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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

20 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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Published by the Directorate of Intelligence
Central Intelligence AgencyTHE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(14 April - 20 April 1966)

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(The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam is based on contributions from CIA, DIA, and INR; it is edited and published by CIA without final coordination.)

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THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

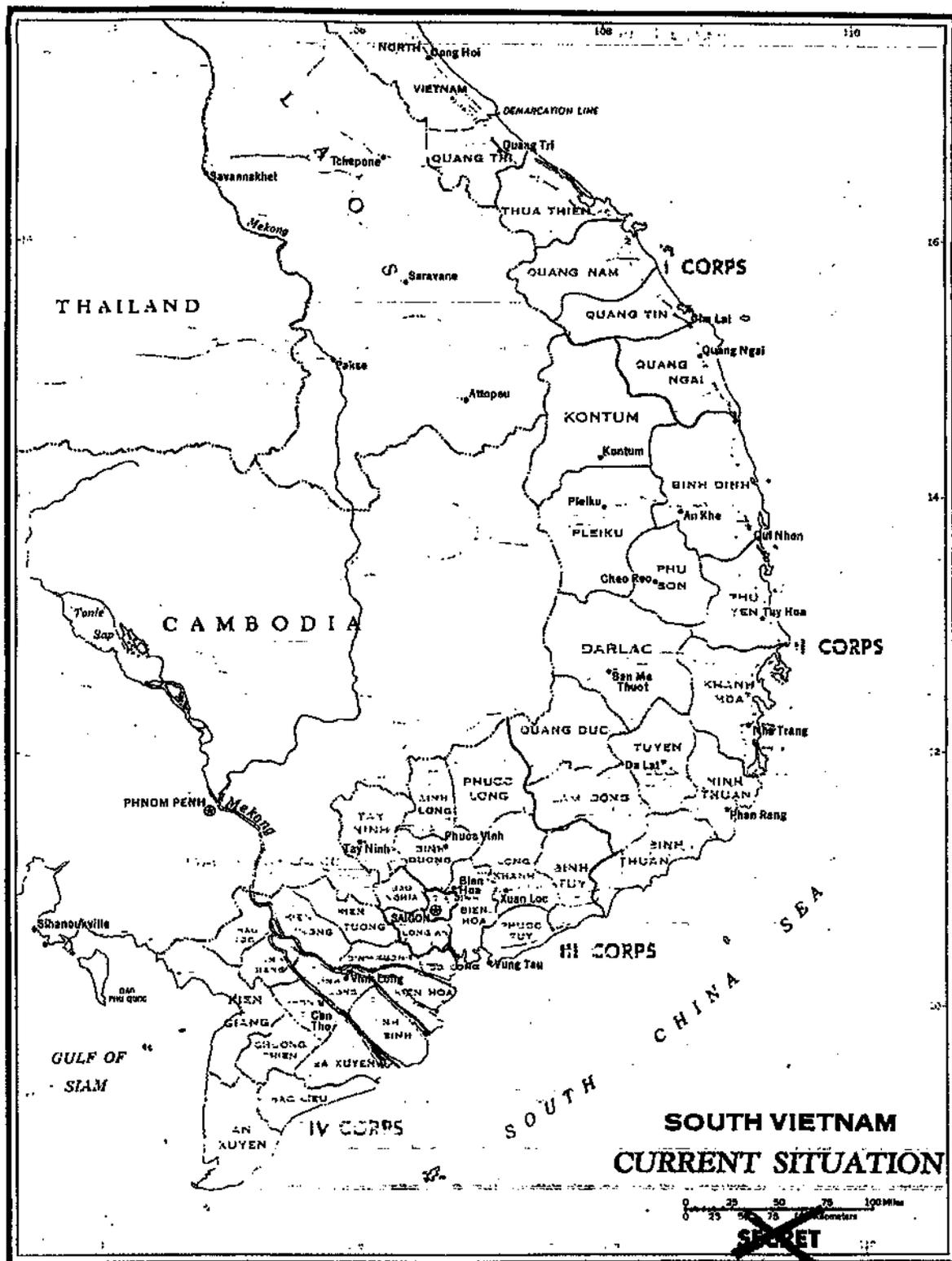
Political tension subsided, at least temporarily, as a result of the Buddhist hierarchy's declaration of satisfaction with the government's promise of early assembly elections. Although Buddhist elements in I Corps are now responding to monk Tri Quang's appeals for an end to protest activity, the situation there is still explosive, with continuing friction between antigovernment partisans, on the one hand, and armed Nationalist (VNQDD) Party followers and Catholics, on the other. There are also indications in Saigon of growing opposition to the elections by strongly anti-Buddhist and anti-Communist circles.

The over-all level of Viet Cong activity declined last week, but there was some increase in the number and intensity of Communist attacks. South Vietnamese and allied operations during the week generally kept up the pressure on the enemy, but failed to score significant results.

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAMA. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. An easing of tension in the country, at least temporarily, has followed Buddhist acceptance of the government's pledge to hold constituent assembly elections within three to five months. Antigovernment elements in I Corps are reluctantly beginning to acknowledge monk Tri Quang's appeal for an end to protest activity, but there is continuing danger that the fragile government-Buddhist accommodation may be rapidly upset by either side.

2. The decree, promulgating elections under the signature of Chief of State General Thieu, was announced on the final day of last week's National Political Congress, which agreed in effect to endorse the Buddhist position. Although the Buddhists officially boycotted the congress, they sent an "unofficial" lay observer to the concluding sessions in anticipation of the favorable turn of events, and after receiving private assurances from Premier Ky that there would be no reprisals against participants in the Buddhist "struggle" campaign. The final afternoon session of the congress, at Ky's suggestion, discussed the question of whether the present government should remain in a provisional capacity pending an elected successor. On this issue, however, the congress declared itself incompetent to make recommendations, even though most delegates supported the present government's retention.

3. The Buddhist Institute moved swiftly to turn a scheduled mammoth protest demonstration in Saigon, scheduled for the same day, into a smaller and orderly "victory parade." On the following day, 15 April, the Buddhist hierarchy--including Tri Quang--met in Saigon and issued a statement that their major demands had been satisfied and that they would suspend further protest activity. The Buddhist leaders also made it clear that they were willing to see the present government stay in office to supervise the elections, but that their attitude in the future would depend on the government's showing of good faith.

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4. The government decree, spelling out only that the function of an elected assembly is to draft a constitution, falls considerably short of original Buddhist proposals that an assembly be given power to "legalize" an interim government and to exercise quasi-legislative powers pending permanent institutions. The Buddhists may reason that having achieved a major concession, they lack strength --at least in the Saigon area--to challenge the government further at this time. They probably calculate that, in any event, future government actions will offer them issues for resuming demonstrations if they so choose.

5. Tri Quang has returned to his base in central Vietnam, where he has appealed to recalcitrant elements in I Corps to line up behind the Buddhist hierarchy's position. Both government officials and Buddhist Institute leaders had voiced some concern that despite Quang's persuasiveness with Buddhist followers, he might not be able to control the supporters of ousted corps commander Thi, or the Communist elements reported to have penetrated the "struggle movement." However, both the Hue and Da Nang militants now appear to be dropping their clamor for immediate replacement of the Ky government and the military Directorate.

6. At the same time, local frictions are continuing in I Corps, and to some extent in II Corps, between supporters and opponents of the "struggle" groups. Sporadic acts of violence have occurred between antigovernment elements, particularly armed student "suicide teams," and progovernment or strongly anti-Communist militants, including armed followers of the VNQDD (Nationalist) Party. Friction is also increasing between "struggle forces" and the Catholics. Some of this violence may be due to Viet Cong efforts to keep the situation from quieting down.

7. The new I Corps commander, General Dinh, continues to move cautiously in trying to restore order and government authority. To some extent, his cooperation with antigovernment military and civilian officials in Da Nang and elsewhere has served to entrench these elements in power. However, by visiting various provincial capitals and issuing orders to

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local army commanders, Dinh has so far succeeded in heading off major confrontations between hostile armed groups, and he has restored at least a surface appearance of normality to the Da Nang area.

8. Meanwhile, in consultation with prominent civilian politicians, the Ky government in Saigon is moving to establish procedures for carrying out elections, now tentatively slated for mid-August. Preliminary agreement has been reached to set up a committee of about 30 members, drawn from both the municipal and provincial councils and from "various organizations," to draft an electoral law and to supervise the elections. The government, however, plans to convene another consultative meeting with a broad spectrum of civilian representatives who will make recommendations on both the composition of the committee and the electoral regulations. This procedure may be indicative of government efforts to avoid any suggestion of plans to rig the elections; however, this cautious approach may also provide critics of the regime with ammunition for charges of government delaying tactics.

9. The government's promise of elections is already provoking a reaction among elements suspicious of Buddhist motives and fearful of Communist exploitation of the ballot box. On 17 April, militant Catholics from a northern refugee community near Saigon staged a demonstration endorsing the principle of elections, but implying that they will combat any procedures permitting the Viet Cong to infiltrate an assembly. A group of Saigon University professors has also proposed delaying the elections until the danger of Communist political inroads has diminished. An influential southern Buddhist lay leader, who has long been critical of the political role of the Buddhist clergy, privately expressed the view that pressure for elections is only a device by Tri Quang to gain control of the government.

10. Some of the Saigon vernacular press, particularly papers sympathetic to the Catholics, has also questioned the wisdom of attempting to elect a national assembly at this time. Since the government's decree was issued, however, the militant nationalist press, including Buddhist organs, has begun to tone

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down earlier overtones of anti-Americanism. Dat To, a paper usually voicing Tri Quang's views, has now even carried an editorial implying that the US has some justification for intervening in Vietnam's internal affairs, but warned that US involvements will be judged by their effects on Vietnam's vital interests.

11. The Saigon press generally has reacted with alarm to the shooting of an editor-publisher, whose newspaper offices had a week earlier been sacked by hoodlums during a Buddhist demonstration. The editor had been sharply critical of the disruptive tactics of the Buddhist clergy, and there is some feeling among press circles that he may have been gunned down by Buddhist elements. He is, however, the second anti-Communist journalist to have been shot in Saigon in recent months. The incident may have been perpetrated by the Viet Cong, both to increase dissension during the present unrest and to continue a campaign of intimidation against anti-Communist intellectuals.

12. According to press reports, one of Tri Quang's top lieutenants has already accused the government of planning a "false coup" in order to renege on its promises. The rumors of dissension among the military, coupled with the rise of vocal opposition to elections, may already be adding to a growing Buddhist suspicion about the government's real intentions. An account of a Directorate meeting, held on 18 April to discuss the election procedures and the continued unrest in I Corps, indicates that there is still serious division among the top generals over the desirability of taking a moderate or firm approach toward the dissidents in I Corps. The possibility of internal changes to eliminate disunity in the military, or even of rash action by the advocates of a hard line, cannot be ruled out.

Economic Situation

13. Import activity in Saigon is returning to normal after seven weeks of decline, partly because businessmen appear to believe that the GVN is prepared to tolerate some black market activity and partly because some merchants apparently feel that

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the present political crisis has distracted the GVN from its anticorruption campaign. Businessmen and bankers continue to hold that a serious interruption of business activity and a significant increase in capital flight is not likely unless the political situation becomes much worse.

14. The US Embassy in Saigon reports that even allowing for the present political difficulties, Minister of Economy Au Truong Thanh has shown little willingness to cooperate closely with the embassy on important economic matters. The minister has proven to be difficult, unpredictable, and sometimes secretive. He tells his subordinates little of his intentions, and it has been difficult to find out what is taking place in the ministry.

15. Deliveries to Saigon of pigs and rice, two key food items, have been adequate during early April. According to the US Embassy, recent trends in pig arrivals show that rural producers and suppliers still have considerable capability to maintain shipments in the face of Viet Cong obstruction. Because of the satisfactory deliveries of pigs, the GVN appears to have given up for the present thoughts of relaxing price ceilings that heretofore had the effect of reducing deliveries of hogs to the Saigon market.

16. Retail prices rose for the week ending 15 April, led by perennially scarce sweetened condensed milk. Rice prices continued upward as a result of higher GVN-purchase and open-market prices set by Minister Thanh. The price of wheat flour was stabilized by the arrival of substantial imports. Apparently in response to the slackening of government controls, the prices of iron and steel products and of fertilizer continued to rise.

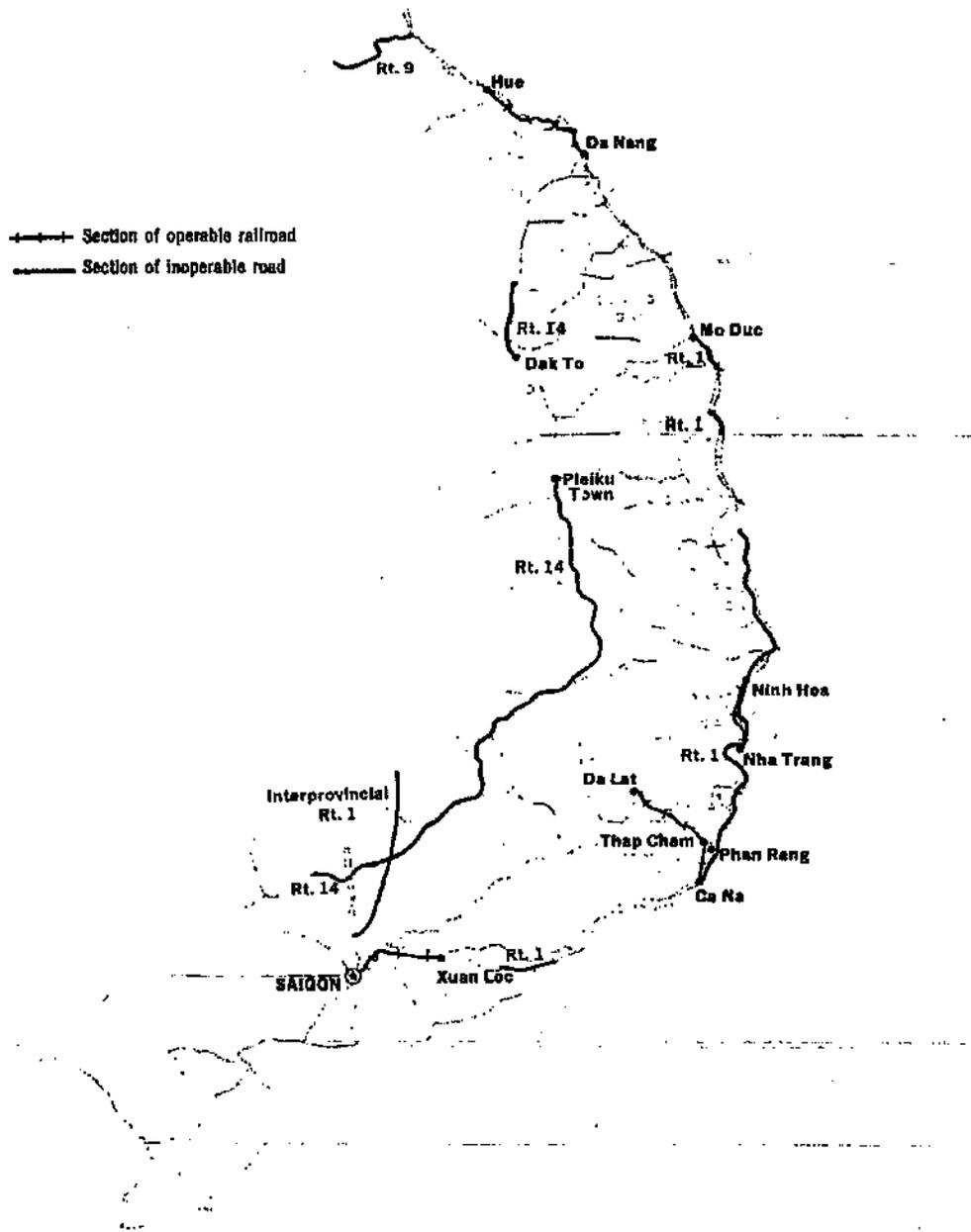
17. In the Saigon free market, prices of \$10 bills rose by five piasters per dollar to 172, which is close to the peak level of 175 reached in 1965. The price of \$10 MPC (scrip) rose by three piasters per dollar to 119, and gold was up two piasters per dollar to 246. The piaster-dollar cross rate in Hong Kong increased from 155 to 156.

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CURRENT OPERATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND COASTAL RAILROAD



Information as of 17 April 1966

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B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. The over-all level of Communist-initiated activity decreased for the week ending 17 April 1966, falling to a new low for the year.

2. During the period there were 607 Communist-initiated incidents compared to last week's 815. There were 17 attacks (three of battalion size or larger) and 463 acts of terrorism compared to last week's five and 537, respectively. The kill ratio favored free world forces 2.75 to 1 compared to last week's 5.6 to 1 (recomputed). Viet Cong losses for the period were 608 killed and 135 captured. Vietnamese casualties for the period were 141 killed, 362 wounded and 52 missing or captured--a total of 555 compared to last week's 278. US losses for the week were 89 killed, 635 wounded, and 2 missing or captured--a total of 726 compared to last week's 598. Free world forces' losses decreased from 40 to 22. The South Vietnamese lost 237 weapons (six crew served).

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA/ CAPTURED</u>	<u>TOTAL CASUALTIES</u>
US	89	635	2	726
ARVN	141	362	52	555
THIRD COUNTRY	3	19	--	22
VIET CONG	608	---	135	743

GVN/Allied Activities

3. Friendly large-unit operations and resulting enemy contacts both increased. Small-unit operations and enemy contacts decreased.

4. In I Corps, US Marines terminated Operation ORANGE in Quang Nam Province. Latest reported casualties were 18 friendly killed and 92 wounded, while Viet Cong losses were 57 killed and 61 captured. In Quang Tin Province, elements of the 1st ARVN Division terminated search-and-destroy Operation LAM/SON-255

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with friendly losses of three wounded. The Viet Cong suffered 33 killed and four captured, with 16 individual weapons lost. Operation QUYET THANG 184, conducted by elements of the 2d ARVN Division, terminated in Quang Ngai Province. Friendly forces lost 11 killed, 45 wounded, and nine individual weapons while inflicting on the enemy casualties of 70 killed and three captured together with the loss of 19 individual weapons. USMC/ARVN Operation NEVADA/LIEN KET 34 terminated with cumulative friendly casualties of three killed and 45 wounded (14 US) and enemy losses of 68 killed, 23 captured, and 16 individual weapons.

5. Elements of the US 101st Airborne Division and ROK Marine Brigade continue Operation FILLMORE in Phu Yen Province of II Corps. Friendly cumulative losses have been 13 killed and 88 wounded. The Viet Cong have lost 165 killed. Operation BUN KAE 66-5 conducted by a regiment of the ROK Capital Division in Binh Dinh Province terminated. Friendly losses were 23 killed and 62 wounded. Reportedly, the Viet Cong lost 292 killed, 74 captured, and 30 individual weapons.

6. In III Corps, the US 1st Infantry Division concluded Operation ABILENE in Phuoc Tuy Province. Cumulative losses were 48 friendly killed and 138 (3 US) wounded. Enemy losses were 92 killed and 20 captured.

7. The one day search-and-destroy Operation CUU LONG 7 conducted by 7th ARVN Division elements in Kien Tuong Province, IV Corps, resulted in Viet Cong losses of 140 killed. Friendly casualties were 11 killed, 8 wounded, and two missing.

8. Free world forces conducted 98 battalion-size or larger operations during the week, 47 of them achieving contact: 30 GVN, ten US, two ROK, and five combined. There were 24,535 small-unit operations, including 3,250 conducted by US forces. Of the 131 that achieved contact with the enemy, 64 were conducted by US units.

Allied Air Activity

9. Eighteen B-52 Stratofortress missions utilizing 86 aircraft were flown during the week ending 17 April.

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The target areas were in Thua Thien and Quang Tri provinces in South Vietnam, the Mu Gia Pass area in North Vietnam, and along the South Vietnamese - Laotian border.

10. On 11 April, 29 aircraft (ROCK KICK III) struck the North Vietnamese side of Mu Gia Pass. Poststrike photography reveals 245 impacts inside and 270 outside the target area. On 15 April, RAT MAT I and II, with six aircraft each, struck in Quang Tri Province in an effort to thwart a possible attack on the special forces camp at Khe Sanh. While no poststrike results have been received, ground follow-up action is tentatively scheduled. Twelve missions of three aircraft each struck Viet Cong infiltration points on the South Vietnamese - Laotian border. Three missions (LONG BEAK II) totaling nine aircraft struck southwest of Hue at Viet Cong supply areas. Poststrike photography of these three missions reveals 64 impacts inside and 51 outside the target area.

11. During the period 8-14 April, a total of 2,540 tactical airstrikes and armed reconnaissance sorties were flown by the combined efforts of the US Navy, Air Force, Marine, and VNAF aircraft. The cumulative results of these strikes as reported by the pilots included destruction of 1,631 structures, 41 sampans, 20 bunkers and trenches, 6 automatic weapons sites, 2 dams, and 1 ammunition dump. Damage was reported to 1,285 structures, 29 sampans, 10 bunkers, 9 foxholes, and 1 AW site. There were 23 secondary explosions reported. On 13 April, a USAF O-1A Birdog on a visual reconnaissance flight was brought down by ground fire approximately 70 miles south of Saigon. The crew was rescued.

Communist Activity

12. I Corps continues to lead all other areas in Communist incidents with 227 reported. On 14 April, an estimated Viet Cong battalion-size force attacked an outpost in Quang Ngai Province. Reaction forces for relief of the outpost reported heavy contact with Viet Cong company-size units on the same day. On 16 April, a well-organized Viet Cong force attacked the positions of a US Marine company in Quang Nam Province.

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Other activity was limited to a variety of harassing actions.

13. Enemy activity in II Corps dropped almost 50 percent from that reported last week. An attack by an estimated Viet Cong company on an ARVN company in Binh Dinh Province resulted in friendly losses of seven killed, 13 wounded, and 24 missing. One Viet Cong was captured and two suspects detained.

14. On 11 April during Operation ABILENE in Phuoc Tuy Province, III Corps, a company from the 2d Battalion, 16th US Infantry, was surrounded by a Viet Cong force estimated to be a battalion from the 94th Viet Cong Regiment. During the two-hour fight, 34 US soldiers were killed and 80 wounded. Nine Viet Cong were killed. On 13 April, Tan Son Nhut airbase was subjected to an intense 15-minute attack by Viet Cong employing 82-mm mortars and 75-mm recoilless rifles. The losses resulting from the 157 rounds fired at the base were seven US killed and 149 wounded (including 14 ARVN), as well as four aircraft destroyed and 58 damaged. In addition, 400,000 gallons of fuel were destroyed.

15. In IV Corps an estimated Viet Cong battalion attacked a forward operating base in Kien Tuong Province on 10 April. The attackers employed a flame-thrower, the first reported use of such a weapon in IV Corps. Captured documents indicate that the attacking force was the 261st Main Force Battalion, Dong Thap I, Viet Cong Regiment. An ARVN relief force made heavy contact on 11 April. Casualties from these two actions were 28 friendly killed (1 US) and 228 Viet Cong killed (US estimate including a body count of 140). The popular force training center in Kien Hoa Province was overrun on 14 April by a Viet Cong force. Friendly losses were 50 killed and 36 wounded; 24 civilians were wounded as well. Weapons losses included one 60-mm mortar and 116 individual weapons. Six Viet Cong were killed.

Status of Transportation Routes

16. The only changes in the status of major transportation routes are that National Route 1 has been reopened in Quang Tin and Binh Thuan provinces, and the national railroad is again in operation between Nha Trang and Ninh Hoa in Khanh Hoa Province.

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C. REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

1. One of the most promising areas of tangible Vietnamese action taken as a result of US recommendations continues to lie in the field of revolutionary development. With the exception of I Corps, progress is visible in many sections of South Vietnam as funds are released in record amounts, cadre groups are trained, and technical ministries begin to coordinate their activities with the Ministry of Revolutionary Development. However, the revised program is still in its elementary stages and further progress will depend on the work of cadre and other specialized groups in the field and on the degree of security that can be provided for the population with whom they will work.

2. The 63-man controller group that will be responsible for inspecting all phases of revolutionary development has been formed and will now undergo two weeks of training. It will then be broken up into nine teams, one for each of the four corps and five others for specific tasks as directed by General Thang. The chief of the group, who recently returned from training in the United States, will be assisted by two civilian controllers, 12 recent graduates from the National Institute of Administration, and 41 officers from the ARVN Officers Candidate School.

3. In addition to cadre groups, each province will have at least one pilot or model hamlet to demonstrate across-the-board civilian activities such as agriculture, health, information, and self-help projects. It is expected that about 15 percent of the total pacification effort in each province will be committed to the pilot hamlets.

4. The prospects for successful, progressive revolutionary development projects in I Corps have been complicated by the political turmoil there during the past month and a half. None of the goals programmed for the first quarter of 1966 in the National Priority Area in Quang Nam Province have been completed in spite of attempts by US Marines to provide security. The embassy feels that as long as the VNQDD (Nationalist) Party disassociates itself from the pacification plan, the GVN chain of command will remain fragmented and unable to recruit military and

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civilian cadre locally, resulting in the priority area not being able to fulfill its plans. Further complications have been introduced by the resignations of the civilian chiefs in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces. The resignation in Quang Tin reportedly involved the inability of the chief to cope with a confrontation between antigovernment demonstrators and armed VNQDD forces from another province.

Returnees (Chieu Hoi)

5. The official tally for March is 2,336 returnees, most of whom defected in the II Corps area where there were large military operations and air strikes. In the week ending 9 April, 646 defectors were registered, of whom 475 were military cadre. Incidents of Viet Cong terrorism against Chieu Hoi centers have increased; two centers were attacked recently, and a claymore mine was exploded on the edge of a third center.

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II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

1. During the week US aircraft struck several major targets in close proximity to the Hanoi-Haiphong area. On 19 April the Uong Bi thermal power plant and the Haiphong highway bridge were attacked but the exact amount of damage cannot as yet be determined. At the power plant, pilots reported seeing detonations in the target area and the simultaneous extinguishing of not only the lights at the plant but those in the area of Haiphong.

2. Pilot reporting on the bridge strike indicated that all ordnance was on target and that one span of the bridge had been dropped. Two USN F-8 CRUSADERS escorting the strike force to the Haiphong area were downed by ground fire.

3. On 17 April two surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites south of Hanoi were attacked by US aircraft. Both sites were left aflame and a secondary explosion was observed at one site. Prior to the strike the aircraft were fired upon by two SAMs but were able to take evasive action.

4. On the same day, US Navy jets attacked a SAM site some 25 miles south of Vinh. They dropped two 1,000-pound bombs on the site, but dust and smoke precluded an accurate damage assessment. At least two SAM firing battalions are believed to be operating in the vicinity of Vinh and have probably accounted for the loss of six US aircraft in the area since 25 February.

Mu Gia Pass Damage Assessment

5. Poststrike photography of the 12 April B-52 Stratofortress bomber raid against Route 15 leading into Mu Gia Pass indicates that over-all damage to the route was minimal and that the damaged areas were probably by-passed within three days. According to the photography, Route 15 was cratered in five places for a total length of 2,500 feet and a small landslide was noted in one place.

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III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTSA. CAMBODIA

1. Radio Phnom Penh announced on 14 April that Prince Sihanouk had invited NFLSVN chairman Nguyen Huu Tho to send representatives to Phnom Penh as soon as possible. These delegates, "together with those of the Sangkum, Vietnam Fatherland Front, and the Neo Lao Hak Xat, will be charged with the task of setting up a permanent secretariat of the Indo-chinese peoples." As yet, there are no indications that similar invitations have been sent to the other groups, or that any replies have been received.

2. The decision to set up such a secretariat was made at the Indochinese Peoples Conference that met at Phnom Penh over a year ago. At that time, there were indications that both the Hanoi and NFLSVN representatives to the conference had misgivings about establishing the organization in Cambodia for fear of losing control over its actions. It is possible that Hanoi has permitted Sihanouk to go ahead with his project in return for the recent agreement to raise the North Vietnamese mission in Cambodia from commercial to "government" (but not diplomatic) status.

B. SOUTH KOREA

On 19 April, Seoul radio carried a South Korean Foreign Ministry announcement that GVN Chief of State Thieu has postponed his official visit to Seoul, which had been scheduled for early May.

C. GABON

A GVN Foreign Office official stated that the Vietnamese ambassador in Tunis would visit Libreville in order to make "initial contact" with the Gabon Government. He also said that the GVN hoped to accredit its ambassador in Tunis to several other African nations, including Libya, Cameroon, and Gabon. The GVN presently has embassies in Rabat, Dakar, Tunis, and Abidjan.

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D. FREE WORLD AID

1. West Germany. The West German Interior Ministry has informed the US Embassy in Bonn that eight tons of pharmaceuticals will be shipped to Saigon by charter aircraft between 21 and 25 April.

2. South Korea. A 3,560-man Korean regimental brigade, destined to reinforce the ROK "Tiger" Division, arrived in South Vietnam on 16 April aboard a US Navy troopship. The division is now at its full strength of three combat regiments.

3. Switzerland. A Swiss medical team comprising two doctors, one x-ray technician, one administrator, and five nurses arrived in Saigon on 14 April. The team will be assigned to Kontum Province to replace the Philippine surgical team that is being reassigned to My Tho. There are now 11 free world medical teams operating in Vietnam, altogether involving 99 medical personnel.

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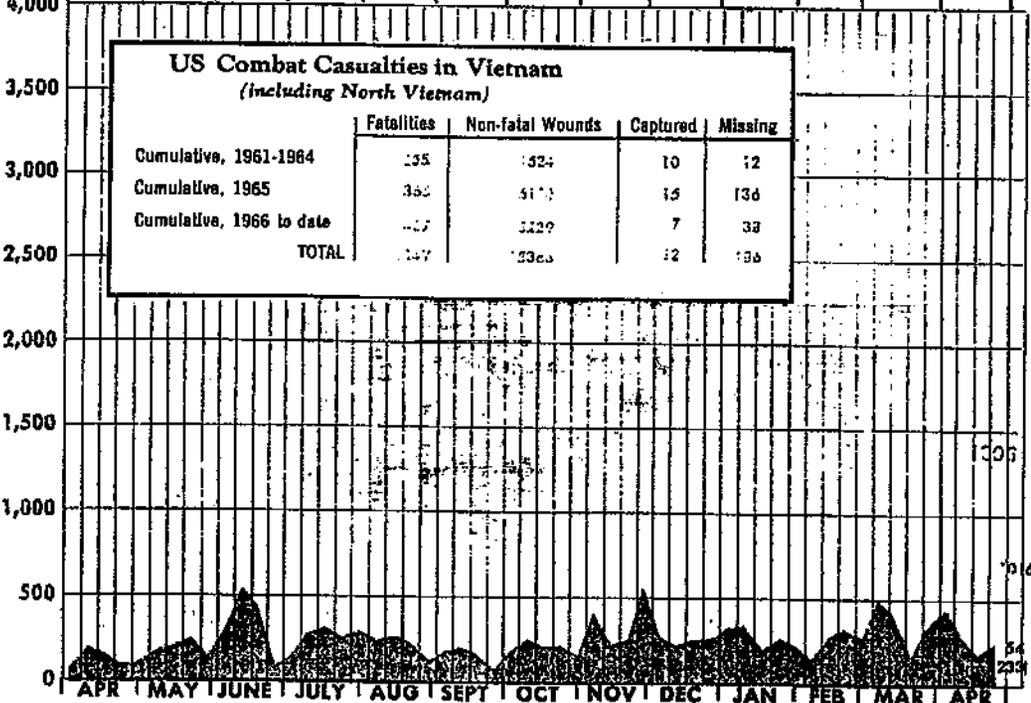
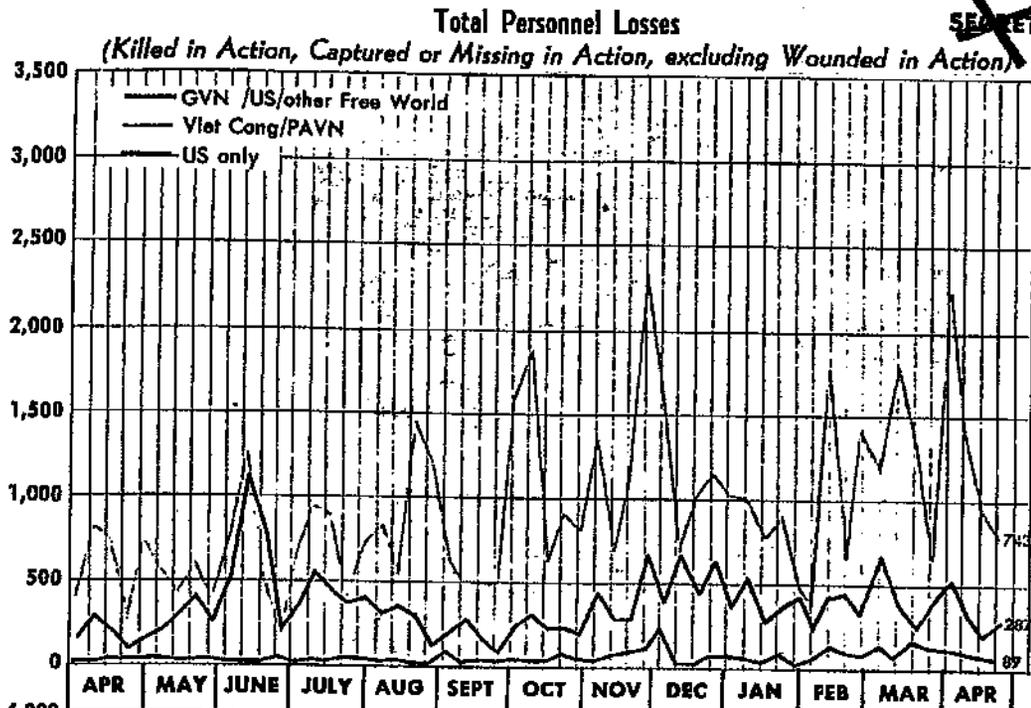
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SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS

WEEKLY REPORT 10 APRIL - 17 APRIL 1966

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	Fatalities	Non-fatal Wounds	Captured	Missing
Cumulative, 1961-1964	135	1324	10	12
Cumulative, 1965	350	5100	15	136
Cumulative, 1966 to date	107	1129	7	33
TOTAL	602	2363	32	181

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

Killed in action
 Missing or Captured in action
 Wounded in action

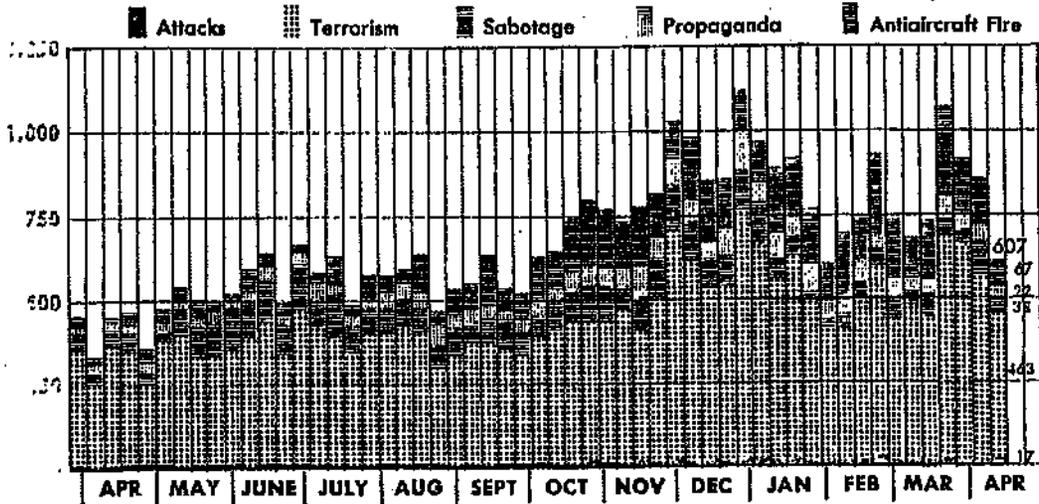
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SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS

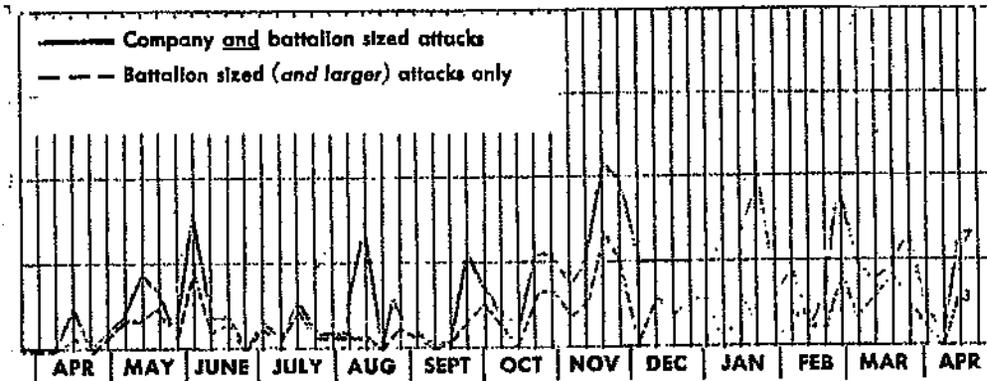
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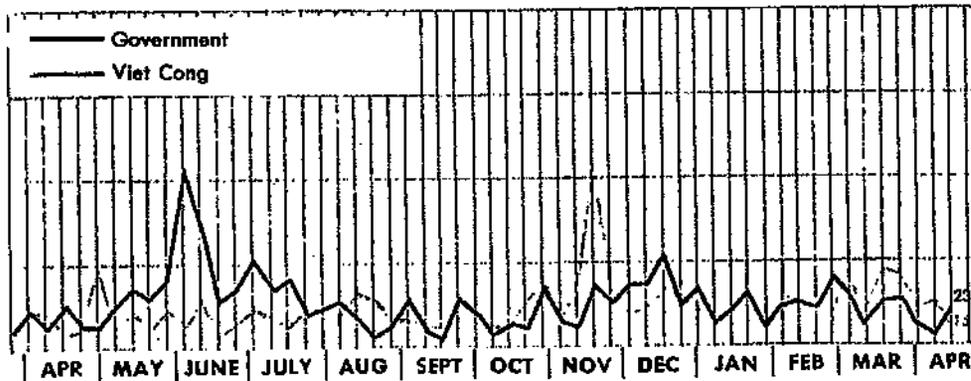
Viet Cong Incidents



Viet Cong Attacks



Weapons Losses



~~SECRET~~
NO FOREIGN DISSEM

NO FOREIGN DISSEM
~~SECRET~~