

**January 20, 1974**  
**Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the  
Republic of Vietnam**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Vuong Van Bac briefs the Secretary General on China's maneuvers in the South China Sea.

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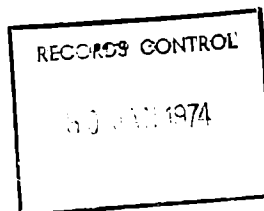
*Y. U.* ORIGINAL SUBJECT

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..... The enclosed communication dated 20 January 1974 is transmitted to the Permanent Missions of the States Members of the United Nations for their information.

21 January 1974

*Y. U.*

OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER  
THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

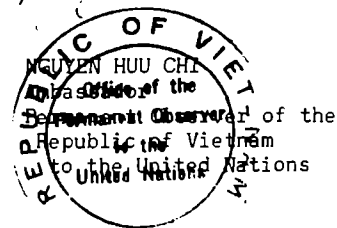
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20 January 1974

Excellency,

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward to Your Excellency a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam concerning the dangerous acts of war being perpetuated by the People's Republic of China against the Republic of Vietnam, on Vietnamese territory and in Vietnamese Territorial Waters.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.



His Excellency Mr. Kurt Waldheim  
Secretary General of the United Nations  
United Nations  
New York

Mr. Secretary General,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, I have the honour to call your personal attention and that of the United Nations on dangerous acts of war being presently perpetrated by the People's Republic of China against the Republic of Vietnam, on Vietnamese territory and in Vietnamese territorial waters.

Subsequent to its unfounded claim - as publicized on January 11, 1974 in Peking - of sovereignty on the Vietnamese archipelago of Hoang-Sa (also known as Paracels, and located between meridians 111 and 113 East, and Parallels 15.45 and 17.05 North), the People's Republic of China, on January 17, 1974 and the following days, sent an important naval task-force composed of 11 vessels of various tonnages, including two missile-ships of the Komar type, to the Hoang-Sa area, approximately 170 nautical miles off Da-Nang.

Hostilities started on January 19, 1974 at 8:29 hours (local time) after a Chinese landing party had opened fire on Vietnamese troops on the island of Quang-Hoa (also known as Duncan, 14.42 East, 16.27 North).

At the same time, Communist Chinese vessels engaged Vietnamese vessels stationed in the area, causing heavy casualties and material damages.

On January 20, 1974, Communist Chinese warplanes which had been overflying the area on previous days, joined the action and bombarded Vietnamese positions on the islands of Hoang-Sa (Paracels) Cam-Tuyen (Robert) and Vinh-Lac (Money).

As of the writing of this letter, Chinese troops have landed on all the islands of the Hoang-Sa archipelago, and the Chinese naval task-force seemed prepared to head for the Truong-Sa (Spratly) archipelago.

The above-mentioned events show that the People's Republic of China is engaging in an aggression across international borders, against an independent and sovereign state, with the aim of occupying and annexing by force of arms territories which are an indivisible part of the Republic of Vietnam. On this point, I wish to refer to my note verbale of January 16, 1974\* in which I detailed undeniable evidence of Vietnamese sovereignty over the island presently under attack by the People's Republic of China.

In bringing the above to your attention, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam once again reaffirms its faith in the United Nations and its acceptance of the purposes and principles enunciated in the Charter of the Organization.

It views the Communist Chinese aggression as a serious breach of international peace and security, threatening the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of small nations everywhere and particularly in Asia.

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\* See S/11199.

- 2 -

Therefore, I kindly request that, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, you draw the attention of the Security Council to the grave situation created by the action of the People's Republic of China since January 11, 1974 in the Hoang-Sa (Paracels) archipelago area.

For its part, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam accepts in advance the obligations of pacific settlement provided in the United Nations Charter.

I also request you to kindly have this letter circulated to all states members of the United Nations and all states maintaining a Permanent Observer to the Organization.

Accept, Mr. Secretary General, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Saigon, January 20, 1974

Signed: WUONG VAN BAC