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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 23,  
IGA 02, SSO 00, NSCE 00, IO 13, RSR 01, /120 W

R 111402Z FEB 68  
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON  
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Rostow

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IN BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING ELEVENTH, AMBASSADOR KOMER  
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 ~~BY~~ THO: LINES OF  
COMMUNICATION IN BETTER SHAPE THAN FIRST THOUGHT TO BE.

PAGE 2 RUMJIP 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 DISPLACED PERSONS WHO WILL RETURN TO HOMES WHEN VILLAGES

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 18999 111439Z

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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

~~PAGE 3 RUMJIR 18999 C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMITED OFFICIAL USE~~  
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 FOR COUNTRYSIDE? NO DOUBT MORE SECURITY IN OFFING FOR CITIES, BUT WHETHER THIS WILL WEAKEN SECURITY IN COUNTRYSIDE 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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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 C O N F I D E N T I A L 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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