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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

URGENT INFORMATION

March 12, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: WILLIAM L. STEARMAN *Kipler*

SUBJECT: Ominous Developments in Vietnam

A number of recent significant military and political developments in Vietnam provide an ominous indication of North Vietnamese strategy and intentions for the months to come. The high level of military activity since March 10 reinforces this view. These new developments are:

-- In December of 1974 the 23rd plenum of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee issued Resolution 23. This may have dealt with a new policy toward the South.

-- In late February and early March, high level Soviet and PRC delegations visited Hanoi. Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolay Firyubin led the Soviet group. The presence of the PRC delegation and Firyubin in Hanoi may be the result of a major Hanoi policy change relating to the war in South Vietnam.

-- Communications intelligence indicates that as of March 10, North Vietnam is apparently deploying to the South an integral unit, the size and identity of which are unknown. This is in addition to the probable movement of elements of the 341st NVA Division from Quang Binh in North Vietnam across the DMZ into Quang Tri and the confirmed movement of the 968th Division from Laos into the central highlands.

-- The forward element of COSVN has expanded its communications and is now in contact with at least three divisions and a number of independent units in the Tay Ninh -- Parrots Beak Area. This forward element will probably be the senior tactical control unit in the expected coordinated Communist offensive in MR 3. Its existence is more evidence of forthcoming multi-regiment size attacks in that area.

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 E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
 NSC Memo, 11/20/78, State Dept. Guidelines
 By *LR*, NARA, Date *11/6/00*



-- Infiltration groups are being dispatched during the current dry season at a rate double that for the same period during the 1973-74 dry season. If the current rate continues, this dry season's infiltration will rival the high level of 1968. (1975: 125,900 - 1968: 130,300)

-- A large scale military recruitment program is being carried out in North Vietnam and the training period for these inductees has been reduced from 4 to 6 months to about 1 month. This shortened cycle now enables the NVA to recruit, train and dispatch infiltration groups in the span of little more than a month. Troops which started training in February are already on their way South.

-- The NVA is continuing to ship large amounts of cargo and additional weapons into the NVN Panhandle, including some tanks and 130 mm guns. Destination of these weapons is unknown, but they are probably enroute to South Vietnam.

-- MIGs have been returned to southern North Vietnam. MIG 17's are at Dong Hoi and MIG 21's are believed to be at Vinh. The MIG force will be primarily reactive in nature, although the MIG 17's may be used as ground attack aircraft with MIG 21s providing air cover.

-- Communist troop indoctrination has stressed that fighting in 1975 will be very intensive. Slogans being used to exhort troops on to a high performance are:

- . "Repeat 1968"
- . "Attack as in 1972"
- . "Achieve a victory like Dien Bien Phu"

When taken together, these signs indicate that the North Vietnamese spring offensive could be extremely intense and is probably designed to achieve a fundamental change in the balance of power in the South. Many intelligence sources indicate that this fighting is a prelude to a new round of negotiations designed to achieve an implementation of the Paris Accords on North Vietnamese terms.



The probable NVN strategy will be to make its gains in the spring and early summer and then offer a cease-fire before the GVN is able to recoup many of its losses. Congressional pressure to accept such an offer would no doubt be great -- since it would be seen as a chance to end the fighting and to reduce our military aid. As it is unlikely that the GVN will be ready to accept the NVN proposals, the Communists would probably seek to pressure us, through the Congress, into forcing Thieu to acquiesce. We may, therefore, soon be facing a situation in which heavy pressure will be placed on the Executive Branch to accept Hanoi's proposals. These will probably center around establishing the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord with some quasis-governmental powers and providing the Communists complete access to the GVN-controlled population.

