

8-67

EDITIONS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Intelligence Information Cable

C ROUTINE

IN TELEPOUCH

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3.5(c)

DIST 12 MARCH 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 31 JANUARY - EARLY FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT POPULAR REACTIONS TO THE VIET CONG TET ATTACK

ON CAN THO CITY

ACQ

SOURCE

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1. THE ABILITY OF THE VIET CONG /VC/ TO ENTER THE CITY OF
CAN THO DURING THE TET /LUNAR NEW YEAR/ ATTACK ON 31 JANUARY 1968
SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY IN
THE ABILITY OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM /ARVN/ TO

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DEFEND THE CITY. MANY TOWNSPEOPLE COMMENTED THAT IF ARVN COULD NOT DEFEND ITS OWN CORPS HEADQUARTERS CITY, THE ENTIRE DELTA REGION MUST BE EVEN MORE VULNERABLE TO VC ATTACK AND SEIZURE. POPULAR MORALE IN THE CITY WAS BADLY DEPRESSED FOLLOWING THE VC ATTACK AND FEAR OF A SECOND ATTACK WAS WIDESPREAD. THE PEOPLE CRITICIZED ARVN MORE FOR ITS POOR INTELLIGENCE IN NOT HAVING ANY PRIOR WARNING OF THE VC ATTACK THAN FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH THE TROOPS FOUGHT ONCE THE ATTACK WAS UNDERWAY. NEVERTHELESS, MANY PEOPLE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE VC WOULD HAVE OVERRUN THE CITY ON 31 JANUARY IF THE ATTACK HAD NOT BEEN STOPPED BY U.S. AIR FORCE AERIAL BOMBARDMENT. DESPITE THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE BOMBING, MANY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN WELCOMED THE AIR ATTACKS, REASONING THAT MORE LIVES WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST BY A VC SUCCESS THAN WERE LOST IN THE BOMBING.

2. DESPITE LOW POPULAR MORALE RESULTING FROM THE ATTACK, NO ONE IN THE CITY WAS KNOWN TO HAVE JOINED THE VC SIDE DURING OR AFTER THE ATTACK. NOTHING WAS HEARD OF ANY BELIEF AMONG THE TOWNSPEOPLE THAT THE VC WOULD WIN THE WAR. RUMORS OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT INCLUDING THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM WERE NOT WIDESPREAD IN THE CITY.

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3. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BATTLE ENDED, THE PROVINCE CHIEF
AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES BEGAN TO SET UP REFUGEE RELIEF SERVICES,
WHICH WERE APPRECIATED BY THE PEOPLE. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] CALLED THE REFUGEE RELIEF EFFORTS 'REMARKABLE.' /

4. PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU'S SPEECH TO THE NATION ON 2
FEBRUARY HAD A GENERALLY GOOD EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE IN CAN THO,
NOT AS MUCH FOR WHAT HE SAID AS FOR THE FACT THAT HE ADDRESSED
THE NATION AT A TIME OF MUCH DOUBT AND FEAR WHEN EVIDENCE OF THE
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY WAS NEEDED.

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