

64
INFORMATION

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Pres file

Monday, February 12, 1968
9:35 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Westy's message:

loud and clear and, in my judgment,
correct.

W. W. Rostow

MAC 01975

WWRostow:rlm

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By kg, NARA, Date 2-10-97



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12 FEB 1968
Z 120612Z ZYH ZFF-1

FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV SAIGON

TO ADM SHARP CINCPAC HAWAII

GEN WHEELER CJCS WASH

ZEM

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SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AND REQUIREMENTS

1. SINCE LAST OCTOBER, THE ENEMY HAS LAUNCHED A MAJOR CAMPAIGN SIGNALING A CHANGE OF STRATEGY FROM ONE OF PROTRACTED WAR TO ONE OF QUICK MILITARY/POLITICAL VICTORY DURING THE AMERICAN ELECTION YEAR. HIS FIRST PHASE, DESIGNED TO SECURE THE BORDER AREAS, HAS FAILED. THE SECOND PHASE, LAUNCHED ON THE OCCASION OF TET AND DESIGNED TO INITIATE PUBLIC UPRISING, TO DISRUPT THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMAND AND CONTROL OF THE VIETNAMESE FORCES, AND TO ISOLATE THE CITIES, HAS ALSO FAILED. NEVERTHELESS, THE ENEMY'S THIRD PHASE, WHICH IS DESIGNED TO SEIZE QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN PROVINCES HAS JUST BEGUN. THIS WILL BE A MAXIMUM EFFORT BY THE ENEMY, CAPITALIZING ON HIS SHORT LINES OF COMMUNICATION, THE POOR WEATHER PREVAILING IN THE AREA FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, AND HIS ABILITY TO BRING ARTILLERY AND ROCKET FIRE TO BEAR ON INSTALLATIONS FROM POSITIONS IN THE DMZ AND NORTH AND FROM LAOS TO THE WEST. FURTHERMORE, HE CAN BRING ARMOR TO BEAR ON THE BATTLEFIELD. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ENEMY HAS DECIDED HE CAN NOT "STRIKE OUT" IN THIS PHASE AS A MATTER OF FACE. WE CAN THEREFORE EXPECT HIM TO EXERT ON THE BATTLEFIELD THE MAXIMUM MILITARY POWER AVAILABLE

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TO HIM. IN ADDITION, WE MUST EXPECT HIM TO TRY TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE IN ALL OTHER AREAS.

2. IF THE ENEMY HAS CHANGED HIS STRATEGY, WE MUST CHANGE OURS. ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS OUR NATIONAL POLICY TO PROHIBIT THE ENEMY FROM SEIZING AND PERMANENTLY OCCUPYING THE TWO NORTHERN PROVINCES, I INTEND TO HOLD THEM AT ALL COST. HOWEVER, TO DO SO I MUST REINFORCE FROM OTHER AREAS AND ACCEPT A MAJOR RISK, UNLESS I CAN GET REINFORCEMENTS, WHICH I DESPERATELY NEED.

3. TO BRING THE MAXIMUM MILITARY POWER TO BEAR ON THE ENEMY IN QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN AND TO PREVENT THE GRADUAL EROSION OF THESE TWO PROVINCES, I MUST OPEN UP HIGHWAY 1 FROM DANANG AND HIGHWAY 9 TO KHE SANH. THESE TWO TASKS ARE NOT UNREASONABLE, PROVIDED THAT I CAN DIVERT THE TROOPS TO PROVIDE SECURITY AND COMMIT THE ENGINEERS TO THE TASK. I THEREFORE MUST MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT IN TROOPS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THE LOGISTICS TO SUPPORT IN FULLY ADEQUATE FASHION TROOPS NOW DEPLOYED AND REINFORCEMENTS THAT WILL BE REQUIRED. FIRST, IT WILL REQUIRE A MARINE REGIMENT OR AN ARMY BRIGADE TO SECURE THE AI VAN PASS FROM QUANG TRI TO HUE/PHU BAI. ANOTHER REGIMENT OR BRIGADE WILL BE REQUIRED BETWEEN HUE AND QUANG TRI. FINALLY, A THIRD REGIMENT OR BRIGADE WILL BE REQUIRED TO SECURE HIGHWAY 9 TO THE KHE SANH AREA. I CANNOT AFFORD TO DIVERT TROOPS NOW DEPLOYED IN THAT AREA FOR THE PURPOSE AND AM THEREFORE FORCED TO DEPLOY THE 101ST ABN DIV FROM THE III CORPS; THIS IS NOW IN THE PROCESS AND WILL BE DONE AS FAST AS TRANSPORTATION CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE. EVEN THE COMMITMENT OF THE 101ST WILL

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PUT ME IN NO BETTER THAN A MARGINAL POSTURE TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION AT HAND.

4. THIS HAS BEEN A LIMITED WAR WITH LIMITED OBJECTIVES, FOUGHT WITH LIMITED MEANS AND PROGRAMMED FOR THE UTILIZATION OF LIMITED RESOURCES. THIS WAS A FEASIBLE PROPOSITION ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE ENEMY WAS TO FIGHT A PROTRACTED WAR. WE ARE NOW IN A NEW BALL GAME WHERE WE FACE A DETERMINED, HIGHLY DISCIPLINED ENEMY, FULLY MOBILIZED TO ACHIEVE A QUICK VICTORY. HE IS IN THE PROCESS OF THROWING IN ALL HIS "MILITARY CHIPS TO GO FOR BROKE." WE REALIZE AND I REALIZE THAT HIS GREATEST OPPORTUNITY TO DO THIS IS IN QUANG TRI-THUA THIEN. WE CANNOT PERMIT THIS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MUST SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRUSH HIM. AT THE SAME TIME, WE CANNOT PERMIT HIM TO MAKE GAINS IN THE OTHER CORPS AREAS, AND I AM OBLIGATED TO MAINTAIN THE MINIMUM ESSENTIAL TROOPS IN THESE AREAS TO INSURE STABILITY OF THE SITUATION AND TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE. EQUAL IN PRIORITY TO THE ENEMY IS THE SAIGON AREA AND A HIGH RISK IN THIS AREA IS UNACCEPTABLE. I NOW HAVE APPROXIMATELY 502,000 US TROOPS AND 60,981 FREE WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE TROOPS. FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE THAIS AND KOREANS ARE MONTHS AWAY. I HAVE BEEN PROMISED 525,000 TROOPS, WHICH ACCORDING TO PRESENT PROGRAMS WILL NOT MATERIALIZE UNTIL 1969. I NEED THESE 525,000 TROOPS NOW. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS CEILING ASSUMED THE SUBSTANTIAL REPLACEMENT OF MILITARY BY CIVILIANS, WHICH NOW APPEARS IMPRACTICAL. I NEED REINFORCEMENTS IN TERMS OF COMBAT ELEMENTS. I THEREFORE URGE THAT THERE BE

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DEPLOYED IMMEDIATELY A MARINE REGIMENT PACKAGE AND A BRIGADE PACKAGE OF THE 82D ABN DIV AND THAT THE REMAINING ELEMENTS OF THOSE TWO DIVISIONS BE PREPARED TO FOLLOW AT A LATER TIME. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

5. I MUST STRESS EQUALLY THAT WE FACE A SITUATION OF GREAT OPPORTUNITY AS WELL AS HEIGHTENED RISK. HOWEVER, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE HERE, TOO. I DO NOT SEE HOW THE ENEMY CAN LONG SUSTAIN THE HEAVY LOSSES WHICH HIS NEW STRATEGY IS ENABLING US TO INFLICT ON HIM. THEREFORE, ADEQUATE REINFORCEMENTS SHOULD PERMIT ME NOT ONLY TO CONTAIN HIS I CORPS OFFENSIVE BUT ALSO TO CAPITALIZE ON HIS LOSSES BY SEIZING THE INITIATIVE IN OTHER AREAS. EXPLOITING THIS OPPORTUNITY COULD MATERIALLY SHORTEN THE WAR.

6. IF CINCPAC CONCURS, REQUEST THAT THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF BE INFORMED OF MY POSITION.

7. I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MESSAGE IN DETAIL WITH AMB BUNKER AND HE CONCURS.

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