

November 13, 1973

**Cable from Comrade Sau Manh [Le Duc Tho] to
Comrade Pham Hung and COSVN Headquarters
Providing Guidance for Military Struggle Operations
in the Cochin China Lowlands, and for Launching a
Political and Military Struggle Movement in South
Vietnam**

Citation:

"Cable from Comrade Sau Manh [Le Duc Tho] to Comrade Pham Hung and COSVN Headquarters Providing Guidance for Military Struggle Operations in the Cochin China Lowlands, and for Launching a Political and Military Struggle Movement in South Vietnam", November 13, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975) [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1224-1226. Translated by Merle Pribbenow. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/175858>

Summary:

Cable from Le Duc Tho to Pham Hung and COSVN Headquarters providing guidance on local military activities in the Cochin China lowlands and plans for a political and military struggle movement in South Vietnam.

Credits:

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Translation - English

In order to defeat the enemy's pacification and land-grabbing operations in the lowlands and to secure control of population and gain control over the territory, the Politburo sent a cable to Comrade Pham Hung providing guidance on military activities in the Cochin China lowlands.

The cable said that our policy on military activities in the lowlands was that we had to strengthen and reinforce our local force and guerrilla militia forces in Regions 8 and 9 [the Mekong Delta] in order to compel the enemy to stretch his forces thin throughout his territory, to disperse his troops and to destroy them.

Because our local force units and our guerrilla militia were still weak and were not yet able to obtain local-acquired replacements, the Center [Hanoi] had decided that a portion of our main force army must be sent down into the lowlands to deal with the enemy's actions and to create a posture of strength for our side. The Center instructed COSVN that before main force troops were sent down into the lowlands they must first receive careful training in our operational formulas and methods, and they must also receive training in political, civilian proselyting, and military proselyting operations so that the troops could both fight the enemy and at the same time participate in the building up of our political forces within the civilian masses and coordinate the three spearhead attack [military, political, military proselyting] to achieve good results.

The Center also directed COSVN to deploy and utilize main force troops in a manner suited to the actual situation on the ground, and that COSVN must concentrate or disperse these troops in a flexible manner so that they were mobile.

With regards to troop levels, the Central Military Party Committee planned to send between 27,000 and 28,000 troops to reinforce the B2 Theater of Operations [the southern half of South Vietnam]. Of this number, 5,000 were to be sent to Region 3 [Military Region 9]; 3,000 to Region 2 [Military Region 8]; 2,000 to Regions 4 and 6 [Saigon Military Region and Military Region 6]; and the rest would be assigned COSVN's main force units. For that reason, Le Duc Tho's cable instructed COSVN to organize cadre framework units so that these new troops could be formed into powerful main force units. He also said that when main force troops were sent down into the lowlands they should be immediately turned over to the local areas to ensure unity of command.

The cable said that the Center would send COSVN additional equipment and technical along with technical and engineer cadre as reinforcements. The Center would provide ample 105mm howitzer ammunition, various types of slow-burning fuses, explosive detonators, and explosive charges. COSVN would be responsible for directing its cadre and enlisted men to properly preserve and maintain all of our weapons and to economize on its expenditure of ammunition.

In order to resolve the most pressing, urgent requirements for the people's daily lives, the Center asked COSVN to launch a political struggle movement in combination with military proselyting efforts, employing struggle methods suited to each specific local area and each specific period of time. The cable directed that in the cities attention must be paid to building up the third force. Political and military proselyting struggles should be launched once every three months. After each such struggle, reviews should be held to derive lessons learned before launching a new struggle.

In order to direct and guide the movement, Party Committees at all levels needed to have one individual, a deputy secretary or member of the current affairs committee, and a specialized section to be responsible for directing the political and military proselyting struggle operations. At the same time, all levels and all branches at COSVN had to step up their work of building up base areas and liberated zones.

[Translator's Note: This document can also be found in the first edition of Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975) [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2002), 981-982.]