

INFORMATION

28.

Tuesday, March 5, 1968 -- 3:30 pm

Per file

Mr. President:

If you have time, you might read the marked passages in these prisoner of war interrogations. The information may not be hard but, taken together, they indicate the mood of the Viet Cong after the failure of the first phase of the Tet offensive.

W. W. Rostow

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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March 5, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

Continued review of prisoner interrogation and/or captured documents seem to confirm the thought that the VC/NVA had made plans for setting up local government structures after the successful take-over during the Tet offensive.

Initial interrogation of approximately 44 Viet Cong in Quang Ngai City indicate that some of these may be fairly important finance/economy cadres and possibly prospective members of a Viet Cong provisional government. One of those arrested was to become head of the Quang Ngai "National Democratic and Peace Front" in the event of Viet Cong takeover.

A new Viet Cong informant whose reliability has not yet been established reports that the second phase of the offensive had begun by mid-February. The Viet Cong will not attack as many places as before but will concentrate large forces against a few main areas in an attempt to occupy them, kill GVN cadre, and control the people. It had not been determined if the Viet Cong would attack Quang Ngai City, but regardless of the decision, the Viet Cong plan to attack Nghia Hanh, Son Tinh, and Duc Pho District Headquarters, Tra Khuc Bridge, Quang Ngai Airport, and the base in Binh Lien Village, Binh Son District. ~~The informant also said that two communist Chinese divisions, one North Korean Regiment, and one Soviet Air Defense Regiment would be in North Vietnam to allow North Vietnamese Army units to move south and hit hard to force peace talks. It could not be judged if this was propaganda designed to boost morale or presented as fact.~~

Informants of varying reliability in VC-controlled areas of Quang Ngai Province have indicated that as of February 10 the Viet Cong have held many military/political retraining sessions for soldiers since the Tet offensive failed in Quang Ngai. The Viet Cong claimed that their plans failed because urgent orders and preparation from high-level cadres were lacking. The Viet Cong were planning many meetings to assess the strong and weak points of the first phase of the offensive and prepare for the second phase.

A Viet Cong informant claims to have obtained the following information from the Long Khanh Provincial Force Political Officer.

A. The Tet offensive was the first wave of the general uprising of the South Vietnamese people. The offensive was conducted throughout South Vietnam to illustrate that the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam's (NFLSV) manpower and weapons can defeat the US and GVN troops in the major cities. He said that by proving that the NFLSV can defeat the forces of the US and GVN the NFLSV would gain more support from the nations of the world.

B. The campaign was also to bring pressure to bear on the US and the GVN so that they will begin to think in terms of accepting a coalition government as suggested by the NFLSV.

C. The campaign was also to gain deeper sympathy from the American people who are protesting the Vietnam war and to show them that patriotic people in Vietnam have the capabilities to defeat thousands of American aggressors in Vietnam. The campaign will also cause President Johnson's prestige to be lowered in the next presidential election.

Informant reports from Quang Tri, Siang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces indicate that the Viet Cong are making preparations for a second attack on the cities of I Corps. The only specific date mentioned is from Quang Tri where February 29 to March 3 were target dates if the Viet Cong encountered no obstacles. If difficulties are met, the plans will be continued and an opportunity sought until March 30. The people of VC-controlled areas were assembled the last three days of February to prepare for demonstrations in Quang Tri City after a military attack.

A prisoner captured on February 5 in Danang City, provides the following information.

The primary factors for the Viet Cong failure to take Danang on January 29, 1968, were faulty intelligence and a mix-up in the schedule for the attack. In order to curry favor with their superiors, Viet Cong cadres in Danang exaggerated their reports, over-estimated the people's pro-VC sentiments, and under-estimated the morale of GVN civil servants and

troops. Although the general offensive throughout the country was to begin the night of January 30, 1968, a prior order had scheduled the attack on January 29. Certain Viet Cong units did not receive the second order and attacked on the night of January 29. To compound these errors, the staff of the Quang Da - Danang Special Zone failed to understand the mood of the people of Danang. They had been led to believe that the people of Danang had grown steadily to their understanding (become more anti-American) and were waiting only for an opportunity to seize power. However, they found that the people did not want to demonstrate or to fight.

A local provincial level security unit source in Long An Province, who has provided the unit with reliable information for three months, has reported that the Viet Cong say that they must successfully attack and overrun the province capital, Tan An. According to the report, the Viet Cong are telling the people that if they fail to overrun Tan An, they will turn in their weapons to the GVN and stop fighting. The source also indicates that the local Viet Cong have been promised the support of North Vietnamese Army troops for the next attack on Tan An, and that a total of 6,000 troops will be used in the attack. The Viet Cong are also claiming that small guerrilla actions are finished and that only large scale attacks will take place in the future.


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