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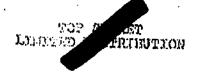
TS# 142405-e SNIE 10-3-61 10 October 1961

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PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO CERTAIN SEATO UNDERTAKINGS IN SOUTH VIRTHAM

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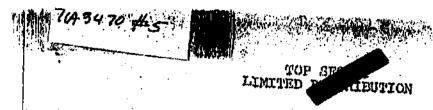
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TS# 142405-0

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

10 October 1961

SUBJECT: SNIE 10-3-61: PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO CERTAIN SEATO UNDERTAKINGS IN SCUTH VIETNAM

## THE PROBLEM

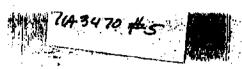
To estimate probable Communist reactions to the use of SEATO forces in South Vietnam to prevent Communist incursions or infiltration from North Vietnam.

## THE ASSUMPTION

For the purpose of this estimate it is assumed that in response to an appeal from the Government of Vietnam (GVN),

Other National Estimates pertinent to this problem are SNIE 10-2-61, "Likelihood of Major Communist Military Intervention in Mainland Southeast Asia," dated 27 June 1961; SNIE 58-2-61, "Probable Reactions to Certain Courses of Action Concerning Lace," dated 5 July 1961; NIE 14.3/53-61, "Frospects for Korth and South Victnem," dated 15 August 1961; and SNIE 53-2-61, "Bloc Support of the Communist Effort Against the Government of Victnem,"







SEATO ground, navel, and air forces numbering about 25,000 are committed to patrol the GVN coast and to secure the GVN-Lactian border against incursions or infiltration from the Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in North Vietnam. The SEATO objective, which will be publicly announced, is to stop external Communist assistance to the Viet Cong Communist guerrillas, while avoiding direct engagement by these troops in the conflict within South Vietnam.

## THE ESTIMATE

1. We believe that the Communist Bloc would not commit North Vietnamese or Chinese Communist forces to a large-scale military attack against South Vietnam or Lace in response to the assumed SEATO action. The DEV would probably seek to avoid having its regular units enter into a direct military engagement with SEATO, and in particular



TOP SECUTION

US, forces. Hanoi, Pelping, and Moscow would almost certainly be concerned over the increased risks for each of them on broadened hostilities involving US forces.

Moreover, they are generally confident that their current low risk inetics of local subversion and supporting "national liberation" struggles will continue to be successful in Southeast Asia.

2. Nevertheless, Peiping and Hanoi in particular would be highly concerned as to the intentions of the SEATO forces, particularly during the initial deployment. The presence of SEATO forces so near its border would be a source of constant unease to the DRV. Moreover, both

The Communist guerrilla organizations in both Laos and South Vietnam (the Pathet Lao and the Vict Cong) are under the control of the Communist Party of North Vietnam and look to Hanoi for guidance and support. We believe that Hanoi exercises considerable local tactical latitude in conducting the Communist struggle in both countries. When the struggle is elevated to the international level, as is now the case with Laos, the major Bloc partners play an increasingly important leadership role. It is also likely that the USSR exercises considerable restraint on DRV or Chinese Communist decisions which would risk the broadening of hostilities and raise the issue of USSR or



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Hanoi and Peiping would consider it a particularly ungent matter to prevent any invigoration or strengthening of SEATO which could result from a successful SEATO operation. Both would seek by political means and by military means short of major overt attack, to frustrate the SEATO effort.

DRY would seek at first to test the seriousness and effectiveness of the SEATO effort by subjecting the SEATO forces and their land lines of communication to harasament, ambach, and guerrilla attack. The Communists could not be expected to recognize the announced intention of the SEATO forces to avoid involvement in the internal struggle in South Victness. They would probably estimate that by using their Vict Congaparatus in South Victness, by committing additional experienced guerrilla forces from North Vietness.



Approximately 90,000 Vietnamese Communist troops, most of them from south and central Vietnam, were evacuated to North Vietnam in the regroupment of forces following the Indochina War. The DRV has maintained relatively intact a large part of this pool of manpower experienced in guerrilla operations in South Vietnam, drawing upon it for cadres to reinforce the Viet Cong.

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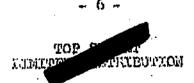
in territory long familiar to them, and by exploiting the opportunities offered by the sizable junk traffic in coastal waters, they could harass the SEATO land forces and infiltrate the SEATO blockade. The Communists would expect worthwhile political and psychological rewards if their harassment and guerrilla operations against SEATO forces were successful, including lowered GVM morale and increased tensions among some of the SEATO members. While seeking to test the SEATO forces, the DEW would not relax its Viet Cong campaign against the GVM.

the DHV to try to gain "compensation" in some manner, such as possibly declaring the 1954 Geneva Agreements, or certain strictes of the Agreements, abrogated. It might also begin to receive increasing military assistance from the Soviet Union and Communist China openly and in unconcealed violation of the Agreements, and to buildup an air force which would include jets. The Bloc would attempt to encourage and instigate Lace and Cambodia to protest to the UN if any SEATO forces crossed the South Vietnam border.

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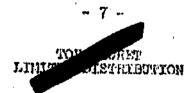
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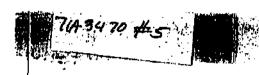
If no agreement on Laos had been reached at Geneva prior to the assumed SEATO action, we believe that the Communists would take steps to hasten their takeover of Laos. They would intensify their offorts to achieve political control, and they would step up military pressures against the Lactian Army. Communist strength in south Lacs would probably be increased by forces from North Vietnam to guard against an effort to partition Laos or an attack against the Pathet Lao forces. The Soviet airlift would probably he increased with a heavier flow of military supply . into south Laos, and the Communists would probably intensify their efforts to establish a secure route for motor traffic into the south. On the other hand, if the SEATO action took .. place after the establishment of a coalition government in Leos under Souvanna Phoume and the conclusion of an agreement at Geneva, the Communists would probably emphasize political rather than military measures to win control of the country. In either case, the scale of Communist infiltration of men and equipment from North to South Vietnam through Laos would probably not be significantly affected.





- 6. If the SEATO action appeared to be proving effective in reducing the present scale of infiltration the Communistsprobably would increase their use of the mountain trail system through Cambodia. This is a longer and more difficult routs but its use could keep at least minimum support flowing to the Viet Cong. At the same time, in order to reduce the apparent success of the SEATO action, they could intensify small unit attacks, assassinations, and local terrorism in South Vietnam; they could also commit more DRV irregular personnel for the harassment of the SEATO forces. It would probably be part of Communist tectics to play upon possible SEATO weariness ever maintaining substantial forces and accepting losses in South Vietnam over a long period of time.
- 7. With the introduction of SEATO troops into South Vietnam, Communist China might increase its ground and air forces in South China and etrengthen its military posture opposite Taiwan. It might also announce various types of military assistance to the DRV "to meet the imperialist threat" from South Vietnam, possibly including the

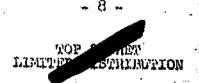


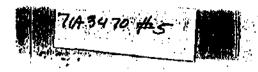


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stationing of Chinese Communist air units in North Vietnam. Nevertheless, we do not believe Peiping would consider assignment of SEATO forces to South Vietnam as an immediate and direct threat to its own national security.

- 8. At the same time, the Communist powers would immediately launch a major propaganda and political campaign designed to label the SEATO action as aggression, as a threat to the peace in the Far East, and as a disguised US effort to remeatablish colonial rule over Indochina. To increase the fears of war in the Far East, Hanol and Feiping would charge that the US, through SEATO, was preparing to attack the DRV and Communist China. The USSR would probably remind the world of its defense commitments to both Peiping and Hanol.
- 9. The reaction to the assumed SEATO action among concerned non-Communist governments would vary widely. The Asian members of SEATO would find renewed confidence in the organization and the US, if the plan were to go well. If, on the other hand, the SEATO action were to become costly, prolonged, or to involve heavy casualties, the Asian members would soon become discrebanted and look to the US to do





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Australia would probably go along with this action; New Zealand might also join in. The UK would be likely to oppose the assumed SEATO action, and British reluctance to participate could be overcome only with great difficulty. France would also oppose the action and almost certainly would refuse to participate.

most concerned at the increased tension and danger of general hostilities. They would dencunce the SEATO action and call for a peaceful solution. None of them, however, would be without some accret sympathy for the SEATO action for they all have fears of Communist subversion and expansion. For example, Sihanouk has become increasingly fearful of and disillusioned with the DRY's subversive and guerrilla organizations in Laos and South Vietnam, both of whom have violated Cambodia's borders. He has no desire to see Laos or South Vietnam under Communist domination. Despite his genuine and justifiable fear of Communist China and North Vietnam, Sihanouk might cooperate, covertly, with the SEATO action.



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against Japan. Although the Japanese Government would be under strong leftist internal pressure, it would probably tolerate US logistic activities and would not officially oppose the SEATO effort. Nationalist China would be elated with the SEATO action.