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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

2 March 1968

Authority 21A 10-9-77, DIA
By ig RARS, Date 8-20-80
State 8-11-80

INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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Published by the Directorate of Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

(24 February - 2 March 1966)

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THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

The pace of Communist military activity has increased, both in terms of initiated actions and of resistance in force to allied ground operations. Most of the action in recent days has been focused in the five northernmost provinces of I Corps, where the Communists have suffered heavily from government counteroperations, but the Viet Cong have also been active in the provinces east of Saigon and in the delta.

The Ky government has sought to keep up the momentum of the Honolulu conference and its own cabinet reshuffle by staging further rallies in the provinces, and by moving ahead both with plans to set up the national advisory council and to hold provincial council elections this spring. However, there are new signs of disenchantment on the part of Buddhists, as a result of the cabinet reshuffle, and on the part of intellectual circles over the anticipated slow pace of political and economic reforms.

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Despite the Ky government's efforts to sustain the momentum generated in the wake of the Honolulu conference, there have been further indications of a hardening attitude in some circles toward the character and performance of the military regime. These signs were particularly evident during the past week in Buddhist circles, which have reacted negatively to Ky's cabinet reorganization, and among certain political and intellectual circles which appear skeptical of the government's willingness and ability to carry out reforms in the political, economic, and social fields.

2. The US Embassy reported that reactions to Ky's cabinet reshuffle were slow to develop, but tended to follow anticipated lines. Although "die-hard" southerners continue to view the government as northern-dominated, the appointment of four additional southerners to new government positions has mollified the bulk of moderate southerners. The appointment of a Catholic lay leader as secretary of youth has pleased most Catholic circles, although some Catholics are reported uneasy over the alleged Marxist background of the new economy minister. Businessmen, on the other hand, tend to expect stronger economic leadership from the cabinet revision. Buddhist leaders clearly resent the replacement of a prominent sympathizer, Ngo Trong Anh, as public works secretary and the increase of Catholic representation in the cabinet; however, the only public comment, appearing in a Saigon newspaper,

somehow back-handedly praised the smooth manner in which Ky effected his governmental changes. Other Saigon papers have devoted minimal comment to the reorganization, but one observed that the changes do not affect the country's basic need for leaders with the "courage to carry out policies they have outlined."

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4. A Buddhist ceremony held in Hué on 27 February to honor Buddhist martyrs also contained overtones of political dissatisfaction, including a hint of possible future Buddhist attacks on the government's pacification teams. One of the speakers, considered close to Tri Quang, claimed that three Buddhist youth leaders had recently been killed-- one by the Viet Cong, one by government Popular Forces, and the third by a government political action team (PAT). He urged youths to protest if similar incidents occur. Earlier this year, some Buddhists and politicians in northernmost Quang Tri Province had accused the local province chief of misusing the PATs as one argument in forcing his ouster.

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5. Buddhist leaders, however, give no indication that they are presently considering any serious effort to topple the government. The Buddhists continue to be plagued by internal dissensions, stemming partly from rivalry between Tam Chau and Tri Quang, and perhaps increasingly from conflicts between the clergy and lay leaders over the exercise of political influence. Recently, a group of laymen who are in the process of organizing a Buddhist political party appears to have antagonized Tam Chau by failing, in a mid-February meeting, to elect any

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of Chau's supporters to the party's interim leadership. This could cost the embryonic party considerable help from the Buddhist Institute's grass roots organization.

6. In addition to the Buddhist leadership, there are indications of restiveness in some intellectual and political circles partially sympathetic to the Buddhists. A prominent Vietnamese writer and composer has claimed that Saigon intellectuals were furious with Premier Ky's sarcastic response to a Saigon professor who voiced public doubts over the government's good faith in promising political and social reforms. According to a fairly reliable journalist, a group of prominent Saigon politicians, including former deputy premier Tran Van Tuyen and possibly current Foreign Minister Tran Van Do, are working on plans for a new government with support from unidentified young Saigon intellectuals. Tuyen is alleged to have told the group recently that he expected peace and the neutralization of South Vietnam in about six months.

7. Under the aegis of Directorate Secretary General Pham Xuan Chieu, the government is continuing to proceed with its plans to establish a "democracy-building" advisory council by approximately mid-March. Chieu, in consulting various groups about the composition of the 80-member council, reportedly has received some acceptable recommendations from the southern Dai Viet political party, Buddhist leader Tam Chau, and retired General Tran Van Don of the former Binh government.

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8. General Chieu is reliably reported to have made one concession which may appease some of the current criticism of the government's plan to hand-pick the advisory council membership. He has agreed to permit some prominent persons already serving on provincial or municipal councils--currently the only popularly elected groups in the country--to serve on

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the advisory council. At the same time, the government has now authorized the holding of new elections for the provincial and municipal councils this spring, rather than postponing the elections and extending the terms of the present councilmen as earlier contemplated. This decision, reached after prodding by US officials, may also help to dispel doubts of the government's good faith in promising a gradual development toward representative institutions. The provincial councils have only advisory powers, and their influence varies by province, depending upon the calibre of their members and of individual province chiefs. On balance, however, the councils appear to have been more useful and more responsible than expected when they were first elected under the Quat government in May 1965.

Economic Situation

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questions this approach because of the serious economic situation.

12. The stocks of rice in Saigon rose from 79,000 MT at the end of January to 87,000 MT on 21 February. The increase resulted totally from imports. Rice deliveries from the delta to Saigon have remained low in February, averaging barely over 1000 MT per day. Meanwhile, wholesale and retail prices of rice are rising.

13. Retail prices in Saigon rose in the week ending 21 February primarily by small amounts. The most significant increases were in rice, charcoal, and firewood. According to the USAID index, the general level of retail prices remained three percent below a month ago.

14. The prices of \$10 bills and \$10 MPC (scrip) in the Saigon free market were unchanged at 169 and 177 piasters per dollar, respectively. The price of gold rose by one piaster per dollar to 223. In Hong Kong the piaster-dollar cross rate remained at 159.

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B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. The over-all level of Communist-initiated activity for the week ending 26 February rose substantially.

2. During the period there were 939 Communist-initiated incidents compared with the preceding week's 757--or about 200 more than the weekly average for the last half of 1968 and 100 more than the 1968 weekly average. There were 26 attacks and 574 incidents of terrorism compared to 16 and 454 respectively for the previous week. Both of the large-scale attacks occurred on 21 and 23 February in Binh Thuan Province. The kill ratio this reporting period favored free world forces 2.2 to 1, down from 4.6 to 1. Viet Cong casualties were 1,122 killed and 92 captured. Totals the week before were 1,357 killed and 122 captured. South Vietnamese casualties for the reporting period were 379 killed, 826 wounded and 183 captured or missing--a total of 1,388 compared to preceding period's 694. Total US casualties rose to 887 from the 454 of the previous week; total other free world casualties also rose--from 30 to 88. The South Vietnamese lost 392 weapons and captured 264 from the Communists; enemy losses included 20 crew-served weapons, while friendly forces lost seven.

GVN/Allied Activities

3. Friendly activity continued at a high level for the third week with emphasis on search-and-destroy operations. Although there were fewer small-unit actions and no increase in battalion-size operations, there were more contacts with the enemy during this period and the level of fighting showed a marked increase.

4. Over 50 percent of ARVN weekly casualties occurred in I Corps area. On 25 and 26 February during the 1st Division (ARVN) multibattalion search-and-destroy operation in Quang Tri Province, five battalions (ARVN) became heavily engaged with an estimated two VC battalions. In the two-day battle friendly losses were 12 killed, 104 (2 US) wounded, and 6 missing. Viet Cong losses were 220 killed, 4

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captured, and 25 weapons seized. In Thua Thien Province on 25 February, a Regional Forces company engaged an estimated VC battalion, and was immediately reinforced by available 1st Division (ARVN) forces. Friendly losses were 8 killed, 22 wounded and three weapons. The VC lost 49 killed, 19 captured and 14 weapons. The combined USMC/ARVN Operation DOUBLE EAGLE II/LIEN KET 24, in southern I Corps area continued with daily contacts. Friendly losses thus far are 8 killed (4 USMC, 4 ARVN) and 133 wounded (102 USMC, 31 ARVN). Enemy losses are 70 killed, 23 captured, 44 individual weapons and three crew-served weapons seized. In Quang Ngai Province, another significant operation was conducted by the 2nd Division (ARVN) to support the local pacification program. On 23 February, contact with a VC force of unknown size resulted in friendly losses of 43 killed, 33 wounded, 28 missing and over 100 weapons lost. Viet Cong losses were 10 killed and six weapons seized.

5. In II Corps area, US forces conducted battalion-size search-and-clear operations. ARVN forces initiated pacification activities along the east side of Route 1 north of Bong Son, and ROK forces continued to secure Route 1. Cumulative friendly losses from this month-long operation now are 366 killed (239 US, 4 ROK, 123 RVN), 1,206 wounded (828 US, 20 ROK, 358 ARVN) and 6 US missing. Enemy losses were 1,742 killed, 430 captured, over 2,000 suspects detained, 302 individual weapons and 63 crew-served weapons seized. Operation VAN BUREN, conducted by the 1st Brigade, US 101st Airborne Division and the Korean Marine Brigade in the rice harvest area southwest of Tuy Hoa, terminated on 21 February with over 30,000 tons of rice harvested. Friendly losses from this 32-day operation were 98 killed (54 US, 44 ROK), 309 wounded (194 US, 115 ROK) and 2 ROK missing. Viet Cong losses were 670 killed, 49 captured and 153 weapons seized.

6. During Operation ROLLING STONE this week in III Corps area, the VC lost 122 killed and 11 captured when they attempted to penetrate the perimeter of the 1st Brigade, US 1st Infantry Division with a force estimated to be three battalions. Friendly losses were 11 killed, 74 wounded and three M-48 tanks and five M-113 APC's damaged. Operation MASTIFF continued without major contact and on

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25 February the 2nd Brigade, US 1st Infantry Division was relocated to Dau Tieng.

7. The most significant friendly activity in IV Corps area this week was the multibattalion, 21st Division (ARVN) operation in Chuong Thien Province during which armed helicopters accounted for 35 of the 41 VC killed. In addition, 35 VC with five weapons were captured, while friendly losses were one killed.

8. Free world forces conducted 88 battalion - or larger-size operations during the week ending 26 February, 44 of them achieving contact--33 RVN, two ROK, and nine US. There were 21,086 small-unit operations, including 3,313 conducted by US forces. Of the 187 which achieved contact with the enemy, 132 were conducted by US units. Sea, river, and coastal forces searched 4,116 junks and 16,728 people compared to 4,632 junks and 18,325 people respectively for last week. None of the 198 persons detained was confirmed as VC.

9. There were seven B-52 Stratofortress raids during the week ending 27 February. During the period 18-24 February there were 3,258 tactical air strikes and armed reconnaissance sorties flown by the US Air Force, Navy, Marine and Vietnamese aircraft. These strikes, in addition to supporting ground activities, produced the following results: 1,706 structures destroyed, 1,330 damaged; 80 sampans destroyed, 65 damaged; three gun emplacements destroyed; two trucks destroyed, one damaged; eight roads cut or cratered and one bridge approach cratered. In addition, 139 VC were reported probable KBA with four confirmed KBA (killed by aircraft).

Communist Activity

10. In I Corps area, the level of Communist activity doubled from that of the previous week. In Quang Tri Province on 22 February, a Popular Forces platoon and a Regional Forces company operating separately, but in close proximity to each other were attacked simultaneously. The platoon lost 20 killed, 14 wounded, seven missing and 20 individual weapons. The Regional Force company losses have not

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yet been confirmed. The attacking force was identified as an element of the 808th VC Main Force Battalion. Also on 22 February, an estimated two VC companies attacked a government security force in Quang Nam Province. A reaction force of two Ranger companies engaged an estimated VC battalion, and the subsequent heavy contact resulted in friendly casualties of 18 killed, 46 wounded, and 10 missing. Enemy losses were 114 killed. On 22 February, a US Marine Corps aircraft flying at 16,000 feet in western Quang Tri Province received fire from a suspected anti-aircraft gun.

11. In II Corps area, enemy activity remained at about the same level as the preceding week but there were more armed attacks. On 21 February, an ARVN battalion in convoy was ambushed by an estimated VC battalion in Binh Thuan Province, and on the same day an unknown number of VC attacked and overran an outpost in Quang Duc Province. On 22 February, an estimated VC battalion attacked the district town of Thien Giao in Binh Thuan Province. Friendly losses were 26 killed, including the district chief, while VC losses were 57 killed and one captured. Documents captured in Darlac Province identified the 966th Battalion, 32nd Regiment in an area northeast of Ban Me Thuot; this unit was previously located in western Pleiku Province.

12. In III Corps area there was a slight decline in enemy activity. On 18 February, an unidentified force attacked an outpost in southern Long An Province. At the same time two district towns and six other outposts in the same area came under attack or harassment. Friendly losses were 10 killed and eight wounded; while VC losses were 28 killed.

13. There was a slight increase in the number of Communist-initiated incidents during the week in IV Corps area. The Binh Thuy Airfield was harassed on 20 February by small arms and mortar fire, resulting in 10 wounded, two trucks damaged and a U-10 aircraft damaged. On 23 February, two outposts in the vicinity of Can Tho and Binh Thuy airfields were attacked by an estimated two VC companies. MACV believes these incidents may be the beginning of a VC effort in Phong Dinh Province to isolate Can Tho from the rice area of An Giang and Chau Doc provinces.

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14. National Route 1 is closed in Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Binh Tuy, and Long Khanh provinces. Route 14 is closed in Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Duc, Phuoc Long, and Binh Long provinces. Route 19 is closed west of Duc Co, Pleiku Province. Route 7 is closed in Phu Yen Province. Route 20 is closed in Lam Dong and Long Khanh provinces. Route 21 is closed in Darlac Province. Inter-provincial Route 1 is closed in Binh Duong and Phuoc Long provinces.

15. The National Railroad is operating between Saigon and Xuan Loc, Long Khanh Province; between Song La Song, Binh Thuan Province; and Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province; between Dalat, Tuyen Duc Province, and Phan Rang, Ninh Thuan Province; and between Da Nang and Hué.

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C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

1. To express better the spirit of the government's pacification effort, the US mission in Saigon has settled on the term "revolutionary development" as the translation of the Vietnamese expression for what was formerly called rural construction. Deputy Ambassador Porter has taken charge of all aspects of the US community's support of the program.

2. On 21 February, 4,500 persons entered the Yung Tau National Cadre Training Center in the first class to receive a new program of instruction designed specifically for revolutionary development cadre. Each province is represented by at least one 59-man team, while the four national priority areas (Da Nang - Hoi An, Qui Nhon - Phu Cat - Binh Khe, the area surrounding Saigon, and An Giang Province) have larger representation.

3. In an attempt to utilize the country's administrative assets more effectively, Premier Ky issued a decree ordering trainees in the National Institute of Administration (NIA) to participate in the revolutionary development program. A year of full-time work in the program will follow the NIA student's first year of training at the NIA. The student returns to the NIA for the third year, after which he spends six months of supervised probationary work in a government agency. He then graduates as a "field administrator."

4. General Nguyen Duc Thang, minister of revolutionary development, plans a series of trips to all the provinces to visit cadres, confer with members of the provincial councils, and generally to check on the progress of development programs. During the week of 20-26 February he visited the IV Corps area.

5. The refugee population continues to grow. The latest figures showing 833,875 as of 20 February, an increase of 31,934 since 11 February. The following table compares the increase in the various categories of refugees for the two reporting periods:

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	<u>Total</u>	<u>In Temporary Shelters</u>	<u>Resettled</u>	<u>Returned to... Native Villages</u>
11 Feb	801,941	450,033	279,873	72,035
20 Feb	833,875	444,549	294,902	84,424

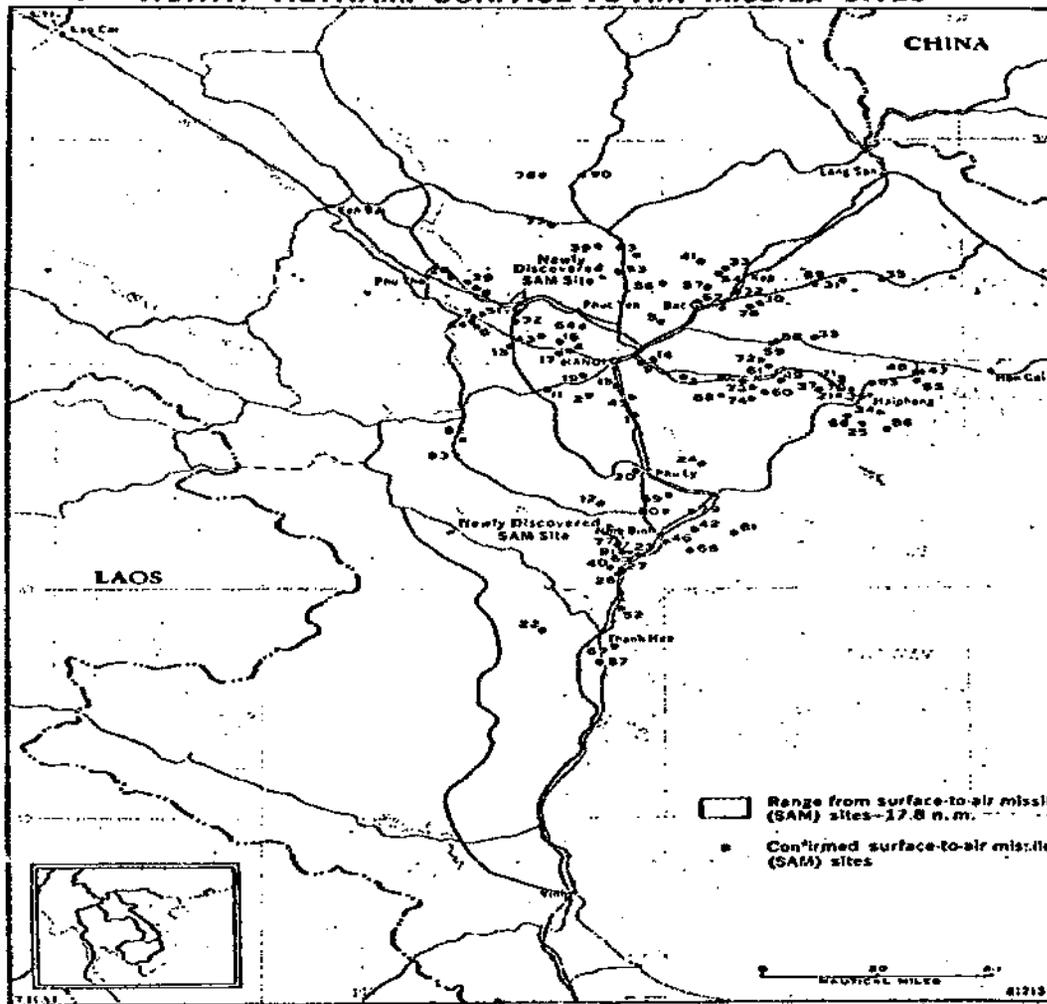
6. An encouraging trend is the number of refugees in temporary shelters. Also encouraging is the increase in the number of refugees returning to their native villages. This latter condition, if it persists, will be an indication that the government is extending its influence in the countryside.

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 eminent among them is the noncooperation of VNQDD members who are unwilling to participate in the nine-village project, a pacification effort in the national priority zone south of Da Nang. (See The Situation in South Vietnam, 29 December 1965 and 9 February 1966 for earlier reports on this project.) The support of this group, whose young men are dodging ARVN efforts to draft them, is conditional upon the resolution of security problems in the province, primarily the security of Route 1 from Da Nang to the province capital of Hoi An and to the populous agricultural river valley just to the west.

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NORTH VIETNAM: SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SITES



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II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

1. Four US aircraft were lost over North Vietnam this week bringing total US losses to 201. Of these 140 have been lost to conventional groundfire, 12 or possibly 13 to SAMs, three to MiG fighters, and the rest for reasons not directly attributable to hostile action.
2. Two new SAM sites--numbers 91 and 92--were discovered during analysis of recent photography. Both are situated within the established boundaries of SAM defenses in the areas of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Thanh Hoa, they do not extend SAM coverage, but, they do add depth to the defenses in this vital region.
3. Hanoi propaganda began this week to react to the recent US public discussions of American policy objectives in Vietnam. A broadcast on 26 February quoted extensively from Western press account of the US Senate Foreign Relations hearings to prove that public opposition to US policy in Vietnam was growing rapidly. The broadcast claimed that the hearings contributed to this growth by bringing "the truth" to the American people.
4. An indirect though more substantive comment on the recent debate appeared in a statement by North Vietnamese lawyer Do Xuan Sang on the role of the Liberation Front (NFLSV) which was also broadcast on 26 February. While not referring to the discussions on the role of the Front currently under way in the US, Sang maintained that the NFLSV "unquestionably had a juridical status in the eyes of international law" because it controlled "four-fifths of the territory of South Vietnam, three quarters of the people, discharged all its international obligations and exercised the powers of a sovereign state." Sang stopped short of calling for recognition of the Front as a government but closed his remarks by quoting Ho Chi Minh's letter of 24 January to the effect that "if the US really wants peace it must recognize the NFLSV as the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people and enter into negotiations with it."
5. Chinese reaction to the recent discussions of the Front's role appeared in a 27 February broadcast which made it clear that Peking does not think

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the Vietnamese Communists should settle for anything less than total control of the government in South Vietnam. According to the broadcast, Senator Robert Kennedy's expression of a willingness to give the Front "a role in a coalition government" was nothing but a "trick." According to Peking, the Front would be only a "minority group" in such a government, rather than the "sole representative of the Vietnamese people," as the Communists demand. The Front, asserted the broadcast, would never play the "walk-in part" of a "showpiece in a puppet regime fostered by the US."

Hanoi's Position on Discussion With British in Moscow

6. Hanoi responded quickly to Western press reports hinting that concessions in the DRV position on settling the war had been made during the 23 February contact with the DRV embassy in Moscow by Prime Minister Wilson's special representative, Lord Chalfont. A spokesman for the DRV Foreign Ministry on 25 February issued a statement summarizing the meeting which asserted that all reports carried by Western news agencies and at variance with the official statement were to be considered "distorted news." The official statement claimed that the chargé of the embassy in his conversation with the British representative had condemned UK support for the US policy, unmasked the "wicked scheme of the so-called unconditional negotiations of the US," and "clearly explained the DRV Government's four-point stand."

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III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

A. JAPAN

1. Bui Dien, secretary of state for foreign affairs and formerly special assistant to Premier Ky, is scheduled to arrive in Japan on 4 March for a five-day "unofficial" visit. |

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B. FRANCE

1. South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Do gave an interview to Vietnam Press, the semi-official GVN news agency, in which he commented more in sorrow than in anger on President De Gaulle's letter to Ho Chi Minh. Do stated that French policy on Vietnam seems to stem more from France's "offended pride" than from reason and equity. He also pointed out that De Gaulle's assertion that the GVN is not representative does not ring true since if the GVN had not broken relations, France would still have an ambassador in Saigon.

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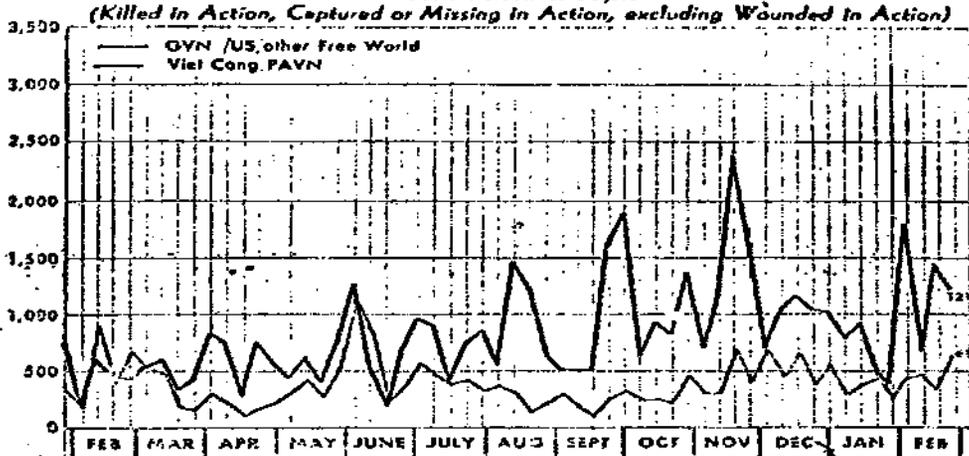
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SOUTH VIETNAM ATTLLE STATISTICS

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Total Personnel Losses

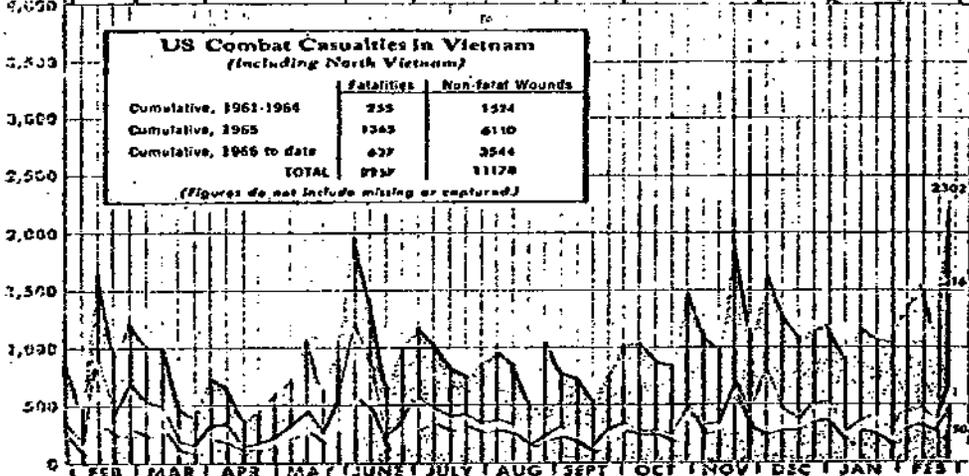
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US Combat Casualties in Vietnam
(including North Vietnam)

	Fatalities	Non-fatal Wounds
Cumulative, 1961-1964	255	1524
Cumulative, 1965	1365	6110
Cumulative, 1966 to date	627	3544
TOTAL	2247	11178

(Figures do not include missing or captured.)



Total Friendly Forces Personnel Losses (US/GVN/Other Free-World)

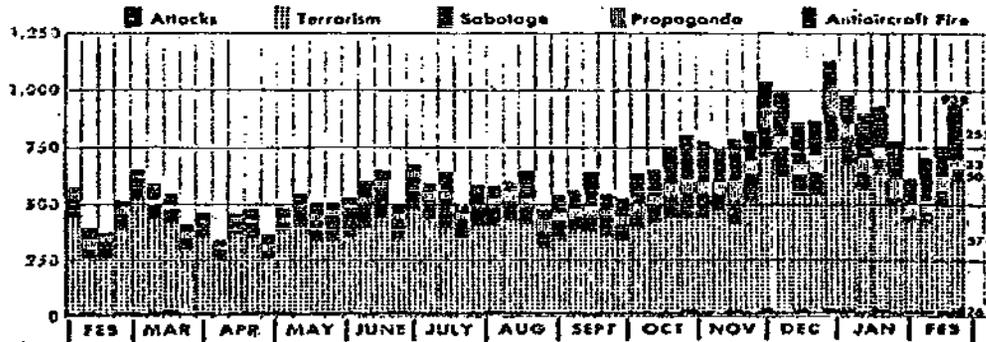
Killed in action
 Missing or Captured in action
 Wounded in action

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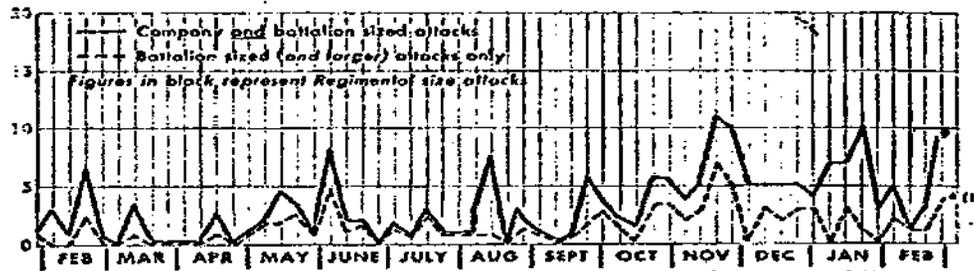
SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS
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Viet Cong Incidents

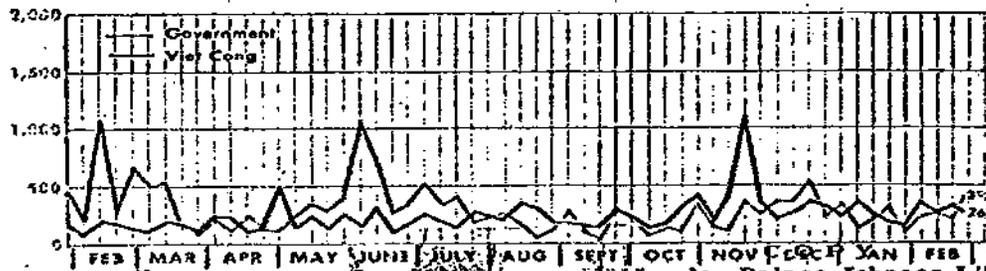
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Viet Cong Attacks



Weapons Losses



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