacks. This is especially true in the northeastern districts of the province, where the Communists first established themselves more than 30 years ago. Reporting from other districts indicates that spotty GVN leadership and a lack of any real program other than maintaining military security are contributing to the pacification slowdown.

Many district and provincial officials have expressed strong misgivings about the withdrawal of any allied troops during the coming year. CIA believes that some of these statements are probably overdrawn deliberately in order to keep U.S. forces in the province as long as possible, but feels that there is substantial evidence from independent sources to verify that the Communists are making a determined effort to reverse pacification gains.

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President Thieu's replacement of the MR II Commander is a sign that Saigon recognizes the need for corrective action in Binh Dinh and other provinces in the Region. The new Commander has been associated with the GVN's pacification effort for several years, but it remains to be seen whether he can galvanize and coordinate GVN assets in Binh Dinh.

Comment. No province, of course, is typical of Vietnam as a whole. But, as one of the largest, Binh Dinh is important in its own right. And it may well reflect the kinds of problems that are developing in other provinces with an historically strong VietnCong presence, Although few areas in South Vietnam have such a strong and long-standing communist tradition as does much of Binh Dinh.

It is also worth noting that this year's accelerated pacification campaign was to emphasize political and economic aspects. It seems clear from this report that the accelerated campaign has yet to reach Binh Dinh.

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