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~~TOP SECRET~~

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Authority NLS/CBS 10

By us, NARS, Date 11-28-83

FROM WALT ROSTOW  
TO THE PRESIDENT  
CITE CAP89119

~~TOP SECRET~~

JANUARY 5, 1968

FROM WALT ROSTOW  
FOR THE PRESIDENT

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Pres file  
68 JAN 6 PM 11:20

FRIDAY

HEREWITH AN INTERESTING CABLE FROM LOCKE, WESTMORELAND, KOMER  
ON HANOI'S MILITARY POSTURE IN RELATION TO ITS DIPLOMATIC POSTURE.

1. WE HAVE NOTED VARIOUS BITS OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE,  
SUCH AS TRINH STATEMENT, WHICH SUGGEST HANOI SETTING STAGE  
FOR TALKS. WHAT STRIKES US FORCIBLY HERE IS SHARP CONTRAST  
BETWEEN THESE APPARENT SIGNS AND INCREASINGLY SOLID EVIDENCE  
OF MAJOR NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY BUILDUP AGAINST I CORPS AREA.
2. AS YOU KNOW, TRUCK TRAFFIC FROM NORTH VIETNAM DOWN HO CHI  
MINH TRAIL FOR LAST FEW MONTHS HAS REACHED MASSIVE PROPORTIONS.  
NOW THERE ARE GROWING INDICATIONS OF MAJOR NORTH VIETNAMESE  
TROOP REINFORCEMENTS IN BORDER AREAS OF QUANG TRI-THUA THIEN-QUANG  
NAM. GEN WESTMORELAND'S BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE  
ARMY MASSING FOR ANOTHER MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THIS AREA, PERHAPS  
TARGETED THIS TIME ON KHE SANH.
3. SINCE FACT OF NEW NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY BUILDUP IS BECOMING  
INCONTROVERTIBLE, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RELATE THIS TO SIGNS OF  
HANOI WILLINGNESS TO TALK. MOST PRUDENT EXPLANATION IS THAT  
APPARENT INCREASED WILLINGNESS TO TALK IS SMOKE SCREEN TO COVER  
BUILDUP. TO GO FURTHER, IF HANOI COULD SECURE CESSATION OF US  
BOMBING IN NORTH AS PRICE FOR TALKS, THIS WOULD IMMENSELY  
FACILITATE SUSTAINED NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY OFFENSIVE. THESE  
EXPLANATIONS WOULD SUGGEST THAT CURRENT POLITICAL FEELERS  
ARE ESSENTIALLY DESIGNED TO BOLSTER HANOI'S MILITARY POSITION.
4. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT HANOI PLANNING ANOTHER  
MAJOR OFFENSIVE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST ONE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
VICTORY IN HOPES THIS WOULD ESTABLISH POSITION OF STRENGTH  
PRIOR TO NEGOTIATIONS. ALTERNATIVELY, HANOI MAY NOT HAVE YET  
DECIDED ON ITS EVENTUAL COURSE, AND BE AWAITING RESULTS OF NEXT  
OFFENSIVE.
5. WE HERE INCLINE TO FIRST VIEW, BUT PICTURE FROM THIS END IS  
STILL MURKY. HENCE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS MERELY TO  
COUNTER-POINT HANOI'S MILITARY PREPARATIONS AGAINST ITS APPARENT  
DESIRE TO CREATE IMPRESSION OF GREATER DESIRE TO NEGOTIATE.  
GEN WESTMORELAND WILL SEND THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS A MORE DETAILED  
APPRECIATION OF ENEMY BUILDUP AND LIKELY OFFENSIVE MOVES.

25/17172 JAN 68

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