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Friday, February 16, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: VC Critique of Their Tet Offensive

Pres file

This summarizes VC document dated 9 February. It was taken from a VC Captain captured at Danang. It analyzes the tet offensive from the viewpoint of VC Military Region 5 (parts of First and Second Corp -- see map attached).

The document notes three failures:

- (1) failure of the VC to get popular support -- "a big mistake";
- (2) failure to defect South Vietnamese troops;
- (3) failure in coordinating attacks.

It attributes military failure to the timidity of main forces which should have been used in the cities and the fact that the offensive was "staggered." On the latter point, it had been planned for all attacks to occur at the same time but units in MR 5 did not get delay orders and attack one day early.

The document lists three options now open:

- (1) continue to try to get a "popular uprising";
- (2) launch military attacks, then try an uprising;
- (3) launch military attacks but defer any popular uprising.

MR 5 concluded that option one -- the general uprising -- must be their target while relatively strong forces still exist, their rural bases are intact and administration is still effective. MR 5 advocates continued terrorism in the cities, renewed guerilla warfare outside the cities, and new waves of major military attacks.

The document indicates clearly that the Communists realize their efforts have largely failed so far. They see no real alternative to try to achieve a popular uprising. They are worried about the effect of their offensive on the morale of their own forces and cadre.

This is an MR 5 view. The analysis and recommendations may or may not be acceptable to the Front headquarters in Hanoi.

W. W. Rostow

Att.

WTT-nas-2/16/68

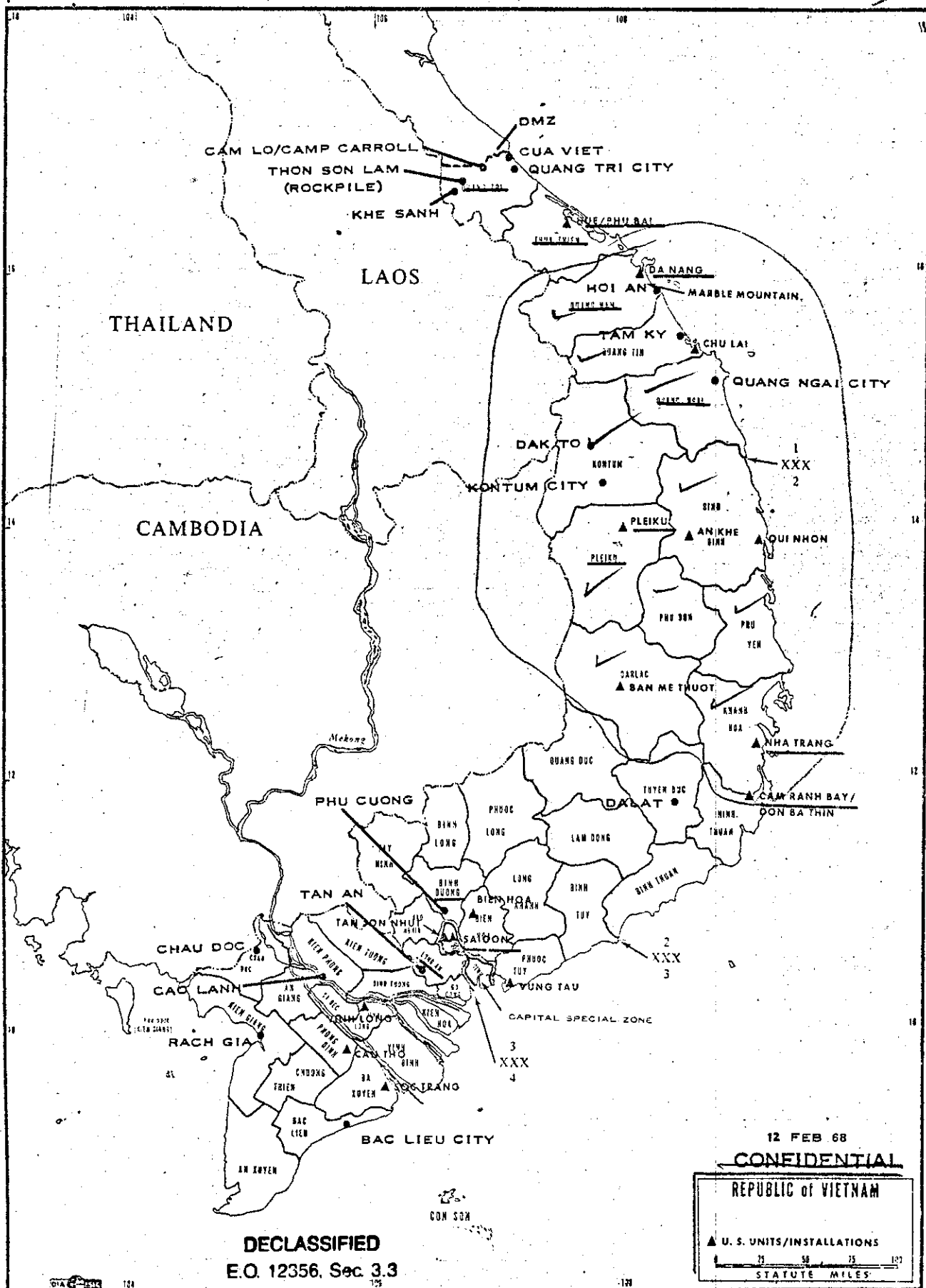
DECLASSIFIED

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

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By *18*, NARA, Date *2-14-92*

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.3

DA Memo, Jan. 5, 1988

By rg NARA, Date 2-14-92

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FM GEN WHEELER, CJCS, WASH DC

TO MR ROSTON, WHITE HOUSE, WASH DC

MR CLIFFORD, WHITE HOUSE, WASH DC

MR RUSK, STATE DEPT, WASH DC

MR HELMS, CIA

GEN JOHNSON, CSA, WASH DC

GEN MCCONNELL, CSAF, WASH DC

ADM MOORER, CNO, WASH DC

ZEN/GEN CHAPMAN, CMC, WASH DC

O 131411Z ZYH ZFF-1

FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV

TO ADM SHARP CINCPAC

GEN WHEELER CJCS

SMB BUNKER SAIGON

GEN ABRAMS (MACV FWD)

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1. A DOCUMENT DATED 9 FEB, PROBABLY WRITTEN BY RANKING CADRE OF MR 5, WAS TAKEN FROM SENIOR CAPTAIN PHAN DUY DAI, A SENIOR MILITARY MEMBER OF THE QUANG NAM PROVINCE COMMITTEE CAPTURED AT DANANG. THIS DOCUMENT IS ESSENTIALLY A CRITIQUE OF THE ENEMY'S TET OFFENSIVE THROUGH 9 FEBRUARY.

2. THE FIRST PARAGRAPHS REITERATE THE STANDARD CURRENT CLAIMS OF VC PROPAGANDA. THE AUTHOR CLAIMS A BRILLIANT VICTORY, DESTRUCTION OF 1500 AIRCRAFT, HUNDREDS OF ARTILLERY PIECES, LIBERATION OF TOWNS AND CITIES AND SO FORTH. HOWEVER, THE REST OF THE DOCUMENT IS DEVOTED TO A MORE REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION.

3. THE DOCUMENT ADDRESSES THE TWO MAIN TASKS OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN--THE "GENERAL COUNTERATTACK" AND THE "GENERAL UPRISING." THE AUTHOR REFERS TO THESE AS "T NO. 1" AND "T NO. 2" RESPECTIVELY. HE DESCRIBES THE ANALYSIS BY THE CURRENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF MR 5 OF THE DEFICIENCIES IN CONCEPT AND TIMING OF THE TET OFFENSIVE.

4. THE DOCUMENT ADMITS TO A FAILURE OF THE VC TO GAIN POPULAR SUPPORT "...A BIG MISTAKE." IT ALSO ADMITS TO A FAILURE TO DEFECT RVNAF TROOPS ("MILITARY PROSELYTING" IN VC TERMS), AND TO A FAILURE IN COORDINATING THE ATTACK RESULTING IN PREMATURE ATTACKS.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.3

DA Memo. Jan. 5, 1988

By *del/lyg* NARA Date 2-14-92

*military Region 5 (has map attached)
(Parts of I Corps and II Corps)*

5. THE AUTHOR ATTRIBUTES THE FAILURES TO WEAKNESSES IN BOTH PREPARATION AND EXECUTION. HE STATES THAT THE POPULACE WAS PASSIVE BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT BEEN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND ORGANIZED. HE ATTRIBUTES MILITARY FAILURE TO THE TIMIDITY OF MAIN FORCES WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN USED FOR "CLOSE ATTACKS," I.E., IN THE CITIES. THEY STAYED "OUTSIDE" AND FAILED TO "SERVE THE IMPORTANT POINT." EXECUTION OF THE OFFENSIVE WAS "STAGGERED" BECAUSE SOME UNITS DID NOT RECEIVE A DELAY ORDER FOR "N DAY." (THIS IS OUR FIRST INFORMATION EXPLAINING THE 24-HOUR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MR 5 ATTACKS AND ATTACKS ELSEWHERE.) THE AUTHOR CLAIMS THAT "MILITARY PROSELYTING" WAS "WELL DEVELOPED," BUT UNCOORDINATED.

6. MR 5 ANALYSIS OF THE OVERALL STRATEGY CONSIDERED THAT THREE OPTIONS OR "CIRCUMSTANCES" ARE NOW OPEN.

A. CONTINUE WITH ATTEMPT TO GAIN POPULAR UPRISING ("2T").

B. GET GENERAL COUNTERATTACK PROCEEDING "TO SOME DEGREE" AND THEN TRY UPRISING AGAIN.

C. GET GENERAL COUNTERATTACK UNDERWAY WITH GENERAL UPRISING STILL NOT POSSIBLE; RETREAT, CONSOLIDATE AND TRY AGAIN AT A LATER DATE. THE AUTHOR STATES THAT THERE WERE A FEW CASES IN WHICH THE GENERAL UPRISING WAS PROCEEDING, E.G., TAM KY. AT SAIGON AND HUE, THE SECOND "CIRCUMSTANCE" PERTAINED, I.E., GENERAL COUNTERATTACK AND GENERAL UPRISING. IN MOST AREAS, HOWEVER, THE THIRD CIRCUMSTANCE, GENERAL ATTACK AND NO UPRISING OCCURRED.

7. MR 5 CONCLUDES THAT STRATEGY MUST BE BASED ON THE FIRST CIRCUMSTANCE. THE "GENERAL UPRISING" MUST BE ACHIEVED WHILE RELATIVELY STRONG FORCES STILL EXIST, RURAL BASES ARE INTACT AND ADMINISTRATION STILL EFFECTIVE. SPECIFICALLY, MR5 ADVOCATES KEEPING UP TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE CITIES, RESTORING GUERRILLA WARFARE OUTSIDE THE CITIES, AND LAUNCHING CONTINUOUS WAVES OF BIG ATTACKS. POLITICALLY THE NEW FRONT ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED AND EXPLOITED. THE PROBLEM OF PREVENTING A DROP IN MORALE IS TO BE CONSIDERED "IN A CRITICAL AND CONTINUOUS MANNER" BY POINTING OUT RECENT EVENTS AS VC VICTORIES AND EXPLAINING THE RECENT ATTACKS IN THE CONTEXT OF A SERIES OF EVENTS.

8. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCUMENT CARRIES THE USUAL HAZARDS OF INTERPRETING THE TURGID COMMUNIST STYLE OF EXPRESSION. FURTHER, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE DOCUMENT EXPRESSES THE VIEWS OF BUT ONE IMPORTANT HEADQUARTERS; MR 5'S ANALYSIS MAY NOT PREVAIL IN THE OVERALL REEVALUATION THAT IS CERTAINLY UNDERWAY WITHIN THE ENEMY LEADERSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, WE FIND THESE POINTS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT AND FAIRLY CLEAR:

A. "1 NO. 1", THE GENERAL COUNTERATTACK, AND "1 NO. 2", THE GENERAL UPRISING, WERE TO BE SIMULTANEOUS, NOT CONSECUTIVE. IT IS NOT SO CLEAR WHETHER THE KHE SANH, DMZ, AND E-3 FRONT ATTACKS WERE TO BE PART OF "1 NO. 1." WE BELIEVE FROM OTHER EVIDENCE THAT THEY PROBABLY WERE. THE LACK OF SEPARATE TREATMENT OF THOSE AREAS IN THE DOCUMENT ALSO SUGGESTS THEY WERE TO BE PART OF THE "GENERAL COUNTERATTACK." WE HAVE NO GOOD CLUE AS TO THE REASON FOR THE LAST MINUTE POSTPONENT ORDER FOR "N DAY", BUT IT COULD HAVE BEEN DUE TO PROBLEMS IN GETTING THE NVA ATTACKS IN REMOTE AREAS UNDERWAY.

B. THE ENEMY REALIZES THAT HIS EFFORTS HAVE LARGELY FAILED. MR 5 SEES NO REAL ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUATION OF ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE A GENERAL UPRISING AND IS WORRIED ABOUT THE EFFECT OF RECENT EVENTS ON THE MORALE OF CADRE AND THE RANK AND FILE.

C. THE DOCUMENT PROVIDES CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT A GENERAL UPRISING WAS EXPECTED AT HIGH LEVELS, AND WAS NOT MERELY A CYNICAL PROPAGANDA PLOY TO INSPIRE THE LOWER ECHELONS.

D. IF MR 5'S VIEWS PREVAIL, THE ENEMY WILL STRIVE TO KEEP UP CHAOS WITHIN THE CITIES, PREVENT THE RETURN OF STABILITY, AND LAUNCH ADDITIONAL LARGE-SIZED ATTACKS--ALL STILL DESIGNED TO PROVOKE A GENERAL UPRISING. HOWEVER, MR 5 MAY BE ADVOCATING A COURSE OF ACTION WHICH IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO COSVN OR HANOI.

9. INTERROGATION OF SENIOR CAPTAIN PHAN DUY DAI IS PROCEEDING AND, IF APPROPRIATE, WILL BE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE MESSAGE.

SSO NOTE: DELIVER DURING DUTY HOURS
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