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Tuesday, February 20, 1968

TEXT OF CIA REPORT [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: General Giap's Strategy for the Communist General Offensive

The following information was received from interrogation of a Viet Cong prisoner [REDACTED]

He was captured [REDACTED] in Danang.

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Summary -- Plans for the VC Tet attack on Danang City were outlined to a group of select cadres on 22 January by Ho Phuoc, Secretary of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone Committee. Although the VC realized they would be outnumbered and would be wiped out if they attempted to stay in the city, they felt they had to make the attack to carry out their part of the overall plan for the general offensive. The strategy for the offensive was devised by General Vo Nguyen Giap and approved by the Hanoi Cabinet. The USSR later also approved the plan and speeded up delivery of arms and armor so that the VC/NVA would be prepared before October 1967. Giap's strategy entailed two phases and, since Phase 1 failed, Phase 2 (Plan No. 2) will now be placed in effect. The big action will occur in the western highlands and Khe Sanh. Giap's plan is to force the GVN to sue for peace under Hanoi's conditions. -- End Summary

At 1000 hours on 22 January 1968, Ho Phuoc, alias Nghinh, Secretary of the Quang Da-Danang Special Zone Committee, convened a meeting in an uninhabited house in Dien Phuoc village, Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province. Present were high-ranking cadres in touch with underground elements in Danang City; these cadres had been selected to infiltrate Danang with the task of inciting the masses and penetration agents to support the Communist troops' general offensive to seize power. [REDACTED] During the meeting, Phuoc made the following disclosures and assignments in connection with the planned attack on Danang:

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A. Senior Colonel Vo Thu, would be in overall command, while his deputy, Senior Captain Hien, would be in charge of special action. Political officer Lieutenant Colonel Duc would serve as Chief of Staff and Captain Pham Duy Dai, member of Special Zone Headquarters, as officer in charge of military affairs and sappers.

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By [REDACTED], NARA, Date 6-15-95

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B. For the purpose of the attack, Danang would be divided into three operational districts, each headed by a District Committee member. Secretary Sau Hung was placed in charge of District 2 (Danang center), which had the key role of taking over the Government of Vietnam administrative installations. Thus District 2 VC cadres would automatically constitute the Danang City provisional executive committee, with Sau Hung as Mayor, once the GVN administration had fallen.

As explained by Phuoc, the plan of action for the attack on Danang was the following: Captain Hien had 40 youths aged 16 to 17 of both sexes and carrying birth certificates to avoid the need for GVN identity cards who would infiltrate the city, led by liaison agents, during the period 24-29 January. They would be armed with silencer-equipped pistols, submachine guns and TNT and their mission would be to reconnoiter ARVN and GVN civil installations and to observe GVN intelligence personnel. The latter were to be captured or killed during the general offensive. The VC recognized they would be greatly outnumbered by the ARVN and allied forces in Danang and would probably be wiped out if they drove deep into the city and stayed there a long while. However, if they did not attack the city, they would lose face with the masses and would fail to carry out their part of the general offensive. Therefore, the following plan for the attack on Danang was adopted:

A. Two local main force battalions, R. 20 and Q. 16, would attack and occupy GVN posts around the city. One infiltrated North Vietnamese Army battalion belonging to worksite 2 would be held in reserve.

B. Only a few elements would thrust deeply into the city. These would then immediately withdraw to the city's outskirts to rejoin the above-mentioned units for a prolonged siege of the city designed to pressure the local authorities into negotiating.

C. In the meantime, the special action unit would coordinate with other specialized elements in inciting the population to go out into the streets to 1) struggle against the GVN, 2) demand the creation of a coalition government, 3) destroy fuel dumps and power plants, and 4) steal weapons and ammunition to arm young men and women who had distinguished themselves in previous struggles. These developments would result in the formation of a "dissident army" headed by Pham Duy Dai. Thus, the "uprising" in Danang would appear to be a mass movement against the GVN.

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D. The attack would begin on the night of 29/30 January 1968. [REDACTED] A later order changed the date to the night of 30/31 January, but for some unknown reason the attack was launched as originally scheduled.)

According to Phuoc, the attack of Danang was part of the plan (Plan 2T) for a general offensive and general uprising. He explained that from September 1967 to January 1968, the VC forces suffered many heavy reverses, particularly in

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Khanh Hoa, Phu Yen and Binh Dinh Provinces, where the "liberated" areas shrunk. GVN and allied forces were not as active in the Quang Ngai, Quang Tin, Quang Nam and Danang areas, but they still inflicted such high casualties on the VC that heavy infiltration of NVN troops was still not enough to fill the gaps. As a result, Communist Chinese and Cuban missions made urgent visits to war theater B and returned with the opinion that the Communists could not hold out against the material strength of the GVN and its allies. [REDACTED]

Hanoi therefore decided it would have to negotiate as the USSR had been advising it to do.

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General Nguyen Chi Thanh, [REDACTED] was called back to NVN many times to discuss action plans. After Thanh's death, General Vo Nguyen Giap asserted that Thanh's strategy of occupying the rural areas inch by inch and setting up defensive installations was in error, since the Viet Cong installations would be worn down by the Government of Vietnam and allies and sooner or later eliminated. Giap decided that before peace talks were held, it was necessary to hit hard militarily to get the upper hand. Giap thereupon devised the following strategy:

A. The Communists did not need to attack, take and defend the rural area, since the rural population and territory could be won by (1) sending all regular North Vietnamese Army units to the south and (2) using half the communist strength, namely, those units previously infiltrated into South Vietnam, to launch the general offensive against the South Vietnamese cities, with the newly infiltrate units being kept in reserve. This would compel Government of Vietnam forces to pull back to defend the cities, thus leaving the rural areas in communist hands without a fight. This comprised Giap's Plan No. 1.

B. Plan No. 2: If the general offensive against the cities should fail, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army forces would pull back and encircle the provincial towns. This would keep the Government of Vietnam and the population under intense strain, the economy would be paralyzed, and foreign aid would have to fill the food supply gap. The piastre would depreciate because the rural areas could no longer supply the cities. The combination of communist military pressure, economic paralysis and popular complaints would force the Government of Vietnam to sue for peace under North Vietnam's conditions.

C. In the meantime, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army would fight the decisive battle. The western highlands (precise province not specified) would be the main theater of battle, while U.S. forces would be lured into the Khe Sanh area and wiped out. To accomplish this, the communists planned the following:

1. Strong harassment in Southern Laos to permit the shifting of all North Vietnamese Army troops to South Vietnam.

2. Movement of Communist troops and armor into southern Laos across from the western highlands (Khe Sanh area).

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[REDACTED]

3. Surprise intervention by the NVA Air Force to support ground action against ARVN and U. S. troops.

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[REDACTED] Giap's strategy was approved by the Hanoi Cabinet, and Le Duan and a Cabinet Minister (name unknown) were sent to Moscow to present the plan to the Soviets and request aid. The USSR accepted the plan and changed its aid policy from a passive one to one of accelerated dispatch of weapons, armor and experts to NVN before October 1967 so that the plan could be put into effect. Since that time, the NVN defense ministry has been directing the war and Giap has personally been commanding the fighting.

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[REDACTED] since the VC attack on Danang has completely failed, the VC will now apply Plan No. 2. Thus, in the days ahead, they will probe GVN/allied reactions by 1) maintaining encircling forces around the city and impose an economic blockade, 2) create extreme tension to arouse popular unrest, and 3) hit the Danang Airbase with heavy rocket attacks. If U. S. and Korean forces cooperate with ARVN and fight the VC actively, the Communists will maintain their encirclement and wait for the big action to begin in the western highlands and Khe Sanh. Only then will they decide whether to continue with the offensive or negotiate from a position of strength. However, if the U. S. and Korean forces support ARVN only with air and artillery, the Communists will quickly intensify their artillery (rocket) firepower and prepare for the general offensive.

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[REDACTED] if the offensive is resumed, the VC/NVA tactic will be to attack, occupy and pull out fast. If possible, they will take and hold some positions around Danang, since it will be imperative to take heavily populated areas that will provide shelter and a long-range food supply and will permit the VC/NVA troops to dig in. Simultaneously, a province mobile battalion would be sent to reinforce sapper battalion 402 for an attack on Hoi An City.

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[REDACTED] the recent VC attack on Lang Vei was for the purpose of testing allied strength and to lure the U. S. into concentrating its artillery, Marines and airpower in the Khe Sanh area. When the offensive resumes, the Communists will start the battle for Khe Sanh and the western highlands, at which time the Quang Tri Airbase will be shelled while one regiment will attack and occupy Quang Tri City.

[REDACTED] The applicability to Danang of the above-described Plan No. 2 has been confirmed by a document which the Special Zone current affairs section sent [REDACTED] and which was captured. The document indicates the following Communist intentions:

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A. Military: Increase military forces; send one unit to attack deeply into Danang; increase special action activity; assassinate GVN personnel; develop agents and bases inside Danang; launch continuous attacks, both large and small, all over to prevent GVN forces from having enough time to stabilize the situation.

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B. Political: Intensify political struggle activity; incite the population to oppose the GVN security measures and to demand its democratic and economic rights; organize the people, prepare them for the struggle and forge organized ranks plus core cadres to lead them with a view to sending the people into the streets in armed revolt; stress the political struggle to smash the GVN administrative apparatus; kill nationalists; seize control neighborhood by neighborhood; introduce the "alliance for democracy and peace" as has already been done in Saigon and Hue.

C. Military proselyting: Proselyte GVN troops and strive to foment rebellion and mutiny.)

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[REDACTED] comment: [REDACTED] statements concerning the Communist strategy and tactics for the offensive against SVN cities and particularly against Danang agree to some extent with what has actually taken place.)

[REDACTED]