

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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Wednesday, February 21, 1968 -- 2:30 p.m.

Mr. President:

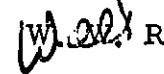
I believe you should read the attached documents:

1. Gen. DePuy's rather brilliant comparison of Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu -- at least the first six pages. On page 5 (marked by me in red) are the major differences. On page six (marked by me in green) are his predictions of future enemy tactics.
2. Three most persuasive interrogation reports on the enemy's campaign plan, from a high level prisoner held at Danang.

Taken together, they define what we are up against.

My judgment is we can deal with it in the weeks and months ahead; but we shall need:

- a plan to take the offensive;
- probably more troops in a hurry.

 Rostow

1/21/68 TO
C. CLIFFORD
ATTENTION
Drs told both

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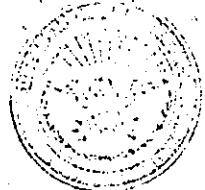
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White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By JRW, NARA Date 3/28/94

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THE JOINT STAFF

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

Excellent

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR
COUNTERINSURGENCY AND SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF

Subject: Comparison of the Khe Sanh Campaign with
Dien Bien Phu

I. General

1. Now that the battle of Khe Sanh seems about to enter the critical phase, it may be worthwhile to compare both the general and local situations with the battle of Dien Bien Phu. General Westmoreland has made a decision to defend Khe Sanh. By this decision he is accepting battle on terrain and at a time selected by the enemy. There are those who doubt the wisdom of his decision. It seems highly likely that the critics and doubters will increase in numbers as costs, casualties and battlefield equipment losses are revealed during the course of the battle. We always know about our own losses from the beginning stages of the battle. It will be many months, perhaps years, before the full extent of enemy losses will be known to us. Because of this, criticism and second guessing comes easily. For these reasons, it seems important to draw a comparison between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu to provide background for a military judgment which has already been taken by the commanders of the ground and naval forces under the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

2. In the brief report which follows, there is a statistical comparison of the forces involved in terms of their strength, firepower, mobility and support and the physical environment in the area of the two battles. However, before we examine those comparisons it should be established that there is an overall similarity between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu in the eyes of the enemy. The following subparagraphs

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 82-290

30W/125 NARA, Date 3/28/74

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EXCERPT - 1
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downgrading and
declassification

endeavor to outline the enemy view of the general situation in South Vietnam and the importance of Khe Sanh to his apparent strategy:

- a. In 1953 General Navarre replaced General Salan as the French Commander. The forces available to him numbered about 522,000. Of these forces approximately forty seven percent or 245,000 were local auxiliaries including Vietnamese, Thai and Cambodians. The Government of Vietnam which had been thrown together as a political expedient under Bao Dai was weak politically and administratively. Corruption was rampant and subversion and penetration widespread. The Viet Minh had captured the patriotic theme of national independence.
- b. Widespread guerrilla attacks from the Tonkin Delta to Cau Mau had tied down in defensive bases the bulk of the French Union Forces and their local auxiliaries. De Lattre had left behind a fortified line in the Tonkin Delta manned by auxiliaries and second line troops. It was the opinion of General Giap that the opponent was on the horns of a dilemma. ^{1/} If he concentrated his forces by withdrawing them from the defense of the populated areas, he contributed to the vulnerability of the rear, stopped pacification operations, and accelerated the possibility of an early takeover by the Communists leading to a "mass uprising". Alternatively, if he remained spread out in a defensive posture then the Viet Minh regiments and Divisions could concentrate at will and destroy his forces piecemeal.
- c. In order to shake loose some mobile forces Navarre planned to turn over the pacification task to the Vietnamese troops. Giap calculated that these were neither inspired nor reliable and would pose no serious obstacle to the Viet Minh strategy.
- d. As soon as Navarre assembled his mobile forces, Giap ordered an immediate offensive by guerrillas throughout the country. When French forces were committed at Dien Bien Phu, Giap ordered an offensive in Laos at Seno, Thakek and Luang Prabang and in Vietnam at Tuy Hoa, Pleiku and An Khe. ^{1/} In February, the Viet Minh seized forty-five strong points in the Tonkin Delta and most of these through defections.
- e. The Viet Minh had long been convinced that they would not succeed unless and until they achieved a

^{1/} For compendium of NVN statements and analysis see Annex A

3. It is interesting to note that as the Americans left Dien Bien Phu, they left behind a large number of Viet Minh prisoners. Presumably, as any military headquarters or staff would do, the Viet Minh deployed around Dien Bien Phu the largest force they could hope to supply and sustain in intensive combat. It is noteworthy that the enemy concentrated their forces at Dien Bien Phu.

4. Although the strategic situation in South Vietnam today differs substantially from the situation in 1953 and 1954, there are enough similarities so that the North Vietnamese might well construct in their own minds, with some wistful thinking, a reasonable parallel.

5. One last general point, prior to Dien Bien Phu, the French Government had decided to negotiate an end to the war. The Viet Minh were aware of this, and in fact, conducted negotiations with the French Government, while Dien Bien Phu was still in progress.

Compassion

NON-COMPREHENSIVE STATISTICAL COMPENDIUM

Dien Bian Phu No Sanh
Open valley with jungle covered mountains.

100

Dien Bien Phu
The Semu
Open valley with
jungle covered
mountains on 2 sides
No open roads
Open plateau with
overlooking jungle
covered mountains
No open roads

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1. LINE OF BATTLE

2. TERRAIN

3. WEATHER

c. Distances
250 KM to nearest
air and log base
(Hanoi)
64 KM to HANG MIEN
260 KM to Danang

NE monsoon rain-
reduced visibility
200

NE monsoon rain-
reduced visibility
200

7. Opposing Forces (See Annex B)

Dien Bien Phu

Khe Sanh

a. Forces

(1) Infantry 5 Divs (-) ~~43000~~ 4 Divs (+) ~~38390~~
(2) Artillery** 96 tubes 48 HOW (+) (Est)
48 120" mortars 24 mortars (Est) 120
16 122mm rockets 36 122mm rocket
Launchers 105 Reconnaiss
(75 or 90mm)

(3) AAA 35-37" 24-37" 80 12.7" machine- 84 12.7" machine
gun gun

b. Equipment

(1) Infantry 7,235 French and 5,906 USMC
American 400 VN Rangers
3,579 Auxiliaries 500 Immigrants
(VN, Thai)

Total ~~10,804~~

~~10,804~~

(2) Artillery On position 28 Howitzers 24 Howitzers
24 120 mm mortars 6 4.2 mortars
(3) Armor 10 Lt tanks None
(4) Other Artillery None 12 - 175 mm guns
In Range

** Estimated on basis 03 and 2023

1. LINE OF BATTLE

2. TERRAIN

3. WEATHER

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8. Supporting Reinforcing Forces

a. <u>Combat air</u>	Dien Bien Phu	Khe Sanh
(1) Fighters/ Fighter bombers	<u>77</u>	200+ 200 (+) on call
(2) Bombers	<u>47 (B-26)</u>	<u>B-52 (30/day)</u>
(3) Sorties (Maximum in one day)		
(a) Fighter	99	500 (+)
(b) Bomber	38	40
(4) Ratio bomb tonnage delivered per day approx		
<i>instead</i>		
b. <u>Loc Air</u>		
(1) etc	43 C-119 29 C-47 (Maximum one day delivery 123 tons)	60 C-123 108 C-130 + necessary cargo helicopt augmentation (up to 1,000 tons)
(2) Helicopter	Utility only	500+ includin CH-47 CH-54 Heavy lift as req.
c. <u>Mobile Reserves</u>	6 or 7 Infantry Bns (night delivery only)	7-10MC Bns 22 USA Bns All capable airmobile introduction

III. Campaign Scenario (To Date) (Annex C, Scenario)

9. The sequence of events and preparations are similar in many respects. In both cases the ~~buildup of enemy forces~~ over a period of ~~about a month~~ was followed by a slow encirclement. Prior to the main attack there was a prolonged supply activity and just prior to the attack, a series of

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coordinated attacks against population centers and support facilities, particularly airfields and LOCs. If the premise in this report is correct -- that is that Khe Sanh is a Dien Bien Phu in the eyes of the NVA, then the evaluation below is probably close to the mark as an extrapolation from the past.

IV. Evaluation

10. Probable enemy course of action:

- a. Attempt to strangle Khe Sanh by "axis" or feeder trenches ala Dien Bien Phu.
- b. Deny use of Khe Sanh airfield.
- c. Dig antitank and increase mines with overhead cover.
- d. Ambush and annoy LZs and supply and commanding terrain.
- e. Attack supporting artillery and airfields as far south as Cam Ranh Bay, Tuy Hoa, perhaps Phan Rang and Bien Hoa.
- f. Intendict route I north of Dakang.
- g. Raise level guerilla and sapper activity throughout country.
- h. Initiate negotiations.

W. E. DePUY
Major General, USA

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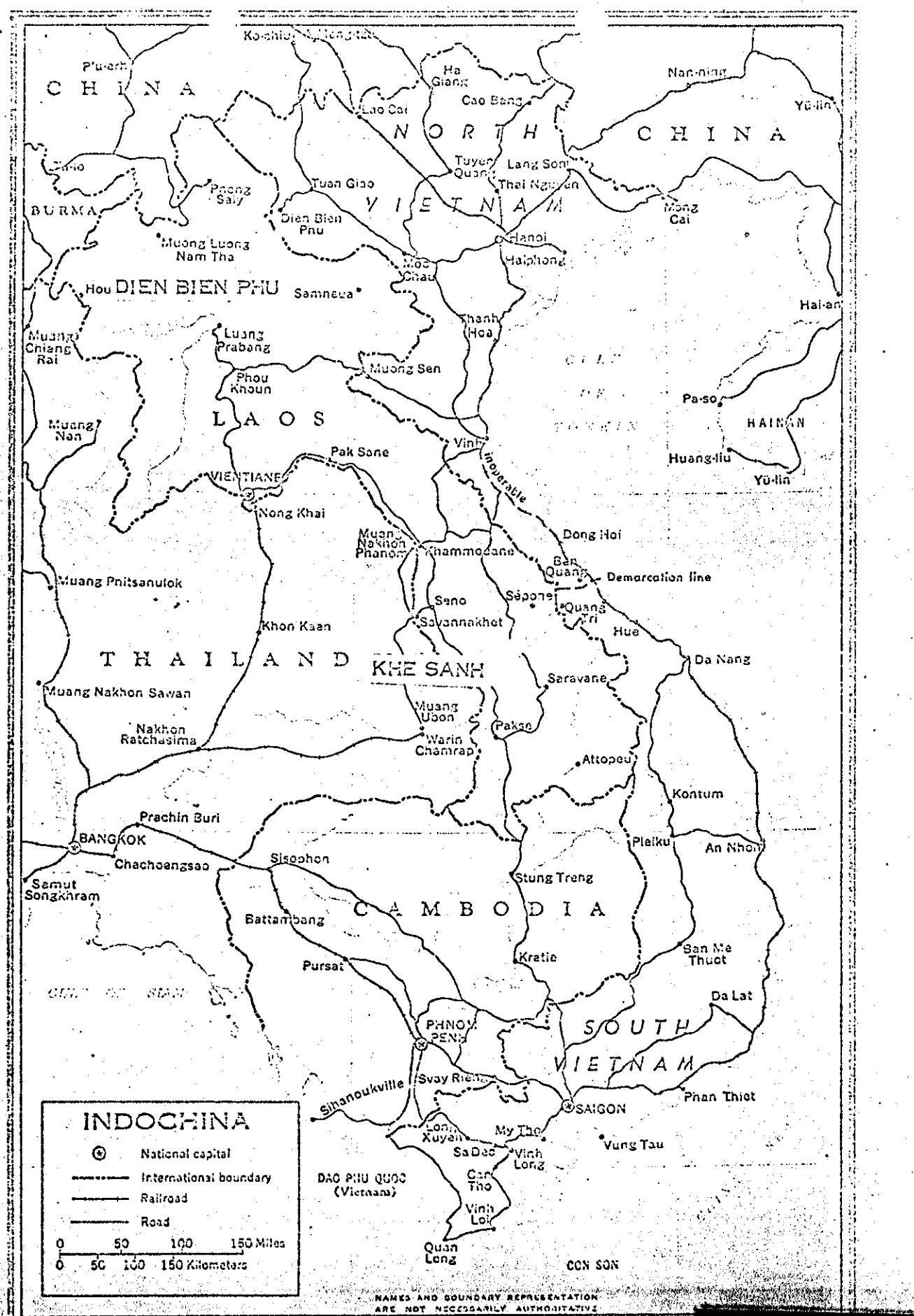
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MAPS

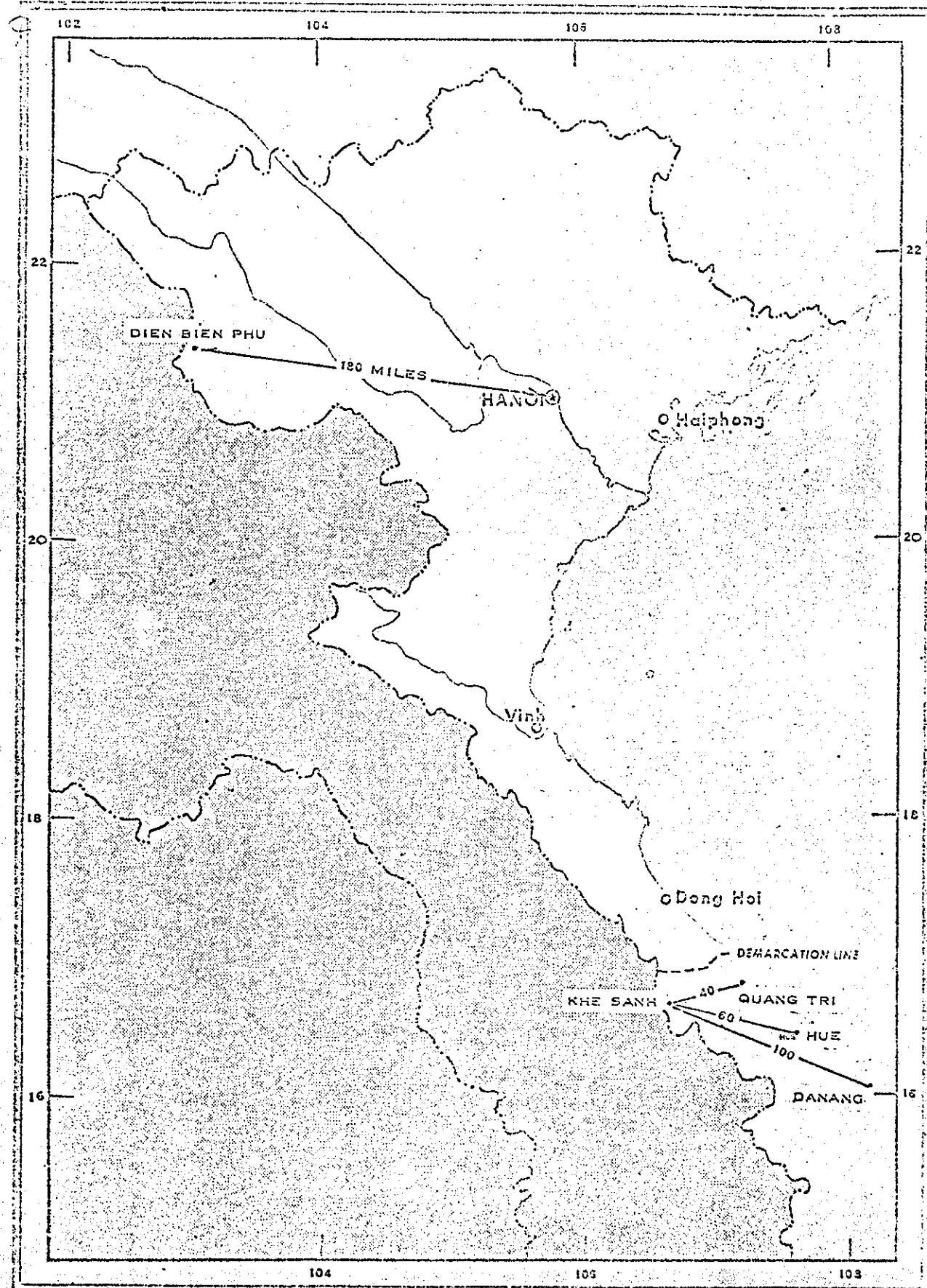
I. INDOCHINA
II. AIR DISTANCE FROM SUPPORT BASES
III. GENERAL AREA - DIEN BIEN PHU
IV. GENERAL AREA - KHE SANH
V. BATTLE AREA - DIEN BIEN PHU
VI. BATTLE AREA - KHE SANH & DMZ

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NIJ 72-191

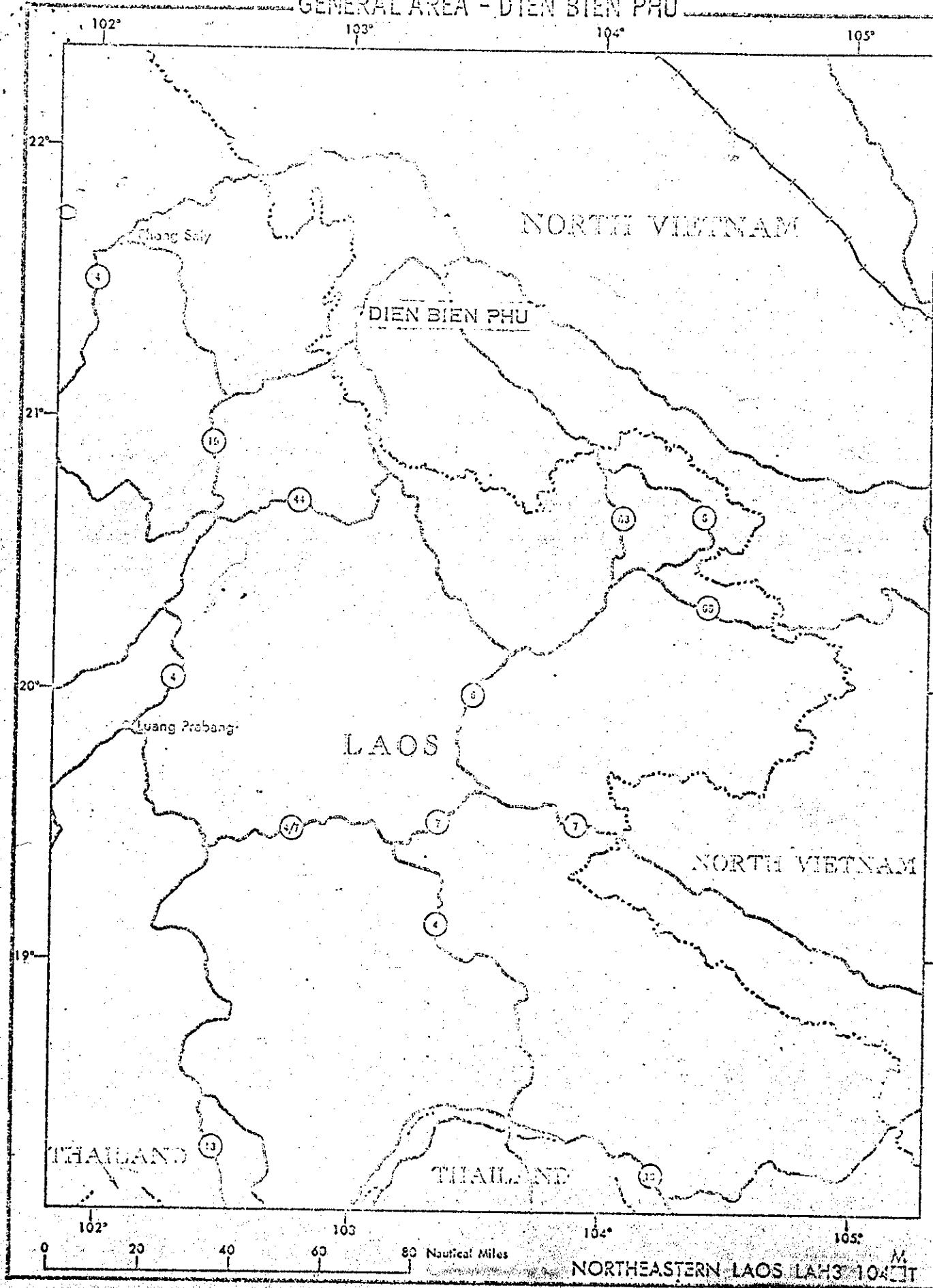
By JOH/ICS, NA



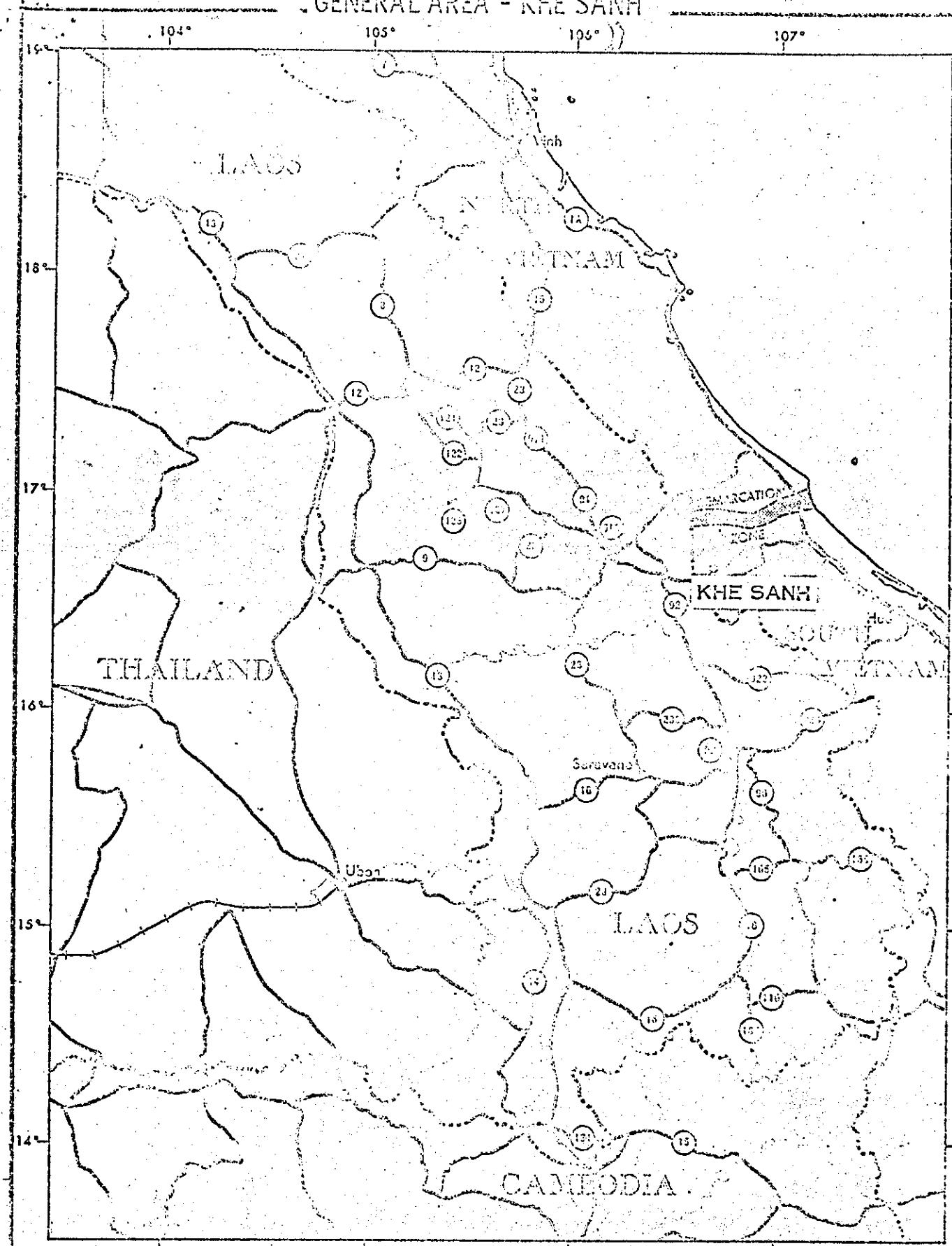
A' DISTANCE FROM SUPPORT SES



GENERAL AREA - DIEN BIEN PHU



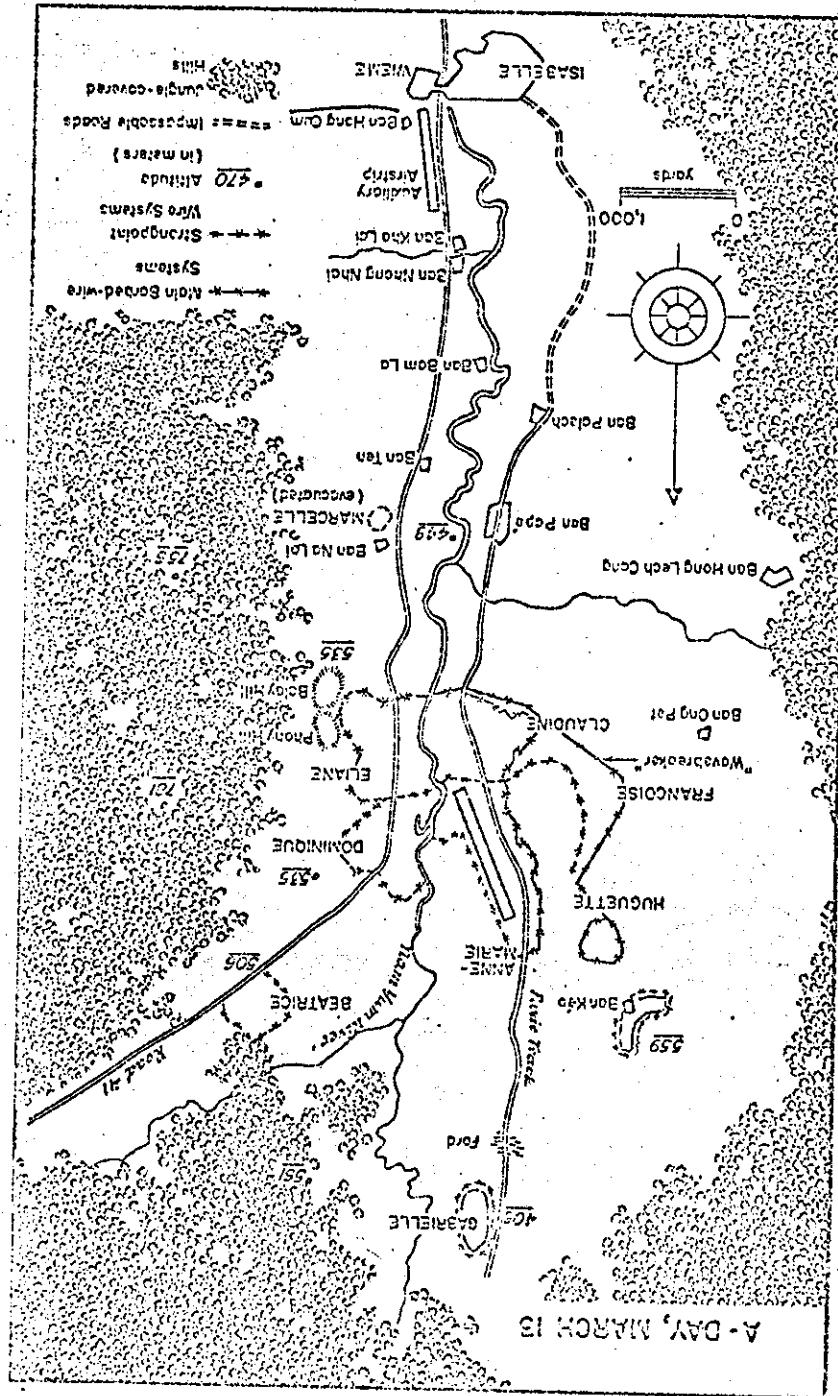
GENERAL AREA - KHE SANH



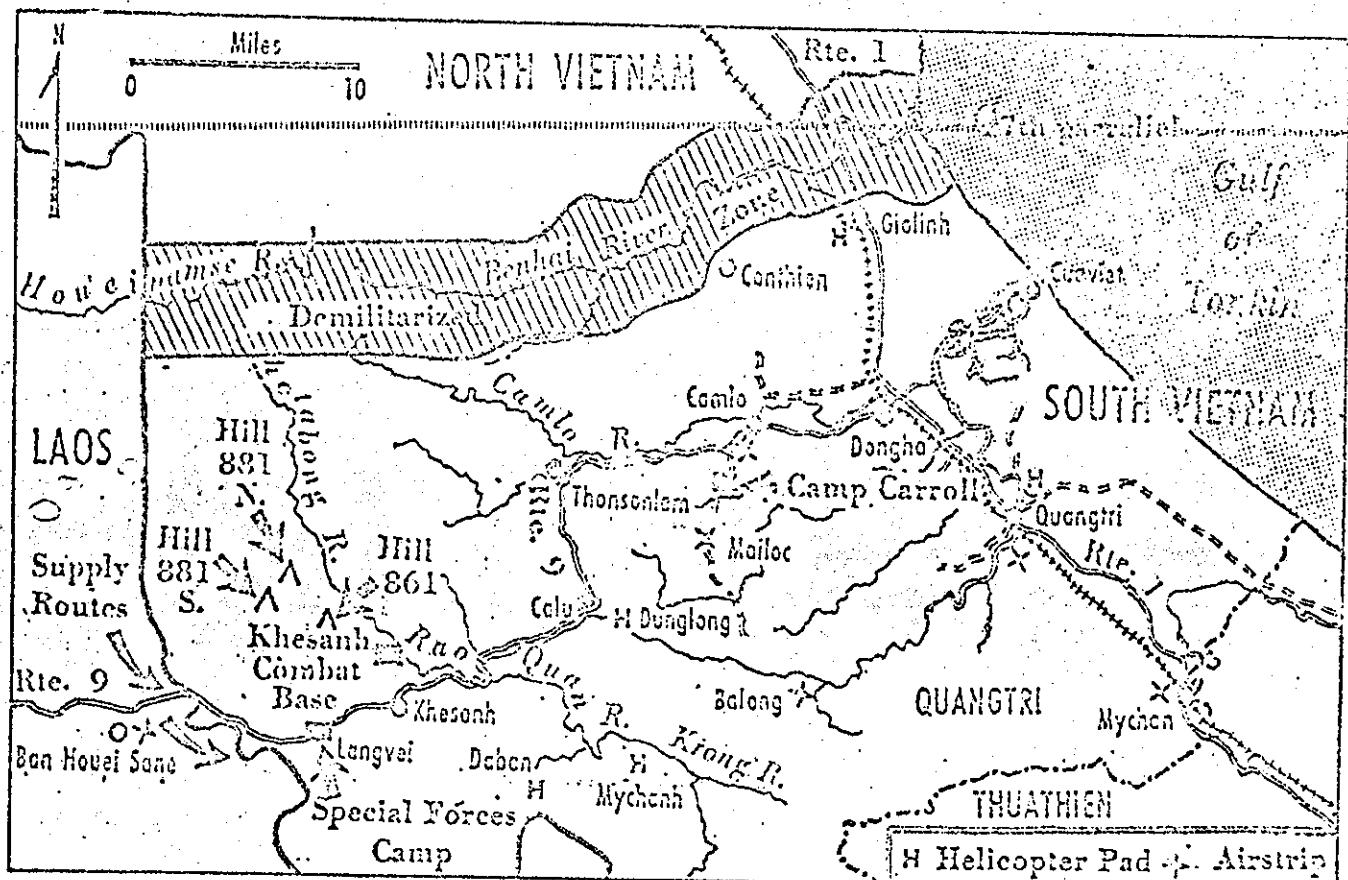
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BATTLE AREA - DIEN BIEN PHU

A - DAY, MARCH 15



BATTLE AREA - KHE SANH - DMZ



1-d

The North Vietnamese View of the "Strategically Decisive Battle of Dien Bien Phu"

On May 7, 1964 the North Vietnamese celebrated the tenth anniversary of the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Minister of Defense Vo Nguyen Giap, Lt Gen Hoang Van Thai, Deputy Defense Minister and Maj Gen Vuong Thua Vu each published long articles in Nhan Dan which explained the strategy which had led to the decision, and the logic of the dialectic which made victory inevitable. Though replete with the usual Marxian doggerel, excerpts from these articles are probably descriptive of the current North Vietnamese thinking on the role of the "Strategically Decisive Battle," and are quoted and paraphrased below.

"Victory in the strategically decisive battles will go to the side whose leadership has seized the strategic initiative. It will go to the force which can force the enemy to fight according to his strategic desires and on an advantageous battlefield of his own choosing."

In order to carry out his plan of offensive Navarre planned to concentrate his force and turn the defense of cleared areas to newly created VN units. "He planned to use puppet troops for pacification and his European and African troops for the mobile attack...against our main forces in the North. The planned grand total of enemy forces would then have been about 500,000,"

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NIJ 82-290

By Jon JCS, NARA, Date 3/28/94

One of the weaknesses of the Navarre plan was the "...basic contradiction between dispersal and concentration."

When the initial concentration of almost half of the French strength into Tay Bac (South and east of Dien Bien Phu) was opposed by "our main force attack in Tay Bac the enemy parachuted into Dien Bien Phu with the intention of occupying a position which they said was 'centrally located for offensive strategic purposes' from which they could operate into Lao tribal regions and establish a connection for strategic purposes with Tay Bac."

On 6 December 1953 Giap issued a mobilization order for the movement of three divisions to Dien Bien Phu.

With the occupation of Dien Bien Phu it was decided that the French had "... spread out in a number of disconnected places. If we step up our attacks on the enemy's weak points we will force them to disperse their mobile attacking forces. Because the mobile attack forces were dispersed, and because a large part had to protect the various base areas...against the guerrilla effort which was growing daily in strength; therefore (his) problem did not admit a solution. The enemy had become submerged in his own sea of defensive measures."

"To force the enemy to keep an important part of his forces in Dien Bien Phu we surrounded the position but did

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~~COMINT~~

not attack. They became afraid that we would attack... so they determined not to pull out. They saw it as an ideal place for us to be defeated. If the enemy lost he would lose a decidedly important portion of his force. His strategic capability would be surely weakened and in a larger sense he would suffer an irretrievable political setback."

"Furthermore the struggle movement of the French people in opposition to the Indo China war would be encouraged and the internal contradiction within French ruling circles would grow apace.

"The battle of Dien Bien Phu had already been decided. This was a strategic determination that was carried to fruition by an iron will which did not flinch from difficulties. Our leadership had to dig hundreds of meters of communications trenches under heavy enemy fire. More than 260,000 people gathered together to carry thousands of tons of food supplies to the front. For seven years the French army wished to have a decisive and major combat so as to destroy General Giap's military force. For seven years (we) avoided such an encounter because we lacked the necessary capabilities."

"While not realizing the enemy's strong points, we had to make the most of his weak points. His greatest weakness lay in his supply. Our tactics were from the very

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
beginning to use our artillery fire to destroy the air strips, and our anti aircraft guns to cope with his planes. Three months had passed from the occupation of Dien Bien Phu to the launching of our campaign. The historic campaign ended in our complete victory. Our troops had fought 55 days and 55 nights."

History seldom repeats itself in detail. At the same time the appraisal which the NVN strategists made of the French predicament is probably very close to their current appraisal of political conditions in South Vietnam, and the home front situation of the United States. So much so that one can predict, with a good deal of assurance, that the NVN will be deterred from an attempt to bill Khe Sanh as a "second Dien Bien Phu" only by being conclusively defeated in that area.

ANNEX B

STATISTICAL SUMMARYDBPKHE

1. Friendly Strength

a. Battle Area
(Personnel)

(1) (March 13)

(January 29)

French	1412
For Leg	2969
Africans	2854
VN Reg	2151
VN Aux	1428

10,814

USMC	
4 Mar Bns	
1 Ren Co	

Total 5906

ARVN (Khe-Sanh)	
1 Ranger Bn	400
RF/PF	97
USMC & Navy	60
Advisors	

557

CIDG (Lang Vei)	333
USSF	16

354

Laos-BV33 552

Refugees	
Bru	5500
Laos	2270

7770

(2) (Mar 13-May 6)

4291 Reinforce-
ments

French	1398
For Leg	962
VN & Afr	1931

4291

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By W. J. C., NARA, Date 3/28/94~~TOP SECRET~~

DBPKHE(3) Casualties
(Mar 13-May 6)

French	1423
For Leg	2322
Africans	1676
VN	1585
VN Aux	178
	7184

(4) (Apr 24-Effectives-
5300 Troops)

(5) Total Casualties

DBP (Mar 13-May 9)

KIA	1980
WIA	5013
MIA	1795
POW (May 7-8)	6500

b. Battle Area
(Support)

(1) Arty

24	105 How
4	155 How
24	120 Mort

18	105 How
6	155 How
6	4.2 Mort
2	175 guns (Rockpile
10	175 Guns (Camp Carroll)

(2) Helicopters
& Light Air

5	S-55 Helo
17	Morane "Crickets" (Based both at DBP & Muong Sai, Laos)

Variable

(3) Armor

2	Platoons of Light Tanks
---	----------------------------

FF NVN

3 MAF
(24 Jan 68)

c. Support Area
(Excluding Battle Area)

(1) Ground Force

185,000
(Includes units
of all types,
similar to the
garrison of DBP)

~~100,000~~
~~100,000~~

(1) 17 USMC Bns
22 USA Inf Bns
18 Arty Bns (US)
14 Combat
Spt Bns (US)

(2) Helicopter Support (24 January)	2 Squadrons Sikorsky S-55	(1) USMC - 316 UE (2) USA - 238 UE (Considerably understated due to recent deployments to I Corps, particularly the 1st Air Cav)
(3) Fighter Aircraft (A total of 3700 support missions were flown during the 167 day seige. Daily sortie rate never exceeded fifty) (The B-26 strength is the highest operational figure attained. Some losses were replaced by US transfers to attain this figure. The average number available was less than this figure.)	32 Fighters (Bear Cats) 45 Fighter-Bombers (Hell divers, Hellcats, Corsairs) 47 Bombers (B-26) 6 C-119 (equipped for napalm bombing.)	<u>USMC</u> * <u>USAF</u> <u>Navy</u> Variable
	142 Fighter-Bombers	

* Note: The total of 200 Fighter-Bombers currently deployed in 1st Corps understates the sortie support available from other SVN locations.

48 Aircraft were shot down at DBP and 14 destroyed on the ground. An additional 167 suffered flak damage. The VC also claimed 78 planes destroyed in raids on Gia Lam (6 March 1954) and Cat Bi (7 March 1954). Their claim is an exaggeration, although this number was probably damaged by the raids.

FF NVN

3 MAF
(24 Jan 68)

(4) Logistic Air Support (Total lift during the 55 day period (Mar 13-May 8) was 6,410 tons, with a maximum one day delivery of 123 tons)

43 C-119
29 C-47
A few each of miscellaneous other types.

60 C-123
108 C-130
Many other of mixed types, capable of lifting in from any of the nine major air bases of SVN, including the helicopter support cited above.

(5) Heavy Bombardment

5 Privateer

Bombers

(2-4 tons)

These were usually used to interdict major supply lines into DBP.

B-52 as scheduled.

Sortie rate since 19 January as follows:

19	6
20	27
21-22	45
23	24
24	33
25	33
26	33
27	33
28	33

Average - 27/Day

DBP

KHE

2. Enemy Strength

a. Battle Area (Personnel)

308 Div
316 Div
304 Div
312 Div
351 Div (H)

325C	(5400)
324B	(7800)
304	(10000)
320	(7500)

Separate Regiments (7890)

Total 43,000

Total 38,590
(Not all of the above have been positively identified in the Khe Sanh area. A total of nine regiments are currently carried as an immediate threat to Khe Sanh)

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b. Battle Area
(Support)

(1) Arty

48	75mm How	(Estimated)
48	105 mm How	
48	120 Mort	5 152 How
36	37mm AA	48 85, 105 or
80	AAMG	122mm How
12-16	Katyusha Rocket Launchers	105 RR (75 or 90mm)
		24 120mm Mort
		36 122mm RL
		24 37mm AA
		84 12.7mm MG

3. Log & Support Rates
(Friendly)

a. Arty (75 Cal or
larger)

(Viet Minh fired
between 103,000
French est⁷ and
350,000 VM claim⁷
The latter figure
is probably correct
for total shells of
all types, i.e.,
including organic
mortars.)

93,000
during the 55 day
battle

Variable. Arty and
mortars at Khe Sanh
are capable of a
daily rate in excess
of 5000 rounds.
Reinforcement or
replacement
relatively easy.

b. Tac Air

Sortie rate of
about 40/day.
Normal load about
one ton plus guns.

Sortie rate
19 Jan - present

19	0
20	4
21-22	84
23	102
24	144
25	125
26	92
27	74
28	78

Average 70/day.
Normal load of
3,000 lbs with
1 hour loiter time.

c. Heavy Air

None except
occasional use of
6 converted C-119
for napalm and 5
Privateers on route
interdiction.

19-28 Jan sortie
rate of 27/day.

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DBPKHE

d. Air Transport

(1) Helo

Negligible and for utility only.

In excess of 500 UE are in supporting range for both troop movement and resupply.

(2) FW

About 100 tons/day. Even if other airlift had been available this figure was close to the garrison's cargo handling ability for air-dropped loads.

At least 1000 tons per day. Rate subject to weather, enemy AA defense, and the cargo handling ability of the Khe Sanh garrison.

4. Description of Support Area and Battle Area

a. Terrain

Similar. Each is relatively lower than surrounding terrain which is hilly jungle. See maps for relative terrain.

b. Distance and Displacement

See maps for distances from support bases.

c. Weather

Dry Season, changing to Monsoon rain in April.

Moonsoon, with heavy fog in morning and evening.

5. Scenario of major events, 1 January 1954 - 8 May 1954:

January

Medium level action around Seno, Thakek, Tuy Hoa, Kontum, Pleiku, An Khe and Luang Prabang. All actions VM initiated and moderately successful, except at Tuy Hoa. French claim heavy Viet Minh casualties.

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February

2 First use of 75mm How by VM at DBP.

5 Action in Laos vicinity Luang Prabang drops off. Minor action in Highlands continues.

8-20 French initiate heavy action in Red River Delta. Minor action in DBP primarily initiated by French patrols in force.

14 French report loss of 45 strong points in Tonkin Delta, mostly through defections.

March

6 VM attack Gia Lam. Damage 10 planes.

7 VM attack Cat Bi. Damage 68 planes. (VM claim. No detailed estimate of level of damage available.)

13 VM attack posts on Hanoi-Haiphong Highway. Capture or destroy 10 posts. Destroy 400 yards of Hanoi-Haiphong Railway. VM initiate final phase of seige on DBP. VM attack northern outpost of DBP. French claim 1500 KIA.

15 VM attack Lac-Dao on Hanoi-Haiphong Highway. VM lose 200 KIA.

20 French seek US military cooperation.

26 VM intensify small unit action in Delta.

April

3 Minor VM attacks on 2 towns and trains in Cambodia.

7 Small action in Tonkin Delta increases. French consider Hanoi threatened.

13 Military train ambushed in Cambodia.

20 Heavy action against Tonkin outposts continues.

26 GENEVA CONFERENCE BEGINS

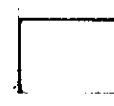
30 Pressure in Tonkin Delta subsides.

May

5 VM renew activity in Tonkin Delta.

7-8 Dien Bien Phu falls.

1-4



Tuesday, February 20, 1968

1-8
1.3(a)(4)

TEXT OF CIA REPORT [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: General Giap's Strategy for the Communist General Offensive

The following information was received from interrogation of a Viet Cong prisoner [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He was captured [REDACTED] in Danang.

1.3(a)(4)

Summary -- Plans for the VC Tet attack on Danang City were outlined to a group of select cadres on 22 January by Ho Phuoc, Secretary of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone Committee. Although the VC realized they would be outnumbered and would be wiped out if they attempted to stay in the city, they felt they had to make the attack to carry out their part of the overall plan for the general offensive. The strategy for the offensive was devised by General Vo Nguyen Giap and approved by the Hanoi Cabinet. The USSR later also approved the plan and speeded up delivery of arms and armor so that the VC/NVA would be prepared before October 1967. Giap's strategy entailed two phases and, since Phase 1 failed, Phase 2 (Plan No. 2) will now be placed in effect. The big action will occur in the western highlands and Khe Sanh. Giap's plan is to force the GVN to sue for peace under Hanoi's conditions. -- End Summary

At 1000 hours on 22 January 1968, Ho Phuoc, alias Nghinh, Secretary of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone Committee, convened a meeting in an uninhabited house in Dien Phuoc village, Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province. Present were high-ranking cadres in touch with underground elements in Danang City; these cadres had been selected to infiltrate Danang with the task of inciting the masses and penetration agents to support the Communist troops' general offensive to seize power. [REDACTED] During the meeting, Phuoc made the following disclosures and assignments in connection with the planned attack on Danang:

1.3(a)(4)

A. Senior Colonel Vo Thu, would be in overall command, while his deputy, Senior Captain Hien, would be in charge of special action. Political officer Lieutenant Colonel Duc would serve as Chief of Staff and Captain Pham Duy Dai, member of Special Zone Headquarters, as officer in charge of military affairs and sappers.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-466

By [REDACTED], NARA, Date 6-15-95

1.3(a)(4)

B. For the purpose of the attack, Danang would be divided into three operational districts, each headed by a District Committee member. Secretary-Sau Hung was placed in charge of District 2 (Danang center), which had the key role of taking over the Government of Vietnam administrative installations. Thus, District 2 VC cadres would automatically constitute the Danang City provisional executive committee, with Sau Hung as Mayor, once the GVN administration had fallen.

As explained by Phuoc, the plan of action for the attack on Danang was the following: Captain Hien had 40 youths aged 16 to 17 of both sexes and carrying birth certificates to avoid the need for GVN identity cards who would infiltrate the city, led by liaison agents, during the period 24-29 January. They would be armed with silencer-equipped pistols, submachine guns and TNT and their mission would be to reconnoiter ARVN and GVN civil installations and to observe GVN intelligence personnel. The latter were to be captured or killed during the general offensive. The VC recognized they would be greatly outnumbered by the ARVN and allied forces in Danang and would probably be wiped out if they drove deep into the city and stayed there a long while. However, if they did not attack the city, they would lose face with the masses and would fail to carry out their part of the general offensive. Therefore, the following plan for the attack on Danang was adopted:

A. Two local main force battalions, R. 20 and Q. 16, would attack and occupy GVN posts around the city. One infiltrated North Vietnamese Army battalion belonging to worksite 2 would be held in reserve.

B. Only a few elements would thrust deeply into the city. These would then immediately withdraw to the city's outskirts to rejoin the above-mentioned units for a prolonged siege of the city designed to pressure the local authorities into negotiating.

C. In the meantime, the special action unit would coordinate with other specialized elements in inciting the population to go out into the streets to 1) struggle against the GVN, 2) demand the creation of a coalition government, 3) destroy fuel dumps and power plants, and 4) steal weapons and ammunition to arm young men and women who had distinguished themselves in previous struggles. These developments would result in the formation of a "dissident army" headed by Pham Duy Dai. Thus, the "uprising" in Danang would appear to be a mass movement against the GVN.

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D. The attack would begin on the night of 29/30 January 1968. [REDACTED] A later order changed the date to the night of 30/31 January, but for some unknown reason the attack was launched as originally scheduled.)

According to Phuoc, the attack of Danang was part of the plan (Plan 2T) for a general offensive and general uprising. He explained that from September 1967 to January 1968, the VC forces suffered many heavy reverses, particularly in

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Khanh Hoa, Phu Yen and Binh Dinh Provinces, where the "liberated" areas shrank. GVN and allied forces were not as active in the Quang Ngai, Quang Tin, Quang Nam and Danang areas, but they still inflicted such high casualties on the VC that heavy infiltration of NVN troops was still not enough to fill the gaps. As a result, Communist Chinese and Cuban missions made urgent visits to war theater B and returned with the opinion that the Communists could not hold out against the material strength of the GVN and its allies. [REDACTED]

Hanoi therefore decided it would have to negotiate as the USSR had been advising it to do.

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General Nguyen Chi Thanh, [REDACTED] was called back to NVN many times to discuss action plans. After Thanh's death, General Vo Nguyen Giap asserted that Thanh's strategy of occupying the rural areas inch by inch and setting up defensive installations was in error, since the Viet Cong installations would be worn down by the Government of Vietnam and allies and sooner or later eliminated. Giap decided that before peace talks were held, it was necessary to hit hard militarily to get the upper hand. Giap thereupon devised the following strategy:

A. The Communists did not need to attack, take and defend the rural area, since the rural population and territory could be won by (1) sending all regular North Vietnamese Army units to the south and (2) using half the communist strength, namely, those units previously infiltrated into South Vietnam, to launch the general offensive against the South Vietnamese cities, with the newly infiltrated units being kept in reserve. This would compel Government of Vietnam forces to pull back to defend the cities, thus leaving the rural areas in communist hands without a fight. This comprised Giap's Plan No. 1.

B. Plan No. 2: If the general offensive against the cities should fail, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army forces would pull back and encircle the provincial towns. This would keep the Government of Vietnam and the population under intense strain, the economy would be paralyzed, and foreign aid would have to fill the food supply gap. The piastre would depreciate because the rural areas could no longer supply the cities. The combination of communist military pressure, economic paralysis and popular complaints would force the Government of Vietnam to sue for peace under North Vietnam's conditions.

C. In the meantime, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army would fight the decisive battle. The western highlands (precise province not specified) would be the main theater of battle, while U. S. forces would be lured into the Khe Sanh area and wiped out. To accomplish this, the communists planned the following:

1. Strong harassment in Southern Laos to permit the shifting of all North Vietnamese Army troops to South Vietnam.
2. Movement of Communist troops and armor into southern Laos across from the western highlands (Khe Sanh area).

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3. Surprise intervention by the NVA Air Force to support ground action
against ARVN and U. S. troops.

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Giap's strategy was approved by the Hanoi Cabinet, and Le Duan and a Cabinet Minister (name unknown) were sent to Moscow to present the plan to the Soviets and request aid. The USSR accepted the plan and changed its aid policy from a passive one to one of accelerated dispatch of weapons, armor and experts to NVN before October 1967 so that the plan could be put into effect. Since that time, the NVN defense ministry has been directing the war and Giap has personally been commanding the fighting.

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since the VC attack on Danang has completely failed, the VC will now apply Plan No. 2. Thus, in the days ahead, they will probe GVN/allied reactions by 1) maintaining encircling forces around the city and impose an economic blockade, 2) create extreme tension to arouse popular unrest, and 3) hit the Danang Airbase with heavy rocket attacks. If U. S. and Korean forces cooperate with ARVN and fight the VC actively, the Communists will maintain their encirclement and wait for the big action to begin in the western highlands and Khe Sanh. Only then will they decide whether to continue with the offensive or negotiate from a position of strength. However, if the U. S. and Korean forces support ARVN only with air and artillery, the Communists will quickly intensify their artillery (rocket) firepower and prepare for the general offensive.

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if the offensive is resumed, the VC/NVA tactic will be to attack, occupy and pull out fast. If possible, they will take and hold some positions around Danang, since it will be imperative to take heavily populated areas that will provide shelter and a long-range food supply and will permit the VC/NVA troops to dig in. Simultaneously, a province mobile battalion would be sent to reinforce sapper battalion 402 for an attack on Hoi An City.

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the recent VC attack on Lang Vei was for the purpose of testing allied strength and to lure the U. S. into concentrating its artillery, Marines and airpower in the Khe Sanh area. When the offensive resumes, the Communists will start the battle for Khe Sanh and the western highlands, at which time the Quang Tri Airbase will be shelled while one regiment will attack and occupy Quang Tri City.

The applicability to Danang of the above-described Plan No. 2 has been confirmed by a document which the Special Zone current affairs section sent [REDACTED] and which was captured. The document indicates the following Communist intentions:

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A. Military: Increase military forces; send one unit to attack deeply into Danang; increase special action activity; assassinate GVN personnel; develop agents and bases inside Danang; launch continuous attacks, both large and small, all over to prevent GVN forces from having enough time to stabilize the situation.

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B. Political: Intensify political struggle activity; incite the population to oppose the GVN security measures and to demand its democratic and economic rights; organize the people, prepare them for the struggle and forge organized ranks plus core cadres to lead them with a view to sending the people into the streets in armed revolt; stress the political struggle to smash the GVN administrative apparatus; kill nationalists; seize control neighborhood by neighborhood; introduce the "alliance for democracy and peace" as has already been done in Saigon and Hue.

C. Military proselyting: Proselyte GVN troops and strive to foment rebellion and mutiny.)

[REDACTED] comment: [REDACTED] statements concerning the Communists strategy and tactics for the offensive against SVN cities and particularly against Danang agree to some extent with what has actually taken place.)

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Tuesday, February 20, 1968 1.3(a)(4)

TEXT OF CIA REPORT [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

SUBJECT: Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Tactics and Strategy for the Tet General Offensive

The following information was received from interrogation of a Viet Cong prisoner [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He was captured [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] in Danang.

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Summary: According to Ho Phuoc, political officer of Viet Cong Quang Da-Danang Special Zone, General Nguyen Chi Thanh was recalled to Hanoi because of the failure of his strategy in South Vietnam. General Vo Nguyen Giap revised the new strategy, which was to be carried out in three phases, with the ultimate aim of forcing the Government of Vietnam to accept a coalition government with the National Liberation Front. Phase 1 called for a general offensive against the cities. If this failed, Viet Cong troops during Phase 2 would besiege the cities and, at the same time, lure U. S. troops into the Khe Sanh area. Phase 3, which was expected to coincide with the establishment of a coalition government, would involve a decisive battle in the Kontum-Pleiku or Saigon area. In support of this new strategy, the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong planned to increase activities in southern Laos to permit the infiltration into South Vietnam of most Regular North Vietnamese Army units. The latter would try to avoid pitched battles with U. S. troops and, instead, to confine them in their bases. End Summary.

During 1967, the Viet Cong acted as though they were weakening in order to mislead the Government of Vietnam and its allies. In reality, men and weapons were moved in South Vietnam in considerable quantity. The Viet Cong anticipated that the U.S. would increase its strength in South Vietnam during the summer of 1968 and they wanted to increase their own strength first. The Viet Cong also planned to put the greatest possible pressure on the U.S. during 1968, the year of the U.S. Presidential elections.

SANITIZED [REDACTED]

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-466

By , NARA, Date 6-15-95 [REDACTED]

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Ho Phuoc, political officer with field grade rank of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone and a member of Viet Cong Military Region 5 Committee, told [redacted] 1.3(a)(4)

[redacted] that General Nguyen Chi Thanh had been recalled to North Vietnam because of the failure of his strategy, Phuoc quoted General Vo Nguyen Giap as having said that the South Vietnamese battlefield had to be reconsidered because Thanh had made a mistake in applying the strategy of occupying rural areas, establishing organization in those areas and trying to hold on to them. This had resulted in Viet Cong troops being eliminated by Government of Vietnam troops and B-52 bombers. [redacted] delegations from Communist China, North Korea and Cuba had visited the South Vietnamese battlefields and, upon returning to North Vietnam, had reported unfavorably on the situation in South Vietnam. [redacted] he learned during November 1967 from Colonel Vo Thu, alias Ngoc, Chief of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone, that Giap had also said there had to be an acid test prior to negotiations.

[redacted] the following factors were taken into consideration in planning the new strategy for South Vietnam.

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A. Coordination between Allied and Government of Vietnam troops was loose and Allied troops only tried to protect their own bases. The wanton killings by Korean troops had caused the people to lose confidence in the Allied troops.

B. Government of Vietnam troops were widely scattered because of their use in the rural reconstruction program and could, therefore, easily be separated and destroyed. The U. S. would support Government of Vietnam troops only with air and artillery, not with infantry troops.

On the basis of these factors and the failure of Thanh's strategy, the following new three-phase strategy was formulated:

A. Phase 1: Attacks on, and protection of, rural areas would be limited. At an opportune time, a general offensive against South Vietnamese cities would be launched. Except in important cities like Saigon and Hue, only one half of available forces, namely, the local combat

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experienced units, would be committed. This general offensive would cause the Government of Vietnam troops to pull back to protect the cities, leaving the rural areas to the Viet Cong. Thus the Viet Cong would achieve a complete victory in the rural areas without the necessity of fighting there.

B. Phase 2: If the general offensive should fail, Viet Cong troops would retreat and surround the cities and villages to create an intense and serious situation and to exhaust the economy. At the same time, the Viet Cong would use decoy tactics to lure as many U.S. troops as possible into the Khe Sanh area, thus reducing U.S. strength in other areas.

C. Phase 3: Because of the pressures generated by Phase 2, the Government of Vietnam would probably agree to accept a coalition government with the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Simultaneously with the demand for a coalition government, North Vietnam would launch a decisive battle with a view to providing political support to the Front element in such a Government. This battle would occur in either the Kontum-Pleiku area or the area around Saigon. []

During indoctrination lectures given in November-December 1967, Colonel Thu said that the Saigon battle area (i.e., Binh Long, Phuoc Long, Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh and Gia Dinh provinces) would be an important battlefield because of the proximity of the supply route from Cambodia.

Thu went on to say that if the B3 Front were chosen, the Viet Cong would fight only in Kontum and Pleiku provinces because of the strong U. S. /Government of Vietnam forces in those areas and because the North Vietnamese High Command could easily support that area across the 1.3(a)(4) Laotian/Vietnamese border.)

in order to carry out the new strategy, it was planned that all activities in the southern part of Laos would be increased so that most regular North Vietnamese Army units other than coastal defense units, anti-aircraft units and units guarding important installations, could infiltrate into South Vietnam. All forces would be used to attack U.S. 1.3(a)(4) troops and to lure them to the Khe Sanh area and away from the decisive battle areas. [redacted] although in the past, Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army troops had fought against U.S. troops, the new surprise strategy required them to avoid such combat and to try only to besiege and hold U.S. troops in defensive positions at their bases.

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According to [redacted] Ho Phuoc [redacted] the U.S. Government had requested the Government of Vietnam to accept a coalition government with the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam but that the Government of Vietnam had refused. The U.S., Phuoc said, wants to bring the war to an honorable end in 1968. It also wants to resolve the problem of the almost 1,000 pilots captured by North Vietnam. Both the U.S. and North Vietnam, Phuoc continued, realize that neither side can win the war and they, therefore, both want a coalition government as a means of ending the conflict.

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[redacted]

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SANITIZED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-466

By [redacted], NARA, Date 6-15-95 Tuesday, February 20, 1968

1.3(a)(4)

TEXT OF CLA REPORT [redacted]

1.3(a)(4)

SUBJECT: Viet Cong General Offensive Plans for Danang, Hue, Quang Tri and Other Centers in Viet Cong Military Region 5

The following information was received from interrogation of a Viet Cong prisoner [redacted]

[redacted] He was captured [redacted] in Danang.

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From briefings he received during November-December 1967, [redacted]

[redacted] learned that the Viet Cong planned to take the following steps in Danang City in connection with the projected general offensive:

- A. Besiege the city and prevent resources from entering it.
- B. Wage a war of nerves against the city.
- C. Attack the airfield by rockets to blockade Government of Vietnam and allied troops within the city.
- D. Increase shelling of the airfield should allied troops provide only artillery and air support for Government of Vietnam troops and try to protect their own bases.
- E. Should allied troops be deployed to reinforce Government of Vietnam troops, retreat from the city and try to besiege the surrounding area while awaiting the outcome of the Khe Sanh and western highlands (Pleiku-Kontum) battlefields. The Viet Cong would then launch a general offensive or ask for negotiations, depending on their position.

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[redacted] indications of a general offensive on Danang were to be: The shelling of Danang and Nhon Nuoc airfields for two consecutive nights; the shelling of fuel storage facilities, I Corps headquarters, and ordnance installations; and attacks by Sapper Battalion 2 on the Lien Chieu fuel storage area, the Nam O bridge, and ships moored in the Hoa Khanh area. Viet Cong forces reserved for the offensive against Danang would be one regiment of the North Vietnamese army 2nd division (the other two regiments would be held for possible use in a very decisive battle), one mobile battalion of the Quang Nam Province main forces, one Sapper element, and newly infiltrated Regiment 31 of North Vietnamese Army 341st division.

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[redacted] in Hue, Viet Cong forces were to overrun the city and to hold it by all means. If attacked by Government of Vietnam/allied forces, they were to move from one house to another but were not to be allowed to retreat from the city, even if this meant the sacrifice of the entire regiment. Thus, the Viet Cong forces would have to hold Hue until the battle broke out in the Khe Sanh area, the Pleiku-Kontum area or the Saigon area.

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In Quang Tri Province, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army planned to eliminate the Lang Vei post as a means to lure the U.S. into concentrating all of its power--artillery, marines, aircraft--in the Khe Sanh area. When the plan had worked out properly, the Viet Cong planned to launch a decisive battle in either the Pleiku-Kontum area or the Saigon area. Once this was begun, the Viet Cong would then shell the airfields. One regiment would attack Quang Tri City and try to hold it at all costs.

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[redacted] in other areas of Viet Cong military region 5, specifically in the provincial capitals where the allies are weak and have no large military bases such as Hoi An, Tam Ky, Bong Son, Hue and Kontum, the Viet Cong planned to use military forces to liberate the people; in the strongly defended cities, the Viet Cong would employ political means as the main force, although they would also fight militarily if possible.

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[redacted] If Government of Vietnam/allied troops wish to fight successfully against the Viet Cong attack on Danang, they must helilift their troops behind Viet Cong lines and attack from the rear. They should outnumber the Viet Cong three to one and be prepared to fight not only the Viet Cong retreating from the city but also the Viet Cong reserve forces trying to penetrate the city. At the present time, Government of Vietnam regular forces should be used to conduct operations to observe and discover the movement of Viet Cong units and front line laborers. At the same time, the Government of Vietnam troops should be allowed to rest and recuperate so as to be prepared for the coming decisive battle.)