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FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV SAIGON

TO GEN WHEELER CJCEWASH DC

GEN JOHNSON SAIGON (25TH INF DIV)

ADM SHARP CINCPAC HAWAII

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By 128, NARA, Date 1-15-96

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1. THE CONCERN EXPRESSED IN YOUR MESSAGE ECHOES MINE. WHICH HAS CAUSED ME TO INITIATE SEVERAL ACTIONS DESIGNED TO HELP CLARIFY THE SITUATION IN THE MIND OF THE PUBLIC. OF COURSE WE MUST MAKE HASTE CAREFULLY IN ORDER TO AVOID CHARGES THAT THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS CONDUCTING AN ORGANIZED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, EITHER OVERT OR COVERT.

2. IT HAS BECOME APPARENT THAT A VOCAL SEGMENT OF THE NEWS PROFESSION IS EQUATING A LACK OF MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS SUCH AS CEDAR FALLS AND JUNCTION CITY WITH A STALEMATE AT BEST, OR A LOSS OF THE INITIATIVE ON OUR PART AT WORST. NOTHING COULD BE FARTHER FROM THE TRUTH, OF COURSE. EVERY INDICATOR BELIES EITHER STALEMATE OR LOSS OF INITIATIVE. IF THE ENEMY WAS EXERCISING EVEN MODEST INITIATIVE THE MORE THAN 30 LARGE OPERATIONS UNDER WAY AND MORE THAN 5,000 SMALL UNIT ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN EACH DAY WOULD HAVE MORE SUCCESS IN FINDING HIM. ENEMY UNITS CAN FEED AND SUPPLY THEMSELVES ENOUGH FOR ABOUT ONE DAY OF ACTION IN 30. THE ENEMY STRATEGY IS SMART AND ECONOMICAL, BUT BASICALLY DEFENSIVE. HE ACCEPTS MAJOR COMBAT OCCASIONALLY ALONG THE DMZ OR IN THE HIGHLANDS WHERE HE HAS BOTH SANCTUARY AND SHORT

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LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS. ELSEWHERE HE REACTS AGAINST REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND GROWING CIVILIAN COMMERCE BY ATTACKING RD OPERATIONS AND SABOTAGING LOCS. HIS ONLY REAL INITIATIVE IS EXPRESSED IN LONG-RANGE ATTACKS AGAINST OUR BASE AREAS. THESE ARE INEXPENSIVE TO HIM IN RELATION TO THE PUBLICITY HE GETS.

3. IT IS TRUE THAT U.S. KIA HAVE NUMBERED MORE THAN RVNAF KIA IN NINE OF THE FIRST 30 WEEKS OF THIS CALENDAR YEAR. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING WHEN TWO FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED: 1) MOST OF THE ENEMY'S MAJOR FORMATIONS OPERATING FROM SANCTUARIES AND WITH SHORT LOCS TO SUPPLY DUMPS ALONG THE DMZ AND CENTRAL HIGHLANDS BORDER AREA ARE OPPOSED BY U.S. FORMATIONS, AND 2) HALF OF THE ARVN MANEUVER BATTALIONS ARE COMMITTED TO THE GRINDING TASK OF SUPPORTING REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT.

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4. MY PROGRAM TO BRING ABOUT UNDERSTANDING OF OUR STRATEGY AND TO ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS OF "STALEMATE", "LOSS OF INITIATIVE" AND "RVNAF EFFECTIVENESS" INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

A. I PLAN TO HOLD A BACKGROUND NEWS CONFERENCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THE MATERIAL IS BEING PREPARED.

B. WE HAVE STARTED A SCHEDULE OF ON-THE-RECORD NEWS CONFERENCES TO WRAP UP THE OVERALL SITUATION IN EACH CTZ. THE FIRST OF THESE WAS CONDUCTED BY LTG LARSEN, COVERING THE II CTZ ON 27 JULY. HE DID AN EXCELLENT JOB. BG DESOBRY WILL COVER THE IV CTZ DURING THE PERIOD 7-12 AUGUST, AND LTG WEYAND WILL DO THE SAME FOR III CTZ DURING THE PERIOD 21-26 AUGUST AND LTG CUSHMAN WILL FOLLOW FOR I CTZ IN LATE AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER. INCIDENTALLY, FROM THESE WE PRODUCE HALF-HOUR TELEVISION SHOWS FOR THE INFORMATION OF OUR FORCES AND OTHERS

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WHO WATCH TELEVISION.

C. WE ARE MAKING A CONTINUING EFFORT TO MOVE NEWSMEN TO THE SCENE OF RVNAF ACTIONS AND TO BRING KNOWLEDGEABLE FIELD COMMANDERS IN. FOR EXAMPLE, ON 1 AUGUST LTG WEYAND SPENT 45 MINUTES AT THE EVENING NEWS BRIEFING COVERING THE CURRENT COMBINED RVNAF/US ACTION IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE IN WHICH THE RVNAF MARINES DID SUCH AN OUTSTANDING JOB OF CLOSE-QUARTER COMBAT THAT THE BEST VC MAIN FORCE BATTALION IN THE UPPER DELTA WAS DECISIVELY DEFEATED.

D. GENERAL ABRAMS AND I ARE MAKING IT A POINT TO TALK PERSONALLY WITH MORE NEWSMEN AND TO TAKE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE ON FIELD TRIPS WITH US. MY SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS, COMPONENT COMMANDERS AND COMMANDERS IN THE FIELD ALSO ARE DEVOTING A LOT OF TIME TO NEWSMEN. AS AN EXAMPLE, OF THE POINT I MADE AT THE BEGINNING OF PARA. 2, ABOVE, TODAY I TOOK WITH ME ON A FIELD TRIP ONE OF THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE AND EXPERIENCED SOUTHEAST ASIA CORRESPONDENTS. HE WAS BOTH CONCERNED AND FRUSTRATED BY INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS HOME OFFICE TO SUBMIT A STORY ON HOW AND WHY OUR STRATEGY HAS FAILED. HE TOLD ME THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO WRITE FICTION TO SUPPORT THE HOME OFFICE ASSUMPTION AND WAS AFRAID THAT ANY HONEST APPRAISAL HE SUBMITTED WOULD BE TWISTED AND RESHAPED BY VIEWS THAT SEEM TO BE PREVALENT IN THE CONFUSION THAT IS WASHINGTON.

E. WE ARE PREPARING VARIOUS BACKGROUND PAPERS ON SUBJECTS SUCH AS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AIR WAR NORTH AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RVNAF. THESE ALSO WILL BE ADAPTED FOR USE IN THE COMMAND INFORMATION PROGRAM. I PLACE GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE COMMAND INFORMATION

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PROGRAM BECAUSE OF THE INEVITABLE IMPACT OF HALF A MILLION YOUNG AMERICANS RETURNING TO U.S. COMMUNITIES EACH YEAR.

F. WE ARE PREPARING A SCOREBOARD OF RVNAF OPERATIONS TO SHOW HOW THEY ARE DOING AND WHAT THE TRENDS ARE. THIS SHOULD BE USEFUL FOR ALL CONCERNED.

5. WHILE WE WORK ON THE NERVE ENDS HERE WE HOPE THAT CAREFUL ATTENTION WILL BE PAID TO THE ROOTS THERE--THE CONFUSED OR UNKNOWLEDGEABLE PUNDITS WHO SERVE AS SOURCES FOR EACH OTHER. IN THIS CONNECTION, LTG LARSEN, ENROUTE TO HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT AT FT. MONROE, AND BG DESOBRY, DEPARTING ON HOME LEAVE IN A WEEK OR SO, ARE RESOURCES WORTHY OF EXPLOITATION.

6. THE FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPING THE PROVINCE-BY-PROVINCE NARRATIVE THAT YOU SUGGEST WILL BE STUDIED.

7. WE PREPARED AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF OUR GOALS AND PROGRESS OVER THE LAST YEAR FOR AMBASSADOR TAYLOR AND MR. CLIFFORD. THIS IS BEING DISPATCHED TO YOU BY FRONT CHANNEL.

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