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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
3 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 12
(As of 5:30 P.M. EST)

There have been no major changes in the military situation since our report of 8:30 A.M. EST on 3 February. The following, however, are the most significant of the developments reported.

I Corps

1. The military situation in northern and western Quang Tri Province remains generally quiet, although intercepted North Vietnamese communications continue to reflect increasing tactical preparations in the DMZ area from Khe Sanh to the South China seacoast.

2. Elements of the 90th Regiment, formerly engaged in logistical activity north of Khe Sanh, began submitting reconnaissance reports on 2 February. These reports have included detailed accounts of helicopter flights from Dong Ha to Khe Sanh and allied traffic along Route 9 in the Rockpile area. The shift by the 90th Regiment from a transportation to a reconnaissance role suggests impending combat activities.

3. On 2 February, the 1st Battalion, 803rd Regiment, 324B Division, which has been moving south toward Lam Xuan Village (YD2868) in the southeastern DMZ area, was instructed to reconnoiter the terrain in preparation for an attack by the entire regiment. A three-stage attack was planned against an unspecified target, possibly US forces on Operation SALINE.

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4. The Communists have the capability to strike at any time against Khe Sanh with two divisions, against the Camp Carroll-Rockpile area in the north-central DMZ with one division, and against the Con Thien - Gio Linh area in the east-central DMZ with a division equivalent.

5. The allied situation at Hue seems to have improved somewhat. While there has been no significant change in positions occupied by enemy or allied forces, US Marines in battalion strength have recaptured the provincial jail which had been held by the Viet Cong. Some 2,500 prisoners, 300 to 500 of whom were considered hard-core Viet Cong, were liberated by the enemy during their initial attack against the prison compound. An ARVN force equivalent to division-strength is continuing to press clearing operations against Communist forces holed up in the citadel area.

6. In the Quang Tri city area, although the Communists have been pushed out of the urban area, they are said to still hold about two-thirds of the RD campaign area, in the district north of the city. It is believed allied forces will have to move in and clear them out, probably with substantial damage to civilian interests.

7. A US Marine battalion has been reported in heavy contact with a large enemy force south of Da Nang, but no further details are presently available. The Communists are believed to pose a very serious threat to the entire Da Nang - Hoi An area, with two regiments of the NVA 2nd Division, the NVA 31st Regiment, and the NVA 368 "B" Artillery Regiment located within striking distance.

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9. A major buildup of Communist forces has been reported near the Quang Tin Province capital of Tam Ky, but no significant new fighting has yet developed.

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[REDACTED] Late reports indicate that the Dak To airstrip has come under heavy rocket and recoilless rifle attack, but apparently remains operational. Elsewhere in the western highlands, no new information has become available on the status of enemy and allied forces in and around the cities of Pleiku, Kontum, and Ban Me Thuot.

11. The Communist B-3 Front command has now committed its entire regional force as well as elements of three of its subordinate NVA regiments to the Tet offensive in the highlands. The Front's entire NVA 1st Division, however, with three regiments supported by 122-mm. rockets and 120-mm. mortars, has apparently been kept in reserve. This division poses a continuing threat to allied units and installations in northwestern Kontum and western Pleiku provinces, and also is capable of joining the attacks against population centers which have been initiated by local forces and independent regiments of the Front.

12. In the coastal provinces of II Corps, Phan Thiet, the capital of Binh Thuan Province, is under attack by three Viet Cong battalions. Meanwhile, Communist forces have ambushed two South Korean army convoys in or near the Binh Dinh provincial capital of Qui Nhon.

III Corps

13. Information on this area is not up to date, but a field wrap-up as of noon (Vietnam time) on 3 February indicated that most of the provinces in the Corps were quiet.

14. Fighting apparently continues in the provincial capitals of Xuan Loc and Phuoc Le, with Viet Cong forces possibly holding positions in both cities. Meanwhile, brigade-strength base camps of the US 1st Infantry Division at Lai Khe and Quan Loi came under heavy rocket and mortar bombardment on the evening

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of 3-4 February. Enemy forces have also been reported moving toward the Binh Duong Province capital of Phu Cuong, although no major attack has yet erupted.

The Saigon Area

15. Press reports indicate that heavy fighting erupted between elements of the US 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and a large Viet Cong force near Thu Duc, just northeast of Saigon, on the morning of 3 February Saigon time. Vietnamese Marines and other American units were also engaged. There are no reports yet on the outcome.

16. In the capital itself, light sporadic contact and sniper fire continues throughout the city. Firing incidents were reported still occurring near the National Palace, the US Embassy, the embassy Marine barracks, and along the main road to Tan Son Nhut airport on the evening of 3-4 February. Police stations and roving security patrols remain prime enemy targets.

17. There is little evidence in COMINT to substantiate earlier reports of an estimated 25-30 Viet Cong battalions reportedly staging for a major offensive against Saigon from positions immediately north and south of the city. It is possible, however, that an enemy force engaged near Thu Duc constitutes some of the reported Communist elements.

18. To the west of Saigon, the 7th NVA Division (101st, 165th and 141st Regiments) and the 88th NVA Regiment continue to pose a distant threat to the Saigon area. These forces, generally located around the Michelin rubber plantation, have not been identified in any recent actions according to available information.

[REDACTED] the 165th Regiment of the 7th Division had moved in a northwesterly direction between 25 January and 2 February. This regiment is now located about two miles northwest of the Minh Thanh Special Forces Camp in Binh Long Province.

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IV Corps

19. There has been no significant change in the situation here, according to the fragmentary reports now available. Only sporadic sniper fire was reported in Vinh Long City where friendly forces continued clearing out VC elements. Enemy attacks during the night of 2-3 February were repulsed at cities in Kien Phong, Kien Hoa and Bac Lieu provinces. Throughout much of the corps area, Viet Cong elements continued scattered harrassing fire. There is no firm information on the situation at Ben Tre, although two Viet Cong battalions on the outskirts of the city are believed preparing for renewed attacks.

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3.5(c)Political Reactions

20. Vietnamese Communist propaganda is continuing to claim that their military offensive has evoked broad popular support particularly in Hue and Saigon and has generated the formation of political "alliances" throughout the country which will eventually overthrow and replace the Saigon government. The composition of these alliances, their function, and their relationship to the Liberation Front continues to be vague, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the Communists probably intend them to be the instrument for the establishment of a coalition government in conjunction with the Liberation Front.

21. An appeal from the "alliance" in Hue, broadcast by the Front on 2 February, is the clearest statement of this objective to date. The appeal stated for the first time that one of the alliance's objectives was the establishment of a national coalition administration in the South and the normalization of relations with the North in order to affect reunification. Previous appeals by the Saigon and Hue alliances and by the National Leadership of the Alliances have called only for negotiations with the Front but have not mentioned the formation of a government, or the issue of reunification.

22. Despite the suggestions that the Communists really intend to march ahead with the formation of a government, there continues to be scant evidence that the Alliances have gained any popular support.

23. Meanwhile, several Hanoi commentaries have suggested that the current military offensive is but one battle in a more prolonged struggle. The Hanoi party paper on 3 February said the current fighting was creating conditions for additional military victories. The North Vietnamese army journal the previous day called for the southern forces to maintain and develop their victories, enlarge their fronts, and develop their revolution.

24. The AFP correspondent in Hanoi reports that the DRV military command has sent a message to the Front unit in Hue and Saigon assuring them that the

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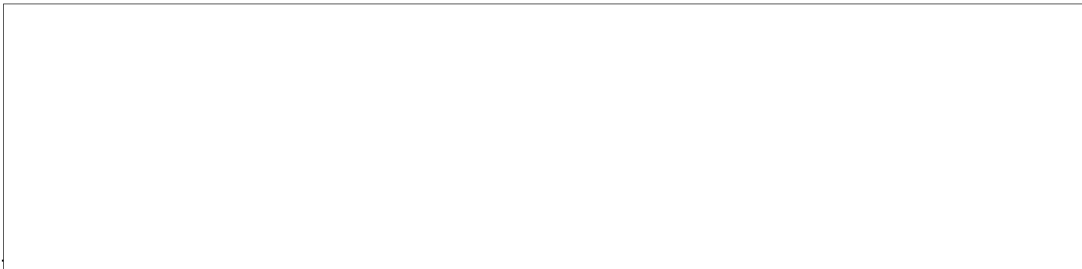
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DRV armed forces stand "ready every second to coordinate their actions with them." In Hanoi itself, according to AFP, mass meetings are being held by various political and religious groups in support of the southern offensive. It would appear that the North Vietnamese authorities are utilizing the successes in the South to pump up popular morale in the North.

North Vietnam

25. There are continuing COMINT indications of Hanoi efforts to establish a fighter interceptor capability in the southern DRV. A possible height-finder radar has been detected in the DMZ area. The recent North Vietnamese air activity in the Vinh area, the establishment of a GCI controller there, and the possible placement of this radar in the DMZ suggests that the North Vietnamese are possibly planning some type of air intercept of US B-52 strikes in the DMZ area.



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