

IIM 74-003

**South Vietnam: A Net Military
Assessment**

2 April 1974

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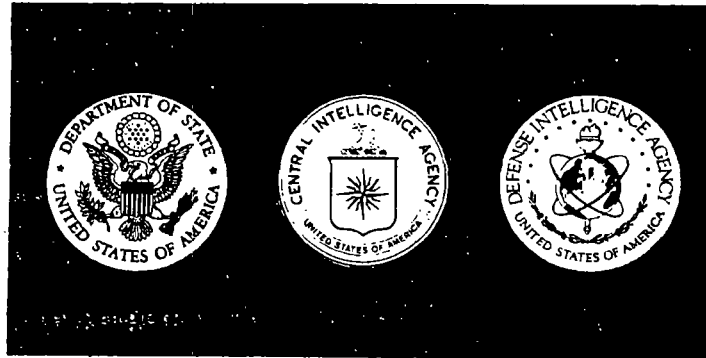
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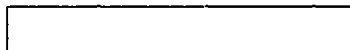
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South Vietnam: A Net Military Assessment



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2 April 1974

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April 2, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: SOUTH VIETNAM: A NET MILITARY ASSESSMENT*

KEY POINTS

- During the past year, both the Vietnamese Communists and the South Vietnamese have improved their military capabilities. Even so, a generally low level of activity is expected to continue at least through May 1974, although the fighting may become intense in some areas. With the forces they presently have in South Vietnam, the Communists lack the capability to make significant and lasting gains against the GVN. The GVN is similarly incapable of making major gains against the Communists.
- The situation would change rapidly, however, if North Vietnam commits its strategic reserve to South Vietnam and infiltrates sufficient manpower to bring existing units up to strength and create a replacement manpower pool. In the event of a country-wide offensive:
 - Reinforced North Vietnamese forces would have the capability to regain control of Quang Tri City, perhaps capture Hue, and make sizable gains in southern MR 1. In MR 2, Kontum and Pleiku cities might fall, and in MR 3, the Communists would make some temporary gains north and northwest of Saigon.
 - We doubt that the GVN would be able to stop the Communist offensive without the US providing large-scale logistical assistance. Moreover, should the Communists accomplish all of the above, the adverse psychological impact might be more significant than the actual impact on the military balance. As a result, a situation could develop in which the GVN would be unable to regain the initiative without the reintroduction of US combat air and naval support.

* This memorandum has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State.

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OVERVIEW

A. Since the cease-fire in January 1973, both the Vietnamese Communists and the South Vietnamese have upgraded their respective military capabilities. The North Vietnamese have increased their combat forces, improved their firepower position, and made extensive improvements to their logistic system. The South Vietnamese, for their part, have also strengthened their combat forces and have assumed responsibility for most of their logistic operations. As a result of the large inflow of US equipment into South Vietnam in the last weeks before January 27, 1973, the South Vietnamese now have more tanks, artillery, and aircraft than ever before.

Manpower

B. Communist regular combat forces physically located inside South Vietnam have grown from 154,000 in February 1973 to an estimated 182,000 in March 1974. Since the cease-fire, this force has markedly changed its orientation. Hanoi has withdrawn two infantry divisions as well as six combat regiments from northern MR 1. In addition, a third infantry division was withdrawn in January just prior to the cease-fire.* Partially offsetting these withdrawals, Hanoi has deployed 12 antiaircraft (AAA) regiments into South Vietnam. Moreover, owing to continuing infiltration and unit deployments, there also are more NVA combat infantry troops in South Vietnam now than in February 1973. The North Vietnamese have also reinforced their controlled areas with a large number of tanks and field and antiaircraft artillery, creating a peak firepower capability. They are clearly intent both on establishing a capability to protect those areas of South Vietnam which they now control and on maintaining an option to resume large-scale offensive action.

* *In terms of combat infantry alone, the North Vietnamese currently have 12 infantry divisions deployed in South Vietnam -- two of which have only one subordinate regiment instead of the normal three -- compared to 15 divisions of three regiments each before the cease-fire. They could, however, move additional divisions across the DMZ and back into northern MR 1 on short notice.*

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C. On the South Vietnamese side, the GVN regular ground combat forces are now some 52,000 men stronger than they were in February 1973, having increased from 320,000 to about 372,000 men. These ground combat forces are supported by a more proficient air force (VNAF) and effective artillery units. Higher manning levels within South Vietnam's 13 infantry divisions account for 45,000 of the 52,000-man increase. The remaining growth results from the upgrading of Regional Forces (RF) into the regular combat structure. This was backed up by the upgrading of some Popular Forces and local self-defense forces into the RF structure. The following table compares GVN and Communist regular combat forces by Military Region and shows that the nationwide force ratio between the opposing armies is basically unchanged from a year ago -- although it has deteriorated (from the GVN point of view) in MR 2 and MR 3, while improving in MR 4.

COMPARISON OF GVN AND COMMUNIST
REGULAR COMBAT FORCES BY MILITARY REGION*

| | <u>MR 1</u> | <u>MR 2</u> | <u>MR 3</u> | <u>MR 4</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <u>March 1974</u> | | | | | |
| GVN | 103,000 | 78,000 | 94,000 | 97,000 | 372,000 |
| VC/NVA | 84,000 | 37,000 | 39,000 | 22,000 | 182,000 |
| Ratio | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 4.4 | 2.0 |
| <u>February 1973</u> | | | | | |
| GVN | 89,000 | 68,000 | 75,000 | 88,000 | 320,000 |
| VC/NVA | 74,000 | 27,000 | 26,000 | 27,000 | 154,000 |
| Ratio | 1.2 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 2.1 |

* Communist regular combat forces include personnel in combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons. In early March 1974, there were 140,000 Communist infantry troops and 22,000 air defense personnel compared with about 125,000 and 15,000 in February 1973. GVN regular combat forces include assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units and regional force battalions.

D. Barring major redeployments from North Vietnam, the current balance of forces will remain fairly stable throughout the remainder of the dry season. The relationship could be

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altered quickly, however, if Hanoi decides to deploy some of its strategic reserve divisions from North Vietnam¹, in conjunction with those elements of the NVA 968th Infantry Division remaining in Laos, into GVN MR 1 or MR 2. In the southern half of South Vietnam, however -- unlike March 1972 -- there is no NVA/Viet Cong reserve force in Cambodia available for deployment into MR 3 or MR 4, and the Communists could only shift forces among MRs to alter the balance. The GVN is in a similar situation countrywide. The ARVN now has no uncommitted strategic reserve; any shifting of forces to one region can only be accomplished by reducing the force structure in another.

Firepower

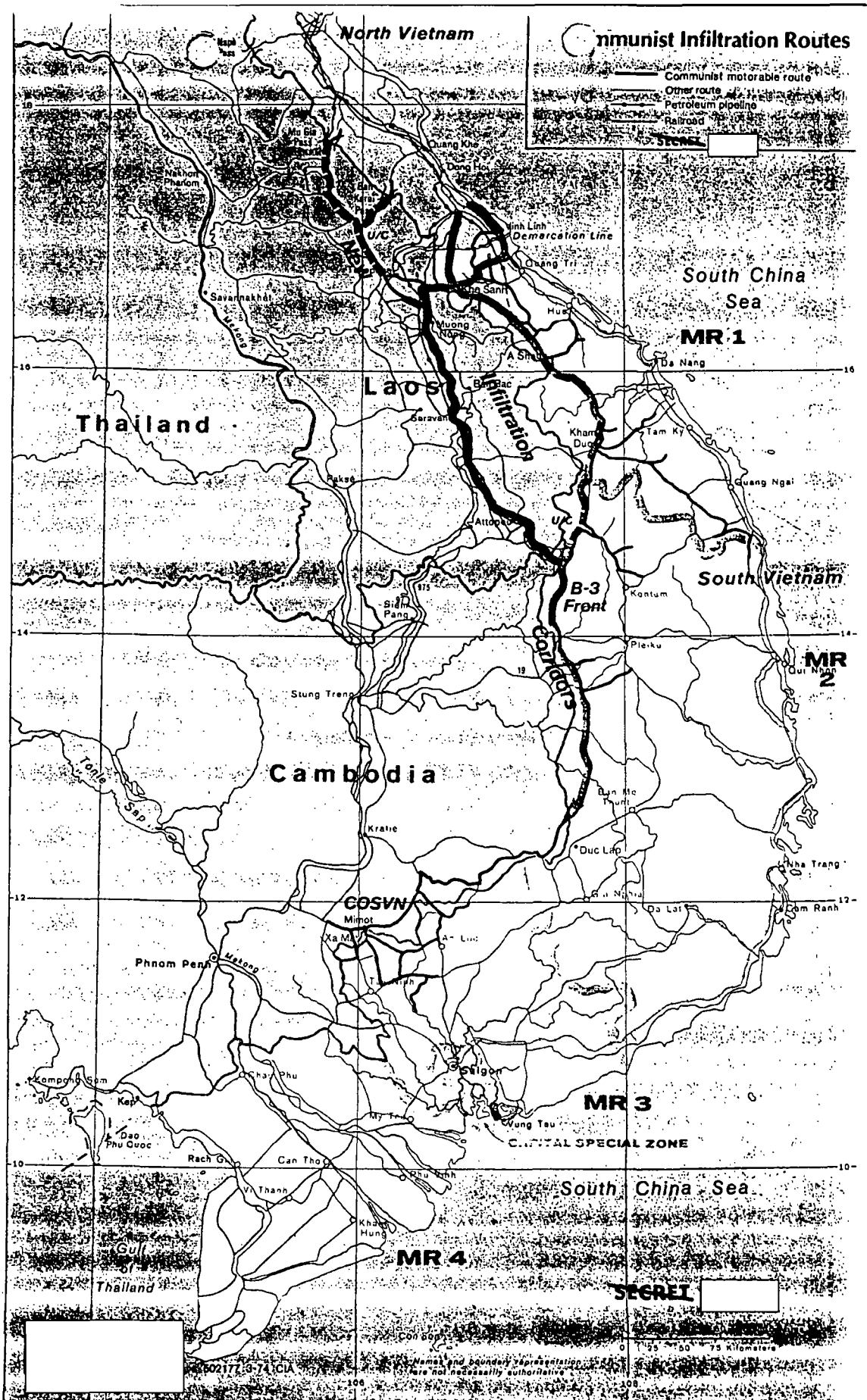
E. The South Vietnamese have improved their armor, artillery, and air capabilities; on balance, they hold an edge in firepower assets countrywide. The withdrawal of US airpower, coupled with the North Vietnamese buildup of armor, artillery, and air defense forces, however, significantly mitigates the GVN's advantage in firepower assets. Moreover, the Communists now enjoy an advantage in long-range artillery, have a strong supply apparatus, and have parity in tanks.

Logistics

F. While strengthening their combat position in South Vietnam, the Communists also have achieved significant improvements in their logistic posture. Following the cease-fire, MR 559 -- North Vietnam's logistic and support structure in southern North Vietnam, southern Laos, northeastern Cambodia, and the western reaches of South Vietnam itself -- was further reorganized to permit a more efficient, speedier transport of supplies in a bomb-free environment. At the same time, the Communists undertook a major road and POL pipeline construction and improvement program in Laos and South Vietnam which permits year-round deliveries to South Vietnam and greatly enhances access to portions of the coastal region² (see map on Communist infiltration routes).

¹ North Vietnam's strategic reserve consists of six divisions, totalling some 40,000-50,000 men.

² Over the past year, the Communists have constructed or upgraded more than 1,000 miles of roads in South Vietnam and extended their POL pipeline about 125-150 miles southward through the Laotian Panhandle and western South Vietnam.



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G. This ambitious construction program did not interfere with the continuing heavy pace of cargo shipments to the South. The improvements to the MR 559 logistic system in the past year, including the dispatch of 26,500 infiltrators to the area, have given the Communists their strongest supply organization and transportation network from North Vietnam to the south ever. Moreover, they now have sufficient ordnance stockpiled in South Vietnam to sustain heavy combat activity for at least 18 months.

H. The South Vietnamese logistic command also has improved steadily in the post cease-fire period. Moving from almost complete dependence on the US for support of its forces, ARVN now has total responsibility for the in-country distribution and storage of supplies. In general, the performance of the ARVN logistic system at the present fairly low level of hostilities has been good. Current supply stockpiles, particularly of military equipment and replacement parts, are more than adequate for current consumption rates. Should major countrywide fighting resume, however, the South Vietnamese logistic system would be stretched to the limit and would probably be unable to handle the infusion and distribution of the large amounts of materiel required to support the GVN's combat forces. Even at the present modest level of combat, there is a problem of getting the proper mix of supplies to GVN forces on a timely basis. Moreover, interregional distribution of supplies is hampered by virtual autonomy of each MR commander, and ARVN remains dependent on US civilian contractors for aircraft maintenance and port management.

Intelligence

I. RVNAF intelligence does not provide adequate out-of-country surveillance. Such primary threat indicators as infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into South Vietnam, deployment of Communist combat units from Laos or North Vietnam, or logistic movements into South Vietnam, are monitored by US intelligence assets. If early warning of a Communist build-up for a major offensive is to be detected, it will have to be through continued US intelligence collection.

Qualitative Factors

J. Since the cease-fire, the RVNAF has improved its leadership through personnel shifts and additional training and has become more proficient in using firepower. Serious

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problems still exist, however, especially those stemming from inexperience in managing, supplying and maintaining a large force in combat. Moreover, lack of coordination between different commands still impedes the RVNAF's fighting ability. While efforts are being made to rectify these problems -- some of which already have been successful -- RVNAF still needs more time to improve all aspects of its fighting forces before it could be expected to handle a major Communist offensive on its own.

K. The Communists historically have been more disciplined, tenacious, and dedicated fighters than the RVNAF. They too, however, have their shortcomings. After the initial successes in the 1972 Easter Offensive, the pressures of maintaining a sustained offensive began to be reflected in less effective leadership and a lack of coordination. Moreover, as the toll of casualties mounted, they began to experience a reduction in troop morale and the problems attendant with having to replace experienced cadre with those who possessed inadequate formal military training. Since the cease-fire, the North Vietnamese have taken measures to overcome these shortcomings, including comprehensive training programs in both the North and the South. In last year's fighting in Quang Duc and Pleiku provinces, the Communists used infantry, armor, artillery and AAA forces effectively, suggesting that they are making progress in coordinating the actions of their forces.

Scenarios for the Remainder of the Dry Season

L. *Limited Activity: The Most Likely Scenario.* According to reliable agent reporting, the North Vietnamese do not plan to launch a major offensive in South Vietnam, at least through the remainder of the 1973-1974 dry season. These sources indicate that Communist combat activity will be confined to the defense of their territory and limited offensive operations against selected targets. Similarly, GVN tactical plans through the dry season will consist of a mix of defense and offense. Under these circumstances, neither side is likely to achieve substantial, permanent territorial gains in the next few months.

M. Under this scenario, the outlook for MR 1, where defensive lines have stabilized, is for a continued absence of heavy combat activity. In MR 2, combat activity may intensify

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in the central highlands as both sides contest territory along strategic lines of communication (LOCs). Neither side, however, has a decisive edge, since ARVN's numerical superiority in the highlands is partly offset by NVA firepower assets. In MR 3, there probably will be some high points of activity, largely confined to sapper attacks, attacks-by-fire and LOC interdiction efforts. To the south in MR 4, Communist combat activity will be handicapped by understrength units and a weak logistic system.

N. *A General Offensive Scenario.* What would be the result if large-scale hostilities broke out again in South Vietnam in the next several months? Both the GVN and the North Vietnamese would find it difficult to launch and sustain a major offensive in the immediate future. Should the Communists decide to do so, however, they would have the capability by the end of April 1974 if they committed new divisions from outside South Vietnam and substantially increased the current rate of infiltration. Since they would be the aggressors and could achieve local manpower or firepower superiority in chosen areas, the unfavorable (to the Communists) nationwide ratio of forces would not necessarily be a critical factor in their decision. (In none of their earlier offensives have the Communists had a favorable nationwide ratio of forces.)

O. Under this scenario, the North Vietnamese would launch a countrywide offensive some time after increasing infiltration and redeploying several infantry divisions from the strategic reserve to GVN MR 1, where the weather will remain good from now through August. If this worst likely scenario developed -- and US support were not provided -- the North Vietnamese forces in northern MR 1 would regain control of Quang Tri City, and gain additional territory in the southern part of the region, probably including a provincial capital. The key to the defense of MR 1 rests with the GVN's ability to resupply critical areas if major land LOCs are interdicted. If the GVN were not able to overcome resupply problems -- considering its limited assets -- then Hue also could fall to the Communists. From the Communist point of view, the destruction of the elite units defending Hue would be as important as the capture of the city itself. The Marines and Airborne are the GVN's strategic reserve, and if they were rendered combat ineffective, it would undermine the GVN's overall defensive ability.

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P. In MR 2, one or both provincial capitals of Pleiku and Kontum could conceivably fall into Communist hands, although the fighting would be fairly even. North and northwest of Saigon in MR 3, the Communists would temporarily gain additional territory, including several district capitals. GVN forces, on the other hand, probably would not yield any substantial ground in coastal MR 2 or in MR 4.

Q. In sum, if the Communists launched a general offensive, we believe that they would make some permanent territorial gains. The GVN would probably be unable to stop the Communist offensive without the US providing large-scale logistical assistance. Given the near parity in the two sides' physical capabilities, the outcome of any major Communist offensive would be highly influenced by intangibles virtually impossible to predict. For example, the resourcefulness and effectiveness -- or lack thereof -- of individual ARVN unit leaders under stress in the initial days of combat could have a major impact on the outcome of the battle. Moreover, the adverse psychological impact of Communist successes in the initial stages of an offensive might be more significant than the actual impact on the military balance. Thus, a situation could develop in which the GVN would be unable to regain the initiative without the reintroduction of US combat air and naval support.

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DISCUSSION

1. This memorandum assesses the relative capabilities of the two sides in South Vietnam by GVN Military Region as of March 1974. The primary focus is on the remainder of this dry season -- through May 1974. A detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the North and South Vietnamese manpower, logistic, and firepower positions is at Annex A, and a discussion of the status of North and South Vietnamese divisions is at Annex B.

Military Region 1

Manpower Capabilities

2. Since the cease-fire there has been a low level of combat activity in MR 1, as both sides engaged in restructuring their forces. Consistent with the tactical situation, the Communists recently reduced their ground combat capability by withdrawing a third infantry division; two left earlier in 1973, one just prior to the cease-fire. They now have five infantry divisions -- one operating with only one regiment -- compared to eight divisions just prior to the cease-fire. (See Military Region 1 Map.) The North Vietnamese, however, have augmented their air defenses by deploying anti-aircraft artillery regiments into the region. As a result of these changes, Communist forces in MR 1 now total 84,000 troops, of which 18,000 are air defense personnel.

3. At the same time, the combat strength of the South Vietnamese regular ground forces has increased significantly in MR 1. This has resulted from upgrading territorial forces into the regular combat force structure and increasing the manning levels of existing units. Thus, South Vietnamese regular combat forces in MR 1 currently total some 103,000 troops, an increase of some 14,000 over the past year.

4. The largest share of both combat force structures is concentrated in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. The Communists have roughly 63,000 men -- including 33,000 infantry

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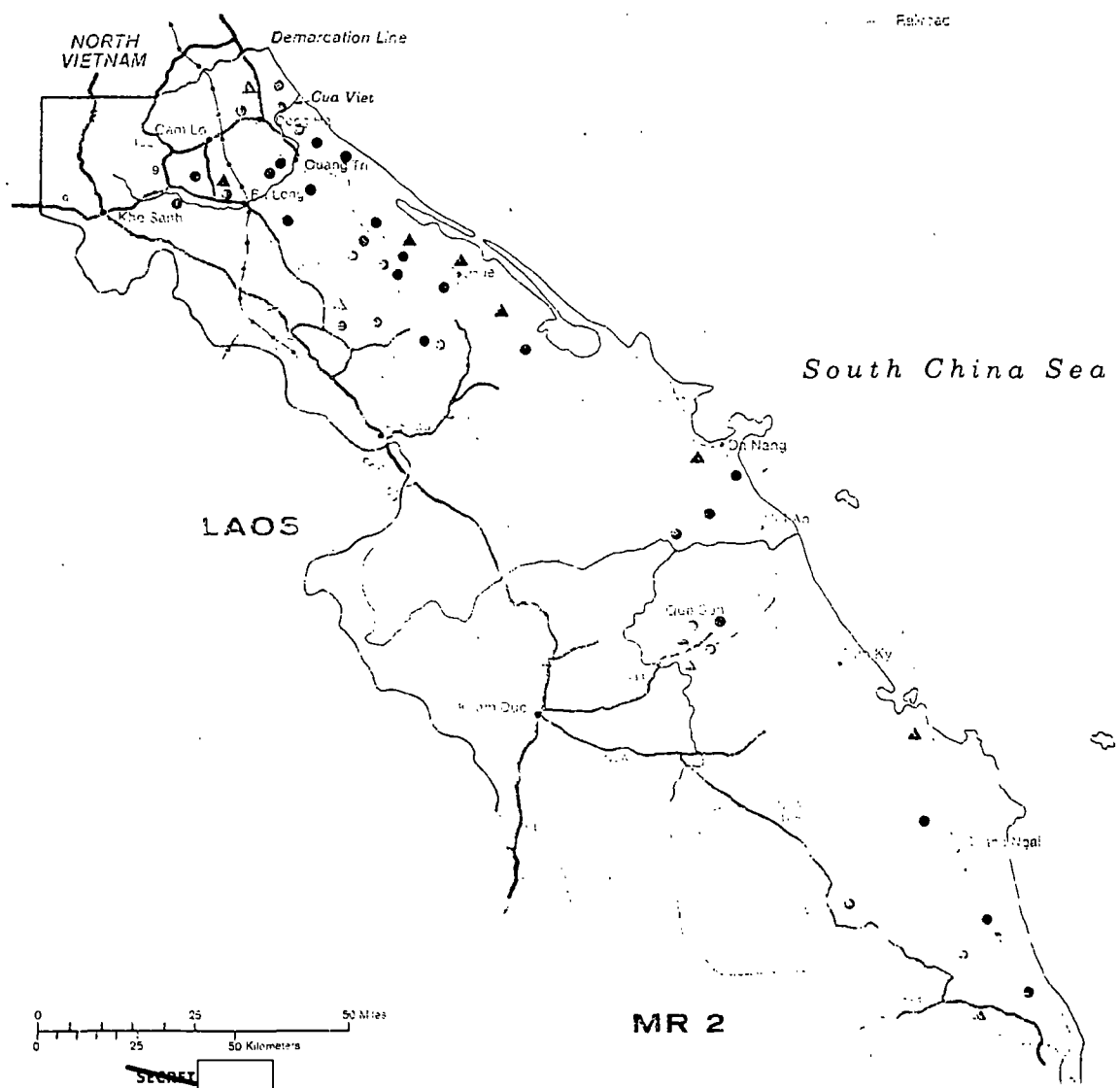
MR 1

SOUTH VIETNAM

NORTH VIETNAM

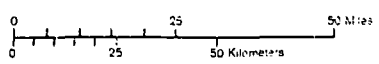
Demarcation Line

- ▲ NVA Infantry Division HQ
- NVA Infantry Regiment
- ▲ GVN Infantry Division HQ
- GVN Infantry Regiment
- Comm. route (US route)
- Other route
- Petroleum pipeline
- Railway



South China Sea

LAOS



MR 2



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troops -- or about 75 percent of their total MR 1 regular combat forces located in the two provinces. Two NVA infantry divisions (the 304th and 325th) supported by 17 air defense, 1 armor, 3 independent infantry, and 5 artillery regiments are deployed north and west of Quang Tri City. One NVA infantry division (the 324B), supported by 2 artillery, 1 armor, and 2 infantry regiments, is deployed west and south of Hue. Arrayed against the Communists are 64,000 GVN troops -- including 46,000 infantry troops -- which are deployed near Quang Tri and Hue cities. Three GVN divisions -- the Marine, Airborne, and 1st -- supported by a ranger group, an armor brigade, and 15 Regional Force battalions form a defense line protecting major GVN lines of communication and population centers.

5. In southern MR 1, South Vietnamese regular combat forces are about double the number of Communist forces. GVN forces number about 39,000 men in two infantry divisions -- the 2nd and 3rd -- three ranger groups, and 35 Regional Force battalions, compared to the Communists' 21,000 men in two NVA infantry divisions -- the 711th and 2nd -- supported by elements of infantry, armor, artillery, sapper, and air defense units. The 711th Division is deployed in Quang Nam/Quang Tin provinces and is targeted against the coastal lowlands, whereas the 2nd Division's only regiment is operating in Quang Ngai.

6. Both Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces are well rested and are at or near full strength, owing to the extensive lull in combat activity. Both sides could launch multi-regimental attacks against selected targets. Despite an enhanced firepower and air defense complement, the North Vietnamese infantry force as presently deployed is not now large enough to seize major population centers in MR 1. ARVN forces are in a maximum defensive posture with their forces committed to the defense of major cities and LOCs. Thus, despite their capabilities for larger-scale actions, both sides now appear to be planning to initiate only light combat activity in MR 1 for the remainder of the dry season.

Logistic Capabilities

7. The Communists in MR 1, under the auspices of MR 559, have continued to improve and expand an already strong logistics base. Several roads feed into the region through the DMZ, some of them now passable year round. Route 9 connects the roadnet

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with Laos and links the extensive logistic facilities established at Khe Sanh, Cam Lo, and Dong Ha. To supplement the overland system, the Communists have also refurbished a large land-water transshipment facility on the Cua Viet River just outside of Dong Ha. The logistic complex, now in operation for nearly one year, primarily handles cargo transshipped from anchorages in the North Vietnamese Panhandle.

8. The western highlands supply corridor, a network of roads stretching from north of the DMZ to Loc Ninh in MR 3, 500 miles to the south, was opened for limited traffic in late February 1974. This corridor is part of the more than 1,000 miles of new or improved roads constructed in South Vietnam during the past year, the majority of it in MR 1. Supplies will be shipped down the highway directly from Quang Tri Province and either stored along the route or sent farther south.

9. These newly constructed or considerably improved arteries include Route 547 and Gorman's Road leading from storage depots in the A Shau Valley to units of the NVA 324B Division just west of Hue, Route 534 running to the Que Son Valley and the NVA 711th Division, and Communist-designated Route 105 (GVN Route 1404) extending from Kham Duc on the western supply route southeastward through Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces. As a result of new Communist construction since October 1973, this last route now extends more than 100 miles and is motorable into Binh Dinh Province in coastal MR 2.

10. In addition to the roadnet, the Communists have constructed large truck parks and numerous service and support facilities, including some 1,800 structures in northern MR 1 alone -- capable of holding several hundred thousand tons. They have extended their DMZ POL pipeline about 50 miles southward from Cam Lo through Ba Long into the A Shau Valley, and established extensive POL storage and distribution facilities in these areas. These facilities, together with the pipeline, are supported by an inventory of some 2,000 trucks in South Vietnam's MR 1, which is several times the number available to the Communists in early 1972.

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11. Supply activity along the western corridor has generally been light in MR 1 in the past few months, probably as a result of the monsoon rains which sweep the area from September through February. Similarly, seasonally wet weather has restricted transport activity along lateral roads feeding the interior of the region. Despite this relatively low level of new supply deliveries into the region, most of the large amounts of ordnance delivered last spring and summer probably are still on hand, as Communist expenditure rates have been low. Thus, Communist forces probably have sufficient stocks on hand to support a sustained offensive for at least 18 months.

12. On the GVN's side, logistics are not much of a constraint to ARVN forces so long as they maintain control of the urban areas and well-traveled arteries in the coastal lowlands. Movement along parts of this network, however, is likely to be impaired by concentrated Communist interdiction efforts. During an offensive, Route 1 linking Quang Tri City, Hue, and Danang would be a prime target. Should the ARVN lose the free use of this route, it would be forced to depend upon resupply by air and sea. If this occurred, ARVN's capability to meet fully its resupply requirements in northern MR 1 would be doubtful because of the GVN's limited air- and sealift capability. As ARVN stockpiles were consumed, a supply shortfall -- particularly of POL and ammunition -- could occur and might reach serious proportions within a month or so, especially if there were a high level of fighting elsewhere in the country.

Offensive Scenario

13. If the North Vietnamese launch a major offensive, they would probably deploy at least three infantry divisions from their strategic reserve and infiltrate sufficient personnel to replace losses. Two divisions might be sent to Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces and a third to southern MR 1. These divisions could move into place near key GVN strongholds with relative ease because North Vietnamese air defense forces would prevent VNAF from interdicting Communist infiltration routes. Moreover, the commitment of North Vietnamese air assets during the offensive probably would temporarily demoralize some GVN combat units and give the Communists the necessary offensive momentum to move deep into GVN controlled territory.*

* See Joint DIA-INR-CIA Memorandum, "The Consequences of the Use of North Vietnamese Airpower in South Vietnam's Military Region 1", 4 March 1974, ~~SECRET~~ SPOKE.

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14. The offensive scenario might unfold as follows: five NVA infantry divisions supported by air defense, heavy artillery, armor, and air would attack Hue from the north and west with the mission of destroying the GVN's three best combat units -- Marine, Airborne, and ARVN 1st Divisions. To the south, two divisions supported by artillery, armor, and some air support would move into the populated lowlands of Quang Tin Province and isolate Danang. Communist troops, including local forces, would attempt to tie down the ARVN 2nd Division near Quang Ngai City.

15. If the above happens, the GVN plans to fight a delaying action from Quang Tri City and withdraw the Marine, Airborne, and ARVN 1st Divisions from forward outposts to preplanned defensive sectors around Hue. Successful implementation of this plan requires the divisions to minimize their combat casualties and for ARVN artillery units and VNAF to provide adequate firepower protection for withdrawal. As attacking North Vietnamese units become more exposed to GVN firepower in the lowlands, their advance could be slowed somewhat. However, without US air assets and logistical assistance -- which were available in 1972 -- the GVN would be hard pressed to defend Hue. Indeed, the GVN's internal distribution problems, coupled with possible shortages of key military supplies such as POL and small arms ammunition, could seriously limit ARVN's ability to meet the Communist offensive throughout MR 1.

16. In the southern provinces, the ARVN 3rd Division, which is currently defending the coastal lowlands, is likely to withdraw to Danang. In such an event, Tam Ky City would probably fall. The ARVN 2nd Division would defend Quang Ngai City and attempt to send reinforcements to Danang. Unless the Communist forces in Quang Ngai are reinforced, ARVN probably would be able to prevent them from making any significant territorial gains there.

17. On balance, the success or failure of a Communist offensive in MR 1 would be determined in large part by the NVA's ability to prevent ARVN from resupplying its major combat forces, particularly in Thua Thien Province. This could be a touch-and-go situation since ARVN is basically dependent on land LOCs for its supplies; its air and naval assets probably could not take up the slack if the major road arteries were interdicted. If this occurred -- and the US did not provide the necessary support to keep ARVN functioning effectively -- the Communists would not only capture Quang Tri City, but also probably Hue and a provincial capital in southern MR 1.

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Military Region 2

Manpower Capabilities

18. In contrast to MR 1, the tactical situation in MR 2 for some time has been marked by periods of intense combat activity -- mainly as a result of GVN attacks to prevent the Communists from securing areas along strategic Route 14 -- and main force unit deployments have been common occurrences. Last summer, for example, the GVN began multi-regimental operations into Communist areas of Kontum and Pleiku provinces. These operations have been only marginally successful and have resulted in heavy casualties for both sides.

19. The Communists, on the other hand, opened another military front in Quang Duc Province and have reinforced the western highlands. From September to December, the North Vietnamese deployed nearly 5,000 men from GVN MR 3 in three regiments -- the 271B and 205th Independent, and the 174th of the 5th Division -- and smaller sapper and armor units. The 174th Regiment with some 1,000 men, however, returned to MR 3 in late February. The Communists reinforced the Kontum/Pleiku area in January by deploying the NVA 232nd AAA Regiment and the 9th Regiment of the NVA 968th Infantry Division from southern Laos, and by infiltrating an armor group to the central highlands. The GVN reacted in September by deploying the ARVN 22nd Division from Binh Dinh to Kontum Province; the ARVN 23rd Division and a ranger group moved to Quang Duc Province in November.

20. With the increased deployment of Communist and GVN forces to MR 2, regular combat strength of both sides has risen since the beginning of the dry season. Communist combat forces have increased from 31,000 to 37,000 in three understrength NVA infantry divisions -- the 320th, 10th, and 3rd -- six independent infantry, one artillery, and three AAA regiments supported by elements of sapper and armor units. South Vietnamese combat strength now totals 78,000 -- up 8,000 -- in two infantry divisions, the 22nd and 23rd, seven ranger groups, one armor brigade, and 82 Regional Force battalions.

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21. The current disposition of GVN and Communist combat forces focuses on Kontum/Pleiku, Quang Duc, and Binh Dinh provinces (see Military Region 2 map).

22. In the Kontum/Pleiku area the GVN has a numerical edge in combat forces, 32,000 against 18,000 Communist troops. The NVA 10th Division, an artillery, an independent infantry, and two AAA regiments supported by armor forces are targeting Kontum City which is defended by a regiment of the ARVN 22nd Division and two ranger groups. The NVA 320th Division and one independent infantry regiment supported by armor forces oppose three regiments of the ARVN 22nd Division, two ranger groups, and an armor brigade near Pleiku City.

23. In Quang Duc and Darlac provinces, there are about 13,000 GVN combat troops of the ARVN 23rd Division, a ranger group, and three Regional Force battalions. This compares to the Communists' 6,000 combat troops in one AAA and three infantry regiments supported by armor and sapper elements. Communist forces are deployed near the Cambodian border with the mission of protecting the North Vietnamese road network linking the central highlands with northern MR 3. The Communists have forced the GVN to reduce its force structure in the provinces of Kontum and Pleiku, but they have also reduced their own threat to Saigon by withdrawing two regiments from MR 3. The opposing forces in Quang Duc and Darlac provinces are basically in a defensive posture although the GVN is attempting to interdict Communist Route 14 in western Darlac Province.

24. In Binh Dinh Province, the balance of Communist and GVN combat forces is about even. The NVA 3rd Infantry Division supported by armor, heavy artillery and other infantry forces, numbers about 6,000 men compared to the GVN's 8,000-man force of two ranger groups and 16 Regional Force battalions. The 3rd Division -- with two of its three regiments under-strength -- is now capable only of conducting limited attacks against GVN outposts and temporarily interdicting GVN supply lines.

25. The ARVN manpower edge in MR 2 is at least partly offset by the Communists' use of their firepower assets. The three North Vietnamese AAA regiments, plus armor and 130mm

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SOUTH VIETNAM

MR 2

- ▲ NVA infantry division HQ
- NVA infantry regiment
- ▲ GVN infantry division HQ
- GVN infantry regiment
- Communist motorable route
- Other route
- Railroad

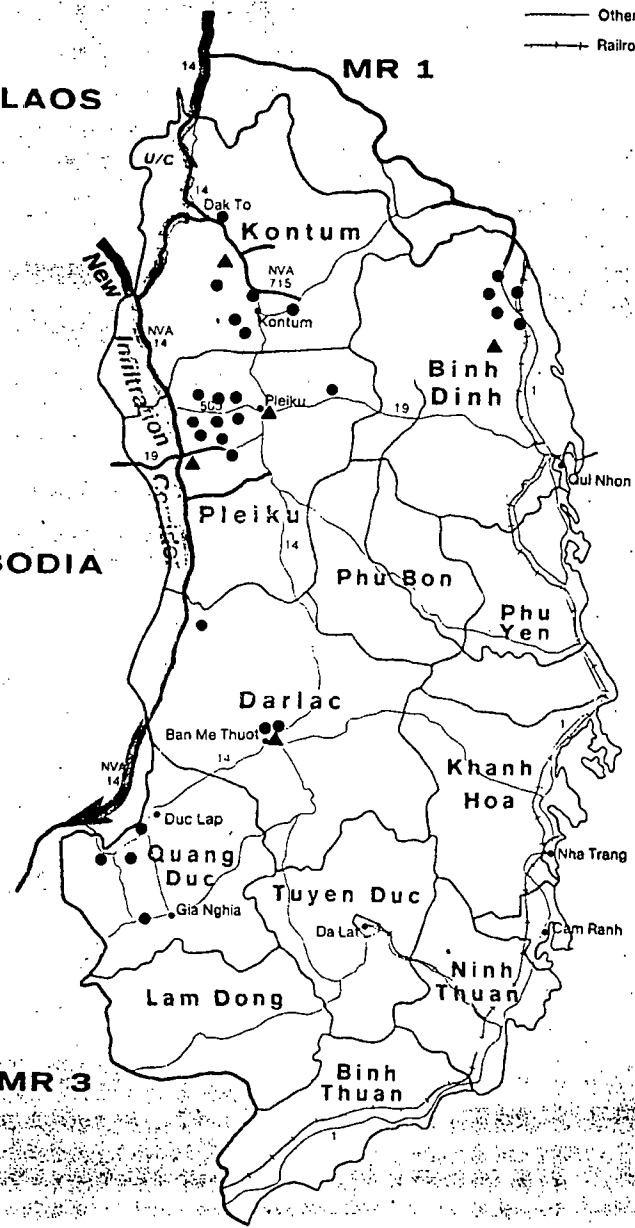
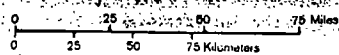
LAOS

MR 1

CAMBODIA

*South
China
Sea*

MR 3



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and 122mm field guns, now deployed in the central highlands constitute the largest firepower commitment of the war to this area. The presence of North Vietnamese AAA units is forcing some VNAF LOC interdiction missions to fly as high as 20,000 feet, restricting their effectiveness. Moreover, Communist 130mm and 122mm field guns have been effective in slowing the advance of GVN combat units into Communist areas west of Kontum City.

26. On balance, although combat activity in the central highlands may intensify, neither side has a decisive military edge in the area. Communist military activity probably will include efforts to occupy additional territory near Kontum City while defending strategic Communist Route 14 and interdicting ARVN supply lines in Kontum and Pleiku provinces. ARVN will continue to launch forays into NVA held areas, but probably will not have much success.

Logistic Capabilities

27. From a logistic perspective, the Communists in MR 2 are strongest in the highland provinces bordering Laos and Cambodia and in coastal Binh Dinh Province. Recent road construction leading into both areas and through much of the highlands has considerably improved their access to main forces. Also, COMINT and photography have revealed large supply shipments and heavy vehicle traffic -- the first since last spring -- into Kontum Province. These goods can be moved quickly down the dual lane road extending through western Pleiku and Darlac into Quang Duc Province.

28. As in MR 1 -- although to a lesser extent -- the Communists in MR 2 have augmented their rear services forces and inventory of transport vehicles along the dual lane supply route, and have expanded storage and other facilities in western Kontum and Pleiku provinces. As the dry season supply effort continues, the Communists will replace stocks expended during the fighting, enhancing their ability to launch and sustain heavy tactical activity in all four highlands provinces in MR 2. In addition, because main force units in the highlands are located close to the new dual lane or other roads, forward supply distribution and tactical troop deployments can be accomplished much more easily and quickly than previously.

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29. Communist forces in Binh Dinh Province reportedly had a substantial part of their supply stockpiles damaged by severe storms which hit the northern coast of South Vietnam last fall. No serious shortages have been reported, however, probably because no significant fighting has occurred. In any case, Communist Route 105 through southern MR 1 now provides the Communists' first motorable link between Binh Dinh Province and the primary infiltration corridors from North Vietnam. With the use of this route during the dry season, they could build a logistic capability for sustained offensive action by the NVA 3rd Division.

30. Logistics will become a serious problem for ARVN forces in the MR 2 highlands if the Communists sharply escalate the fighting and attempt to capture the province capitals. Although ARVN now has approximately three weeks of stocks in place in the highland provinces, it relies heavily upon only two major arteries to resupply these areas. These arteries -- Route 19 feeding Pleiku City from the coast, and Route 14 linking Kontum and Pleiku cities -- are vulnerable to Communist interdiction. Cutting these routes would make resupply of the cities entirely dependent on airlifts, which in turn are vulnerable to Communist AAA fire.

Offensive Scenario

31. If Hanoi were to launch a major offensive in MR 2, at least 20,000 infiltrators -- of which some 10,000 have already been dispatched -- would be needed to augment understrength combat units and to create an initial manpower reserve. Additional infiltration, however, would be required to replace losses as the fighting continued. Furthermore, the North Vietnamese probably would shift the two remaining infantry regiments of the 968th Division now in southern Laos to the western highlands. Once accomplished, the Communists would attempt to isolate Kontum and Pleiku cities by interdicting Routes 14 and 19. The 10th and 968th Divisions supported by armor, heavy artillery, and anti-aircraft forces would attack Kontum City, while the 320th Division would attempt to tie down GVN forces near Pleiku City.

32. The GVN plans to respond to a major Communist offensive by deploying the ARVN 23rd Division now in Quang Duc

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and Darlac provinces -- and possibly another ranger group from Binh Dinh Province -- to Pleiku City. These forces combined with the ARVN 22nd Division and four ranger groups supported by VNAF would have to keep Routes 14 and 19 open to ensure resupply -- if Kontum and Pleiku cities are to be successfully defended. If the North Vietnamese, however, deploy their anti-aircraft and heavy artillery weapons near GVN installations and LOCs and successfully interdict Routes 14 and 19, one or both of the province capitals might well fall.

33. On the coast, a strengthened NVA 3rd Division would move into the lowlands of northern Binh Dinh Province and capture one or two district capitals as happened in 1972. In the southern coastal provinces, the Communists would be limited to harassing attacks and LOC interdiction activity.

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Military Region 3

Manpower Capabilities

34. Within MR 3 both sides have been resting and rebuilding their combat forces and consolidating their respective geographic positions. Communist regular combat forces are now closer to the populated areas north of Saigon than in 1972, when they initiated their attacks from the border areas of Cambodia. Thus, their proximity poses a greater threat to GVN LOCs and installations surrounding Saigon. In terms of numbers, however, the Communist threat to this area has been reduced since October 1973 by some 4,000 troops with the deployment of infantry, sappers, artillery, and armor to Quang Duc Province.

35. Currently there are about 39,000 Communist regular combat forces in MR 3 -- some 13,000 more than at the time of the cease-fire. Major units include an artillery, an antiaircraft, and three infantry divisions plus nine infantry, sapper, and armor regiments (see Military Region 3 map). The infiltration of armor and antiaircraft and field artillery into the provinces north of Saigon last year provides the Communists with more firepower in the region than ever before. In early 1973, an AAA division was formed in Binh Long Province. This new unit, coupled with the continued availability of the SA-7 missile, increases the threat to South Vietnamese air operations in this area of MR 3, although the overall threat is less than in northern MR 1 and the western highlands.

36. Opposing the Communists in MR 3 are some 94,000 South Vietnamese troops in three infantry divisions, one armor brigade, four ranger groups, and supporting artillery and Regional Forces units. The government force increased by about 2,000 men in the past year, and now is roughly 2 1/2 times that of the Communists. Moreover, it possesses an enhanced armor and artillery capability. The GVN forces, however, are spread throughout the region in defense of government-held territory. This defensive posture permits the Communists to concentrate their forces for selected thrusts against key targets.

37. Available evidence suggests that the Communists in MR 3 will be content this dry season with locally intense but generally limited military activity. The fighting probably will include ground and artillery attacks against GVN military facilities such as POL and ammunition depots as well as against LOCs. The Communists are likely to concentrate their activity in the provinces north and west of the capital.

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38. In Tay Ninh Province, the Communists have the NVA 5th Infantry Division* along with one regiment each of infantry, sapper and antiaircraft. The ARVN 25th Infantry Division is responsible for defending the provinces of Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia and maintaining secure LOCs to Saigon. Moving east, the NVA 7th and 9th Infantry Divisions, supported by a total of six regiments of antiaircraft, armor, artillery, sapper, and independent infantry, are targeted against Binh Duong and Binh Long provinces. The ARVN 5th Infantry Division, two regiments of the 18th Division, and two ranger groups are the principal GVN forces in these provinces. Another threat area lies east and southeast of Saigon where Communist infantry, artillery, and sapper units have required the positioning of a regiment of the ARVN 18th Infantry Division and two ranger groups.

Logistics Capabilities

39. The Communists in MR 3 have not expended the large quantities of ordnance amassed by the end of last dry season and remain in a strong supply position, capable of supporting heavy fighting. Although large-scale shipments to this region from Laos and North Vietnam have not yet been detected, the supplies may currently be moving south from Kontum Province along Communist Route 14. Moreover, a new motorable road in extreme southeastern Cambodia has just been completed, connecting the Communists' existing route structure in southern Cambodia with the dual-lane corridor in western MR 2. The road, although sufficient for current Communist needs, would be complemented by additional routes prior to any Communist offensive.

40. Inside MR 3 the Communists have considerably improved their resupply system over the past year. Storage, communications, and other logistics facilities have been constructed, and a number of roads have been either built or upgraded. The key roads include one leading from Loc Ninh, two crossing the Tay Ninh-Binh Long provincial border, and another extending southward from southern Binh Long Province to Binh Duong Province, only about 30 miles north of Saigon. These roads will allow the Communists to move their armor and artillery effectively, ease troop and resupply movements, and lessen constraints on mobility posed by the wet season should fighting continue beyond May.

* *Tenuous evidence indicates that at least one regiment of the 5th Division is redeploying from northwestern Tay Ninh Province to Dinh Tuong Province in northern MR 4, where the division operated from mid-1972 to April 1973.*

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41. Seven COSVN Rear Service Groups (RSGs) operate the transportation corridors in northern MR 3. Most of these RSGs were activated in early 1972, and since the January 1973 cease-fire they have extended their areas of operation from rear bases in Cambodia deeper into MR 3. They are now much closer to tactical forces in the region, which together with an improved transport network add considerably to the Communists' capability to support further fighting.

42. For the most part, GVN forces in MR 3 enjoy the use of the extensive transportation infrastructure built initially for commercial purposes. Logistics will pose no problem in and around the urban areas the government now firmly controls. ARVN's resupply links with outlying towns and outposts in Phuoc Long, Binh Long, and Tay Ninh provinces, however, are tenuous, and very likely many would prove impossible to defend should the Communists initiate heavy offensive activity.

Offensive Scenario

43. If the Communists should decide to launch a major offensive in MR 3, they would need to infiltrate some 20,000 combat troops in order to increase combat unit strengths and establish an initial manpower pool. This could be accomplished in April, if current infiltration levels to COSVN are maintained. So far this dry season some 30,000 infiltrators have already been dispatched to the southern half of South Vietnam.

44. During the initial stages of an offensive the Communists probably would make significant tactical gains because their units are in forward positions close to GVN population centers and installations. The present deployments reduce Communist command and control problems while affording the South Vietnamese less reaction time than in 1972. Communist combat units probably would exert heavy pressure against the province capital of Tay Ninh City to tie down ARVN troops and prevent their use as reinforcements against the main offensive thrust south by the NVA 7th and 9th Divisions from Binh Duong Province along the northern approaches to Saigon.

45. If the Communists penetrate the densely populated GVN-controlled areas of Tay Ninh, Binh Duong and Bien Hoa provinces,

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they would meet increasingly strong resistance from ARVN regular and regional forces. The GVN would have to shift forces within the region and redeploy the ARVN 9th Division from MR 4. Although the GVN could prevent the capture of Saigon, it would be forced temporarily to give up additional territory to the Communists north of the capital. The South Vietnamese, however, could be expected to further reinforce the area in order to recapture populated areas which they consider politically vital, even at the expense of losing territory elsewhere in the country.

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Military Region 4

Manpower Capabilities

46. The balance of forces in MR 4 weighs heavily in favor of the GVN. For the remainder of the dry season, the Communists' capability for offensive activity there is quite limited. Major Communist combat forces number 22,000 men in two artillery and 12 infantry regiments and numerous local force units (see Military Region 4 map). Communist units in MR 4 are sorely understrength when compared with 1972 levels, and more than 10,000 replacement personnel are needed to rebuild existing forces. Furthermore, there has been no significant improvement in the Communist firepower position over 1972 levels. Some of the tanks and long-range artillery that deployed to the COSVN area a year ago could conceivably move into northern MR 4, but their effectiveness would be extremely limited by the open terrain and numerous canals which crisscross the delta.

47. By comparison, the GVN has some 97,000 men in three infantry divisions and one armor brigade, with supporting artillery and a large number of regional force battalions. Moreover, ARVN has continued to perform well in the delta and has not only contained but reduced the Communist threat there. The three-division force -- the 7th, 9th and 21st -- committed to the delta is currently in relatively good shape, and neither manpower shortages nor the quality of units appears to pose any significant restraint on ARVN capabilities. In addition, ARVN forces are supported by an air force that has provided effective close air support in this area.

48. In the northern delta, the Communists have concentrated one artillery and five infantry regiments in Dinh Tuong, Kien Phong, and Kien Tuong provinces. These forces are opposed by the ARVN 7th Infantry Division and a regiment of the ARVN 9th Infantry Division, supported by regional forces, which have succeeded in preventing the Communists from infiltrating the more populated areas. Another large concentration of Communist combat forces is in Chuong Thien Province, where an artillery, a sapper and five infantry regiments confront the ARVN 21st Infantry Division and a regiment of the ARVN 9th Division.

49. Until recently a third threat area existed in Kien Giang and Chau Doc provinces along the Cambodian border, where the

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MR 4

SOUTH VIETNAM



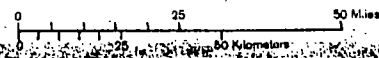
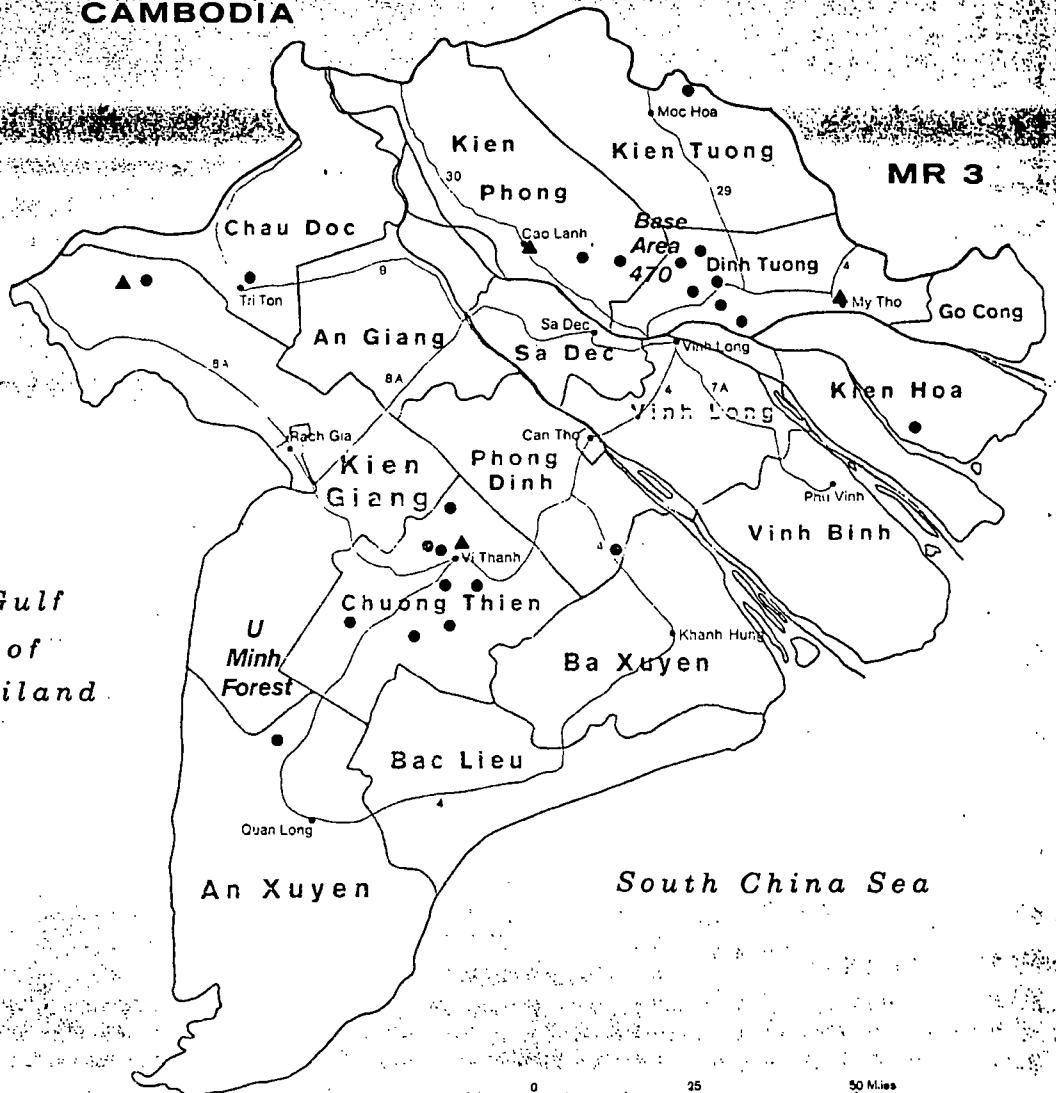
- ▲ NVA infantry division HQ
- NVA infantry regiment
- ▲ GVN infantry division HQ
- GVN infantry regiment
- Route

CAMBODIA

MR 3

Gulf of Thailand

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understrength North Vietnamese 1st Infantry Division operates. Two of the division's regiments have apparently been dissolved and their personnel assigned to reinforce the one remaining regiment of the unit. This has reduced the Communist threat to GVN forces in the area, consisting of one regiment of the ARVN 9th Division and regional forces.

50. The Communists, however, still are capable of launching understrength, regimental-sized attacks in several areas, notably in Dinh Tuong and Chuong Thien provinces. They could overrun isolated district towns and outposts as well as temporarily interdict GVN lines of communication, but would not achieve any major permanent gains.

Logistics Capabilities

51. Logistically, the Communists also are in a much weaker position in MR 4 than in the northern three regions. Although relatively secure rear base areas have been established across the border in southern Cambodia, few shipments have been detected entering the delta over the past several months. Moreover, the Communists' supply lines into the region are neither motorized nor secure from ARVN interdiction efforts during periods of increased hostilities. Such traditional means of transportation as sampans and porters are still relied upon heavily. Large fishing vessels reportedly have been used to deliver arms and ammunition to Communist-controlled coastal areas over the past year, but only in small quantities.

52. The Communists in MR 4 are strongest logistically near the Cambodian border, in Base Area 470 in western Dinh Tuong Province, and in the U Minh Forest on the western coast. Sufficient stocks are on hand in these traditional strongholds to support a continuation of the level of fighting which has prevailed over the past several months and periodic highpoints, but not much more.

53. The ARVN in MR 4 has the advantage of better supply lines. Heavy sustained combat, requiring large amounts of supplies for both sides, is less common than in the other MRs. The protracted warfare style in MR 4 mitigates the positive effect ARVN's logistics advantage may have on the overall balance of forces.

Offensive Scenario

54. If large-scale military activity is initiated in the other MRs -- particularly MR 3 -- the Communists would attempt

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to tie down the three ARVN divisions in MR 4, probably unsuccessfully. The transfer of the ARVN 9th Division from the delta -- as provided for in contingency planning -- would permit the Communists to make some territorial gains in the rural areas. There is little reason to suspect, however, that they would achieve any greater success than they did in the 1972 offensive, when they were unable to capture any major population centers.

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ANNEX A

MANPOWER AND LOGISTIC POSITIONS OF NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM

Manpower Overview

North Vietnam

1. The North Vietnamese Armed Forces (NVNAF) total about 660,000 men of which 285,000 are located out-of-country in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Hanoi's forces have continued to grow despite the heavy losses suffered in the 1972 offensive, increasing by an estimated 55,000 since the cease-fire. The majority of the increase occurred in the growth of the combat and rear services structures and the remainder was from fleshing out existing Communist units. There also has been qualitative and quantitative improvements in the South through the increased deployment of longer-range offensive and defensive weapons as well as better military equipment, leading to a dramatic increase in North Vietnamese firepower.

2. The personnel increase in the NVNAF and the replacement of most of the losses suffered in 1972 were drawn from a population base of more than 20 million,* containing a manpower pool of an estimated 1.3 million physically fit males between the ages of 15-39. Within the aggregate manpower pool there are an estimated 360,000 men in the prime age group of 17-25. Hanoi probably could induct 100,000 per year without any drain on the aggregate reserve; thus, it has the ability to increase its armed forces further while maintaining a regular flow of infiltration to South Vietnam.

Induction

3. North Vietnamese induction since the cease-fire has featured two distinct trends. In the first six months following the signing of the agreement induction was particularly light, as the Communists skipped their annual spring recruiting

* *There is some recently available evidence which suggests that the North Vietnamese population may total about 26 million. If so, all of the manpower figures in this paragraph would be higher.*

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drive. In August, however, the North Vietnamese launched a substantial recruiting effort, traditional for the August-September period. The second intensified recruiting effort of the post cease-fire period started in January.

4. The induction effort this dry season is probably designed to maintain a sufficient pool of trained manpower to support planned infiltration while strengthening units that have redeployed to North Vietnam. New inductees are probably ready for infiltration in four to five months; thus, those inducted recently would be unlikely to move south before late spring.

Infiltration

5. Since September 1, 1973, Hanoi has sent some 71,000 troops to the southern war zones, about 14,000 fewer than during the comparable period in the 1972/1973 infiltration cycle. About two thirds of the total, or more than 48,000 troops, have traveled to Communist combat units in South Vietnam, while the remainder -- mostly rear services personnel -- have been sent to southern Laos and contiguous border areas. As shown in the table below, total troop infiltration to major Communist regions in South Vietnam thus far in the 1973/1974 infiltration cycle is substantially less than last year, but infiltration to southern Laos and adjacent areas is more than twice as great.

Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
September 1 - March 26

| | <u>1972-1973</u> | <u>1973-1974</u> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total | 85,000 | 71,000 |
| Military Region (MR) | | |
| Tri-Thien | 26,000 | 2,000 |
| MR 5 | 9,000 | 8,000 |
| B-3 Front | 14,000 | 8,500 |
| COSVN | 25,000 | 30,000 |
| Southern Laos/MR 559 | 11,000 | 22,500 |

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6. The dispatch of a large number of infiltrators to the MR 559 area early in the dry season reflects North Vietnamese emphasis on logistic activities and further refinements to the transport system. Hanoi did not begin significant combat troop infiltration to South Vietnam until mid-December -- more than a month later than usual. This shift in the timing of the departures from North Vietnam may reflect both the sharply reduced travel time for infiltrators en route to South Vietnam and an apparent lack of urgency in completing the rebuilding of understrength combat units.

7. During the remainder of the regular infiltration cycle, North Vietnam probably will continue to send troops to the B-3 Front and COSVN areas, where units are still understrength. [] between 55,000 and 68,000 troops would be sent to these areas. If true, this would be more than sufficient to rebuild understrength units and establish a reserve manpower pool by late spring.

8. Infiltration, however, probably will not be confined to the southern half of South Vietnam. The recent resumption of infiltration to VC MR 5 suggests that Hanoi is beginning to dispatch troops to northern South Vietnam where the dry season is now beginning.

9. Since the cease-fire, the Communists have sent a substantial number of personnel from the south to North Vietnam. During 1973, some 45,000 exfiltrators were detected moving through the Vinh area in North Vietnam, and thus far in 1974, the rate of northward moving personnel has been increased. Most of this year's exfiltrators have been sick and wounded, although others, such as escort cadre who previously accompanied infiltrators south and personnel being sent to North Vietnam for training, also have been observed. The large proportion of sick and wounded probably results from the improved road system and the Communists' lowering of the medical criteria necessary for a soldier to return home, allowing a higher number of marginally sick and wounded to return to North Vietnam.

South Vietnam

10. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) has a current strength of over one million men and -- like the

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NVNAF -- its regular combat forces have continued to grow despite battlefield losses. The assigned strength of regular combat forces has risen to 372,000, compared to 320,000 in February 1973, resulting primarily from a change in the strength of ARVN/VNMC combat units from 194,000 to 239,000 in the last quarter of 1973. Although now operating without US air and adviser support, RVNAF capability has been enhanced by the addition of large numbers of aircraft, tanks, and artillery pieces.

11. On the population side, the manpower base for South Vietnam -- 19 million -- is roughly comparable to that of North Vietnam. South Vietnam has an estimated manpower pool of about 2 1/2 million in the 18-39 age group, and we believe that an additional 175,000-225,000 young men reach age 18 each year. This is more than sufficient to meet the GVN's annual induction needs.

Combat Unit Deployments

North Vietnam

12. Since the start of the current dry season, the North Vietnamese have reinforced their combat forces in South Vietnam with some 9,000 troops in eight regiments -- five AAA, an infantry, an artillery, and a sapper regiment. Only three of the units -- the artillery and two AAA regiments -- deployed directly into South Vietnam from the north; the remainder relocated into the country from southern Laos and Cambodia. The five AAA regiments and the infantry regiment deployed into the western part of South Vietnam as part of a continuing effort to enhance North Vietnamese defensive positions against South Vietnamese air and ground operations along the Communists' logistic corridor. These AAA regiments increased total post cease-fire air defense deployments to 12 AAA regiments, totaling some 10,000 men.

13. These augmentations, however, were offset by the withdrawal from northern South Vietnam since late 1973 of the 320B Infantry Division, an independent infantry, and three AAA regiments. These withdrawals total some 11,000 troops. Earlier in 1973 two other infantry divisions -- the 308th and 312th -- also redeployed to North Vietnam.

South Vietnam

14. South Vietnamese unit deployments in recent months have been aimed at reinforcing the central highlands of MR 2.

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During August and September, the ARVN 22nd Division with roughly 13,000 troops deployed from Binh Dinh to Kontum and Pleiku provinces in order to support ARVN 23rd Division operations into Communist territory west of Kontum and Pleiku cities. In November and December, the ARVN 23rd Division with some 10,000 men deployed to Quang Duc Province to counter the growing Communist threat. In addition, a reorganization of the Ranger Command was completed in January and six ranger battalions in MR 4 were deployed to MRs 2 and 1.

Strategic Reserve

15. Within North Vietnam there are a total of 10 infantry and training divisions, the same number that was there prior to the 1972 offensive. Four of these -- the 250th, 330th, 338th, and 350th -- in the past have always been committed to a home defense and training role. The remaining six divisions, with some 40,000 to 50,000 troops, comprise Hanoi's strategic reserves which can readily deploy out of country (see Strategic Reserve map). During 1972, for example, Hanoi committed seven strategic reserve divisions to South Vietnam, four of which are still there. This sizable drawdown in its reserves led to the creation of one new infantry division, the 308B in mid-1972, and the regeneration of an old division -- the 341st -- in the spring of 1973.

16. Hanoi also established a major new tactical headquarters in Thanh Hoa Province in 1973. The new headquarters has three identified subordinate infantry divisions -- the 308th, 312th, and 320B, all withdrew from South Vietnam last year -- plus artillery, armor, and engineer elements. The new headquarters consolidates and improves the command and control over Hanoi's strategic reserve forces in North Vietnam. It would also facilitate multi-divisional redeployment to South Vietnam if Hanoi decided to resume major military action. A redeployment to northern MR 1 could be accomplished with little advance warning.

17. The South Vietnamese strategic reserves consist of the Airborne and Marine Divisions, plus three ranger groups, totalling some 35,000 troops. These "reserves", however, are all committed -- the airborne and marines to MR 1 and the rangers to MRs 2 and 3. In an offensive, the South Vietnamese would be forced to redeploy their reserves or other forces* to the critical areas.

* ARVN contingency plans, for example, call for the redeployment of the 9th Division from MR 4 in the event of a major offensive in MR 3.

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NVA and ARVN Command and Control

18. Besides rebuilding their combat forces numerically, the Communists and South Vietnamese each have continued to improve their command and control structures to meet the changing priorities of a cease-fire environment. Above the division level, there are few close similarities between the North and South Vietnamese armies. In both cases, however, formal lines of control run from a high command directly to the MRs. The South Vietnamese MR commander normally exercises tactical control over all ground forces within his region. The Communist MR commander has the same authority, but in some cases there are separate front headquarters within the Communist MR which are directly subordinate to the high command. In this case, the front headquarters supersedes the MR commander's tactical authority over a given area within the MR.

19. At the division level and below, however, North and South Vietnamese command and control organizations are similar. Within a division, they both have support battalions attached to the division headquarters and three infantry regiments with three maneuver battalions each. In addition, according to Table of Organization both have an artillery regiment or equivalent as an organic part of the division. While the South Vietnamese division has an organic armored cavalry squadron, the Communist divisions do not. In the past, North Vietnamese armor has been attached only temporarily to a division for a specific mission.

Logistics Overview - North Vietnam

Military Imports

20. During 1973, the North Vietnamese apparently continued to receive Soviet and Chinese military imports, possibly in substantial quantities. [] artillery and armor have been shipped into North Vietnam during the past year. []

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21. In addition to the above items, the North Vietnamese have also received some additional SA-3 equipment from the Soviet Union since the cease-fire.* With the exception of the SA-3 missile system, however, North Vietnam is not known to have added any major weapons systems to its arsenal since the cease-fire.

[REDACTED]

22. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But some imports are clearly continuing to be received by Hanoi, and these should be sufficient to replenish, at least partially, the drawdown in stockpiles from supplies sent by North Vietnam to its forces in the South.

Communist Construction Activities

23. The Communist-controlled areas of South Vietnam have changed radically owing to post cease-fire construction activity. They are linked to North Vietnam by a greatly improved logistic system. The "liberated" areas are no longer just remote bases hidden under jungle canopy and served by foot and bicycle paths. In many cases, they have become a series of strongholds united by a net of new motorable roads, and some of them are supported by new petroleum pipelines and coastal transshipment points. There is at least one SAM-defended airfield.

24. In order to consolidate territorial gains, the North Vietnamese moved swiftly after the January 1973 cease-fire to upgrade their transport system in southern Laos and "liberated" areas of South Vietnam. A system of interconnecting roads tying the scattered enclaves together to permit rapid development and a buildup of heavy weapon defenses was the most important

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development. By early summer 1973, the first phase of this access roadnet was completed. Communist vehicles can now move with relative impunity from depots in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to front lines in MRs 1, 2, and 3. The keystone of this developing road system is the ongoing construction of two separate parallel north-south truck routes, one leading along the western GVN border (Communist Route 14) and another extending through southern Laos.*

25. The two separate north-south road systems, located on either side of the Annamite Mountains bordering Laos and South Vietnam, apparently were built to mitigate the effects of the varying monsoon rainy seasons, and to permit more dependable vehicle access between major Communist base areas and North Vietnam. During the summer monsoon season in Laos, for example, vehicles could shift to the route through western South Vietnam, and then during the fall and early winter months transfer back to the Laos system.

26. The onset of the 1973-1974 dry season caused a seasonal and expected shift in Communist construction activity. An accelerated tempo developed on the new dual lane system in southern Laos, and work slackened on LOCs and facilities in northern and central portions of South Vietnam where wet weather prevailed.

27. Free from US air attack, the North Vietnamese concentrated their construction efforts on building a high-speed supply corridor through the Laos Panhandle while abandoning other routes.

[] with the exception of Route 9, which leads into the Khe Sanh military complex, most of the former major roads leading through southern Laos to the South Vietnam border have been abandoned.

28. The North Vietnamese resumed heavy truck traffic in southern Laos during late November accompanied by a surge of construction activity on the dual-lane road. This road now extends into the western highlands and joins Communist Route 14

* Construction methods to build these two roads are much different than those used during the bombing period. The alignments are mostly dual lane to permit two way traffic and passing. Segments are straight, grades are less steep, the roadbeds are well drained, and in a number of areas roads have been graveled or oil covered. Consequently the roads recover quickly from the effects of monsoon rains.

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in Kontum Province. The Laotian pipeline system has also been rapidly extended along the path of the new roadbed; by early 1974, it had reached the tri-border area.

29. There were two major developments associated with the Route 14 system extending along the western GVN border. A new major road in southwestern North Vietnam is to extend about 95 miles from Mu Gia Pass southward through Quang Binh Province to a juncture with Communist Route 14 near the DMZ. Also, Communist road gangs probably have completed a Route 14 bypass road around an ARVN strongpoint at Duc Lap in Quang Duc Province. This bypass leaves the dual-lane system ten miles north of Duc Lap and extends southwest for some 30 miles through the corner of Mondolkiri Province, Cambodia, before joining Cambodian Route 14. Completion of this bypass road closes the last link needed to complete a 500-mile through-truck route from the North Vietnam border through Laos and the GVN western highlands to the COSVN area.

1973-1974 Dry Season Supply Effort

30. The Communists' 1973-1974 dry season supply effort is now in full swing. As in the past, it is a major effort which is more than adequate to replace the supplies consumed by Communist forces. Since early November, for example, Communist units in the Vinh area have handled at least 15,000 tons of all types of ordnance. In addition, about 10,000 tons of cargo per month, mostly foodstuffs, have been shipped into Dong Ha in northern Quang Tri Province. Route 9 has been one of the main entry corridors for supplies entering Laos; since the beginning of the year logistics units operating along this corridor in Quang Tri Province have shipped or stored possibly as much as 65,000 tons of cargo.

31. Deliveries from this area into Laos have resulted in heavy traffic along the Communists' dual-lane road. Since mid-November, almost daily aerial reconnaissance of the main north-south supply corridor in Laos has shown an average of several hundred trucks moving south. Unlike past years, North Vietnam has been able to ship supplies the length of the Laos Panhandle without having to shuttle supplies because of the threat of aerial interdiction.

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[] During the December 7-25 period, one logistics unit in Laos reported handling some 4,000 tons of cargo, including 1,800 tons of ordnance. In early February, [] plans to move some 12,000 tons of cargo from southern Laos into the Group 470 area. This cargo, a significant part of which is probably ordnance, is destined primarily for the B-3 Front and COSVN areas of South Vietnam.

33. To support the heavier supply shipments in Laos, Hanoi has redeployed major rear services elements from South Vietnam. As early as September 1973, Hanoi transferred two transportation regiments and a commo-liaison regiment from South Vietnam into Laos to prepare for the dry season effort. In January, elements of three additional transportation regiments which had been in South Vietnam were identified operating along the main supply corridor in the Laos Panhandle. More recently, two major MR 559 elements -- Headquarters (Hqs.) Group 470 and Hqs. Group 471 -- have relocated to support the February logistics push. The Hqs. Group 471 deployed out of western South Vietnam into southern Laos to a position about 35 miles southwest of Ban Bac along the dual-lane corridor. Similarly, Hqs. Group 470 moved some 50 miles northward to a location near the Hqs. B-3 Front in Kontum Province.

34. Rear services units probably will continue to move supplies through southern Laos into South Vietnam for delivery to the B-3 Front and COSVN areas via Communist Route 14. In addition, the North Vietnamese can be expected to resume heavy supply shipments into northern South Vietnam on the DMZ routes, once the dry season takes hold in that area. By June, the Communists' resupply efforts will have placed NVA forces in an even stronger supply situation.

RVNAF Logistics

35. Since the cease-fire, the RVNAF logistics system has made significant progress -- moving from complete dependence upon the US military toward self-reliance in the allocation, transportation, and stockpiling of supplies. A computerized system for handling overall supply requisitioning is now nearing completion and will further improve the receipt and allocation of military equipment. A large number of South Vietnamese technicians have been trained to replace the US

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military personnel who departed shortly after the cease-fire. South Vietnamese Airforce (VNAF) airlift operations, which play an essential role in South Vietnam's supply distribution system, are currently providing sufficient supplies to about 30 ARVN outposts that are inaccessible by land LOCs. The RVNAF still remains dependent upon US contract personnel for aircraft maintenance and the operation of port facilities.

36. Adequate supplies are available to South Vietnam to continue meeting RVNAF's logistic requirements at current consumption rates. Because of US budget constraints over the past year, however, ammunition and other military goods have not been replaced on the one-for-one basis permitted by the cease-fire agreement. As a result, stocks are being drawn down from their January 1973 level. Supplies of ground ammunition -- currently at 66 percent of the quantity available at the time of the cease-fire -- are equivalent to 7 1/2 months' supply at current expenditure rates, but only 1 1/2 months' supply at rates expended during the 1972 offensive. Air munitions stocks are more plentiful, equal to 16 months' supply at current expenditure rates and 5 months' supply at 1972 offensive levels. Current gross POL inventory is about 33 days of supply at the consumption rate of 25,000 barrels daily, the amount required to combat an NVA offensive. The POL, however, is provided on a contract basis, which would allow sufficient POL during an offensive, but which must be paid by US funding.

37. RVNAF stockpiles of weapons and other military equipment are adequate for its force structure, and the RVNAF currently has more and better aircraft, armor, and artillery to combat a North Vietnamese offensive than it did in 1972. Sufficient amounts of materiel, however, would not be on hand to replace heavy combat losses unless US stocks were made available. Stocks of in-country repair parts are adequate in most cases for six months' supply at present consumption rates.

38. Although the RVNAF logistics system is capable of coping with the present level of tactical activity, a North Vietnamese countrywide offensive would present major problems. It is doubtful that the system could handle the infusion and distribution of large quantities of ammunition and equipment necessary to replace expenditures and combat losses. Supply shortages, particularly in POL and ammunition, would soon occur.

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39. RVNAF depends largely on trucks and other vehicles to transport troops and supplies, and its transportation units have performed well in the past year. The country has an extensive roadnet, but many key routes are vulnerable to Communist interdiction.

40. In an offensive, VNAF's air supply capabilities would be deficient. At the current low operational rate of cargo aircraft, VNAF could not carry out an airlift comparable to the 1972 effort without US support. Moreover, only about half of the 32 C-130 aircraft are normally operational at any one time. VNAF, in fact, will be pressed if required to take on many more than the 30 or so areas currently needing continual air resupply.

41. An offensive would also surface shortcomings in the RVNAF sealift capability. The South Vietnamese Navy (VNN) now possesses only six landing ship tanks (LSTs) and other vessels which are inadequate to perform such multiple tasks as relocating major ARVN units and evacuating large numbers of refugees along the coastline of northern South Vietnam. Efforts are underway, however, to increase the VNN's inventory of LSTs.

42. Other problems may arise from ARVN's failure to develop an effective system of cooperation among the military regions in the reallocation of scarce supplies. This failure prevents the rapid transport of critically needed supplies from one MR to another, even when the distance is very short. Finally, it is also uncertain if US civilians now supporting RVNAF in several key areas would remain if heavy fighting developed.

Firepower Balance

43. The South Vietnamese still hold an edge in firepower assets over the Communists on a countrywide basis. The withdrawal of US airpower coupled with the North Vietnamese buildup of armor, artillery, and air defense forces, however, has caused a major shift in the firepower balance toward the Communists.

44. Hanoi's substantial commitment of tanks and artillery in South Vietnam last year raised inventories to the

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highest level ever. The 130mm field gun gives the Communists the advantage in long-range artillery in northern MR 1 and in some of the other areas where these weapons are concentrated. Moreover, the sizable buildup of North Vietnamese air defense units, coupled with the general availability of the SA-7 missile, have served at least partially to compensate for the GVN's dominance in the air.

45. The Communists and South Vietnamese are estimated to have roughly the same number of tanks -- about 600. The Communists have the edge in MR 1 and the central highlands. Poor armor tactics on the part of the NVA, coupled with the effective use by the South Vietnamese of numerous antitank weapons, however, could offset this advantage, as occurred in 1972.

46. The South Vietnamese artillery units, among RVNAF's best combat forces, have a large numerical edge in artillery with some 1,700 155mm and 105mm artillery howitzers plus 76 175mm field guns. Use of howitzers gives RVNAF effective close ground support, although during an NVA offensive RVNAF could be handicapped by resupply constraints. The North Vietnamese are estimated to have some 350 122mm and 130mm artillery pieces with fewer supply constraints. Because they have fewer howitzers than the GVN, the Communists must rely more on mortars and rockets for their ground support.

47. There are several factors which at least partly offset the RVNAF's numerical artillery advantage. For example, the Communists have more long-range artillery than the GVN; and the 122mm and 130mm field guns are superior to the 175mm with respect to accuracy, rate of fire, and maintenance requirements. In addition, many of the North Vietnamese AAA forces, particularly in northern MR 1, are also trained to use their guns in a ground support role. South Vietnamese combat units are located in fixed positions on key terrain features which would give Communist artillerymen the opportunity to concentrate their long-range field guns on these positions. Such a concentration of firepower might permit the North Vietnamese to achieve significant tactical and territorial gains initially.

48. The VNAF is capable of significantly augmenting GVN ground firepower in many areas of the country. Currently, VNAF has 304 attack aircraft with 255 jet and 49

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propeller aircraft -- which can be used for tactical support. These planes are capable of flying about two-thirds of the monthly number of close air support sorties flown by the US and South Vietnamese during the 1972 offensive.

49. To counter this advantage in the air, the North Vietnamese have built up within South Vietnam their most formidable air defense structure of the war. This structure currently consists of 23 regiments (22 AAA and one SAM) and 22,000 men. There are 18 regiments in MR 1, at least three in western MR 2, and two in northern MR 3. The AAA weapons of these regiments range up to 100mm in caliber. This force represents a serious threat to VNAF which has been reluctant to operate near concentrated North Vietnamese air defense positions.

50. North Vietnam also has the ability to conduct air operations in MR 1 to achieve air superiority there. Currently, Hanoi has 210 jet fighters capable of such operations, although only about one-fifth of these could be committed on a sustained basis. These planes could be staged from any of the five airfields currently capable of handling jet aircraft in the North Vietnamese Panhandle.* (See Strategic Reserve map.) Aircraft flown from the southernmost airfield at Dong Hoi in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam, however, would greatly reduce the South Vietnamese warning and reaction times and give the North Vietnamese aircraft maximum time over target.

51. In the event Hanoi did commit its aircraft to the South, the North Vietnamese air force would be particularly strong in air-to-air combat. They have experienced pilots, along with high quality radar and air controllers. In terms of providing close air support, however, the North Vietnamese pilots are inexperienced, and probably would encounter problems coordinating attack operations with ground units.

52. In contrast, the South Vietnamese pilots are highly qualified in close air support operations but have no air-to-air combat experience. VNAF has had no combat experience in ground control intercept operations, and its skill at actual

* *The airfield at Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam, could be made available as an emergency recovery base, but it is not now capable of sustaining jet aircraft operations.*

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intercept operations is probably marginal. VNAF also would have difficulty in a ground attack role in northern MR 1, given the proliferation of AAA weapons and SA-2 missiles there. Except for the AC-119 gunship, VNAF aircraft are not equipped with radar homing and warning equipment and have no jamming capability against electronically-controlled AAA guns and SA-2 missiles.

53. VNAF air-to-air capabilities, however, will be improved somewhat this spring. The first shipments of the higher performance F5E jet aircraft began arriving in March as replacements for the F5A; the first F5E squadron will be activated in May. The F5E is a faster, more maneuverable aircraft than the F5A, with improved electronics equipment and greater range or bomb load capacity. VNAF's main problems, however, will continue to be the lack of trained, combat-experienced pilots, plus the lack of sufficient ground support equipment.

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ANNEX B

STATUS OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE
INFANTRY DIVISIONS

Overview

The North Vietnamese

1. As a fighting force, the Communists are generally tough, disciplined, tenacious fighters. For the most part, the cadre are politically reliable and dedicated to the Communist cause. Leadership within Communist units has generally been good, although the cumulative attrition caused by the war has taken a heavy toll of experienced military cadre. The Communists also have enjoyed the advantage of usually being able to choose the time and place to launch military action. This has allowed them to position forward supplies on a battlefield and to make detailed plans of attack.

2. The Communists, however, also have their shortcomings. For example, although they made initial gains in the heavy fighting in South Vietnam in 1972, they failed to exploit these gains and therefore lost their offensive momentum. The Communists frequently failed to coordinate effectively armor, artillery, infantry, and air defense forces. In addition, the North Vietnamese had a relative lack of experience in using various forces in combined actions, and the attacking Communist units suffered severe losses from US bombing and the heavy combat.

3. As the offensive continued and losses soared, other deficiencies began to surface within the Communist military structure. Troop discipline weakened, and there were instances of low morale. The loss of experienced leadership often forced the Communists to promote troops with practically no formal military training up through the ranks to leadership positions. While these troops possessed combat experience, it resulted in cadre not knowing how to react to rapidly changing battlefield situations. Moreover, the quality of troop replacements arriving from North Vietnam was seriously degraded due to the shortened basic training cycle and immediate integration into combat units.

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4. North Vietnamese propaganda since the cease-fire indicates the Communists are aware of these shortcomings. Training programs in the North and South have been expanded, and they now concentrate to a greater extent on preparing troops and cadre to fight a conventional war with mixed forces. In last year's fighting in Quang Duc and Pleiku provinces, for example, the Communists used infantry, armor, artillery, and AAA forces effectively. Finally, the Communists have had a year to rest and refit. Thus, although they have not overcome all their shortcomings, it is likely that the Communists have made progress in improving their overall combat status.

The South Vietnamese

5. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) today constitutes the largest, most well-equipped force in Southeast Asia. In the year since the cease-fire and withdrawal of US forces, the RVNAF has proven capable of defending GVN-controlled territory. Indeed, in the fighting over the past year, the South Vietnamese have generally been able to prevail over the Communists, and the GVN now controls slightly more people and territory than it did at the time of the Paris agreement.

6. The RVNAF, however, continues to face problems. They stem to a large degree from inexperience in managing, supplying, and maintaining a large force structure. Other difficulties arise from low troop morale problems, corruption, and lack of inter-regional cooperation. Efforts are currently under way within all branches of the RVNAF to cope with these problems. Maintenance and logistic operations are being improved through command emphasis and increased training. Logistics and maintenance, however, will continue to be a problem in RVNAF with the continued requirement of US civilian technical support. Efforts are also underway to improve RVNAF troop morale, but these are hindered by inflation and extended deployment of units in areas distant from homes and families.

7. Despite such problems, ARVN commanders have shown themselves adaptable in operating against Communist forces and have proved proficient in using their available firepower assets. Not a small part of this has included learning to operate without US air support. Additionally, ARVN infantry divisions have conducted extensive training over the last year, mostly by rotating individual infantry battalions through division or national training centers. An even more ambitious program is scheduled this calendar year.

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8. RVNAF intelligence services provide good information on in-country Communist activities, although certain problems continue to restrict their capability.

-- The VNAF has assigned six RF-5s and four RC-47s to collect photo intelligence. The camera systems on the RF-5, however, have only limited utility and the RC-47s cannot operate in a AAA environment.

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Most RVNAF intelligence resources are expended on in-country collection. For early warning of Communist preparations to launch a major offensive, such as troop and logistic build-up or unit redeployments, the RVNAF is heavily dependent on US intelligence collection.

North Vietnamese Infantry Divisions

In North Vietnam

NVA 308th Division

9. The division currently is garrisoned in the Hanoi area. The 308th is considered one of North Vietnam's best infantry divisions, and in 1972, it spearheaded the attack into South Vietnam's northern MR 1. After suffering heavy losses, the division returned to North Vietnam in January 1973, just prior to the cease-fire. Since then, it has been undergoing extensive training and is now at full strength.

NVA 308B Division

10. The 308B Division and its three regiments currently are garrisoned in Vinh Phu Province northwest of Hanoi. The division was formed in Thanh Hoa Province in mid-1972 and operated there until December 1973, when it moved to the Hanoi area. The division originally had four regiments, two of which

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were deployed to Laos -- the 88th to north Laos in late 1972 and the 102nd to south Laos in January 1973. The 88th Regiment, however, was resubordinated in mid-1973 to the 316th Division and returned to North Vietnam with the division in December 1973. The 102nd withdrew from Laos in late spring 1973. Neither the 88th or 102nd Regiment is known to have participated in any significant combat operations while in Laos. The 308B is currently operating at full strength.

NVA 312th Division

11. The division is located in its traditional garrison area of North Vietnam's Thanh Hoa Province and has been refitting and training since mid-1973. The 312th operated in northern Laos from 1969 to early 1972, when it returned to North Vietnam. After a brief period of rest, it infiltrated South Vietnam's Quang Tri Province in mid-1972 and suffered heavy casualties in the fighting southwest of Quang Tri City. The division withdrew to North Vietnam in the spring of 1973 and is now at full strength.

NVA 316th Division

12. The 316th Division has been fighting in northern Laos since mid-1960. During its tenure there, the division headquarters functioned essentially as an administrative command; it did not serve as a major tactical authority for its two subordinate infantry regiments. In late 1972, the 88th Regiment of the 308B Division was sent to reinforce battle-weary North Vietnamese units in the Plaine des Jarres area and was resubordinated to the 316th Division in mid-1973. In December 1973 the division headquarters and two of its three regiments withdrew to Nghe An Province in North Vietnam where they are currently located. The third regiment of the division continues to operate in northern Laos.

NVA 320B Division

13. The division currently is located in Thanh Hoa Province in North Vietnam. It deployed to northern MR 1 in the spring of 1972 and was responsible along with the NVA 325th Division for the defense of Quang Tri City. After the GVN recaptured the city, the division pulled back to the DMZ area where it continued to operate until its withdrawal to North Vietnam in late 1973. Since then, the unit is believed to have been refitting and training.

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NVA 341st Division

14. The 341st Division was reactivated with two regiments in North Vietnam in the spring of 1973 and is garrisoned in southern Quang Binh Province. The division had previously operated from the DMZ area to North Vietnam's Nghe An Province during the mid-1960s, but appears to have been dissolved in 1968. In December 1973, it acquired a third infantry regiment from Quang Tri Province of South Vietnam. The current mission of the division is unclear, but its location would permit a rapid deployment to northern MR 1 with almost no advance warning.

In Laos

NVA 968th Division

15. The division was established in January 1972 in southern Laos, largely from existing North Vietnamese units. Prior to the cease-fire, the division was tasked with securing Communist areas there and protecting North Vietnamese infiltration routes through the Panhandle. During the year following the cease-fire, the division remained generally in-place and in a low-profile training and refitting mode. In January 1974, however, the division's most seasoned regiment -- the 9th -- relocated to the western highlands of South Vietnam to provide additional security for the Communists' new western supply corridor. Since then, there have been indications that other elements of the division also may relocate to South Vietnam.

In South Vietnam

NVA First Division

16. The division has operated along the Cambodian border in the provinces of Chau Doc and Kien Giang of MR 4 since the 1972 offensive. Its primary mission is to secure infiltration corridors leading into the delta from Cambodia. In 1973, however, two of its three regiments apparently were dissolved, thus reducing the threat to the GVN in the area. The remaining regiment continues to operate in Kien Giang Province.

NVA Second Division

17. The operating area of the division has been Quang Ngai Province of MR 1 since mid-1972. The division last summer

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resubordinated a regiment to the 711th Division in Quang Tin Province and another regiment to the NVA 3rd Division in MR 2. The 2nd Division has now been reduced to one reinforced regiment operating southwest of Quang Ngai City.

NVA Third Division

18. Binh Dinh Province of MR 2 has been the division's traditional operating area. Because of heavy combat losses during the 1972 offensive, a regiment of the division was disbanded in mid-1973 and replaced by a regiment from the NVA 2nd Division in MR 1. The division is now resting and refitting its three understrength regiments in northwest Binh Dinh Province and is reportedly having serious morale problems.

NVA Fifth Division

19. The division which has historically operated in MR 3 moved to Dinh Tuong Province of MR 4 where it operated from mid-1972 to April 1973 before returning to Tay Ninh Province in MR 3. Since that time it has been resting and refitting, and at the same time, attempting to secure Communist territory in southern Tay Ninh Province. The division poses a threat to Tay Ninh City and GVN-controlled areas near Routes 1 and 22. There are indications that at least one regiment of the division may be returning to Dinh Tuong Province.

NVA Seventh Division

20. The 7th Division has been resting and refitting in northern MR 3 since the cease-fire. The mission of the division is to protect Communist-controlled territory near Route 13 in Binh Duong Province and to attack targets in GVN areas. Since the cease-fire, heavy artillery weapons and tanks have arrived in the division's operating area from North Vietnam, providing its units with greater firepower support than in 1972. The division represents a major threat to GVN forces and positions north of Saigon.

NVA Ninth Division

21. The division currently operates in western Binh Duong Province in MR 3 and has not seen major combat activity for more than a year. It was refitted in 1973 and represents a major

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threat to the northern approaches to Saigon. The division's combat capability also has been enhanced by the deployment of additional armor and heavy artillery to its area of operations in 1973.

NVA Tenth Division

22. The 10th Division was organized in late 1972 in Kontum Province of MR 2 from independent combat regiments operating under the NVA B-3 Front. The division has successfully countered GVN thrusts into Communist territory north of Kontum City since August and September. The division is currently considerably understrength, but it has been conducting training to upgrade the quality of its personnel.

NVA 304th Division

23. This division has a long history of combat in South Vietnam and is currently deployed in western Quang Tri Province of MR 1. It has not seen combat since November 1972. Its primary mission is to maintain control of Communist-occupied territory north of the Thach Han River, including the Khe Sanh airfield and North Vietnamese logistics facilities along Route 9. Combat units of the division have conducted extensive training for the past year and are now probably at full strength.

NVA 320th Division

24. The 320th Division is located in western Pleiku Province of MR 2 and is successfully defending Communist areas against GVN operations. The division's regiments are currently understrength. Since the cease-fire, the division has conducted extensive training to improve its command and control and upgrade leadership.

NVA 324B Division

25. The 324B Division is one of the most combat-experienced divisions in the North Vietnamese Army. Since the cease-fire, however, the division has been resting and refitting in western Thua Thien Province and is now estimated to be at full strength. Concurrently it has been conducting an extensive reconnaissance of GVN military installations in the coastal lowlands of the province. The division now controls two artillery and five infantry regiments in Thua Thien Province west of Hue. Its

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mission in recent months has been to secure Communist areas in the western part of the province and open infiltration routes into the coastal lowlands.

NVA 325th Division

26. The 325th Division is located in northeastern Quang Tri Province of MR 1. The division's mission is to provide security for Dong Ha City and the Cua Viet logistics complex. It also maintains an active reconnaissance of GVN military activity near Quang Tri City. It has not experienced combat for more than a year and is at full strength. The 325th Division successfully defended the Cua Viet and Thach Han river lines against heavy attacks by the South Vietnamese Airborne and Marine Divisions in late 1972.

NVA 711th Division

27. The division -- near full strength -- operates in Quang Tin Province of MR 1 with the mission of protecting Communist logistics facilities and infiltration routes southwest of Danang. In early 1973, units of the division were suffering from personnel shortages, morale, and leadership problems. Consequently, one regiment was deactivated and a regiment of the NVA 2nd Division was resubordinated to the division in mid-1973. The division has been resting, refitting, and conducting extensive training for more than a year.

South Vietnamese Infantry Divisions

ARVN First Division

28. The division is primarily responsible for defending GVN-controlled territory west of Hue and is one of the best ARVN divisions. Two of its four infantry regiments have experienced high manpower losses in recent months because of malaria and some combat activity. The current shortage of experienced leadership in the division is being corrected by the implementation of battalion- and company-level refresher training programs.

ARVN Second Division

29. The current mission of the division is to maintain security in GVN-controlled areas of Quang Tin and Quang Ngai

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provinces and to deny the Communists access to Quang Ngai City. Territorial forces and ranger units have been upgraded to operate with the division's infantry regiments, improving the defense of the populated lowlands. Since the cease-fire, the division has eliminated some pockets of Communist resistance in the lowlands, while concurrently rotating its infantry battalions for refresher training.

ARVN Third Division

30. The division has largely recovered from its April 1972 debacle in Quang Tri Province of MR 1. In the fall of 1972, it successfully recaptured extensive territory in the populated lowlands of Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces. The division's current task is to provide security for major population centers near Danang and to protect principal ARVN installations and supply lines. For more than a year, combat activity has been exceptionally low, contributing to high morale and a significant improvement in the strength of the division's combat units.

ARVN Fifth Division

31. The division is one of the government's poorest units. It has sustained heavy combat losses in attempting to reopen Routes 13 and 1A in Binh Duong Province of MR 3 last summer and serious morale problems continue. Currently, the 5th Division commander is attempting to reorganize understrength units and improve the division's combat effectiveness. The division is in a defensive posture, deployed in base camps astride Routes 13 and 1A. In late March/early April, the division is scheduled to be withdrawn for training, and the responsibility for its area of operations is to be assumed by the ARVN 18th Division.

ARVN Seventh Division

32. The 7th Division is deployed in Dinh Tuong Province of MR 4 with the mission of protecting GVN installations and populated areas along Route 4 between My Tho and Sa Dec cities. In recent months, the division has successfully executed several combat operations near traditional Communist infiltration routes and base areas in Dinh Tuong and Kien Tuong provinces. The division is well led, highly mobile, and is the most effective combat unit in MR 4.

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ARVN Ninth Division

33. The 9th Division is primarily responsible for interdicting Communist infiltration routes from Cambodia through the delta provinces of Chau Doc, Kien Giang, Chuong Thien and Dinh Tuong. The division is now slightly understrength because of desertions and personnel replacement problems. The Joint General Staff (JGS) has designated the division as part of the General Reserve, and it will move to MR 3 if the Communists launch a general offensive.

ARVN 18th Division

34. The 18th Division has developed into the best MR 3 unit. It has primary responsibility for defending populated areas and GVN lines of communication north of Saigon. The division has been scheduled to replace the ARVN 5th Division in Binh Duong Province with the mission of opening Route 13 to Binh Long Province. Morale is high in the division and its units are known to have a good rapport with the local population. Moreover, the division is overstrength and recently was ordered to discontinue recruiting. There has been an increase in security because of its aggressive combat operations in conjunction with territorial forces. The division possesses good leadership and conducts regular rotational training of all combat units.

ARVN 21st Division

35. The division is deployed in the southern delta with the mission of protecting populated areas. Although its operating area has been reinforced by territorial forces, the division continues to be the weakest of the three GVN divisions in MR 4. It has not made significant progress in opening new territory for resettlement or closing Communist supply and infiltration routes. The division continues to be characterized by poor leadership at all levels of command.

ARVN 22nd Division

36. The traditional area of operation for the division is in Binh Dinh Province where it was routed by the NVA 3rd Division in the opening phase of the 1972 offensive. The division recovered, however, and by the start of the cease-fire had recaptured most of its lost territory. The division is now deployed in Kontum and Pleiku provinces where it has primary responsibility for defending the provincial capitals. For the past few months, the division, reinforced by rangers and territorial forces, has been

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unsuccessful in its operations into Communist base areas in the two provinces. The operations have been costly in terms of manpower losses: two regiments are now considered only marginally combat effective.

ARVN 23rd Division

37. The division is now operating in Quang Duc and Darlac provinces of MR 2 and has the mission of conducting operations against Communist base areas along the Cambodia/South Vietnam border. The former operating area of the division was Kontum and Pleiku provinces where it successfully recaptured Trung Nghia in the fall of 1973. Because of combat since the cease-fire, it is judged to be marginally effective.

ARVN 25th Division

38. The division is currently at full strength and has the mission of defending Tay Ninh City and protecting Routes 22 and 1 to Saigon. The 25th Division is augmented by territorial forces, and this combined force proved to be highly effective during the 1972 offensive. The division is now undergoing extensive training.

Airborne Division

39. The Airborne Division is one of the GVN's most effective divisions. Although the division has been deployed in MR 1 since April 1972, it continues to be part of the JGS General Reserve. Since the cease-fire, airborne units have assumed a static defensive posture in Thua Thien Province. The division has some morale problems because of economic hardships faced by families of division personnel living in the distant Saigon-Bien Hoa area. This situation has been alleviated somewhat by rotating division personnel to Saigon. Individual and unit refresher training is conducted on a regular basis and unit manning levels are at 98 percent.

Marine Division

40. The Marine Division has distinguished itself as a highly motivated, well-disciplined, and aggressively-led combat unit. Although still part of the JGS General Reserve, the

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division represents the GVN's main line of defense in Quang Tri Province of MR 1. Combat units of the division, supported by territorial forces, are defending Quang Tri City and the coastal lowlands of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. Despite its defensive mission, the division has maintained excellent troop morale because of refresher training programs, frequent rotation of units to Saigon, and effective civic action programs within populated areas. Current manning levels have surpassed authorized levels and recruiting has been temporarily suspended.

Ranger Command

41. A two-phase plan for the reorganization of ranger units was completed in January. The Ranger Command now has 15 ranger groups. Three groups, however, have been designated part of the JGS General Reserve. The Rangers presently augment GVN forces in the MRs. The combat performance of many ranger units has been less than satisfactory because of a lack of equipment, poor training, and poor discipline. To alleviate these problems, a concerted effort is underway to improve individual and unit training.

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