

February 10, 1975
**Cable No. 727 from the Central Military Party
Committee to Headquarters B4 [Thua Thien-Hue]
and Headquarters B5 [Quang Tri]**

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Summary:

Vo Nguyen Giap, on behalf of the Central Military Party Committee, sent a cable to Headquarters B4 and B5 to give an assessment of the situation at the battlefields and issue operational guidelines for the Tri-Thien battlefield in 1975.

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I-ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

1. Enemy:

-In the Tri-Thien battlefield, even though the enemy still has a significant sized force, it has grown somewhat weaker, especially in terms of its morale and fighting strength.

-Although the enemy's network of repression in the lowlands is still relatively stable, it is now somewhat looser.

-The enemy has fallen into a reactive, defensive posture and it would be easy for us to cut off and divide his forces, especially in the area south of Phu Bai. He has supply problems and it will be easy for us to surround and isolate his forces.

-If we make a powerful attack, the enemy might conduct a tactical withdrawal and regrouping by abandoning his small outposts. He would use air strikes combined with commandos to attack and disrupt our rear area. He would bomb Cua Viet and Dong Ha and bring back a portion of the airborne division.

In the event he faces severe danger, he might conduct a campaign-level withdrawal and regrouping, pulling back his forces and concentrating them to defend Hue, and it is possible that, and we need to monitor this possibility, the enemy might even abandon Hue and withdraw his mobile forces back to defend Danang.

2. Friendly:

-Including both Military Region and [2nd] corps forces, we have a large force, but our combat strength is not yet truly high, even though that strength has been raised a notch. There are still units that have not yet been regrouped, consolidated, and trained.

-Our political and armed forces in the lowlands and in Hue city have improved over their previous status, but they are still weak. Our springboard position on the outskirts of Hue still has problems.

-We have a strategic posture that threatens the enemy. From the west we have a good chance of being able to cut off and divide the enemy's forces, and if we know how to exploit and develop such an opportunity we will have great strength that will be capable of destroying enemy forces, of cutting off and dividing the enemy at the tactical and campaign level, and of surrounding and isolating Hue. However, our organizational structure is still weak in the area east of Hue, at Cua Thuan, and along the Perfume [Huong] River. Our battlefield preparations are still inadequate.

-Our military proselyting operations are still weak and do not yet meet our mission requirements.

II-MISSIONS OF THE TRI-THIEN BATTLEFIELD FOR THE YEAR 1975

In order to carry out the Politburo decision to strive to win a big victory in 1975, quickly shift the balance of forces in our favor, and create the necessary conditions to advance toward winning an even greater victory, during 1975 the Tri-Thien battlefield must successfully accomplish the following missions:

1. Destroy or disperse an important portion of the enemy's regular and local force units and of the puppet's forces of repression (for both the military region and the corps we expect the elimination of approximately 50% of the enemy's forces) in order to decrease the enemy's troop strength on the battlefield.

2. Fundamentally defeat the enemy's pacification program: annihilate enemy thugs; shatter his instruments of repression; destroy or force the abandonment of outposts, police-stations, village military headquarters [sub-sub-sector headquarters], district military headquarters, and district capitals; and liberate and gain control of 50% of the civilian population in the rural lowlands.

3. Make continuous attacks against the enemy's lines of communications, cut enemy traffic for specific periods of time, progressing to completely cutting all of the enemy's road, air, and water traffic, divide and cut off the enemy at the strategic level, isolate the enemy's forces from Hue northward; incite mutiny and secession among enemy troops; improve our strategic posture, shatter the current clear lines dividing our territory from enemy-controlled territory and from the enemy's blocking positions in the foothills. This task will require a determined and resolute plan aimed at accomplishing this mission, no matter what.

4. Move in to the outskirts of Hue to resurrect, defend, and expand revolutionary pockets and springboard areas on the outskirts of the city and to create a corridor linking our forces with the city.

Develop additional strength in the city and strengthen our movement inside Hue. Intensify military proselyting operations, cause the disintegration of the enemy's local forces (PSDF, PF, and RF) and a portion of the enemy's regular forces, and incite mutiny and secession in units that we have surrounded and isolated.

5. Destroy the enemy's reserve stockpiles and military equipment, especially ammunition, fuel, aircraft, pilots, etc.

6. Tie down enemy forces in the Tri-Thien battlefield, force the enemy to maintain his current deployment of forces dispersed throughout South Vietnam in order to create favorable conditions for the battlefields further south and also within the Tri Thien battlefield itself; annihilate and cause the disintegration of enemy forces.

7. Build and hone our main force corps units, our main force military region units, our local force troops, and our guerrilla militia forces; implement our formula of growing stronger the more we fight.

The missions listed above are intimately connected with one another. While you are carrying out these missions, which will require a concrete, detailed plan, you must at the same time make comprehensive preparations to follow-up this campaign up with an even larger campaign next year. These preparations are an extremely important responsibility for both the corps and the military region. You need to prepare a detailed, concrete plan so that the General Staff can review it in a timely fashion and forward it to the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Committee.

You must maintain a firm understanding and grasp of the following missions:

-The mission of annihilating and causing the disintegration of the enemy's manpower strength;

-The mission of fundamentally defeating the enemy's pacification program;

-The mission of strategically dividing the enemy and improving our own strategic posture in order to stimulate the development of the situation in directions favorable to us, to completely change the face of the Tri Thien battlefield, and to create the necessary conditions to enable us to gain an even greater victory next year.

III-ORGANIZING THE PHASES OF OPERATIONS

1. Two separate attack phases of a combined nature will be conducted during the 1975 Dry Season.

Phase 1 will be conducted during March, April, and a part of May 1975.

Phase 2 will be conducted during July and August 1975.

We will use larger forces during Phase 2 and our goals for Phase 2 will be higher, but Phase 1 will be of decisive importance to the success of Phase 2 and will decide our success or failure for the entire year of 1975.

For that reason you must achieve as much of the goals and requirements of Phase 1 as you possibly can.

-Each phase will require two plans: a basic plan and an exploitation plan. If conditions are favorable, each phase should begin with attacks against supply facilities and airfields along with the destruction of bridges and culverts. During the time period between the two phases, you need to have forces ready to take turns conducting constant offensive operations against the enemy and firmly defending a number of important areas and our strategic position. The goal is to tie down the enemy and to draw enemy forces out to the foothills, thereby creating favorable conditions for the lowlands to expand people's warfare operations and to conduct continuous attacks and uprisings, and for us to expand, secure, and consolidate the newly liberated zones and to advance to achieving a posture of mastery and control.

2. Phase 1.

-Destroy five enemy battalions, including completely annihilating one enemy regiment to enable us to send forces down into the lowlands, to tie down enemy regular units in order to coordinate with and support our operations throughout all of South Vietnam and to firmly hold and defend the area east and west of Route 14 and Mo Tau.

-Send forces down into the lowlands to annihilate the enemy's forces of repression, to overrun or force the abandonment of enemy outposts and police stations, and to liberate territory and advance toward gaining control over villages and hamlets with a total population of between 70,000 and 100,000 people.

-Cut the overland routes from Phu Bai to the Hai Van pass for limited periods of time, take the first step toward shattering the enemy's blocking position and eliminating the lines delineating areas of control in the foothills, and improve our strategic posture.

-Hone our troops and command cadre in combat, fight massed regimental and division-level battles, shatter pacification, and liberate villages and hamlets.

b) Attack sectors:

-Simultaneously attack and destroy enemy forces, draw in and pin down enemy forces in the foothills, open up a corridor down into the lowlands, and attack and destroy the enemy's apparatus of repression in the lowlands.

-Closely coordinate our actions on the foothills front with our actions in the lowlands front.

-Foothills Front: The primary sector will be the area between Hue and Danang, the section from Phu Bai to the Hai Van Pass; the coordinating [supporting] sector will be the area between Hue and Quang Tri and the western portion of Route 12.

-Lowlands Front: Southern Thua Thien, northern Thua Thien, and Trieu Hai [district].

c) Utilization of forces:

-Utilize forces subordinate to Military Region Tri Thien and those forces from the [2nd] Corps that are able to participate in the fighting during Phase 1 (five regiments).

-Concentrate forces in the primary sector of the Foothills Front, using four regiments from 324th Division (minus) and 325th Division (minus) plus two regiments from the military region. These forces will be organized into two echelons that will take turns attacking the enemy in the area between Phu Bai and the Hai Van Pass.

-Use three military region battalions to cut road traffic between Phu Bai and the Hai Van Pass.

-Forces assigned to the Foothills Front supporting sector: one regiment plus a number of independent battalions that are subordinate to the military region.

-Lowlands Front: armed operations teams, district platoons and companies, provincial and military region battalions.

-Forces to be held in readiness to defend Cua Viet and Dong Ha: one regiment from [2nd] Corps plus a number of field artillery battalions and anti-aircraft artillery regiments.

d) Fighting tactics for main force units and methods for destroying pacification in the lowlands:

-Guidance concepts, combat methods, and destroying pacification (at the campaign and tactical levels) are important issues that will have a decisive impact. Therefore [Party] leaders and [military] commanders must deeply immerse themselves in deciding these issues, in conducting training, and in ensuring that cadre and soldiers fully understand, depending on each unit's specific assigned mission.

Devote special attention to: audacity, certain victory, mobility, flexibility, secrecy, and surprise.

-Attack supply warehouses, command posts, bridges, and culverts before the Phase actually begins.

-Destroy enemy forces and at the same time liberate and hold territory. Main force troops must have a firm understanding of our goal of annihilating enemy forces that are occupying defensive fortifications and enemy troops being sent out as

reinforcements or relief forces; make a maximum effort to create conditions that will enable us to attack arriving enemy reinforcements and relief forces; attack when victory is certain and ensure that we win the first battle; defend important locations that must be held at all costs (for instance: Mo Tau, Chuc Mao). In order to accomplish individual combat missions, you need to take measures to organize the tactical posture required for each specific mission.

-Attack the enemy in the foothills to tie his forces down and open up a corridor while at the same time we send forces down into the lowlands. Develop and expand people's war in the local areas. Depending on the specific location and timing, send in armed operations teams [armed propaganda teams], local force platoons and companies, or entire battalions. Make sure you focus on annihilating enemy thugs, on overrunning or forcing the abandonment of small outposts and village military headquarters [sub-sub-sector headquarters], and on annihilating reinforcements sent to relieve village military headquarters. Attack district military headquarters and district capitals in order to liberate villages and hamlets, building up to overrunning district military headquarters and liberating district capitals. You must select appropriate operational methods for each individual area, depending on whether you expect to loosen the enemy's grip in that area or to elevate the area to a contested area, because when we liberate an area the enemy may contest us for control of the area, or we may liberate the area and then successfully hold onto it. You should use the above points as a foundation upon which to determine tactical formulas and methods to provide specific, concrete guidance and command to our troops.

-Always maintain a reserve force that is able to strive to hone and improve its combat strength while at the same time it remains ready to seize favorable opportunities to expand our attacks.

d) Date for opening fire to begin Phase 1: no later than 5 March 1975.

3. Phase 2.

a) The fall, July and August 1975, a period when conditions are right for the Tri Thien and Region 5 battlefields to fight large-scale battles.

Specific mission guidance: During Phase 2 the missions of the Tri-Thien battlefield may be as follows:

-Achieve large-scale annihilation, annihilate or cause the disintegration of 50% of all puppet regular and local forces; destroy battalions or regiments on a regular, widespread basis, and perhaps even to annihilate an entire division.

-Overrun and liberate a number of district capitals and district military headquarters; annihilate a number of regiments sent to relieve garrisons; permanently divide and isolate the enemy.

-Surround and isolate Hue, incite military mutinies and secessions, appeal to the mutineers to form an alliance with us, and be prepared to attack and annihilate those enemy forces that are located in Quang Tri or to attack and capture Hue if the enemy experiences large-scale panic and wavering.

b) You need to immediately begin work on a plan to make preparations for this phase:

-Prepare roads: quickly complete the road up to Bach Mai.

You must make preparations to attack Hue to ensure that we do not miss any opportunity that presents itself.

-Prepare the necessary logistics support and supplies.

-Prepare forces and tactics; prepare personnel to serve as replacements for losses of enlisted men, cadre, and technicians.

IV-ORGANIZING MILITARY COMMAND AND PARTY GUIDANCE

The two 1975 phases, the summer phase and the fall phase, are both offensive phases of an overall, combined nature that require a concentrated and unified military command and Party guidance structure.

You need to have a unified Party Committee (for the membership of this committee-see the separate resolution from the Central Military Party Committee).

With regard to the missions and plans for Phase 2, you will use the actual, concrete situation, both enemy and our own, in Tri-Thien and throughout South Vietnam after the end of Phase 1 to make your final determination.

In order to successfully accomplish the missions for 1975 and create the requisite conditions for next year, you comrades must make a correct assessment of the situation.

You must clearly recognize the new deterioration of the enemy's strength and the new advantages enjoyed by our side. You must resolutely launch attacks to destroy or cause the disintegration of the puppet army, to disrupt pacification, to secure control of the population, to strategically divide and isolate the enemy, to move our forces in close to Hue, and to seize opportunities to exploit and expand victories. You must have a deception plan, you must maintain secrecy, and you must constantly create and achieve surprise at the campaign and tactical level. You must do whatever is necessary to build model units with high combat capabilities, all the way from the small armed operations units up to infantry and technical specialty branch battalions, regiments, and divisions. You must conduct exemplary attacks and battles with a high level of combat efficiency, battles in which our casualties and expenditure of ammunition are low but in which we capture many enemy prisoners, capture large quantities of enemy weapons, and liberate large numbers of villages, hamlets, and district capitals.

If you clearly understand both the enemy and our own forces, attack resolutely, maintain tight solidarity, improve the quality of our Party leadership and the skills of our commanders, provide good guidance to the work of improving our troops' combat power, and provide good coordination between the military struggle, political struggle, and military proselyting operations, the Tri Thien Military Region and 2nd Corps will certainly have great success in achieving each of the goals that have been set for you.

You must keep the entire content of this message in the strictest secrecy. You may only disseminate this text within the Current Affairs Committee of the Front Party Committee. Otherwise, each command level and each component is to only be briefed on the specific missions that are assigned to that particular command level or component and on those items that are necessary for coordination with other friendly units.

On Behalf of the Central Military Party Committee

Secretary
Vo Nguyen Giap