

NIE 63-4-54

**Probable Military and Political
Developments in Indochina
Over the Next 30 Days
(15 June-15 July)**

15 June 1954

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
NIE 63-4-54
(Supersedes NIE 63-3-54)

**PROBABLE MILITARY AND POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA OVER THE
NEXT 30 DAYS (15 June-15 July)**

Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the

INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

on 15 June 1954. Concurring were the Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Director of Intelligence, USAF; the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff. The Director of Intelligence, AEC, and the Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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PROBABLE MILITARY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA OVER THE NEXT 30 DAYS (15 June - 15 July)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable military and political developments in Indochina over the next 30 days (15 June-15 July).

ASSUMPTIONS

1. That no cease-fire agreement is reached during the period of this estimate.
2. That French policy with respect to Indochina will not undergo a radical change with the next 30 days.¹

THE ESTIMATE

I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. The effects of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the progress of the Geneva negotiations will continue to be significantly reflected in the attitudes of all participants toward the war. The Viet Minh have maintained a high level of activity, particularly in the Red River Delta. The Viet Minh can be expected to exploit to the full extent of their capabilities any opportunities for decisive action which might result from these operations or from a further political and psychological disintegration in Vietnam. The French are concentrating their efforts in maintaining their general position in the Red River Delta. The French command is reorganizing and strengthening the defense of vital areas in the Delta, primarily to counter the Viet Minh threat to the security of the French Expedi-

tionary Corps, and secondarily to hold as much of the Delta as possible pending the outcome of the Geneva negotiations.

2. Except for 10 regular battalions held in the general area of Dien Bien Phu, the redeployment of Viet Minh forces from Dien Bien Phu to base areas has been virtually completed. Two infantry divisions and the artillery division are now in base areas immediately northwest of the Delta. Two additional infantry divisions have arrived in base areas southwest of the Delta. In addition to the above forces, up to 17 battalions have been assembling in the Thai Nguyen region, ostensibly for reorganization and advanced training. These forces bring the total Viet Minh troop strength within and in the proximity of the Delta to 94 infantry battalions, 1 artillery division, 110 district companies, and 40,000-50,000 militia of lower combat effectiveness.

3. Opposing the Viet Minh the total French Union force strength in the Delta including

¹This assumption will be reviewed in the light of French political developments in the immediate future. An amended estimate will be made if required.

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recent reinforcements from Laos and North Africa is 109 battalions, including 9 mobile groups and 6 parachute battalions, plus supporting artillery, tanks, and armored cars. Approximately 60 percent of the infantry strength is composed of Vietnamese battalions of the Vietnamese National Army. There are also approximately 80,000 auxiliary troops and militia of low combat effectiveness. By 15 July, an additional mobile group will have arrived from North Africa and at least 1 or 2 more mobile groups will have been formed from units withdrawn from static defenses.

4. The Viet Minh has a substantial capability for sabotage and terrorist activities throughout much of Vietnam, particularly in such key cities as Saigon, Haiphong, Hai Duong, and Hanoi. In Hanoi this capability has probably increased as a result of the influx of Viet Minh agents among civilian refugees entering the city. The rail and road line between Hanoi and Haiphong have been disrupted frequently and periodically despite preventive measures of the French Union forces. Although the Viet Minh will continue to engage in sabotage and terrorist activities, we believe that they will use their total capability, including uprisings in the cities, only in conjunction with an all-out military assault.

5. Since the fall of Dien Bien Phu there has been noticeable decline in the morale of French Union forces. Recently, one Vietnamese militia battalion deserted, one Vietnamese regular Army Group Mobile refused orders to go into action, Vietnamese resistance to conscription has increased and further Vietnamese defections within the next 30 days may be expected. On the other hand, French and Vietnamese troops have been engaged in local actions with no indication of a seriously impaired will to fight. If there are substantial Viet Minh victories or the Vietnamese become convinced that the French are abandoning the capitol, Hanoi, and substantial parts of the Delta, we believe increased and serious defections would occur among Vietnamese units. In these circumstances, however, the French Expeditionary Corps and some Vietnamese units would continue to fight.

6. Although there is no positive indications of Viet Minh intentions with respect to the Delta, throughout the period of this estimate the Viet Minh will be capable of launching a major assault against the Red River Delta. The Viet Minh may soon undertake such an assault on the Delta because of the political advantages to be gained at Geneva by such action, or because they have become convinced that French Union forces have become demoralized and that Viet Minh capabilities for assault combined with those of sabotage, terrorism, and uprisings would prove decisive in the Delta, except for limited beachheads in the Haiphong area. The Viet Minh will also believe that the French will be handicapped by lack of initiative and the necessity of tying down considerable numbers for this positional type defense. The Viet Minh will weigh these considerations against the obstacles imposed by terrain and weather and against the fact that the French Union forces will approach their maximum strength within the perimeter during this same period and will be superior in numbers, firepower, air strength, and logistic support.

7. We estimate that the most likely Viet Minh course of action will be to increase their present level of operations during the next 30 days and to continue attacks on French Union strong points, especially in the Delta. It is possible that elements of the Viet Minh battle corps, redeployed from Dien Bien Phu, will be committed in the Delta during this period to increase the weight of Viet Minh attacks. The Viet Minh objectives will be to reduce the area under French control, to demoralize the Vietnam Army and militia, and reduce the capacity of the LOC between Hanoi and Haiphong to such an extent that the French position in Hanoi becomes untenable. Although we consider it likely that French Union forces will suffer some reverses, they will probably be able to retain possession of their key strong points and prevent the prolonged severance of the LOC between Hanoi and Haiphong.

8. If, as a result of the foregoing course of action, the Viet Minh should develop an op-

portunity to initiate a major attack, the French Union forces have the military capability to hold Hanoi during the period of this estimate. However, if the Viet Minh achieve military successes in the Delta and French control of the native elements in critical areas of the Tonkin Delta deteriorates, the French may withdraw toward the Haiphong perimeter. Moreover, even in advance of determined military pressure by the Viet Minh, concern for the integrity of the French Expeditionary Corps and for the security of the loyal population in Hanoi might induce the French to evacuate Hanoi and withdraw toward the Haiphong perimeter. A major attack would probably be accompanied by uprisings, sabotage, and terrorist activities which would almost certainly multiply and aggravate the difficulties of the French. In any event, the French could almost certainly hold Haiphong during the period of this estimate. The French position at Haiphong will be strengthened by the arrival of two cruisers now en route.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

9. Barring the unlikely event of a large-scale Viet Minh invasion, Laos and Cambodia will probably retain their present uncertain political stability during the next 30 days if the French continue to provide support.

10. The political situation in Vietnam will probably continue to deteriorate during the period of this estimate. Treaties of independence and association with France have now been initialled, but the impact of this action has not been sufficient to bolster Vietnamese morale or add to the strength of the ineffective Vietnam Government. Even if the present government is supplanted during the period of this estimate, it is unlikely that the present trend of disintegration could be arrested in the absence of a substantial improvement in the military prospect of the French Union forces. Factionalism has become extreme and the Vietnamese central government is virtually paralyzed. If the Vietnam central government should disintegrate, this fact by itself would not cause the French to lose the ability to maintain order in the regions controlled by their military forces.