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Wednesday, Aug. 24, 1968  
11:55 a. m.

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Mr. President:

Bob Wheeler's attached summary  
of what the recent high-level defector  
had to say (pp. 2 - 5) will interest you.

Key passages marked.

W. W. Rostow

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

CM-3228-68  
23 April 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Press Report on High-ranking NVA Rallier (U)

1. You have probably read recent press accounts of information provided by "the highest-ranking defector yet to fall into allied hands in South Vietnam." This story was fired by George McArthur of the Associated Press and although MACV J-2 indicates that it is inaccurate in some respects, I am very much concerned over the impact which the knowledge of this man's defection by the enemy may have. This is an extremely serious breach of security and MACV is currently investigating the incident with all available resources to try to determine the source of McArthur's information.

2. The gist of McArthur's story is as follows:

a. The highest-ranking defector yet to fall into allied hands in South Vietnam has surrendered with enemy plans for a "second wave" of attacks on Saigon involving more than 10,000 troops.

b. The defector was identified as a North Vietnamese colonel and political commissar from the Viet Cong's Ninth Division, posted northwest of Saigon.

c. The defector turned up in Binh Duong Province, about 50 miles north of Saigon. He is in his early forties and is known in the Communist party as Tam Ha.

d. The enemy command originally planned the assault on the capital for 22 April as a follow-up to the Lunar New Year offensive, but undetermined problems caused a delay.

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e. The attacks on Saigon were to follow the same pattern as those that hit the city during the offensive that began January 31. The attacking forces were to include two regiments from the Ninth Division, two regiments from the Fifth Division east of the city and at least two local guerrilla regiments. These forces have since received new weapons and North Vietnamese replacements.

f. The Ninth Division was to strike from the northwestern edge of the city, hitting the Tan Son Nhut Airbase, while the Fifth Division came in from the east and the south.

3. We do not yet possess sufficient information here in Washington on the results of interrogations of this defector to make a detailed analysis of the accuracy of McArthur's article. However, the following excerpts from interrogations of this rallier may be of interest to you:

a. The third general offensive will start NLT 1 May 1968.

[Not later than 1 May] b. Participating units and targets:

101st Regiment - north of Tan Son Nhut.

88th Regiment - control the rural area in Phu Hoa Dong, Trung An, Highway 8, Tan Thanh Dong area.

208 Rocket Regiment (122 MM) - shell Tan Son Nhut.

D1 - Phu Dong.

D2 - Joint General Staff.

D3 - Bien Hoa and Binh Loi.

Sapper D - coordinate with D1 and D2.

Source estimates 50 percent of above unit strengths are North Vietnamese.

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c. The general direction of attack on Saigon will be from southwest Saigon northeast to Tan Son Nhut Airbase. The third offensive will be nationwide. The signal for the start of the attack is unknown, as is the manner of troop commitment (i.e., piece meal or simultaneous). However, source believes that they will be similar to the Tet offensive, namely rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut to signal start of attack and issuance of warning order letter to commanders on the day prior to the attack.

d. Dac\* gave the following reasons for failure of the Tet offensive:

- (1) Insufficient time to prepare the troops.
- (2) Lack of artillery/infantry coordination.
- (3) Non-availability of DKB rockets.
- (4) Lack of popular support.

To correct these deficiencies COSVN had directed that for the third offensive:

- (1) Artillery would be reinforced.
- (2) Artillery/infantry coordination would be improved.
- (3) Viet Cong would strive to obtain sufficient ammunition and rockets.
- (4) Military and civilian proselytizing would be strengthened.

e. Dac knew of no new weapons to be used in the offensive. Neither was there to be any armor or air support. Source has heard of no heavy engineer equipment in the area. He heard that flame throwers are to be used from company level up, but he has not seen any.

\*The name given by the rallier.

Dac stated the 122 MM rocket would be utilized. Other than the 122 MM rockets, he knew of no weapons larger than 82 MM mortars in the area. He did not know of any AAA positions, and added that the 12.7 MM/12.8 HMG units of the 101st Regiment and the regiment's 82 MM mortars were all destroyed in the recent offensive. The only vehicles utilized in resupply are trucks, locally obtained.

f. Dac knew of no resupply by water to this area; most of the supplies come from Cambodia. In response to questions on Cambodia, Dac could provide only the following information: the Cambodian Army does not resupply the Viet Cong, although NFLSVN had a representative who conducted liaison with the Cambodian corps commander on the border. Dac did not know of any air traffic between Cambodia and North Vietnam.

g. Since the recent Tet attacks, the following units have sustained losses:

(1) 101st Regiment - 1,850 KIA and WIA,  
~~300 remaining.~~

(2) 1st Battalion - 280 KIA and WIA,  
~~120 remaining.~~

(3) 2nd Battalion - 200 KIA and WIA,  
~~100 remaining.~~

(4) 3rd Battalion - 350 KIA and WIA,  
~~180 remaining.~~

(5) Sapper Battalion - 190 KIA and WIA,  
~~28 remaining.~~

The majority of casualties were from helicopters and artillery fire. In mid-February 1968, the 208th Rocket Regiment was hit by a B-52 strike at Nghi Binh. Casualties were unknown, but source heard that they were heavy.

h. Replacements are mainly taken from NVA infiltration groups, recovered wounded from the 71st Hospital in Cambodia, and other hospitals. Few youths were locally recruited, as this source of manpower was depleted. Personnel from decimated units were also reassigned. Females were used sparingly.

i. Dac could provide no details on infiltration, as he had infiltrated in 1962.

j. Soldiers and lower cadre have low morale because their lives and the situation were worsening and becoming more difficult. Food is lacking. The Chieu Hoi Program is effective and the allied air loudspeaker broadcasts in the area are clear. Southern soldiers and guerrillas are deserting and returning home. NVA deserters hide in the villages and attempt to lead civilian lives.

k. Source rallied because he foresaw no victory for the Viet Cong; difficulties could not be solved; he did not accept the division of the nation; and his opinions were not respected by his superiors. He has thought about leaving the Viet Cong ranks for 10 years, but he did not before now, because of the close control of his movements.

4. Dac's statements are in general corroborated by other available intelligence. The MACV J-2 believes that the enemy intended to attack Saigon before 1 May, and probably had offensive intentions against a limited number of other cities or places around the country. The enemy's realization of Dac's defection (with a substantial assist from McArthur), and MACV's preemptive preparations, may very well have alerted the enemy to the fact that we are aware of his plans and thus may cause him to change or cancel them.

  
EARLE G. WHEELER  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Copy to:

Mr. Walt W. Rostow  
Mr. Nitze