

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL - October 19, 1973  
SUBJECT: North Vietnamese Intentions -

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~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

URGENT ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER  
FROM: WILLIAM L. STEARMAN *WLS*  
SUBJECT: North Vietnamese Intentions

A National Intelligence Estimate (Tab A) on short-term prospects for Vietnam has concluded that the chances for a dry season Communist offensive in 1974 are roughly even and that, in any event, significant but localized NVA/VC attacks will accelerate in the coming months. We concur in this estimate of Hanoi's intentions but believe that the possibility of escalation -- sparked by major local attacks -- raises the chances of a renewal of all-out fighting to better than even. In light of

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The Estimate concludes that "it is a close choice" whether Hanoi will opt for a major offensive this dry season and it presents the arguments of both those analysts who believe Hanoi will strike sooner rather than later and those who apparently believe the Communists will delay an attack until the 1974-1975 dry season. (We specifically requested that various views be expressed in this NIE.)

Hanoi's decision on timing will be based on its perception of the situation in the South, and on the positions of the United States, the Soviet Union and the PRC. The military balance in the South only slightly favors the GVN, and

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outset of the 1972 offensive). The Communist powers, however, are apparently urging restraint on the DRV and would likely oppose an unprovoked offensive while detente is paying dividends, particularly if it appeared the United States would reenter the war. Soviet and Chinese military aid continues but perhaps at a reduced rate: (See accompanying memo for fuller discussion of DRV military imports.) Concerning the United States reactions, Hanoi undoubtedly views the chances of American forces reentering the war "under any circumstances," as "greatly reduced." United States distraction with the Middle East could further reduce Hanoi's fears of U.S. retaliation, but the North Vietnamese cannot wholly dismiss the possibility of U.S. reentry.

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with the United States. If Hanoi does not launch a country-wide offensive this dry season, the NIE predicts a period of accelerated, significant, but localized and limited, attacks intended to test ARVN and big power reactions and to seize additional territory. The odds favoring a major offensive, however, will increase significantly as the 1974-1975 dry season approaches.

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We concur in the Estimate's major conclusions and are inclined to agree with those analysts who see major hostilities coming sooner rather than later. We agree that the North Vietnamese clearly intend -- as a top priority matter -- to resolve the situation in the South to their favor and that a resumption of full-scale fighting is nearly inevitable -- at least within the next 18 months. We also view MR-1 as the greatest threat area and concur that U.S. air intervention -- if only in an interceptor role -- may be required to avoid an ARVN debacle north of the Hai Van Pass. However, the absence of U.S. air support elsewhere, or an inability fully to resupply ARVN could leave the Communists with substantial territorial gains, even if they fall short of their ultimate objective.

## GHI CHÚ:

Các đoạn văn trên chụp từ chính bản lưu trên Thư Viện CIA :>>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-118-02-70.pdf>