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UNITED STATES ARMY
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

4 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Vietnam Assessment

In accordance with your instructions, I visited South Vietnam during the period 28 March - 4 April. I have completed my assessment of the current situation there, analyzed what the Government of the Republic of Vietnam intends to do to counter the aggression from the North, assured President Thieu of your steadfast support in this time of crisis, and examined the options and actions open to the United States to assist the South Vietnamese.

The current military situation is critical, and the probability of the survival of South Vietnam as a truncated nation in the southern provinces is marginal at best. The GVN is on the brink of a total military defeat. However, the South is planning to continue to defend with their available resources, and, if allowed respite, will rebuild their capabilities to the extent that United States support in materiel will permit. I believe that we owe them that support.

We went to Vietnam in the first place to assist the South Vietnamese people--not to defeat the North Vietnamese. We reached out our hand to the South Vietnamese people, and they took it. Now they need that helping hand more than ever. By every measure we have been able to apply 20,000,000 people have told the world they fear for their lives, they cherish values that are closely allied with those of non-communist systems, they desperately seek the opportunity to continue their development of a way of life different from those who now live under North Vietnamese rule.

The present level of U.S. support guarantees GVN defeat. Of the \$700 million provided for FY 1975, the remaining \$150 million can be used for a short time for a major supply operation; however, if there is to be any real chance of

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By WAD NLF Date 11/19/80

success, an additional \$722 million is urgently needed to bring the South Vietnamese to a minimal defense posture to meet the Soviet and PRC supported invasion. Additional U.S. aid is within both the spirit and intent of the Paris Agreement, which remains the practical framework for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

The use of U.S. military airpower to reinforce Vietnamese capabilities to blunt the North Vietnamese invasion would offer both a material and psychological assist to GVN and provide a much needed battlefield pause. I recognize, however, the significant legal and political implications which would attend the exercise of this option.

Given the speed at which events are moving, there is one other matter you should consider. For reasons of prudence, the United States should plan now for a mass evacuation of some 6,000 U.S. citizens and tens of thousands of South Vietnamese and Third Country Nationals to whom we have incurred an obligation and owe protection. The lessons of Danang indicate that this evacuation would require as a minimum a U.S. task force of a reinforced division supported by tactical air to suppress North Vietnamese artillery and anti-aircraft, as required. At the appropriate time, a public statement of this policy should be made and the North Vietnamese clearly warned "of U.S. intention to use force to safely evacuate personnel". Authority should be obtained to authorize appropriate use of military sanctions against North Vietnam if there is interference with the evacuation.

United States credibility as an ally is at stake in Vietnam. To sustain that credibility we must make a maximum effort to support the South Vietnamese now.

A more detailed analysis is contained in the attached report.

Respectfully,



FRED C. WEYAND
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

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As stated

REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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INTRODUCTION

On 24 March 1975 you directed me to conduct a fact finding mission to the Republic of Vietnam. My task was to:

Assess the current military situation and probable North Vietnamese intentions during the current offensive.

Determine and assess what the Government of the Republic of Vietnam is now doing and intends to do in coping with this offensive and with its impact on both the military and civilian sectors.

Determine what the United States Government can do to bolster South Vietnamese military capabilities and to alleviate suffering among the civilian population.

Assure President Thieu that this Administration remains steadfast in its support of the efforts by the Republic of Vietnam to resist North Vietnamese aggression and that it will do what it can to provide the materiel assistance necessary for the defense of the republic.

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. The Background

The Paris Agreement of 27 January 1973 marked not the beginning of peace in Vietnam, but instead the beginning of a Communist build-up of supplies and equipment for continued North Vietnamese military aggression in Vietnam. In the ensuing 26 months since the Agreement was signed, North Vietnam rebuilt the Ho Chi Minh Trail into a major all-weather supply artery. They built pipelines extending 330 miles into South Vietnam for movement of their POL. With this major supply system in full operation, they quadrupled their field artillery, greatly increased their anti-aircraft and sent six times as much armor into South Vietnam as they had in January 1973 (See Table A). At the same time, they increased their troop strength by almost 200,000 men. All of these actions were in direct violation of the Paris Agreement. The US, by contrast, did not fulfill its obligations to maintain South Vietnamese equipment and materiel levels as they were authorized to do under the Agreement. Ground ammunition declined by 30% from 179 thousand short tons at the cease fire to 126 thousand short tons when the current NVA offensive began. Shortages of POL and spare parts curtailed operations of the South Vietnamese Air Force by 50%.

The historical record outlined above set the stage for the current situation in South Vietnam. This situation is both fluid and fragile. It changed markedly during the month of March and has the potential for further rapid change in the weeks, or even days, immediately ahead.

On 10 March, the Communists launched "Phase II" of their 1975 campaign. Two North Vietnamese Army Divisions assaulted Ban Me Thuot, a strategic cross-roads in the western highlands, which was lightly defended by ARVN. At about the same time, North Vietnamese Army units west of Saigon initiated a systematic effort to eliminate the GVN presence, give the Communists a shortened, more secure infiltration corridor south into the Mekong Delta and, simultaneously, to interdict the only two roads between Saigon and Tay Ninh.

In mid-February, President Thieu sent Senator Tran Van Lam to the US as a private emissary to assess the mood of Congress with respect to Vietnam and the prospects for favorable Congressional action on aid legislation. Lam submitted a very pessimistic appraisal, which Thieu felt was confirmed by the early March votes of the House Democratic caucus. Thieu was digesting Lam's bleak estimate when the Communists launched the aforementioned "Phase II" attacks. Thieu saw his country faced with a major Communist offensive coinciding with a curtailment, and possible cessation, of US aid. He and his military advisors therefore decided that a drastic strategic retrenchment was essential to the GVN's survival.

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This new strategic concept entailed writing off most of the mountainous, sparsely populated portions of MR's 1 and 2 to concentrate the GVN's assets and resources on defending MR's 3 and 4 plus the coastal lowlands of MR's 1 and 2, the agriculturally productive areas of South Vietnam in which the bulk of the population resided. This strategy was sound in concept and Thieu's estimate of its necessity was correct. Its execution, however, was disastrous.

In a 13 March meeting with his MR 1 Commander, General Truong, President Thieu outlined his new strategic concept and his resultant decision to withdraw the Airborne Division from MR 1 to MR 3, despite General Truong's strong objection that the withdrawal of the airborne division would make the GVN's position in MR 1 untenable. During the next twelve days (13-25 March) there was vacillation, both in MR 1 and in Saigon, over what portions of MR 1 were to be held--and particularly, whether any attempt should be made to defend Hue. As a result of the changing orders he was receiving from Saigon, General Truong had to revise his troop deployment plans at least three times, even as the North Vietnamese Army attack was steadily increasing in intensity. Quang Tri City was evacuated in orderly fashion on 19 March, but before a new GVN defense line could be stabilized along the My Chanh River, territorial forces in the area began evaporating in the face of North Vietnamese pressure; Saigon recalled the last airborne brigade in MR 1, and an unravelling process began. North Vietnamese pressure mounted daily at a sharply increasing rate. Hue was evacuated on 25 March, but by then NVA units had cut Route 1 south of the city and the removal of Hue's 20,000 defenders, including most of ARVN's 1st Division, became largely dependent on haphazard, improvised sealift operations. During this same period, over-extended GVN units in Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces, were being dispersed or defeated piecemeal by advancing NVA forces.

The GVN's presence in MR 1 collapsed into an enclave at Da Nang. What was left of the GVN's effective strength in that region--basically the Marine Division and a part of the 3rd ARVN Division--tried to set up a defense of Da Nang, but the effort was not successful. Arrayed against the GVN's 10,000 odd organized defenders were over 30,000 NVA troops advancing with the momentum of success. Further compounding the situation's problems was the influx of more than a million refugees. With a total of close to 2 million people increasingly desperate to get out, panic spread and on 28 March order collapsed. NVA tanks began moving into the town soon thereafter. No more than 50,000 refugees were brought out by air or by sea, and the GVN succeeded in extracting approximately 22,000 troops, including about 9,000 marines and 4,000 - 5,000 troops from the 2nd and 3rd ARVN divisions, but the fate of the remainder of Da Nang's civil and military population is unknown.

In MR 2, President Thieu and his regional commander, General Phu, met at Cam Ranh Bay on 14 March to discuss the situation in light of the loss of

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Ban Me Thuot. At that meeting, President Thieu outlined his new strategic concept to withdraw from the highlands and consolidate GVN forces for defense of vital coastal areas. The exact wording of the President's orders are not known, but General Phu interpreted them as authorizing at his discretion the immediate, total evacuation of Pleiku and Kontum Provinces, for which no plans or preparations had been made. The exodus began in the next two days, with the evacuating ARVN forces following Highway 14 and Route 7B across Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces to the coast at Tuy Hoa. Compounding the already severe difficulties inherent in this unplanned exodus, 7B was a secondary road, virtually unused for years, with many bridges out and no fords prepared. Command and control broke down. The six ranger groups and one infantry regiment from Kontum and Pleiku became interspersed among the increasingly desperate 200,000 odd civilians fleeing with the exfiltrating column. At least two and possibly three NVA regiments wheeled northward from Darlac to Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces to harass the column, systematically and methodically engaging the dispersed ARVN military units, none of which were combat effective when the column's lead elements entered Tuy Hoa City on 26 March. The carnage inflicted en route on the hapless civilian refugees was horrendous.

While the above events were in train, the GVN diverted one airborne brigade from the Hue area to Khanh Hoa Province to block the two to four NVA regiments pursuing the remnants of the 23rd ARVN eastward from Ban Me Thuot across Darlac Province. The 23rd Division already battered by its stand at Ban Me Thuot, had virtually ceased to exist as an organized unit by the time its survivors began trickling into Nha Trang.

B. The Present Situation

The military situation existing in the first week in April has to be assessed in light of what happened in March. Amid the general chaos in MR's 1 and 2, a number of ARVN units performed well. Without the effectiveness of the Marines and some elements of the 3rd ARVN, no one would have gotten out of Da Nang. In Ban Me Thuot, elements of the 23rd ARVN held out for more than a week against two NVA divisions. The 40th and 41st regiments of ARVN's 22nd division fought savagely to delay superior NVA forces from breaking through to the coast at Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province. The net effect of March's events, however, has been severely adverse both in concrete terms and, even more, in psychological ones.

Communist forces have the momentum of success and though they have suffered casualties which may have been heavy, they are being augmented daily by fresh replacements and supplies from North Vietnam (Table, TAB A). During the last three weeks in March, five ARVN divisions, twelve Ranger Groups and two brigade equivalents of armor have been rendered combat ineffective. Officers and men from these units can be regrouped into new formations, but virtually all of their equipment has been lost. Many other GVN units have suffered heavy losses in personnel and equipment.

As of 1 April, Communist combat forces in South Vietnam, predominately North Vietnamese Army units and personnel, totalled over 200,000 organized

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into 123 regiments--71 infantry, 7 sapper, 4 armor, 16 artillery and 25 AAA*.

Comparable, currently effective ARVN ground combat forces total just over 54,000 troops, organized in 39 regiments/brigades or equivalents--18 infantry regiments, 2 armored brigades, 5 ranger groups, 3 airborne and 2 marine brigades**. Given replacement equipment, effective ARVN combat manpower and unit strengths can be augmented by new units formed out of the personnel remnants of the units dispersed during the March battles in MR's 1 and 2, but this will take time. As of 1 April, the predominantly North Vietnamese Communist combat force in South Vietnam outnumbers equivalent GVN forces just under 3 to 1 in size.

Territorially, all of MR 1 has been lost by the GVN, along with most of MR 2***. The GVN currently holds a coastal lowland strip running southward from about Cam Ranh to the MR 3 border, plus the southern portion of Tuyen Duc Province. Lam Dong Province fell on 1 April, Dalat City was evacuated on 2 April and what is left of Tuyen Duc Province is disintegrating.

In MR 3, Phuoc Long Province was lost in January. In March there was further territorial erosion in a broad arc about 50 miles west, north and east of Saigon. The fighting in MR 3 has been sporadic and, on occasion, heavy but there, the ARVN has basically held its own during the past three weeks. In MR 3, ARVN forces do not yet face the problem of being significantly outnumbered. Though the Communists are already applying severe pressure in several areas (e.g., Tay Ninh and around Xuan Loc) and are clearly planning a round of new attacks, GVN forces by and large are holding their own and fighting well, and in the process have badly mauled a few Communist units. Barring a wholesale morale erosion on the part of

*See Table, Tab B, for details. This does not include administrative service and combat support personnel, nor does it include Viet Cong provincial and district territorial units.

**See Table, Tab C, for details. These figures do not include the South Vietnamese Air Force or Navy, nor do they include the Regional and Popular Forces, Police Field Forces or other miscellaneous non-ARVN units. Strength estimates for the GVN Regional Forces are included in the table as part of the GVN's overall armed strength. With some specific exceptions, these territorial units, however, were ineffective during the March campaigns in MR's 1 and 2, often dispersing and dissolving at the first serious probes (or even appearance) of North Vietnamese Army line units. ARVN commanders in MR's 3 and 4 generally doubt the territorials would be more effective in the face of heavy North Vietnamese attacks in the lower half of the country. As a consequence, territorial forces are being upgraded into the regular ARVN structure.

***See Maps (Tab D).

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ARVN forces or a significant further increase in Communist strength beyond that of the past week, the GVN should be able to hold the situation in MR 3 about as it stood on 3 April, at least for the immediate future.

In the Mekong Delta (MR 4), the past several weeks have not seen any appreciable change. Opposing regular combat forces are about evenly matched (See Tables, Tabs B & C). The tactical situation could deteriorate rapidly if additional Communist units come into the area or if the GVN should redeploy to MR 3 any one of the three ARVN divisions now assigned to MR 4.

Militarily, the GVN is on the defensive and beleaguered. March's military reverses and their attendant consequences--the loss of territory, military and civilian casualties, and the enormous population dislocation of the more than two million civilian refugees--have had a heavy, adverse impact on the whole political and social structure of South Vietnam. Just how heavy, extensive or lasting is hard to tell, partly because the South Vietnamese people are in a state of shock and because a full knowledge of what actually has happened in MR's 1 and 2 is not yet widespread, even in Saigon, let alone the populated rural areas in MR 3 or the still prosperous and agriculturally busy Mekong Delta.

C. North Vietnamese Plans and Intentions

North Vietnam's intentions are hard to discern and its next moves are probably the subject of active discussion now being conducted by the Lao Dong Politburo in Hanoi. Such evidence as is available suggests that Hanoi is weighing two broad options:

a. Exert a maximum effort to exploit the recent tactical successes and present battlefield advantage of the North Vietnamese Army in an all out effort to collapse the GVN and eliminate it as a functioning political entity.

b. Consolidate recent gains and try for one or two more major victories (e.g., disperse the 25th ARVN Division and/or capture Tay Ninh), then call for negotiations on terms tantamount to a GVN surrender, planning to try again for military victory later in 1975 or 1976 if the GVN can not be pressured politically into accepting some form of "coalition government" that would give the Communists de facto political control over South Vietnam.

From the time the Paris Agreement was signed in 1973, Hanoi has been steadily improving its military capabilities in South Vietnam through a continuous improvement of its logistic infrastructure (roads, trails, depots, etc., in both Laos and South Vietnam) and a continuous infusion of supplies, equipment and troops--all in direct violation of Article 7 of the 1973 Agreement. This flow has peaked and valleyed over the past 26 months, but it has never stopped.

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In the summer of 1974, when the GVN's overall position looked promising, this manpower and supply flow augmenting North Vietnam's invading expeditionary force in the South was down. It began to pick up soon after last summer's political developments within the United States and diminishing Congressional support for continued assistance to South Vietnam. The logistic flow of men and materiel out of North Vietnam--and, hence, the North Vietnamese Army's capabilities in the south--began to pick up in the latter part of 1974. The pace has been intense since the beginning of 1975, was increased in February and March, and is now going at full throttle.

Hanoi certainly had planned a significant level of offensive action this spring. In retrospect, the "Phase I" January campaign (which overran Phuoc Long Province), among other things, seems to have been a test of whether the US would react to what even Hanoi must have considered a blatant violation of the 1973 Paris Agreement. Judging from the Communists subsequent behavior--e.g., the sharply rising build-up, introduction of North Vietnamese strategic reserve units, the assault on Ban Me Thuot with two NVA divisions (one recently brought south from Hanoi's strategic reserve) and the increasing stridency with which the Communists have played the propaganda theme of US "impotence"--Hanoi seems to have decided that the US was too preoccupied with other problems to react significantly to anything North Vietnam did in Indochina.

Official party directives and high level instructions issued in January and February and even through the third week in March suggest that at least the initial objectives of the 1975 campaign were something less than near term total victory--i.e., an improved territorial position (probably including capture of Tay Ninh City), harassment and attrition of ARVN, and heavy overall pressure on the GVN. The main goal of this campaign appeared to be that of putting the Communists in a commanding position from which they could demand negotiations leading to a coalition government, and, if such were not forthcoming, from which they could launch a "final" assault in 1976.

How much Hanoi's goals may have escalated or its appetite been whetted by the past month's events in South Vietnam--and in the United States--is impossible to tell, particularly since even Hanoi has not had time to digest the most recent developments. The rate at which men and supplies are coming down from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, however, certainly suggests that Hanoi intends to keep pressing its invading expeditionary force's attacks.

II. MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS

The GVN is faced with an interlocking web of rapidly mounting problems which fall into three broad areas.

First, there are physical or concrete problems. The most important of these is the North Vietnamese Army--including its present size, increasing

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strength and aggressive activity. Then, there is the sheer magnitude of the past three weeks' losses in personnel and equipment which--unless or until replaced--puts an increasingly debilitated ARVN in a worsening position against a growing North Vietnamese threat. In the civil sphere, there is the concomitant magnitude of the refugee flow, uprooting close to ten per cent of the entire population, whose urgent needs for food, clothing, shelter, and medical care place enormous strains on the machinery of government. Meeting these refugees' immediate needs is in itself a massive problem but resettling them and absorbing them in the areas still under GVN control is an even more formidable task.

There are many other concrete problems that are intrinsically important (e.g., keeping the roads and lines of communication open, food supplies moving, maintaining basic law and order in areas inundated with refugees, controlling or checking Viet Cong subversion and terrorism in areas not under immediate conventional attack), but these are overshadowed by the three "physical" problems mentioned above.

In addition, there are a host of burgeoning, related problems which might be termed "administrative". These involve providing the leadership, guidance and direction necessary to cope with the physical problems noted above. They also involve the leadership and administration, military and civil, necessary to rally a nation after a series of defeats, check the spread of despondency and hopelessness, develop a sense of national unity and common purpose, and wage a war for survival. In a Vietnamese context, the situation requires the kind of leadership and effective administration Churchill and his War Cabinet gave Great Britain after Dunkirk and the fall of France. To date (as outlined in Section III below) this kind of leadership and administration is not evident--and in Vietnam, there is no English Channel to check the onrushing tide of invasion or provide a respite for regroupment.

Then there is a complex of psychological and attitudinal problems which, in the end, may prove the most important of all. In refugee-clogged coastal MR 2, the kind of fear and panic which erupted in Da Nang also rose to the surface before the GVN's position north of Cam Ranh collapsed. In MR 3 and Saigon, the people are shocked and bewildered. They may not yet have a sense of immediate personal danger and crisis, but that emotion is beginning to spread with increasing rapidity. In the Delta, where news of northern developments takes time to circulate, life is prosperous and there is no change in the pattern of the past two years' events yet perceptible to the ordinary citizen, people are perplexed and troubled but do not yet feel immediately threatened. The GVN has a little time in which to act before the full story of what has happened in MR 1 and MR 2 becomes widely known throughout the rest of the country; but the time is very short.

In the Army, the psychological problems are more focused and more intense. Army units in coastal MR 2 know they may soon be overwhelmed. Despite certain local tactical successes, the units in MR 3 could fall prey to a

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sense of defeatism and hopelessness. In the Delta, senior ARVN commanders assert that the morale of their troops is still good and that when attacked they will fight, but when talked to privately by Americans they know, and whose discretion they trust, these same commanders caution that their troops' morale could not stand the news of major defeats in MR 3.

One of the most serious psychological and attitudinal problems at all levels, military and civilian, is the belief that the South Vietnamese have been abandoned, and even betrayed, by the United States. The Communists are using every possible device of propaganda and psychological warfare to foster this view. The higher one goes in the social or hierarchical scale the greater the degree of sharpness and focus to such sentiments. Much of this emotion is keyed on the 1973 Paris Agreement and subsequent US withdrawal. It is widely believed that the GVN was forced to sign this agreement as a result of a private US-North Vietnamese deal under which the US was allowed to withdraw its forces and get its prisoners back in return for abandoning South Vietnam. This sense of abandonment has been intensified by what is widely perceived as a lack of public US acknowledgment of South Vietnam's current plight or willingness to provide needed support.

All of the above problems are interacting. One result of this interaction is a spreading loss of confidence in the GVN's top leadership, a sentiment felt throughout the politically aware population and mounting rapidly in the Army. President Thieu's inner core of senior advisors is felt to be disgraced. With every passing day, more of this bitterness and resentment is being focused on President Thieu himself. There is a general awareness that any coup attempt, even if successful, would probably be the ultimate disaster; but the odds are mounting that unless this crisis of confidence is dispelled, President Thieu will have to step down.

III. CURRENT GVN PLANS AND INTENTIONS

The GVN has what it calls a "strategic plan" but it is being revised almost daily in the light of events. A week ago (25 March) it envisioned an enclave at Da Nang and a southern defense line anchored on the coast at Binh Dinh or, failing that, just below Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province. The contemplated line was to swing through Tuyen Duc and Lam Dong Provinces, then to Xuan Loc in Long Khanh Province and over to Tay Ninh. Since the plan was developed, Da Nang has fallen, the GVN's position in coastal MR 2 has collapsed north of Cam Ranh.

The GVN intends to reorganize and refit the ARVN and Marine units decimated in last month's battles with all possible speed. It also intends to take other steps to augment ARVN's strength by upgrading significant numbers of territorial forces and Ranger groups. The success of all of this will depend on the degree to which RVNAF is able to correct serious deficiencies in command and control and its capacity to translate plans into coordinated action. President Thieu and General Vien are aware of the need and have promised corrective action.

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The refugee problem reflects similar deficiencies in planning and administration. There is a concern and desire to be helpful and sources of international sympathy and support which could be tapped, including funds, medical personnel, supplies, etc.. Dr. Dan--the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for refugees--is doing what he can, but there is, as yet, no internal GVN mechanism capable of addressing the intricate details and systematic follow through this enormous and complex problem requires. As a result, the burden tends to fall on a few officials, including local provincial ones, some of whom have been imaginative in coping with immediate crises but whose efforts are individual, fragmented and not part of an integrated whole.

Propaganda and psychological warfare and even essential governmental communication with the GVN's own people show similar deficiencies in overall concept and systematic follow through.

The GVN, in short, has hopes and aspirations, and a desire to cope, but few of these are focused, channelled or truly organized. The government, especially the bureaucracy, is in a state of shock and bewilderment and the top echelons do not seem to have a full realization or comprehension of the magnitude of the GVN's many problems.

IV. CURRENT PROSPECTS

What happens in South Vietnam over the next month or so, let alone a longer time frame, depends very much on what is done--or not done--by North Vietnam, the GVN, and the United States during the next two to three weeks and even the next few days.

Unless North Vietnamese Forces are somehow checked in battle or Hanoi induced to pause by some form of diplomatic or other suasion, the North Vietnamese will defeat the GVN militarily. There is no evidence that the North Vietnamese are developing logistic problems or beginning to outrun their supplies. The southward march of one, let alone two, of Hanoi's five divisions now in MR 1 would be enough to seal the fate of the GVN's hold on coastal MR 2. If one of Hanoi's five divisions already in MR 2 were brought down into MR 3, particularly if augmented with more armor and artillery, that would tilt the present balance of forces in MR 3. The GVN's forces in the Delta have all they can handle with the North Vietnamese troops already in that region, and MR 4 could not hold if MR 3 collapsed in the wake of defeats in MR's 1 and 2.

The above picture may be altered as the GVN deploys into MR 3 units reconstituted from the remnants of the ones recovered from MR 1 and MR 2. This, however, requires time to reorganize and equip. The odds are that in pure capability terms, the North Vietnamese can move and commit existing divisions within SVN faster than the GVN can form new ones.

As for the GVN, some steps--dramatic and demonstrably effective--have to be taken not just to prevent any near term deterioration in the GVN's

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military position in MR 3, but also--and perhaps more important--to give the population, and the RVNAF, a psychological lift and confidence in the GVN's top leadership. In the morale sphere, South Vietnam--at least in MR 3, including Saigon--is very near the brink of a slide into the kind of hopelessness and defeatism that could rapidly unravel the whole structure.

V. THE US ROLE AND POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

What the US does, or does not do, in the days immediately ahead will probably be as critical a determinant of the next few weeks' events as the actions or non-actions of Saigon or Hanoi. The US, alone, can not save South Vietnam but it can, however inadvertently, seal its doom.

My specific recommendations fall into two different categories. There are short term actions--partly physical but primarily psychological--needed to give South Vietnam a morale lift and, if possible, to induce Hanoi to pause. This buys nothing but time, but at the moment that time is urgently needed. Secondly, there are longer term actions, mainly material though still with a strong psychological dimension, which are necessary if South Vietnam is to have any hope of physically surviving the North Vietnamese onslaught or negotiating any settlement short of unconditional surrender.

The essential and immediate requirement is Vietnamese perception of US support. Perceptions are important in every respect. A perception of diminishing US support for South Vietnam encouraged the North Vietnamese to launch their current offensive. It was this same perception that caused the Republic of Vietnam to begin withdrawal from the dispersed and exposed positions in the northern provinces. These perceptions were shaped by the following actions: Immediately following the signing of the Paris Agreement, \$1.6 billion was requested to meet the requirements of the South Vietnamese in FY 1974; \$1.126 billion was provided--70% of the needs. A subsequent request for a \$500 million supplemental was ultimately turned down. For the current fiscal year, \$1.6 billion was requested to maintain a viable Vietnamese military capability for defense; \$700 million was provided--44% of the stated requirement. These and related actions helped generate the crisis of confidence that precipitated the GVN strategy of retrenchment.

Now, the key to Vietnamese national survival is the GVN's ability to stabilize the situation, and to bring their military resources to bear in blunting the North Vietnamese offensive. Their ability to stabilize the situation hinges, to a very large extent, on the ability to convince the average soldier and citizen that all is not lost, and that the North Vietnamese can be stopped. Though this is largely a task for the Government of Vietnam, the actions of the US are vital in restoring confidence.

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The action which the US could take which would have the greatest immediate effect on Vietnamese perceptions--North and South--would be the use of US air power to blunt the current NVA offensive. Even if confined to South Vietnam and carried out for only a limited time, such attacks would take a severe toll on the North Vietnamese expeditionary force's manpower and supplies, and have a dramatic morale impact on North Vietnam's invading troops. These attacks would also give Hanoi's leaders' pause and raise concerns, which do not now exist, about the risks involved in ignoring a formal agreement made with the United States.

South Vietnamese military leaders at all levels have repeatedly cited the importance of B-52 attacks to the conduct of a successful defense against superior enemy forces and there is sound military justification for such a point of view.

The above comments convey only a military assessment. I recognize, however, the significant legal and political implications which would attend the exercise of such an action.

One important step that the US should take is to make it clear that the US supports South Vietnam. This should include positive statements by the President and other senior US officials. Sagging Vietnamese morale was clearly bolstered by the arrival of the United States team sent by the President to investigate the situation. Additional US actions of this nature would highlight US concern. In addition to statements from the Executive Branch, there should be an effort to insure that a broad spectrum of concern is evident in the United States. Support from Members of Congress; public statements from responsible individuals both in and outside of the Government; and understanding in the US press will foster changing US perceptions of the situation in Vietnam.

This effort could stress three principal themes:

--The Vietnamese people, with first-hand knowledge of life under both the Thieu Government and Communism, have clearly indicated their choice by "voting with their feet," as the East Germans did before the introduction of the Berlin Wall. The mass exodus from the northern provinces, in the face of hardships, danger and intense human suffering, is a true sign of their feelings. In their choice, none have fled north to Hanoi and North Vietnam--where there is no fighting, where there are no refugee columns, and where war has not touched since the Paris Agreement. The question is not an academic one to the individual Vietnamese; it is one of life and death. By their actions they have chosen liberty and possible death.

--South Vietnam is fighting a defensive war. US materiel is used to defend South Vietnam, while Soviet and Chinese tanks and war materiel are being used by the North Vietnamese for open, naked, defiant aggression. It is this North Vietnamese invasion, not the actions of the South Vietnamese, that has already required the Administration to seek additional support from the Congress.

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--We should continue to emphasize the effect of Vietnam on the credibility of any US commitment. The world clearly understands past US commitments to Vietnam. Our expenditure of lives and resources in pursuit of this commitment is well known to all. The governments of the world know the past, but will see any present inability to support the Vietnamese in their crisis of survival as a failure of US will and resolve. If we make no effort, our future credibility as perceived by ally and potential adversary alike will be lost for years to come.

Statements of US support are important, but it is also essential that the message be validated with concrete actions to demonstrate that the United States stands behind her ally. While the ultimate availability of military resources will rest with supplemental appropriations in the Congress for the current fiscal year, there is more than \$150 million available from the \$700 million voted in the Defense Appropriations Act. This money can be used to meet the most immediate needs now and in the next few weeks. However, the rapid expenditure of the remaining funds will soon exhaust US capabilities to provide support. A supplemental appropriations bill, probably for about \$722 million, is urgently needed for basic military necessities to provide a chance for the survival of the Republic of Vietnam. Details of the requirement follow:

The present offensive campaign by the NVA has caused serious materiel losses which must be replaced now:

--Five ARVN Divisions have been destroyed or rendered combat ineffective and another division has been only partially salvaged. While at this writing an exact numerical count of personnel and equipment losses is impossible to obtain, the following are the presently known materiel losses:

GROUND MUNITIONS (DEPOT STOCKS ONLY)	\$ 129.0 M
INDIVIDUAL & CREW SERVED WEAPONS	24.6 M
ARTILLERY	16.0 M
TRACK VEHICLES	85.0 M
WHEEL VEHICLES	77.0 M
COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT	15.6 M
POL	6.3 M
MEDICAL	7.9 M
ENGINEER	1.8 M
GENERAL SUPPLY STOCKS	<u>110.5 M</u>
TOTAL	\$ 473.7 M

S E C R E T

--In addition the VNAF has lost 393 aircraft valued at \$176.3 million, \$52.8 million of air munitions, and \$68.6 million of spare parts and support equipment.

--During the current offensive the Vietnamese Navy lost three craft valued at \$2.4 million and \$5.4 million in supplies and support equipment.

The total estimated cost for RVNAF military supplies and equipment lost in the current offensive is \$779.2 million. These losses do not include basic load munitions, non-divisional support units or fixed facilities such as airfields, ports and military installations.

The GVN believes the current offensive can be blunted with military forces currently available and to be reconstituted. They contemplate retaining a reduced RVN consisting of the southeastern portion of the MR 2 lowlands, the southern two-thirds of MR 3 and all of MR 4. The territory to be held contains the bulk of the population and has the requisites for a viable political and economic entity. They are working on a reorganization plan which, if successfully implemented, could provide military protection for this truncated RVN.

At this writing, the GVN reorganization plan envisages reconstitution of four infantry divisions, conversion of 12 ranger groups into four ranger divisions and the upgrading of 27 mobile Regional Force Groups into 27 infantry regiments. To be effective, implementation must begin immediately. Under the critical assumption that the GVN can stabilize the present military situation, with the materiel and manpower resources presently at their disposal and within the limited remaining FY75 appropriation, they need immediate additional materiel replenishments which will require new authorizations and appropriations. Our estimate of these immediate requirements is:

--Equipment for four infantry divisions:	\$ 138.6 M
--Conversion of 12 ranger groups to four divisions:	118.0 M
--Conversion of 27 RF groups to 27 ARVN Regiments:	69.6 M
--Ground munitions to sustain combat operations and reconstitute stockage levels:	198.0 M
--Air munitions to sustain combat operations and reconstitute stockage levels:	21.0 M
--POL products to sustain combat operations and insure adequate stockage levels:	10.4 M
--General supplies and repair parts:	21.0 M

--Medical Support (Hospitals & Supplies):	\$ 7.0 M
--Aircraft (two C-130's), spares, ground support equipment, and airfield repairs:	44.9 M
--Cost of transportation of supplies and equipment:	<u>93.7 M</u>
TOTAL	\$ 722.2 M

We estimate that the bulk of the above materials can be delivered to RVN within 45 days of availability of funds. It must be understood that without this supplemental funding, RVNAF's ammunition supply will be exhausted before the end of this fiscal year at the present level of combat. Reconstitution of combat ineffective units will not be possible without supplemental funding.

Beyond satisfying these immediate military requirements we should seek separate appropriations for refugee relief. The GVN should not be burdened with the expense of resettling over one million refugees when its resources are already needed for its fight for survival.

There is not and can not be any guarantee that the actions I propose will be sufficient to prevent total North Vietnamese conquest. The effort, however, should be made. What is at stake in Vietnam now is America's credibility as an ally. We must not abandon our goal of a free and independent South Vietnam.

NVA/INCREASED NVA WEAPONS
IN RVN SINCE CEASEFIRE
 (All Numbers Rough Estimates)

WEAPONS	ON HAND	MOVED IN THRU	TOTAL	MOVED IN	TOTAL INCREASE	MOVING SOUTH
	23 JAN 73	1 MAR 75	1 MAR 75	1 MAR-1 APR 75	23 JAN 73-1 APR 75	1 APR 75
Field Arty Pieces (85, 122, 130MM)	85-105	270-380	355-485	15	285-395	30-40
Anti-Aircraft 12.8, 14.5, 23, 37, 57, 100MM	700	800	1500	250	1050	250
SA-2	-----	15-25 LCHRS	15-25 LCHRS	16-25 LCHRS	31-50 LCHRS	Poss 50-75 LCHRS
SA-3	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
ARMOR PT76, T54, T63, etc.	90-115	575-635	665-750	20-30	595-665	Unk

PERSONNEL INFILTRATION ARRIVALS IN RVN	ARRIVED BETWEEN	ARRIVED DURING	DETECTED	ESTIMATED
	28 JAN 73 AND 1 MAR 75	MARCH 1975	APRIL ARRIVALS	ADDITIONAL APRIL ARRIVALS
195,400	19,400	23,400	10,000	248,300

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By DAW NLF Date 11/19/80

DAO VC/NVA OB
MAJOR COMBAT UNITS IN RVN

	JAN 73	MAR 75	APR 75 (Change over Mar 75)	Moving to SVN
	DIVS	REGTS	DIVS	DIVS
		REGTS	Bdes	REGTS
COUNTRY-WIDE	17 (16 Inf, 1 AA)	97 (85 Inf, 12 AA)	20 (+5) (15 Inf, 1 Arty 3 AA, 1 Sap)	4 (3 Inf, 1 AA)
			117 (+20) (65 Inf, 16 Arty, 4 Armor, 24 AA, 1 SAM, 7 Sap)	16 (12 Inf, 3 AA, 1 SAM)
MR-1	9 (8 Inf, 1 AA)	50 (39 Inf/ Arty, 11 AA)	6 (-3) (4 Inf, 2 AD)	4 (No Change)
			46 (-4) (20 Inf, 6 Arty, 2 Armor, 17 AA, 1 SAM)	50 (+1 Inf)
MR-2	3 Inf	10 Inf/ Arty	4 Inf (+1)	6 (No Change)
			25 (+15) (15 Inf, 3 Arty, 1 Armor, 4 AA)	27 (+4) (3 Inf, 1 AA)
MR-3	2 Inf	17 (16 Inf/ Arty, 1 AA)	7 (+5) (4 Inf, 1 Arty, 1 Sap, 1 AA)	8 (+1 Inf)
			31 (+14) (15 Inf, 5 Arty, 1 Armor, 1 Sap, 3 AA)	34 (+3 Inf)
MR-4	3 Inf	20 Inf	3 Inf (No Change)	3 Inf (No Change)
			18 (-2) (15 Inf, 1 Sap, 2 Arty)	18 (No Change)

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TABLE

COMBAT UNITS IN SOUTH VIETNAM *

(NO. OF UNITS) (STRENGTH)

END-JANUARY 1975

	MR 1	MR 2	MR 3	MR 4	RVN
Inf Regts	(10) 16,000	(7) 11,500	(9) 14,800	(9) 10,800	(35) 53,100
Armd Bdes	(1) 1,300	(1) 2,000	(1) 1,700	(1) 1,100	(4) 6,100
Arty Regts	(6) 7,800	(3) 3,900	(4) 5,200	(4) 5,000	(17) 21,900
Rgr Gps	(4) 4,800	(7) 8,400	(4) 5,000	(0)	(15) 18,200
Abn Bdes	(3) 4,500	(0)	(0)	(0)	(3) 4,500
Mar Bdes	(3) 6,000	(0)	(0)	(0)	(3) 6,000
TOTAL	(27) 40,400	(18) 25,800	(18) 26,700	(14) 16,900	(77) 109,800
RF BNS	20,000	32,000	33,000	40,000	125,000

END-FEBRUARY 1975

	MR 1	MR 2	MR 3	MR 4	RVN
Inf Regts	(10) 16,000	(7) 11,500	(9) 14,800	(9) 10,800	(35) 53,100
Armd Bdes	(1) 1,300	(1) 2,000	(1) 1,700	(1) 1,100	(4) 6,100
Arty Regts	(6) 7,800	(3) 3,900	(4) 5,200	(4) 5,000	(17) 21,900
Rgr Gps	(4) 4,800	(8) 9,600	(4) 5,000	(0)	(16) 19,400
Abn Bdes	(3) 4,500	(0)	(1) 1,500	(0)	(4) 6,000
Mar Bdes	(3) 6,000	(0)	(1) 2,200	(0)	(4) 8,200
TOTAL	(27) 40,400	(19) 27,000	(20) 30,400	(14) 16,900	(80) 114,700
RF BNS	19,000	31,000	32,000	34,000	116,000

END-MARCH 1975

	MR 1	MR 2	MR 3	MR 4	RVN
Inf Regts	(0)	(0)	(9) 11,800	(9) 12,000	(18) 23,800
Armd Bdes	(0)	(0)	(1) 1,500	(1) 1,500	(2) 3,000
Arty Regts	(0)	(0)	(5) 6,500	(4) 5,000	(9) 11,500
Rgr Gps	(0)	(0)	(5) 6,200	(0)	(5) 6,200
Abn Bdes	(0)	(0)	(3) 4,500	(0)	(3) 4,500
Mar Bdes	(0)	(0)	(0) 5,000	(2)	(2) 5,000
TOTAL	(0) 0	(0) 0	(23) 35,500	(16) 18,500	(39) 54,000
RF BNS	0	0	31,000	32,000	63,000

* Includes only personnel in combat effective units, does not include stragglers, processees, trainees, etc.

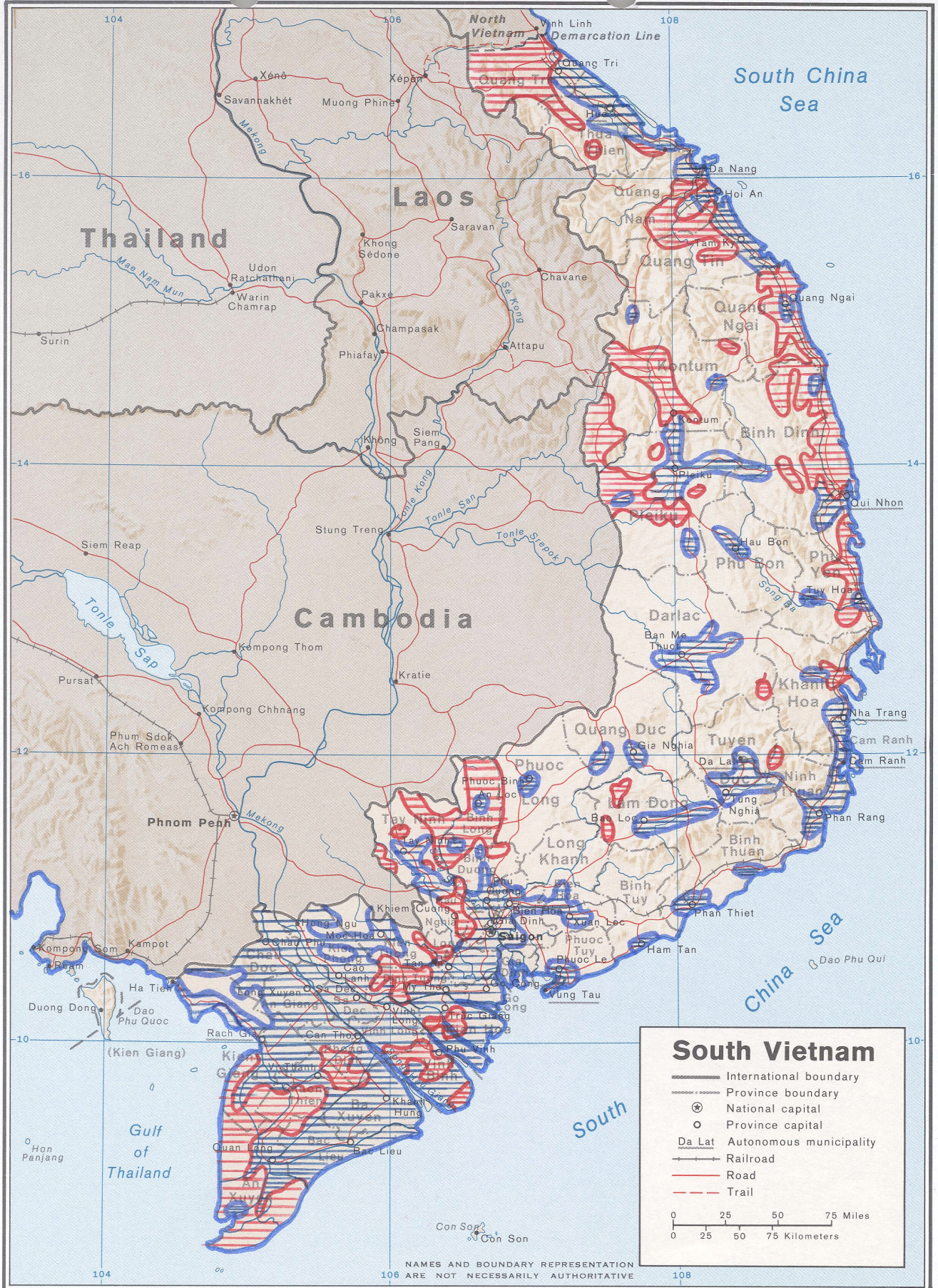
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* WHITE AREAS ARE CONSIDERED UNPOPULATED

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