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PAGE 01 SAIGON 18999 111439Z

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INFO CIAE 00,DODE 00,GPM 03,H 02,INR 07,L 03,NSAE 00,NSC 10,P 04,
RSC 01,SC 01,SP 02,SS 20,SAL 01,SAH 03,SR 01,ORM 03,AID 28,
IGA 02,SSO 00,NSCE 00,IO 13,RSR 01,/120 W

R 111400Z FEB 68
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6420
INFO USIA WASHDC 4624

Rostow

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IN BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING ELEVENTH, AMBASSADOR KROMER
AND HIS DEPUTY, MR GEORGE FORSYTHE MADE FOLLOWING POINTS RE AFTERMATH
VC TET OFFENSIVE:

1. SAIGON-RETURNING TO NORMAL. CREDITED PRESIDENT THIEU AND VP KY,
HEAD OF "OPERATION RECOVERY" TASK FORCE, WITH FORCEFUL ACTION TO BRING
ABOUT RECONSTRUCTIVE, CARE FOR REFUGEES AND MAINTENANCE OF ESSENTIAL
UTILITIES IN SAIGON, AUTONOMOUS CITIES AND PROVINCIAL CAPITALS. NOTED
HIGHWAY 15 NMV OPEN TO SAIGON: HIGHWAY 4 OPEN TO MY THO: LINES OF
COMMUNICATION IN BETTER SHAPE THAN FIRST THOUGHT TO BE.

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 18999 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

2. FIRST ESTIMATES HOUSES DESTROYED, DAMAGED THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM
TOO HIGH. WITHOUT COMPLETE REPORTS FROM HUE, TOTAL HOUSES KNOWN TO BE
DESTROYED PLACED AT 19,750. REFUGEES NOW TOTAL 347,000, WITH MANY OF
THESE BEING DESPLACED PERSONS WHO WILL RETURN TO HOMES WHEN VILLAGES

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 18999 111439Z

SECURED.

3. NO COMPLETE CASUALTY FIGURES FOR REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT TEAMS BUT APPARENTLY LIGHT, ATTRIBUTING THIS TO GENERAL VC TET OFFENSIVE AIMED AT CITIES RATHER THAN SECURE HAMLETS. ENEMY THIS TIME APPEARED TO TRY TO GAIN FIRM HOLD ON CITIES DEPARTING FROM PREVIOUS HIT AND RUN TACTICS. NOTED ENEMY PRISONERS SAID THEY HAD NO RPT NO ORDERS TO WITHDRAW, TOLD THEY WOULD BE REINFORCED. VC COUNTED ON GENERAL UPRISING AGAINST GVN, AMERICANS TO SUPPORT OFFENSIVE BUT THIS FAILED COMPLETELY.
4. PERFORMANCE OF GVN RECOVERY EFFORTS COMMENDED: GVN HAS RISEN TO CRISIS AND PERFORMANCE SINCE FEB. 2 HAS BEEN MUCH MORE RAPID, MORE DYNAMIC. MINISTRIES FOR REFUGEES, HEALTH ESPECIALLY CITED FOR PROMPT ACTION. KY TASK FORCE MEETS EVERY MORNING TO PLAN NEW RECOVERY OPERATIONS, FOLLOW UP ON OPERATIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY. TASK FORCE

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HAS DEVELOPED SENSIBLE PLANS TO DIVIDE SAIGON INTO LESS RESTRICTED "BLUE" AREAS AND MORE RESTRICTED "RED" ZONES SO THAT NORMAL CITY FUNCTIONS CAN BE RESTORED BY STAGES.

5. PACIFICATION PROSPECTS? UNDOUBTEDLY SOME SHORT TERM SETBACK. HOW BAD ENEMY HAS BEEN HURT AND HOW MUCH SECURITY HAS DETERIORATED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE MUST FIRST BE DETERMINED BEFORE ADEQUATE ASSESSMENT CAN BE MADE. APPEARS ENEMY HAS USED UP MUCH OF HIS STRENGTH, WHICH CHANGES "THE NAME OF THE GAME" FROM ONE OF ATTRITION TO LARGE-SCALE OFFENSIVES SUCH AS THAT WHICH APPEARS TO BE SHAPING UP AT KHE SANH IN I CORPS.

6. WILL NEED FOR GREATER SECURITY AROUND CITIES REDUCE PACIFICATION SECURITY FORCES FOR COUNTRYSIDE? NO DOUBT MORE SECURITY IN OFFING FOR CITIES, BUT WHETHER THIS WILL WEAKEN SECURITY IN CONTRYSIDE IS AN IMPOUNDERABLE AT THIS TIME UNTIL ASSESSMENT MADE HOW HARD ENEMY HIT TOO.

7. GVN, ALLIED FORCES ON ALERT FOR POSSIBLE SECOND VC WAVE, BUT THIS

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 18999 111439Z

SIGNIFICANTLY DID NOT RPT NOT MATERIALIZE AS MANY VIETNAMESE EXPECTED
LAST NIGHT (11TH NIGHT OF THE LUNAR MONTH.) IN SAIGON-CHOLON, VC STARTED

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 18999 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
FIRES TO COVER ESCAPE: THREE VC PRISONERS TOLD OF MISSION TO FIRE ON
AIRCRAFT HOPING TO DRAW ALLIED FIRED AND BOMBS ON CITY. ALSO STRONG
POSSIBILITY EXISTS VC HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN REFUGEE CAMPS WHERE THEY
HARD
TO DETECT BUT GVN IS ALERT TO THIS AND IS CAREFULLY REGISTERING AND
IDENTIFYING
ALL REFUGEES. BUNKER

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