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#24

A DIVISION FORCE AT THE 17th PARALLEL

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: JAN 07 2013

PRO

1. Such a force will be a clear indication of the seriousness of U.S. purpose and will provide a great lift to local morale.
2. Military mission is an appropriate one for U.S. forces.
3. Its presence reduces or eliminates danger of an attack from across the parallel.
4. Living conditions in the area are relatively good.

Office of the Secretary of Defense 505.6.55
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
Date: 07 Jan 2013 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: Deny in Full:
Declassify in Part: X
Reason: 3.3(b)(1) through (9)
MDR: 12-M-3203

CON

1. The force represents a relatively large commitment which we can ill afford.
2. The size of contribution may tend to reduce Diem's efforts to use his own resources.
3. It does not contribute directly to a reduction of the Viet Cong threat. It will relieve only about 3500 troops presently in position along the parallel.
4. There is no end in sight for this force. The duration of the mission is presumably concurrent with the Viet Cong insurgency.
5. There are considerable Viet Cong concentrations on the left flank and in the rear of this position.
6. This force will require a line of communication of about 100 miles.

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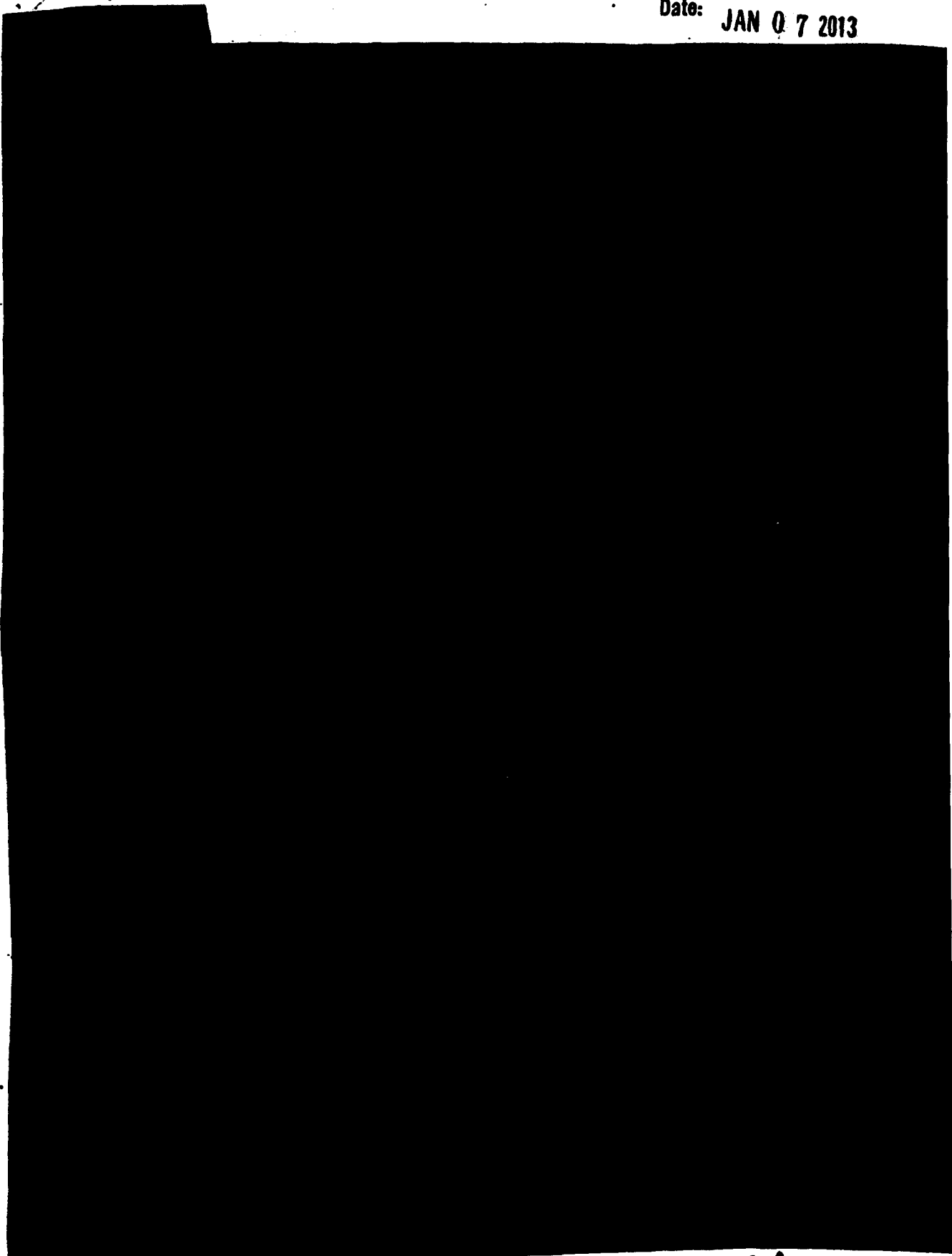
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OSD 33(b)(1) - (9)

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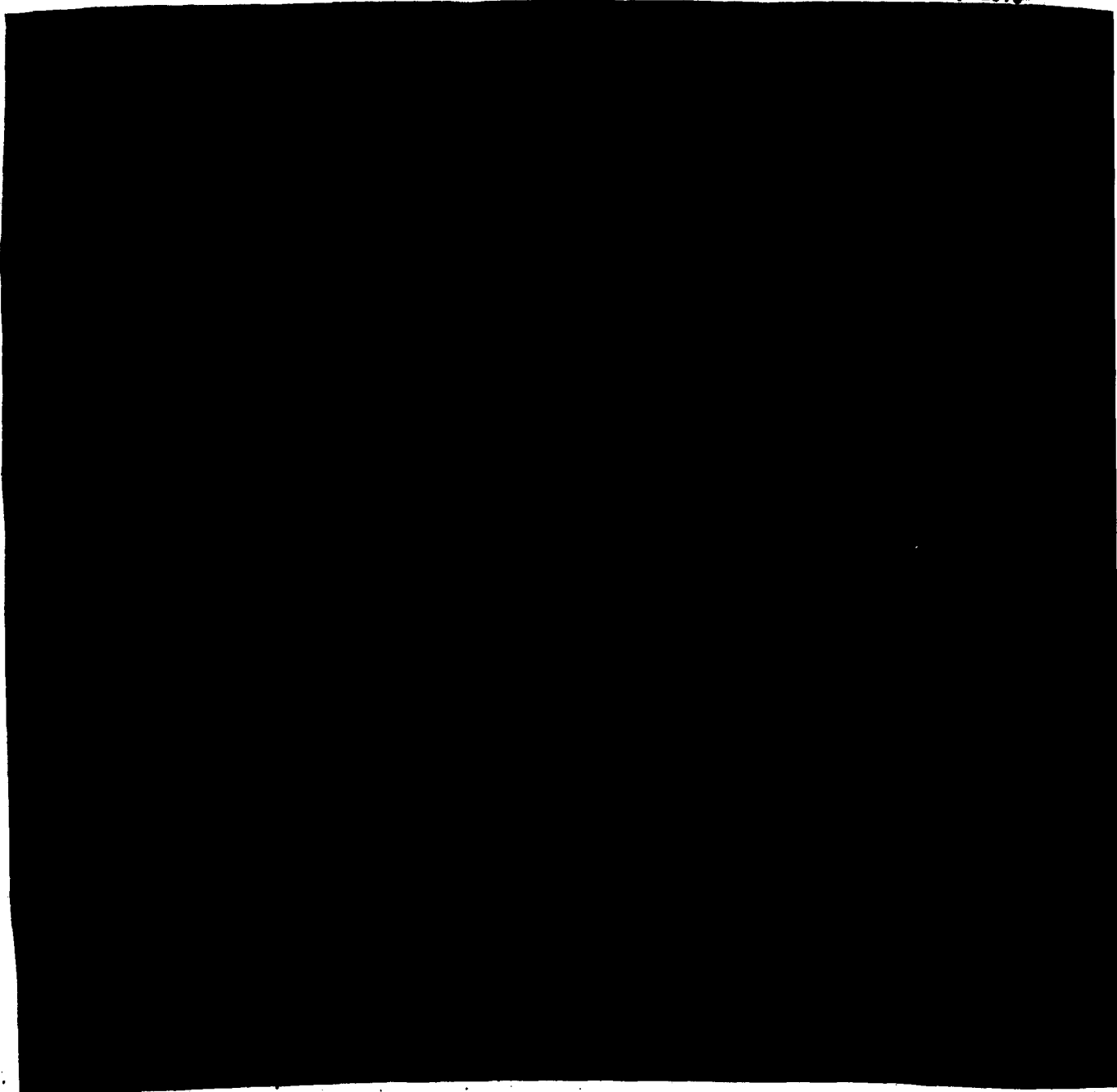
OSD 3.3(b)(1) - (9)

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
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OSD 33(b)(1)-(9)

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Kien Giang Province

502nd Battalion

OSD 3.3(b)(1) - (9)

The battalion is divided into the following companies 271st, 272nd, 273rd, and 274th.

Total strength: 400 men

Weapons: two 60-mm mortars, 2 heavy machine guns, 20 automatic rifles, and 140 rifles.

Regional Forces

These include a number of regional squads and platoons which are most active in the area of Can Lam District.

Phu Yen

There are no regular forces yet.

Regional Forces

The Viet Cong have organized regional platoons at Son Hoa, Dong Hoa, and Tuy Hoa, with about 30 men to each platoon. They are relatively well armed.

Binh Dinh

There are no regular forces yet.

Regional Forces

An Lao Regional Company

Total Strength: 200 men

Weapons: 3 automatic rifles, 12 submachine guns, and 80 rifles.

Base and Zone of Operation: An Lao District

Vinh Thanh Regional Company

Total Strength: 100 men

Weapons: one submachine gun and 30 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Vinh Thanh District

Vinh Thanh District Party Committee Platoon

Total Strength: 30 men

Weapons: 3 submachine guns and 10 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Vinh Hoa and Vinh Thanh Townships

Page determined to be Unclassified
Reviewed Chief, RDD, WHS
IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
Date: JAN 07 2013

An Thach--An Oi Regional Platoon

Total Strength: 40 men

Weapons: one submachine gun and 10 rifles

Hoai Xhon District Viet Cong Party Committee Platoon

Total Strength: 20 men

Weapons: one submachine gun and 5 rifles

Phu My District Party Committee Platoon

Total Strength: 20 men

Weapons: 10 rifles

Phu Cat Regional Platoon

Total Strength: 20 men

Weapons: one submachine gun, 5 rifles, and 2 pistols

Ca Chang Regional Platoon

Total Strength: 20 men

Weapons: 5 submachine guns and 13 rifles

Quang Ngai

Regular Units

Minh Mo Duc--Duc Pho Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 4 submachine guns and 20 rifles

Base: at BS-659,342 in Ba My Township, Ba To District

Quang Ngai Province

Central Ba To Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: one automatic rifle, 2 submachine guns and 10 rifles

Base: Ba Doe Township, Ba To District

Zone of Operation: Central and southern areas of Ba To District

Western Ba To Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 2 submachine guns and 20 rifles

Base: Ba Bieu Township

Zone of Operation: Western and northern areas of Ba To

Southern Son Ha Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 1 submachine gun and 10 rifles

Base: Ha Dung and Ha Tay (Ba To) Townships

Zone of Operation: Southern area of Son Ha

Northern Son Ha Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 1 submachine gun and 8 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Northern area of Son Ha

Minh Long Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 3 automatic rifles, 6 submachine guns and 15 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Minh Ha Township, Minh Long District

Sen Tinh Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 2 submachine guns and 12 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Tra Bong District and the western area of Sen Tinh

Binh Son Company

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 3 submachine guns and 10 rifles

Zone of Operations: Border region of Binh Son and Tam Ky

Regional Forces

In organizing regional troops and township guerrillas in Quang Ngai Province, the Viet Cong developed forces evenly throughout the province.

At the present time, they have about 6 regional platoons and 21 guerrilla platoons with an average numerical strength of 25 to 40 men.

Quang Nam

In Quang Nam Province at the present time the Viet Cong have two regional companies with a total strength of 200 men, operating in Nhat Yang and Tam Ky Districts. Their weapons consist of 1 heavy machine gun, 12 submachine guns, and 100 rifles.

There are also two platoons of special forces, with a total strength of 20 men, armed with 1 submachine gun and 10 pistols. They are also equipped with a total strength of 30 to 50 men and sufficient weapons.

Phu Thuan

Regular Forces: None

Regional Forces

One Regional Company

Total Strength: 100 men divided into platoons and squads.

Weapons: 4 automatic rifles, 12 submachine guns and 30 rifles

Base: Secret zones 25 and 7 in An Phuoc District

Zone of Operation: Thanh Hai and An Phuoc Districts

Phu Thuan

Regular Forces: None

Regional Forces:

Two regional platoons and one tribal platoon.

Total Strength: each platoon has from 20 to 40 men

Weapons: One automatic rifle, 25 submachine guns and rifles

Quang Tri

Regular Forces: None

Regional Forces

In Haong Hoa and Ba Long Districts and in the mountainous areas of Cam Lo, since the terrain between Laos and Ha Tayen is dangerous, the Viet Cong have taken advantage of this spot to organize hamlet and village guerrilla militia guard units.

They have also been able to build up about 7 guerrilla squads with a total strength of 10 to 15 men armed with submachine guns and rifles. These groups have scattered their bases in various secret areas in order to propagandize and to persuade the tribal compatriots to leave their villages and follow them; at the same time they are carrying out their threats and are terrorizing and killing cadres of the Republic of Vietnam government.

Furthermore, during the last week of June 1961, the Viet Cong organized a battalion called "The Yellow Star Forces for Southern Progress" (Doi-quan Sao-vang Nam-tien). The majority of its component units were guerrillas regrouped in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. This entire unit will be sent in turns into the South for harassment.

Kontum

Regular Units

One regular battalion (in the Mang Canh Clandestine Area)

Total Strength: 600 men

Weapons: four 81-mm mortars, 30 automatic rifles, 80 sub-machine guns, and 175 rifles.

Base and Zone of Operation: the area of Mang Bak, Ton Morong, and Kon Brai

Bak To Regular Company

Total Strength: 100 men

Weapons: 3 automatic rifles, 15 submachine guns and 40 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Bak To District

Besides, the Viet Cong are organizing one autonomous regional battalion with a total strength of 300 men and armed with 10 automatic rifle, 30 submachine guns, and 150 rifles. There are also a number of other regional platoons.

Flak

Regular Units: None

Regional Forces

In Pleiku Province, as is the case in all other provinces in the South, the Viet Cong have organized many guerrilla units composed mostly of tribal youths who were forced to study in the jungles. When they complete their studies, they are sent back to their native villages to take part in operations.

They have now completely organized a regional district party committee company with a total strength of about 100 men. Their weapons consist of 4 automatic rifles, 25 submachine guns, and 50 rifles. This company has been divided and sent to various localities for operational purposes.

Darlac

Regular Units: None

Regional Forces

A Regional Platoon:

Total Strength: 40 men (the majority are tribesmen)

Weapons: one automatic rifle, 5 submachine guns and
20 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Buon Ho District

A Regional Platoon:

Total Strength: 55 men

Weapons: 5 submachine guns and 15 rifles

Zone of Operations: Duc Lap District, and the border between
Quang Duc and Darlac Provinces

Two Regional Platoons

Total Strength: 60 men

Weapons: 2 automatic rifles, 10 submachine guns and 40 rifles

Base and Zone of Operation: Lac Thien District

Quang Duc

Regular Units: None

Regional Forces

A Regional Company

Total Strength: 70 men

Weapons: 3 automatic rifles, 12 submachine guns and 42 rifles

Zone of Operation: mobile throughout the province

Tuyen Duc

Regular Units: None

Regional Forces

A Regional Platoon

Total Strength: 50 men

Weapons: 3 Automatic rifles, 3 submachine guns and 15 rifles

Base and Zone of Operations: Duc Trong District

A Regional Platoon

Total Strength: 40 men

Weapons: One automatic rifle, 3 submachine guns and 20
rifles

Zone of Operations: Lac Duong and Don Duong Districts

Lam Dong

Regular Units: None

Regional Forces

Page determined to be Unclassified
Reviewed Chief, RDD, WHS
IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
Date: JAN 07 2013

One Regional Company

Total Strength: 150 men

Weapons: 5 automatic rifles, 28 submachine guns and 100 rifles

Zone of Operation: mobile throughout the province

V. ROADS USUALLY USED BY THE VIET CONG TO TRANSPORT
TROOPS INTO THE SOUTH

At the present time the Viet Cong usually use two main routes to transport cadres, soldiers, and weapons into South Vietnam. These are the ocean route and the route through Lower Laos, Cambodia, and PMS (Plateau Montagneux du Sud).

A. The Ocean Route

This route is usually used by the Viet Cong to bring cadres, espionage agents, communications equipment weapons, ammunition and medicine from north of the 17th parallel into the South.

Their points of debarkation are in Quang Binh and northern Quang Tri Provinces, especially the areas of Dong Hoi, Gio Linh, and Trieu Linh.

Cadres and weapons are received at various points that have been established along the Central Vietnam seacoast. Most frequently these are in the areas of Hai Van, Lien Chieu (Quang Nam), and Minh Thuan.

Sometimes their bases are far down the seacoast in Vinh Binh and Kien Hoa Provinces.

The Viet Cong usually use large and small boats of different types for transportation; they innocently use commercial boats, especially fishing boats, and send out two or three at a time; many times they have

a proper escort. Toward the end of 1960, the Viet Cong at one time sent 11 large boats loaded with weapons into the South.

They have now organized at Bo Trach (Quang Binh) a Naval Group known as 603 which is responsible for the regular shipment of supplies to the South. This Naval Group is very active.

Furthermore, in many areas of the Central Vietnam coast the Viet Cong have organized Sea Transport Committees to go to the North to receive the weapons which are to be distributed to all Southern provinces.

With these facilities and with such a detailed organizational plan, the Viet Cong have for some time now used the ocean route to transport a great many cadres and a great amount of military supplies and weapons into the South.

B. The Route Through the Mountains

This route is of great importance in the Viet Cong's plan to engulf South Vietnam.

From Hanoi, as from Dong Hoi, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, etc., the Viet Cong are sending troops through Laos by air and by highway. Every day, Soviet and Viet Cong planes transport troops, weapons, and ammunition through Xiang Khouang, and Tchepone (Laos) or groups of Malouin trucks transport troops from Quang Tri through Tchepone (Laos), and from these rear area bases the Viet Cong use the highways to transport troops down to Lower Laos and drop them at HKS-Boloven plateaus or the Vietnamese-Lao border.

Page determined to be Unclassified
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IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
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From Laos and Cambodia, the Viet Cong secretly thrust into the FMS area night and day. With a border hundreds of kilometers long, with the protection of dangerous jungles and mountains, and with sparse population, it is very easy for the Viet Cong to infiltrate the FMS area.

At the present time the Viet Cong have established many bases in Lower Laos and in Cambodia.

C. The Tchepone-Kontum Route

The Viet Cong army from North Vietnam usually crosses through (either by air or by highway) and assembles at the Tchepone base. From there, they move gradually down to the PMS-Boloven area (Laos) to reach Kontum (Vietnam).

The road from Dong Hoi (North Vietnam) through Tchepone is now being guarded by the Viet Cong 325th Division. The road from PMS-Boloven (Laos) to Kontum is being guarded by the Pathet Lao and the Viet Cong.

D. Routes from Cambodia to PMS

Along the border of Cambodia and PMS (which includes Pleiku, Darlac, and Ban Me Thuot Provinces) the Viet Cong have set up many bases as points from which to enter Vietnamese territory.

It is known that the Viet Cong have set up the following bases in Cambodia:

Secret base No 292, which is 15 kilometers from Kratie.

Secret base No 290 which is 15 kilometers from Ban Me Thuot Province.

Secret base No 294 which is 15 kilometers from the border of Pleiku Province.

There are many Viet Cong soldiers at all these bases ready to cross the border at Kratie in order to invade Vietnamese territory.