

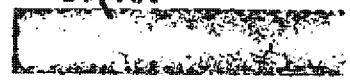
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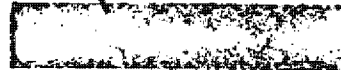
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The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh

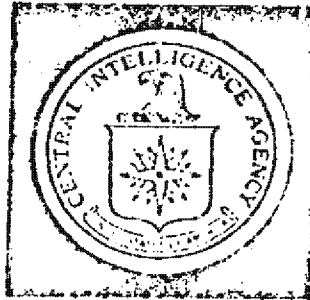


CIA OOI SC # 01237-68
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The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh



~~Secret~~

10 January 1968
SC No. 01237/68

Approved for Release
Date

16 JUL 1985

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
10 January 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh

Summary

In the past several weeks there have been a number of indications that the enemy is building up its forces in the Laotian panhandle west of the Demilitarized Zone.

The target primarily threatened by these forces appears to be the allied base at Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province of South Vietnam. Enemy reconnaissance and probing activity near Khe Sanh has increased markedly in the last few weeks.

[REDACTED] The Communists could be using the time between now and the Tet holidays to complete their concentration around Khe Sanh in preparation for an offensive after Tet.

[REDACTED]

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Vietnamese Affairs Staff and the Office of Current Intelligence.

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The Communists could muster a total force of over 20,000 should they decide at some point to commit all personnel from the elements of the four divisions now in the general area. This is considerably more than they would need merely to take Khe Sanh. Their primary objective in attacking Khe Sanh would be to draw US reinforcements into the area, tie them down to static defensive positions, and inflict maximum casualties on US forces over a period of time.

The buildup of forces in Laos and western Quang Tri Province also strengthens North Vietnamese defense of the Laos corridor. There have been indications of Hanoi's concern over the possible extension of the US electronic "barrier" and strongpoint system into Laos.

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The Current Situation

1. Developments in recent days strongly suggest that the Vietnamese Communists intend once again to increase military pressure against the strategically placed outpost at Khe Sanh, on Route 9 in Quang Tri Province.

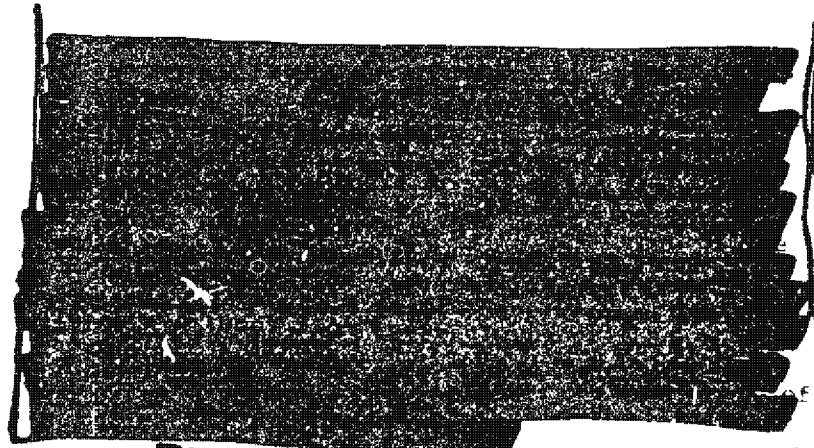
2. The post, approximately nine miles from the Laotian border, is used as a base for observation and interdiction of enemy infiltration activities in the area. It was last besieged in the winter of 1967, following the movement of the North Vietnamese 325C Division into the western DMZ area. Elements of the 325C have again moved into the region, after a period of rest and refitting in North Vietnam.


[REDACTED]

3. The units mentioned above probably would take the primary role in any Communist effort to step up action at Khe Sanh.

[REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED]

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5.  information also indicates that the Communists are preparing for an offensive around Khe Sanh. Photography on 2 December of an area about five miles northwest of Khe Sanh revealed 21 foxholes, two fortified hilltops, and heavy trail activity. On 26 and 27 December, an unknown force twice attempted to penetrate the defensive perimeter of friendly forces on Hill 861. On 27 December, a friendly reconnaissance team contacted an estimated 15-20 enemy four miles northeast of Khe Sanh. On 2 January, an enemy force of about six men engaged a Marine squad at a listening post about two miles north of Khe Sanh. The next day a patrol was grenaded; the patrol also observed lights on a trail near Route 9. These incidents all point to increased enemy reconnaissance against the Khe Sanh combat base.

Enemy Objectives

6. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the buildup around Khe Sanh is that the enemy may hope to wipe out the US garrison there and the Civilian Irregular Defense Corps (CIDG) camp at Lang Vei, about five miles to the southwest on Route 9. The Communists have long regarded Khe Sanh, located near the infiltration corridors in Laos, as a thorn in their side. According to the latest

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available information, the garrison at Khe Sanh is defended by three infantry battalions and an artillery battalion of the 26th Marine Regiment. The CIDG camp at Lang Vei has about 320 men.

7. The Communists, however, do not need a force of upwards of 22,000 men to take Khe Sanh and Lang Vei. If the buildup is as extensive as suspected, and all of these units are destined to be committed to an offensive in the area, the primary purpose of the Communists may prove to be much broader. By attacking Khe Sanh, they would hope to draw US reinforcements into the area, tie them down to static defensive positions, and inflict maximum casualties on US forces over a period of time. By occupying the high ground around Khe Sanh and setting up ambushes along Route 9, the only overland route into the area, the enemy could make resupply and reinforcement a difficult and costly proposition, especially if he has developed an effective antiaircraft capability. Monsoon rains have closed large portions of Route 9, compounding the problem and making resupply largely dependent on airlift.

8. A final objective of the Khe Sanh buildup would be to harass and foil the strongpoint barrier system which is being implemented in the DMZ north of Khe Sanh and in the infiltration corridors in Laos.

9. Enemy strategy as outlined above fits in with the enemy strategy during 1967 of fighting the main force war partly from peripheral areas adjacent to border sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. By positioning his forces in these areas, the Communists seek to lure US units away from populated areas, disperse them, and inflict a maximum number of casualties in the process. This relieves pressure on main force units operating in populated areas and enables them to coordinate with local force units to disrupt the pacification program and attack allied outposts and base camps around urban areas. Since the start of the "winter-spring campaign" in October,

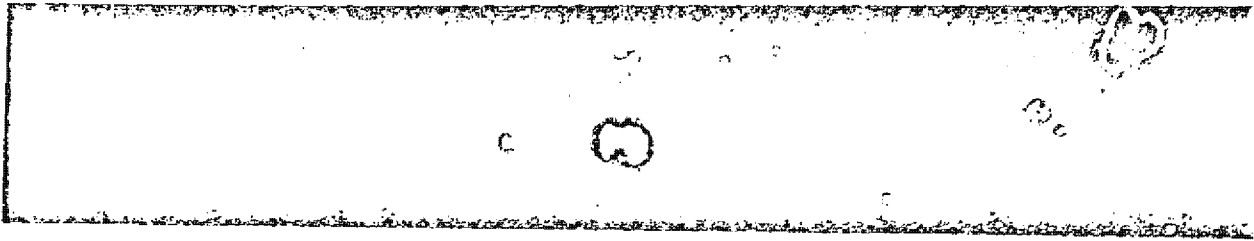
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the enemy has employed this strategy in II Corps and III Corps.

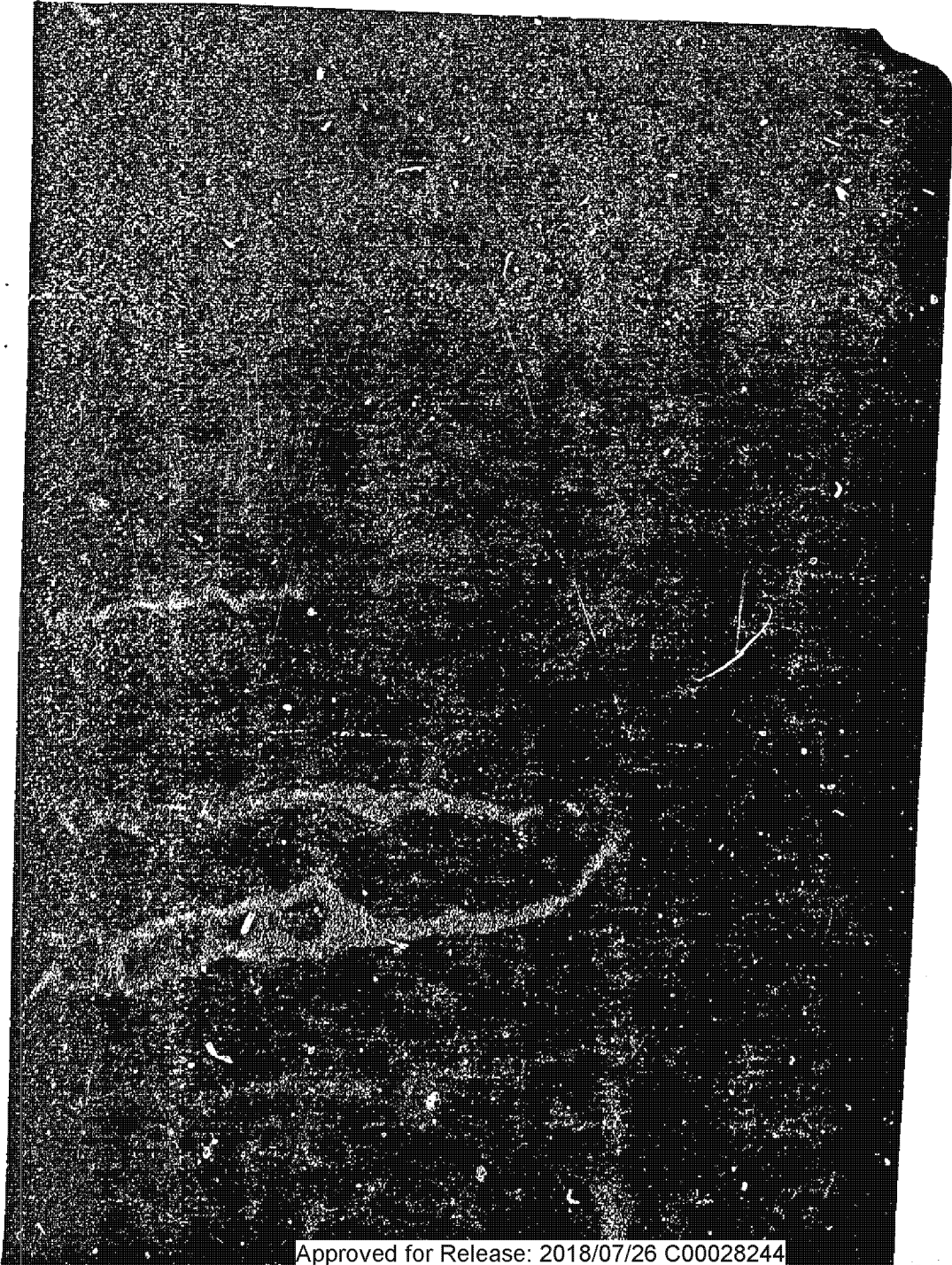
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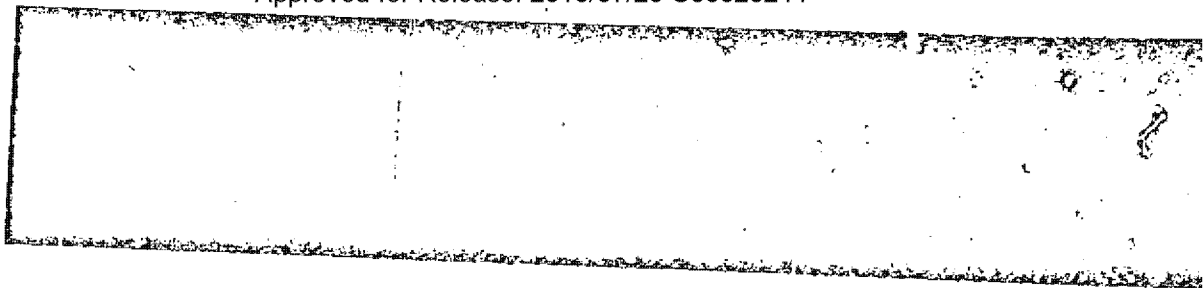
A similar situation exists in III Corps, where a New Military Region (NMR), designated MR 10 and consisting of the border provinces of Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Quang Duc, was established in 1967. The establishment of MR 10 was followed by a rapid buildup of Communist forces in the area and attacks on targets near the Cambodian border, like Loc Ninh, Bu Dop, and Bo Duc. It is possible, therefore, that the buildup of Communist forces in the Khe Sanh area presages the establishment of a new front headquarters to conduct operations in the border areas of Tri-Thien Military Region (Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces).

10. In summary, the enemy's objectives in any sustained offensive in the Khe Sanh area would be, at a minimum, to force the abandonment of the Khe Sanh base and the Lang Vei CIDG camp and to inflict heavy casualties. At the maximum, the Communists would hope to draw substantial US reinforcements from other areas in South Vietnam and tie them down in the Khe Sanh area. Their objective would be to give the other NVA units which operate in the Tri-Thien Military Region (the 5th, 6th, and 9th regiments) greater mobility to operate against the populated areas along the coast of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. It would also give the Communists greater freedom of action along the DMZ. Whatever course of action is open to the enemy, he will be striving in addition to obtain that often touted major psychological victory against the allies.

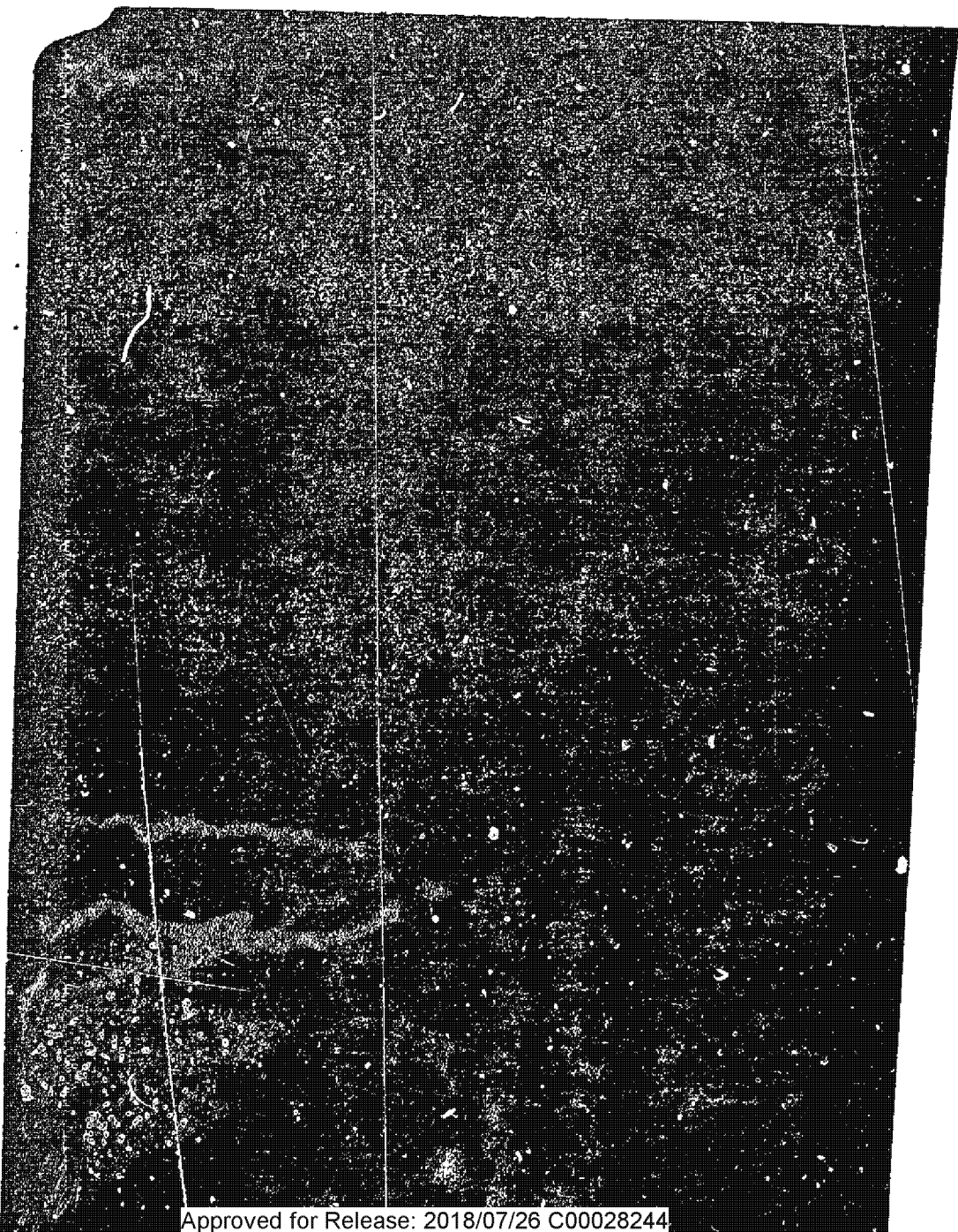


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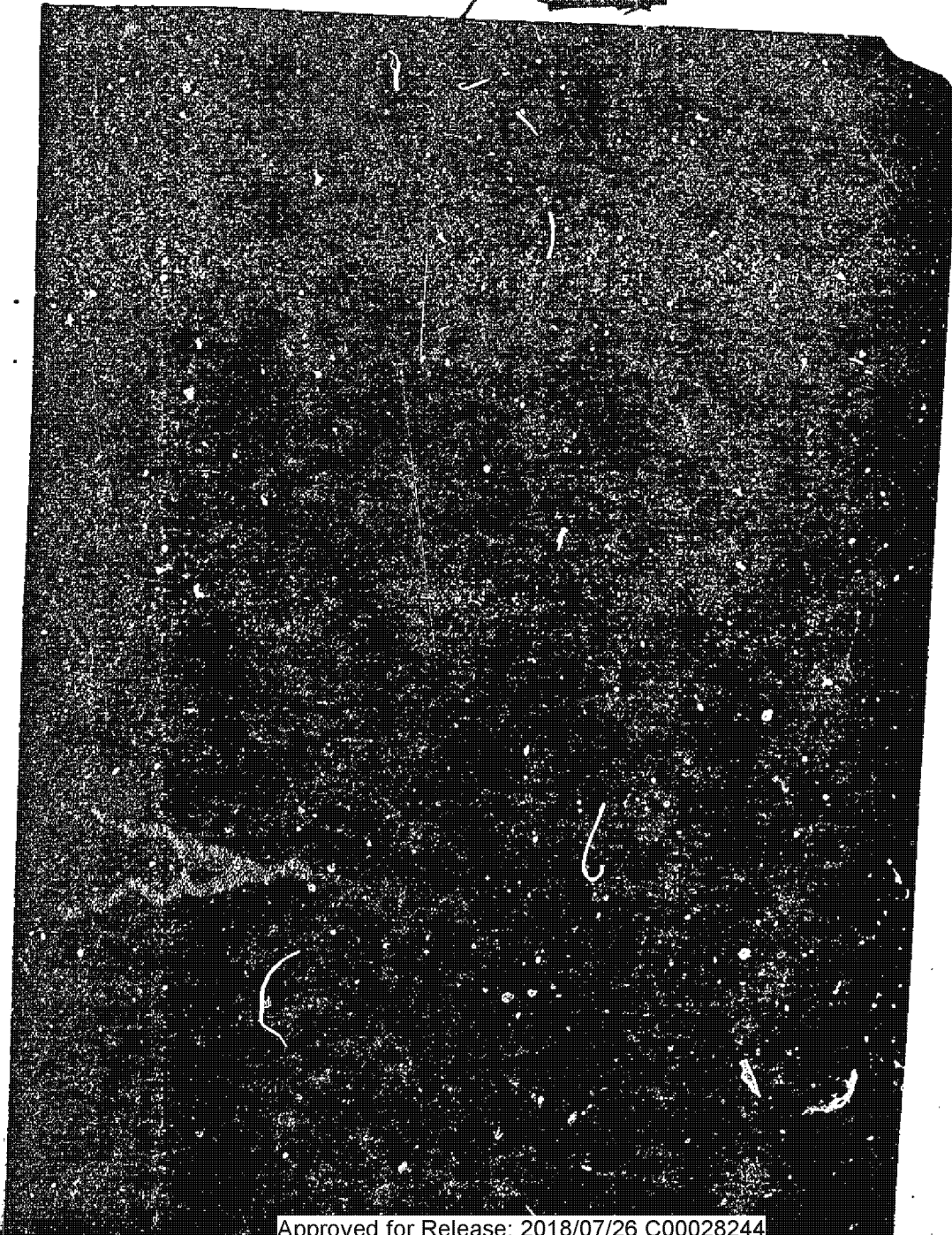


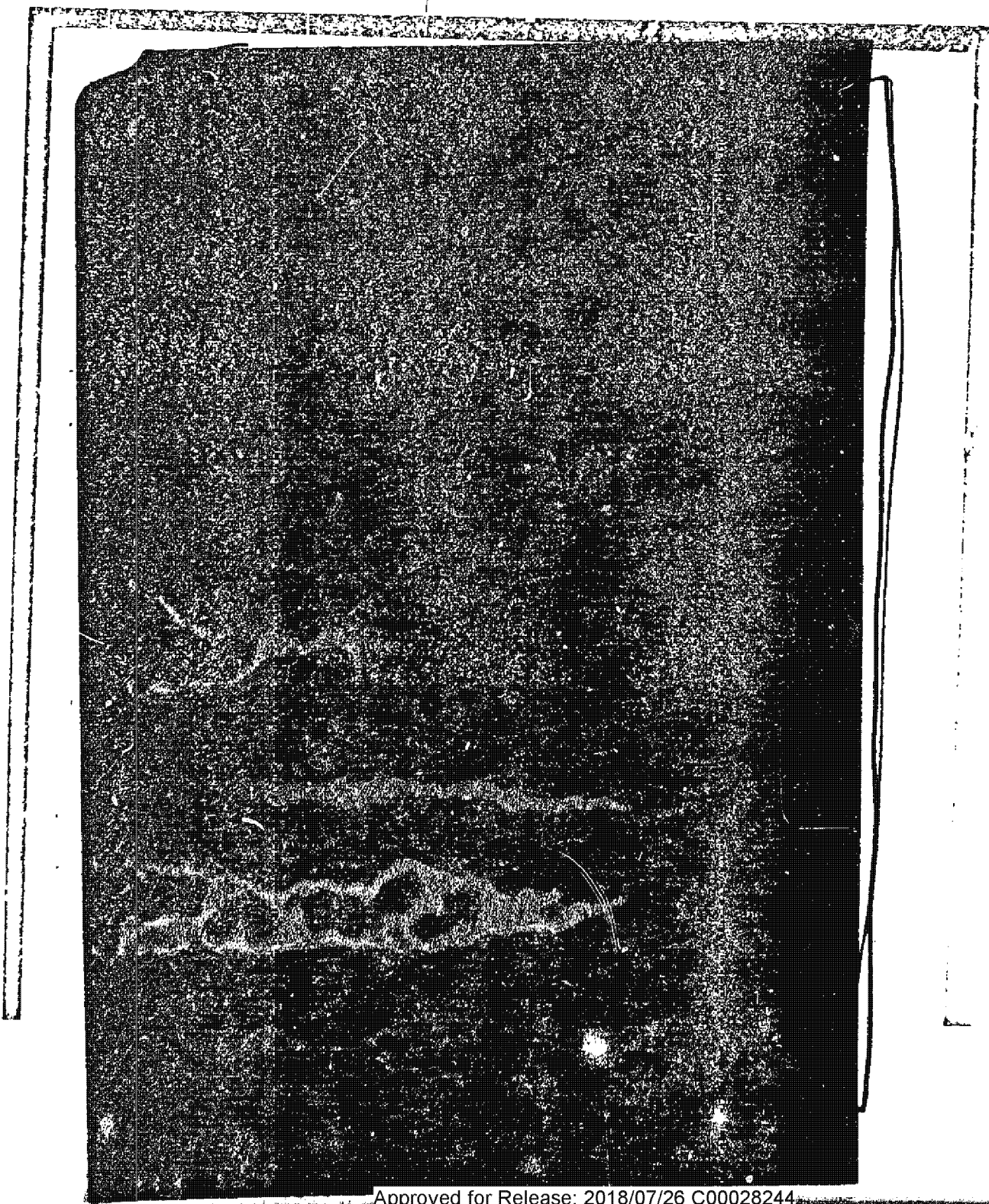


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum


The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh



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2 February 1968
SC No. 01242/68

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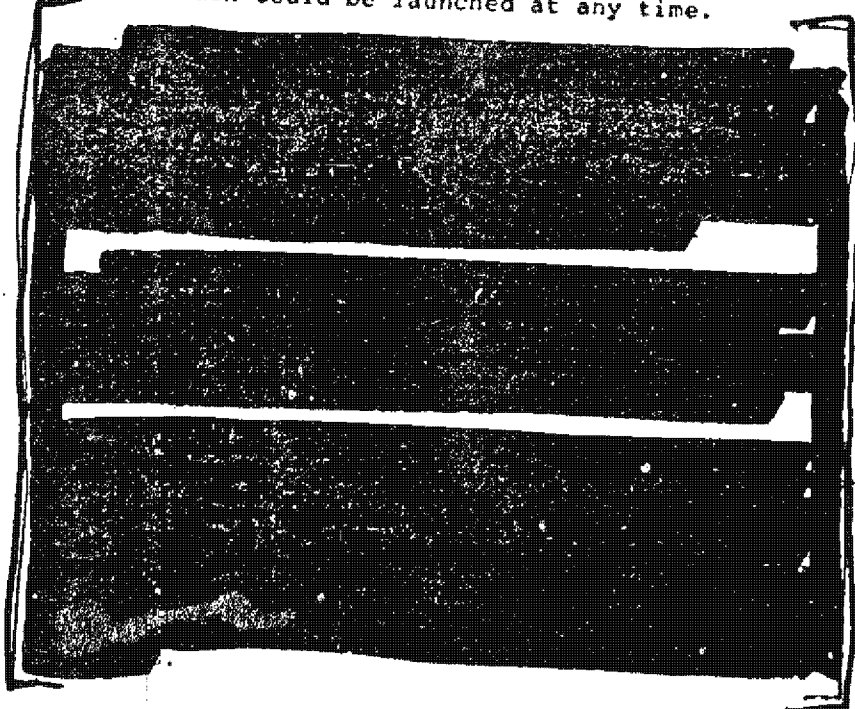
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
2 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM


The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh

Summary

Enemy preparations for the long expected offensive at Khe Sanh appear at an advanced stage, and a major attack could be launched at any time.



Note: This memorandum, an update of SC No. 01137/00 of the same title issued on 10 January, was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Current Intelligence and the Vietnamese Affairs Staff.

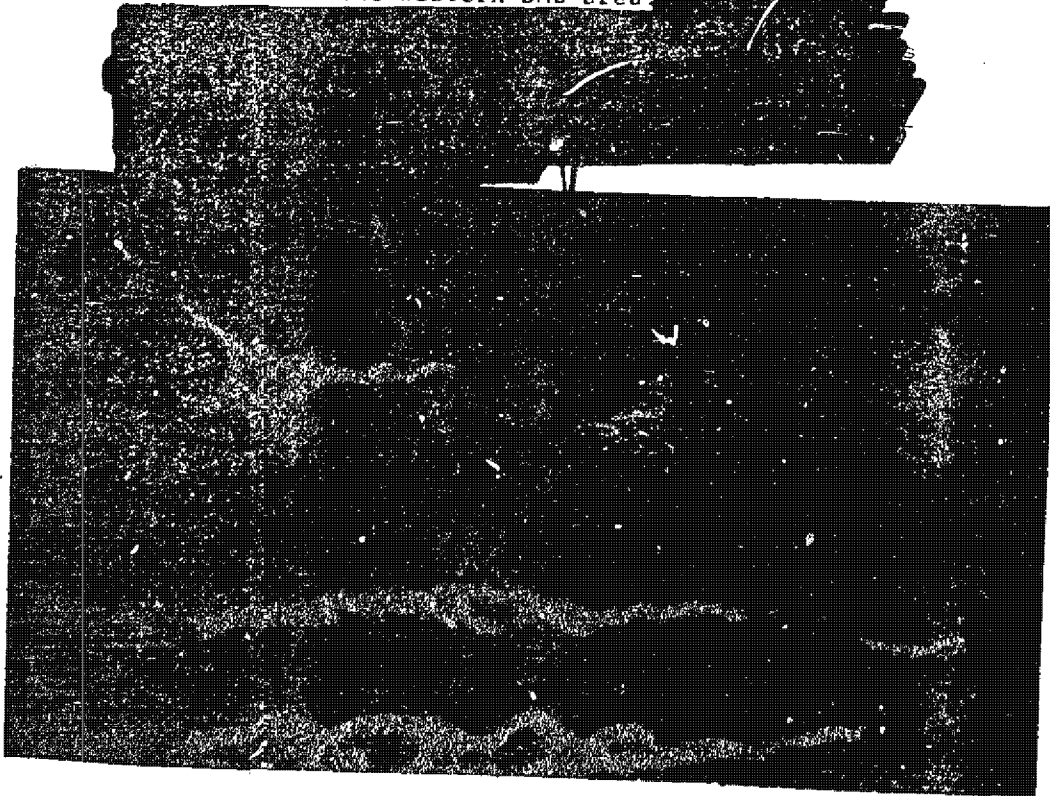
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The Build-up

1. Developments in recent weeks strongly suggest that the Vietnamese Communists intend once again to increase military pressure against the strategically placed outpost at Khe Sanh, on Route 9 in Quang Tri Province.

2. The post, approximately nine miles from the Laotian border, is used as a base for observation and interdiction of enemy infiltration activities in the area. It was last besieged in the winter of 1967, following the movement of the North Vietnamese 325C Division into the western DMZ area.

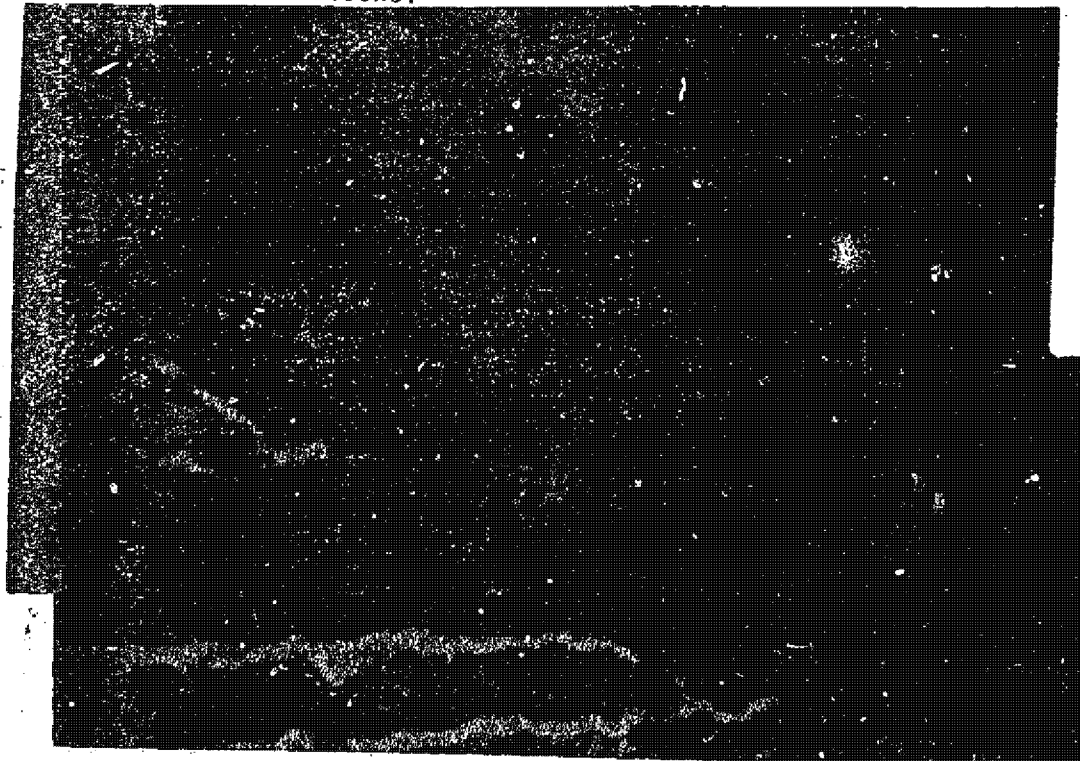


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The Current Situation

4. Since the outbreak of major enemy activity on 30 January, the military situation in the Demilitarized Zone/western Quang Tri Province area--the anticipated focal point of a Communist offensive--has remained unusually quiet.

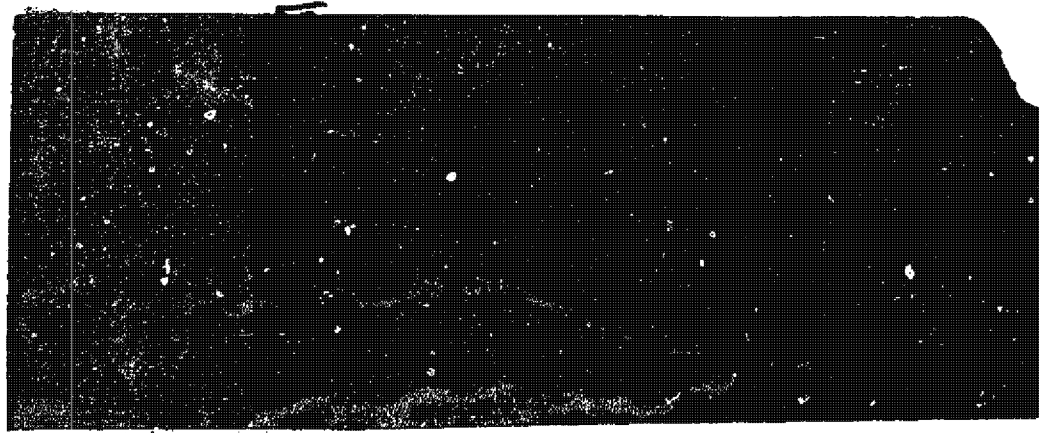
5. The Communists' timetable for major attacks in this sector, presumably in concert with the widespread attacks elsewhere, is believed to have been delayed in part at least by the unusually heavy allied aerial bombardment against North Vietnamese positions threatening Khe Sanh and the network of allied strong points just below the zone. The Communists may also be waiting for the most advantageous weather conditions.




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9. Meanwhile, regimental strength elements of the North Vietnamese 325 "C" and 304th Divisions have continued to maneuver into battle positions to the north, west, and south of Khe Sanh. Sharply intensified aerial photoreconnaissance of the Khe Sanh area has provided tentative indications of a major attempt by the North Vietnamese to dig their way toward the strategic US combat base--an "encroachment with fortifications" reminiscent of the Dien Bien Phu tactics. Photography indicates that the Communists have been preparing positions ever closer to the Marine garrison, but not occupying them. Should the North Vietnamese begin to construct communications trenches leading forward from these positions, the parallel to Dien Bien Phu would become even stronger.

10. Moreover, US aircraft during late January reported the presence of 37-mm. and/or 57-mm. enemy antiaircraft artillery weapons in the hills north and west of Khe Sanh. In addition, a recent Communist defector reported that some 20 field artillery pieces were being towed by vehicles through Laos to firing positions near Khe Sanh. The introduction of these weapons would significantly enhance the enemy's firepower capability against both the Khe Sanh garrison and allied aerial resupply and reinforcement efforts in the area.



~~SECRET~~ Enemy Objectives

12. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the build-up around Khe Sanh is that the enemy may hope to wipe out the US garrison there and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp at Lang Vei, about five miles to the southwest on Route 9. The Communists have long regarded Khe Sanh, located near the infiltration corridors in Laos, as a thorn in their side. According to the latest available information, the garrison at Khe Sanh is defended by four infantry battalions, and an artillery battalion of the 26th Marine Regiment. In addition, an ARVN ranger battalion is deployed along the garrison's outer defense perimeter. The CIDG camp at Lang Vei has about 320 men.

13. The Communists, however, do not need a force of upwards of 20,000 men to overrun Khe Sanh and Lang Vei. If the build-up is as extensive as suspected, and all of these units are destined to be committed to an offensive in the area, the primary purpose of the Communists may prove to be much broader. By attacking Khe Sanh, they would hope to draw US reinforcements into the area, tie them down to static defensive positions, and inflict maximum casualties on US forces over a protracted time period. By occupying the high ground around Khe Sanh and setting up ambushes along Route 9, the only overland route into the area, the enemy could make resupply and reinforcement a difficult and costly proposition, especially if he has developed an effective antiaircraft capability. Monsoon rains have closed large portions of Route 9, compounding the problem and making resupply largely dependent on airlift.

14. Allied reinforcement difficulties would be increased if the enemy managed to sustain his current offensive around and in the urban areas of the country. Reaction to this thrust has so far tied down numerous allied maneuver battalions and reserve forces.

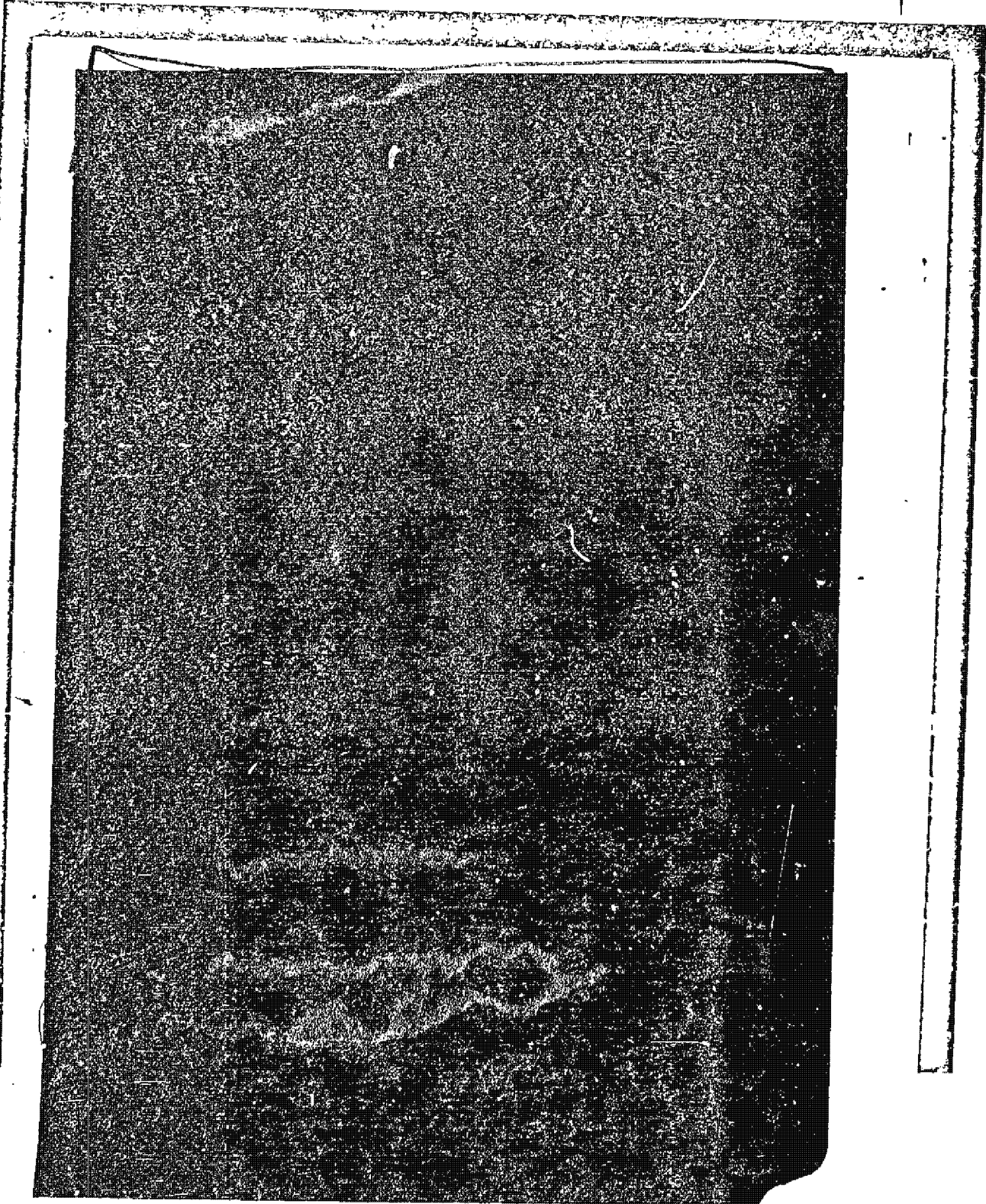
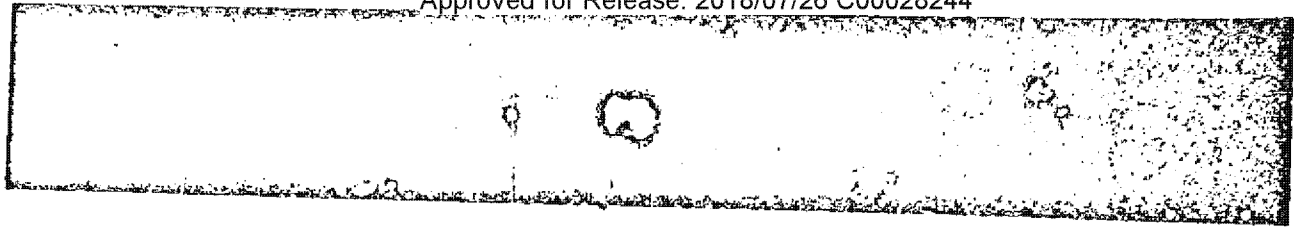
15. A final objective of the Khe Sanh build-up would be to harass and foil the strong-point barrier system which is being implemented in the DMZ north of Khe Sanh and in the infiltration corridors of Laos.



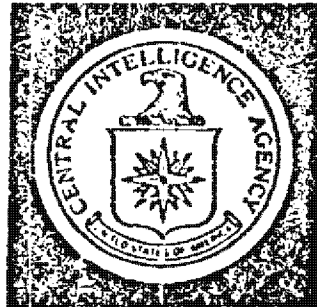
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16. Enemy strategy as outlined above fits in with the enemy's efforts during 1967 in fighting the main force war partly from peripheral areas adjacent to border sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. By positioning his forces in these areas, the enemy sought to lure US units away from populated areas, disperse them, and inflict a maximum number of casualties in the process. This relieves pressure on main force units operating in populated areas and enables them to coordinate with local force units to disrupt the pacification program and attack allied outposts and base camps around urban areas. Since the start of the "winter-spring campaign" in October, the enemy has employed this strategy in II Corps and III Corps.

17. The next few days are expected to bring poor flying weather to the Khe Sanh/DMZ area, thereby seriously restricting allied tactical air support and resupply efforts. Moreover, sizable numbers of allied forces who otherwise would be available as reinforcement to positions under siege in northern and western Quang Tri Province have been diverted to clearing and securing the many areas recently attacked from Quang Tri city southward to Hue. These factors weigh heavily in favor of possibly imminent offensive activity at Khe Sanh, probably in coordination with major thrusts against allied positions along the central and eastern portions of the DMZ.



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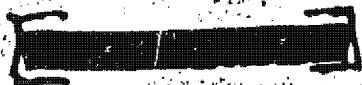


DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

CLIA/CCR / T. 01244-68

Intelligence Memorandum

*Construction and Logistic Activities
in the Khe Sanh Area*



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35
7 February 1968
SC No. 01244/68

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 Directorate of Intelligence
 7 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Construction and Logistic Activities
In the Khe Sanh Area

Summary

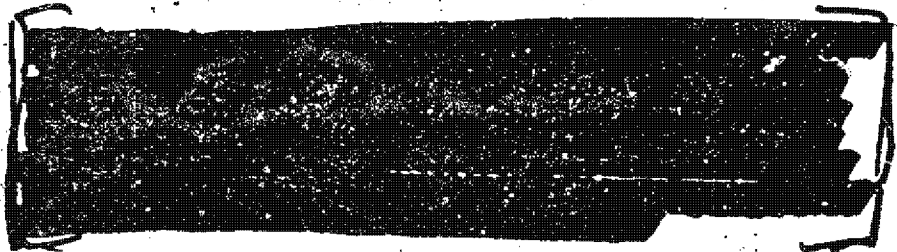
The deployment of more than 22,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops in the Khe Sanh area and upwards of 12,500 troops in the north-central DMZ area has been paralleled by a rapid acceleration of enemy logistic and construction activities. These activities point to the acquisition of a capability for sustained offensive operations.

The construction of two new roads from Laos toward the Khe Sanh area will facilitate the enemy's ability to sustain the resupply of his forces. Construction of new fortified positions and weapons emplacements in the immediate vicinity of Khe Sanh appears to be well advanced. These emplacements will be extremely difficult to neutralize and will provide the enemy with an improved capability to defend areas he now holds and to interdict friendly movement in and out of the Khe Sanh area. These activities are hampered and disrupted by intensive US air strikes, but the enemy appears to be pressing his preparations and they could be nearing completion.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Economic Research and the Vietnamese Affairs Staff and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence. It should be read in conjunction with the CIA memorandum, "The Enemy Threat to Khe Sanh" of 2 February 1968.

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~~SECRET~~ New Road Construction

1. Aerial photography has revealed two new roads being built by the North Vietnamese from a point near Ban Dong in Laos on Route 9 eastward to the Khe Sanh area. These roads, detected in the past month, parallel Route 9 to the north and south and converge on the Khe Sanh area from the northwest and southwest. (See Figure 1). Work on both roads has progressed to the Laos - South Vietnam border, which is within 12 to 15 miles of Khe Sanh, and probably is continuing into South Vietnam. This new road network significantly increases the North Vietnamese logistic capability near the DMZ, and reflects the intensive nature of enemy preparations for major operations in the Khe Sanh area.

2. The Communists have also gained the use of Route 9 at least as far as the Vietnamese border, having driven off in late January the Lao Army battalion (BV-33) which had controlled the Ean Houei Sane area and blocked the use of Route 9 to the Communists since mid-1961. Large bunkers and storage areas have been detected near the terminus of the southernmost of the two new routes, and numerous secondary explosions have followed B-52 strikes in the area.

Supply Depots

3. The Tchepone area of Laos, about 20 miles west of the Vietnamese border, has long been known to be a major staging point for the movement of supplies from North Vietnam through the southern Laos panhandle. Numerous new depots and distribution points in Laos and the DMZ area have been built in recent months to support combat preparations. A series of storage depots or way stations has been established on a north-south axis across the demilitarized zone about 10 to 15 miles east of the Lao border. Additional storage areas have been detected near the eastern terminus of the southernmost of the two recently built roads. Other storage and distribution points have been detected at points in the hill mass northwest of the main US base at Khe Sanh. Jungle cover precludes estimating the capacity of these facilities, but they appear to be extensive.

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~~SECRET~~Fortifications

4. There are numerous indications of recent construction of fortifications ranging from groups of foxholes to entrenchments, bunkers, weapons emplacements, and large strongpoints. Some of those in the northwest quadrant from Khe Sanh had been built during the heavy Communist pressure in that sector in April and May 1967. One North Vietnamese regiment that has remained in the area since then may have maintained some of these positions in usable condition. More recent construction includes a number of bunkers, entrenchments, and large strongpoints in the hill mass south of Route 9 and extending from the area southeast of Khe Sanh westward to the border of Laos. These positions have been built in some depth.

5. Other new fortifications and weapons emplacements have been detected in and behind the ridges east and north of the main complex. Considerable fortification and entrenchment activity has also been observed north of Route 9 along the hills and ridges west and southwest of the main US base. Photography taken in late January shows several large but unoccupied groups of foxholes--one numbering over 400--between Hill 861 and the main base. One group of foxholes is within 1,000 meters of the base. (See Figures 2 and 3).

6. These activities suggest that the Communist forces are prepared to defend the areas they now hold, to encircle US positions completely, to extend their positions progressively closer to ours in siege fashion, and to prepare in advance assembly areas from which assaults can be mounted. If these positions are subsequently connected by communications trenches, the Communists will be able to maneuver their forces from one portion of the battlefield to another under cover from friendly fire. They would also be in position to block movement from the main base at the airfield to outlying US positions on the hills to the northwest. These techniques are similar to those employed by the Communists in their prolonged siege campaign at Dien Bien Phu.

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Location of Mortar and Rocket Sites

7. The selected weapons sites shown in Figures 2 and 3 are representative of many such sites in the Khe Sanh area. The circles drawn on the map indicate ranges from which weapons of various types can be fired on the base. These include some weapons (82-mm. mortars) which are organic to enemy infantry units. The 120-mm. mortar ring also approximates the range of 75-mm. pack howitzers which the enemy is believed to have in the area. The 160-mm. mortar ring approximates the range of the 122-mm. rockets which the Communists have already employed at Khe Sanh. Thus far, antiaircraft positions for 37-mm. weapons have been detected only at positions from which they can protect rear depot areas. Positions for 12.7-mm. antiaircraft machine guns, however, have been observed within 1,500 meters north and northeast of the airfield. Emplacements for 152-mm. artillery weapons have been detected at distances beyond maximum range of the main US base, although weapons in these emplacements could reach some of the outposts northwest of the airfield and the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei to the west.

8. It is evident from the terrain features and enemy positions that the Khe Sanh base and airfield are vulnerable to interdiction from these known emplacements. Profiles of the terrain in a straight line from each indicated enemy position to the center of the Khe Sanh runway show that in nearly every case the enemy has the advantage of cover and concealment from friendly ground fire, although the positions may be more vulnerable to air attack. There is little doubt that for every location noted there are many more which cannot be detected from the air.

The Logistic Build-up

9. The deployment of more than 22,000 NVA troops in the Khe Sanh area and upwards of 12,500 in the north-central DMZ area was accomplished by a rapid acceleration of enemy logistic activities.

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~~SECRET~~Traffic Through the Laos Panhandle

10. The volume of supplies moved into the Laos panhandle from North Vietnam during the last five months has been significantly greater than that moved during comparable periods in the past. The observed increases in traffic have paralleled closely the heavy deployment of troops to the Khe Sanh area, and most of these supplies seem destined for these forces.

11. According to reports of roadwatch teams along Route 15 in North Vietnam just north of the Laotian border, truck traffic moving toward Laos during the last four months of 1967 averaged about 17 trucks a day compared with 15 a day during the comparable period of 1966. These trucks could have delivered over 5,000 tons of supplies for the Communist-held portions of Laos and South Vietnam, or over 40 tons per day during this period in 1967.* During January 1968, southbound traffic on the same route increased to a daily average of 26 trucks compared with an average of 22 for January 1967. Over 1,900 tons could have been delivered during January 1968, or an average of about 60 tons per day.

12. Roadwatch reports are not available on Routes 137/912, the other truck route into the Laotian panhandle from North Vietnam. An analysis of reports of aerial reconnaissance over this route reveals a substantial increase in truck activity on this route in 1967. Although there is no way to quantify the tonnage moving on Routes 137/912, it almost certainly equaled the tonnage moved on Route 15 and could have been more. Moreover, aerial reconnaissance reports show considerable truck activity on Route 911 and on Route 9, which

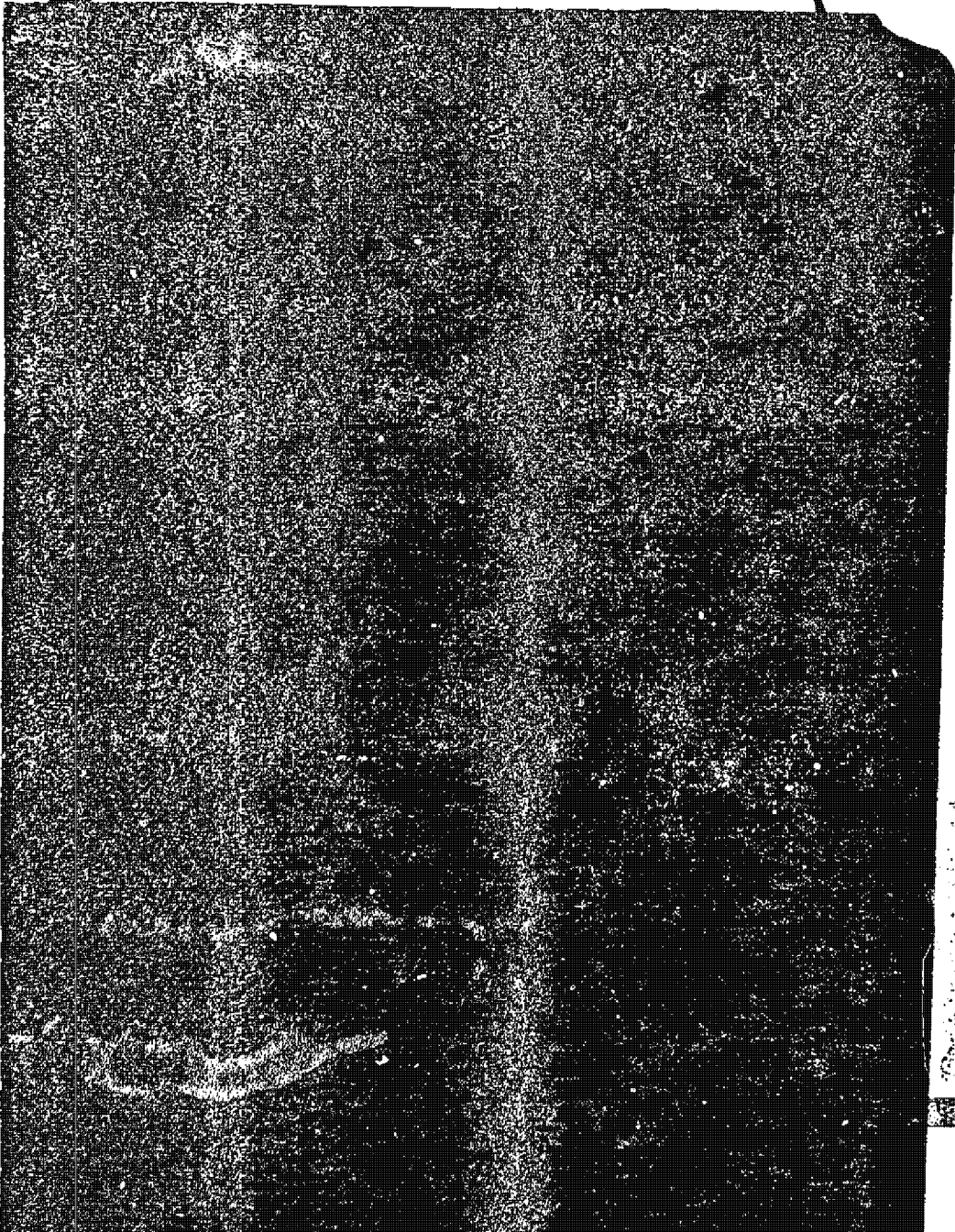
*The estimates of supplies moved include an allowance of 20 percent for losses in transit and losses due to air operations.

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lead to the two new roads that now branch off from Route 9 to the border of South Vietnam in the direction of Khe Sanh. Roadwatch teams consistently report a low level of truck traffic on Routes 92 and 96 south of Route 9, indicating that most trucks may have discharged their loads in the vicinity of Route 9. Furthermore, the increase in truck traffic in this area observed by aerial reconnaissance began after the first of November 1967.

Traffic to the DMZ Area



~~SECRET~~Logistic Requirements for Forces

15. Communist forces currently deployed in the Khe Sanh area would require on the order of 32 to 37 tons of supplies per day under sustained heavy combat conditions.* Ammunition supplies would account for 6 to 10 tons of the total daily resupply requirement. Actual consumption of ammunition would depend of course upon combat intensity. The requirements given above are for two NVA divisions--the 325C and the 304th--comprising at least six infantry regiments with artillery support. These forces for the most part probably receive their supplies from those delivered by truck into Laos.

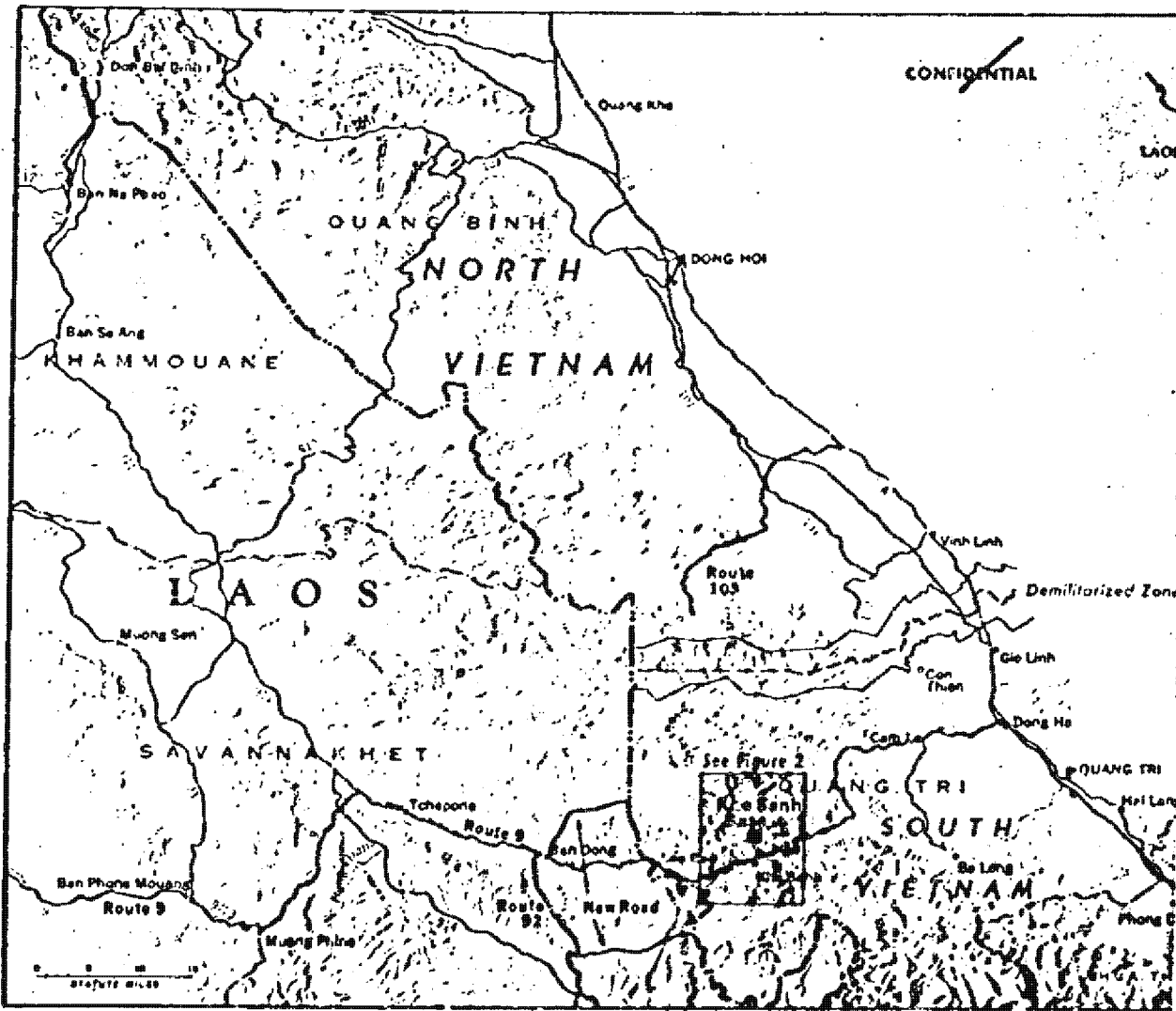
16. In addition to these forces, at least two infantry regiments of the North Vietnamese 320th Division have been deployed in an area in the north-central DMZ. The role of the 320th Division is probably to harass and interdict allied reinforcements moving from the east toward Khe Sanh. In this role their logistic requirements would probably be relatively less than those of the forces in the immediate Khe Sanh area. On this basis, the requirements of the 320th Division are calculated at between 17 and 21 tons of supplies a day, with ammunition accounting for 3 to 6 tons of the total. These forces probably receive their supplies from across the DMZ.

17. Since the deployment of these divisions in the Khe Sanh and DMZ areas and the logistic build-up were parallel developments, Communist forces probably began stockpiling of weapons, ammunition, and equipment possibly by mid-November or earlier. With due allowance for materials already consumed, the estimated flow of traffic has been sufficient to provide a stockpile of from 60 to 90 days. On the basis of past experience it is estimated that the Communists have a daily resupply capability to maintain these stockpiles at that level.

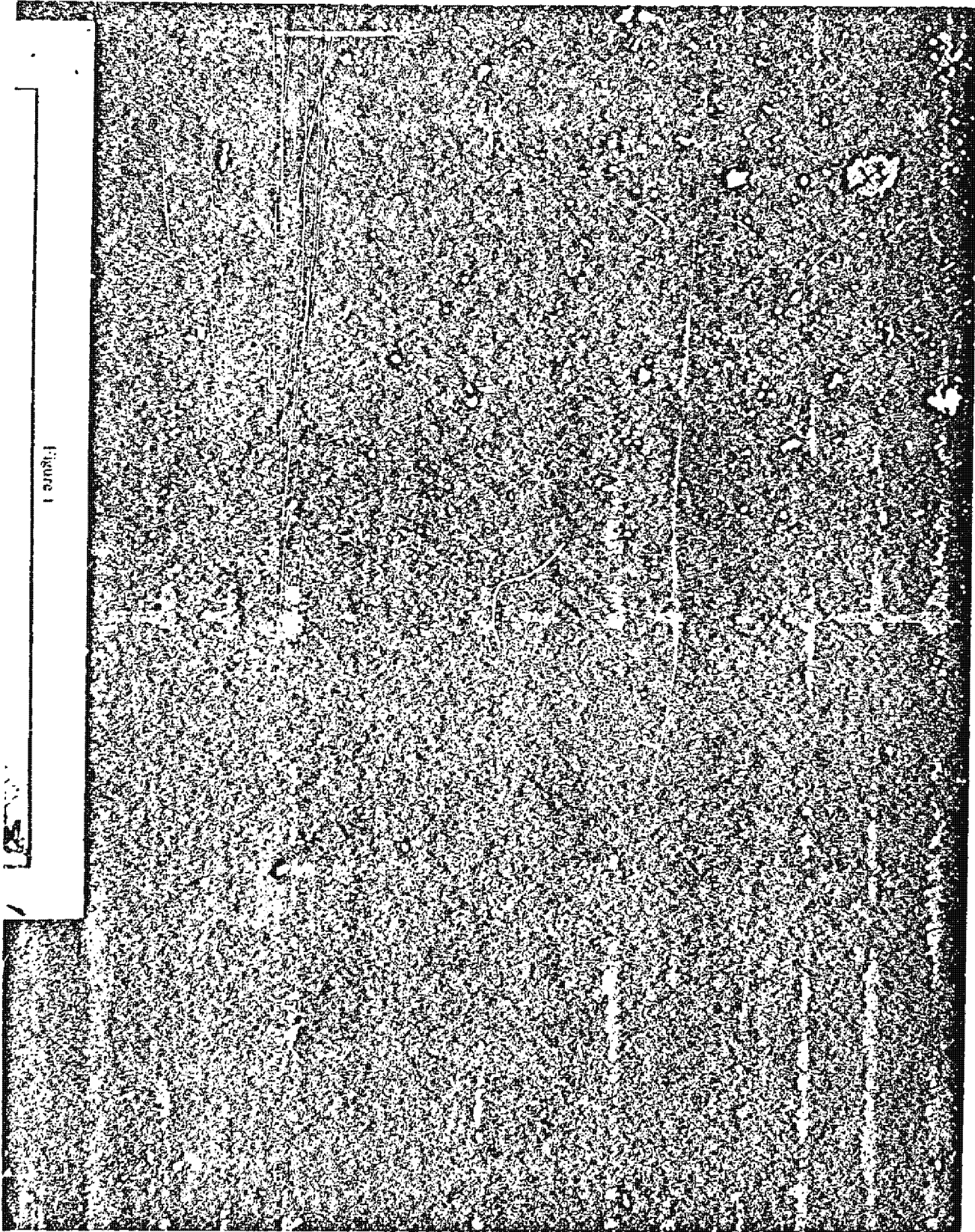
*The infantry battalions are given a rate of combat of 1 day in 10. The artillery regiment and the two AAA battalions are given a support role of 1 day in 3. These rates of combat are significantly higher than the 1 in 30 day rate used by MACV as representative of the 1967 campaign.

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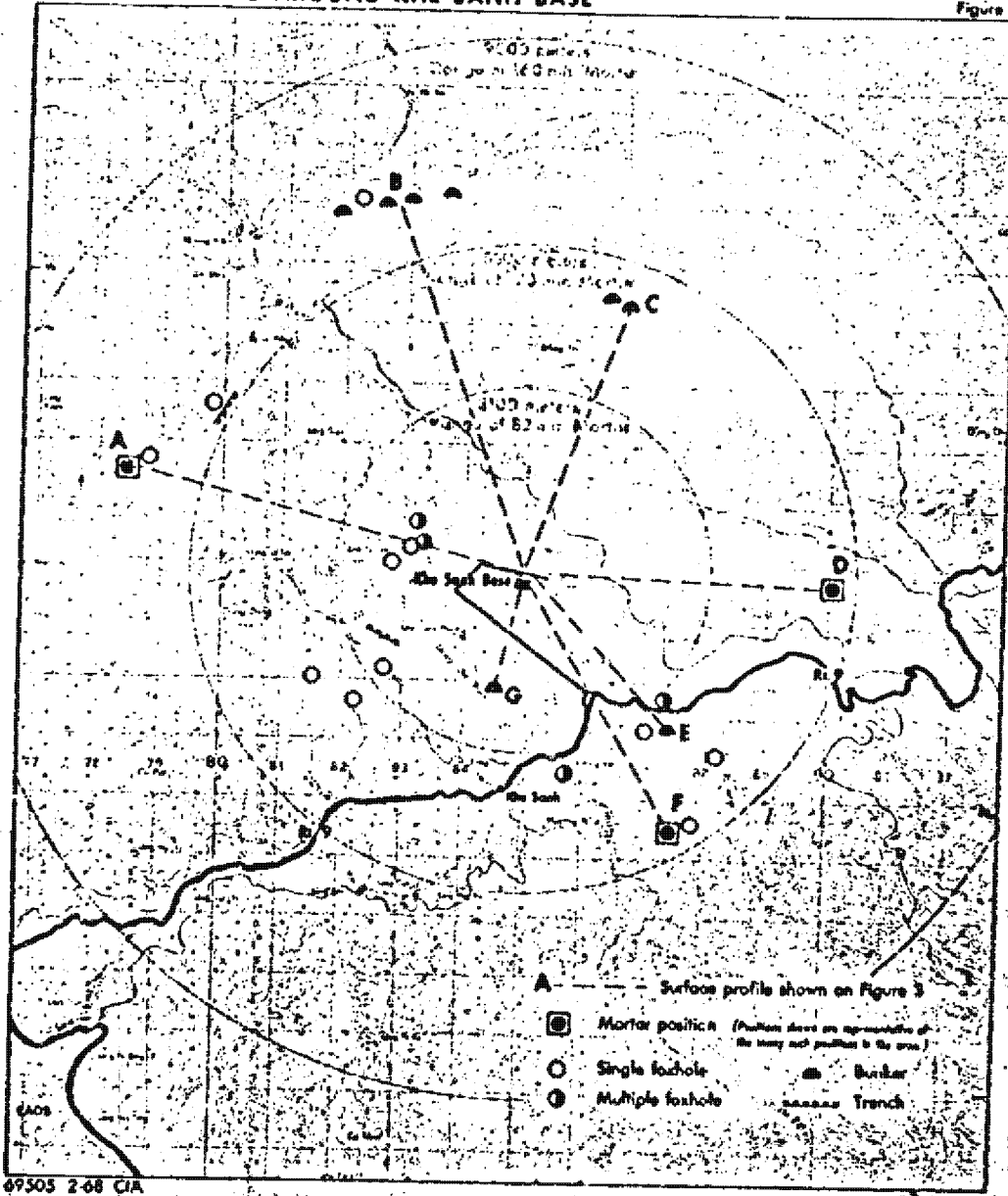


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ENEMY POSITIONS AROUND KHE SANH BASE

Figure 2



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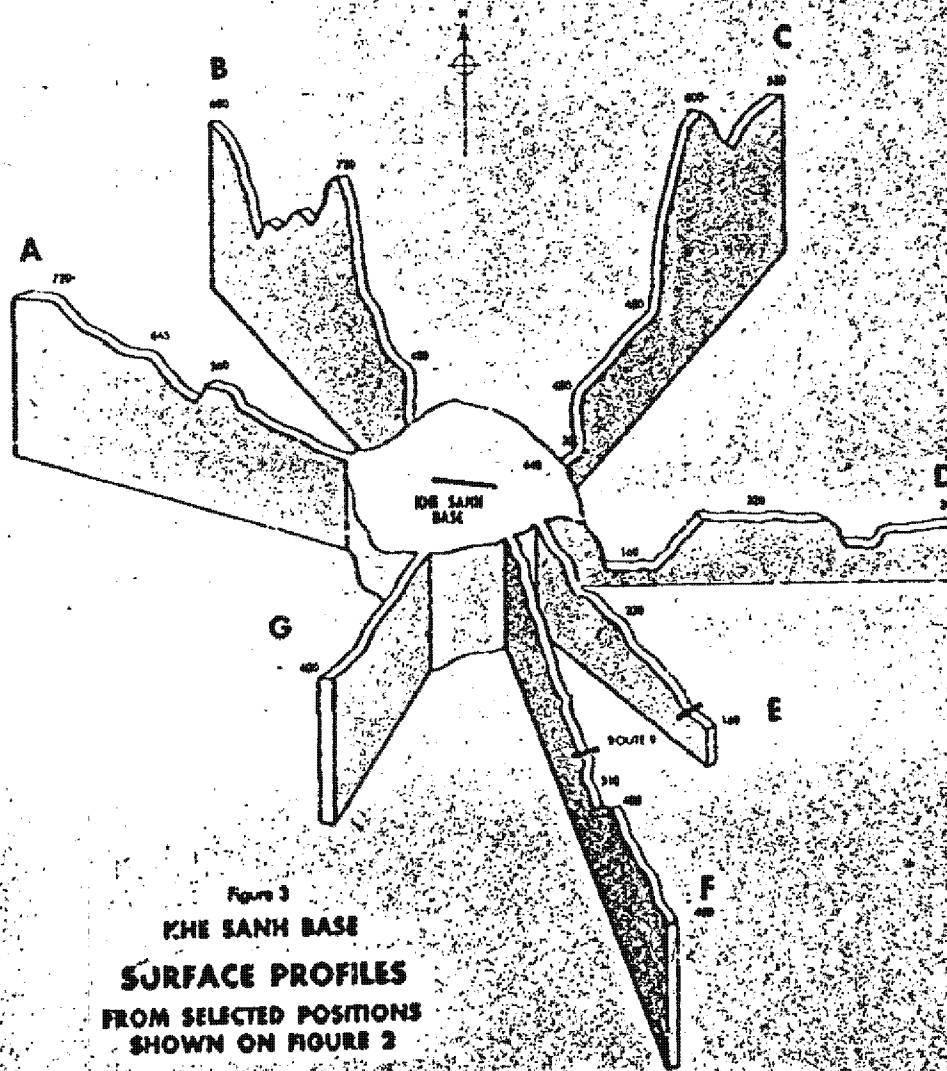


Figure 3
KHE SANH BASE
SURFACE PROFILES
FROM SELECTED POSITIONS
SHOWN ON FIGURE 2

DAGUERRE MATCH

Approx. height of path: shown to 100.00

CONFIDENTIAL

30 JUL 1985

Ray W. Stubbe
2422 N. 60th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53210

Dear Mr. Stubbe:

This is our final response to your Freedom of Information Act request for finished intelligence concerning Khe Sanh during the period 1967 through 1969. Additional material responsive to your request has been provided from the records released during the Westmoreland vs. CBS litigation.

Enclosed are segregable portions of four documents responsive to your request. CIA information in documents numbered 1 through 3 is released in its entirety. The National Security Agency, however, has excised material under exemptions (b)(1) and (b)(3). We have deleted material in document 4 under exemptions (b)(1) and (b)(3). The CIA officials responsible for these determinations are Mr. Paul Marr, Information Review Officer for the Directorate of Intelligence and Mr. Robert Manners, Information Review Officer for the Directorate of Science and Technology. An explanation of the exemptions is enclosed.

You have the right to appeal the above decisions by addressing your appeal to the CIA Information Review Committee, in my care. Should you decide to do this, please explain the basis of your appeal.

During our searches we located United States Government material that was not originated by the CIA. This material appears to be relevant to your request and has been referred to its originating agency for review and direct response to you.

Thank you for your patience while we completed the processing of your request.

Sincerely,

John H. Wright

John H. Wright
Information and Privacy Coordinator

Enclosure

IPD/KVR/ksk/25 July 85

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