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30 January 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Walt W. Rostow

SUBJECT : The Situation in South Vietnam

As agreed between you and the Director of Central Intelligence last evening, CIA has prepared the following report on the unprecedented Communist attacks in South Vietnam which began yesterday. Information is current as of 0700 EST.

1. Communist forces staged a series of well-coordinated attacks on eight principal cities and several key military installations throughout South Vietnam's I and II Corps early on 30 January. This flurry of enemy activity was intended primarily for the psychological impact it would have on the South Vietnamese on Vietnam's most important holiday--the lunar new year's day. The enemy may also have believed that the celebrations would impede the effectiveness of the allied reaction effort.

2. The enemy's principal targets included provincial capitals, cities in the western highlands and major cities and military installations along the coastal area as far south as Cam Ranh Bay.

The Current Tactical Situation

3. Da Nang: Both the giant US airbase and key US and South Vietnamese military installations within Da Nang itself were attacked by enemy forces early on 30 January. The airfield complex was hit by 40 rounds of mixed rocket and mortar fire which resulted in at least seven aircraft destroyed and nine damaged. Fires were reported at the airfield's bomb storage area and in hangar and troop housing areas. At last report the east runway of the airfield was under small arms

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fire. Initial reports list one American killed and six wounded. No estimate of the effect on US air operations staged from the base has been received.

4. At Da Nang, the I Corps Headquarters and MACV compound were hit by 40-50 rounds of 82-mm. mortar fire, small arms and satchel charges. Three South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and another seven wounded according to initial reports. US Marine and South Vietnamese reaction forces moved to counter the enemy's assaults and, at last report, the enemy raiders were withdrawing.

5. Nha Trang: In Nha Trang, the capital of Khanh Hoa Province, Communist forces attacked in the early morning hours and occupied the provincial headquarters, the military sector headquarters, the radio station, and the railroad station. The enemy also attacked the provincial jail, reportedly freeing several hundred prisoners.

6. Pleiku City: A 500 to 700-man Viet Cong force followed up a heavy rocket barrage on the Pleiku airfield with an assault which penetrated the city. A nearby montagnard training center was also a target of a Communist rocket barrage. At last report the fighting was continuing within the city itself.

7. Kontum City: An estimated 500 to 1,000 enemy troops penetrated Kontum city in the early morning hours of 30 January. A US 4th Infantry Division reaction force fought its way into the city and by mid-morning the situation was reported as "no longer critical."

8. Tan Canh: This South Vietnamese village located some 20 miles north of Kontum near the Dak To Special Forces Camp, was overrun and burned early this morning. The assault on the village was mounted by a Communist company-size force and was preceded by a heavy barrage of 82-mm. mortar fire.

9. Other Attacks: Fighting was reported in Binh Dinh's provincial capital of Qui Nhon with an enemy company conducting raids on the police headquarters, radio station, and other key installations in the city. The airfield at Ban Me

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Thuot in Dar Lac Province, Phu Yen Province's capital of Tuy Hoa, Hoi An in Quang Nam Province, and the large US military complex at Cam Ranh Bay were also targets of enemy raids. Details of these attacks are still extremely sketchy.

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10. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] have reflected extensive enemy preparations for combat in the northern half of the country. Among these, tactical activities have included intensive reconnaissance, patrols, resupply, training and other related activities. Intercepted enemy messages have made repeated references to "N-Day", the Vietnamese equivalent of D-Day, with some messages suggesting the beginning of offensive activities on or shortly after 30 January.

11. Enemy communications also disclosed widespread coordination between major enemy units and their command and control authorities. High volumes of messages between major controls and with Hanoi were also observed being passed up to 30 January.

12. Although it is too early to determine the over-all scope of the Communist offensive, it appears that the enemy has aimed his campaign at undermining the population's confidence in the present government. The initiation of the offensive at a time when the country was celebrating the Tet holiday was probably calculated to achieve a significant psychological impact despite the fact that it displayed a blatant disregard for the cease-fire periods announced by both the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese.

Other Related Actions

13. A radio broadcast from Hanoi indicates that the Communists hope to shift the responsibility for their blatant truce violations to the allies. The 30 January broadcast, in English to international audiences, charged that the US and South Vietnam had canceled the cease-fire and had launched "raids" against the people in many northern provinces. The broadcast also condemned the continued bombing of southern North Vietnam during the allied truce, and claimed the allies had "trampled upon the legitimate aspirations and traditional customs of the Vietnamese people." It appears that the Communists are laying a propaganda base for future claims that their own offensive activity was in retaliation for US misdeeds.

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14. Unusual activities by North Vietnamese air force elements were detected on 30 January. The airfield controller at Hanoi Gia Lam noted light transport aircraft, and possibly four others, would be engaged in unidentified aerial activity at 1700 hours Hanoi time (0400 EST, 30 January). Two of the planes mentioned by the controller were part of the aerial strike force that raided a friendly installation in northern Laos on 12 January.

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16. There are as yet no indications of any North Korean initiatives or activities which can be related to the enemy offensive in South Vietnam.

17. Pyongyang's military posture remains essentially defensive. As it has since the seizure of the Pueblo, the North Korean Air Force is continuing to fly defensive patrols, particularly in the vicinity of Wonsan harbor. No major incidents have been reported along the DMZ during the past 24 hours.

18. Other than the Hanoi broadcast noted above, bloc media have not as yet commented on the attacks. Neither have there been any signs of Communist military or diplomatic activity relating to the offensive.

Late Item

19. General Westmoreland gave his personal assessment of the situation in a Telecon with Washington at about 0700 EST this morning. He described the situation as "well in hand," adding that more enemy were killed in the raids than at any other time in his memory. It appears that enemy losses will be over 700 dead. Allied casualties were light. Captured enemy soldiers said their mission was to terrorize the civilian population, and attack civilian installations such as radio stations. According to Westmoreland, the situation in the DMZ is quiet. The weather there is good and facilitates extensive allied air attacks.

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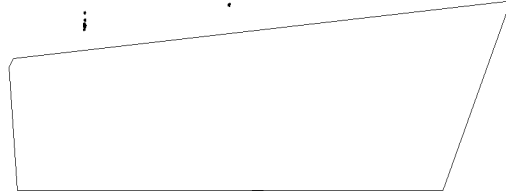
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20. Da Nang: Late information indicates there were numerous incidents in the area between 1400 and 1600 local Vietnam time today. The Marble Mountain installation received a mortar attack. At 1430, Da Nang airbase was hit by mortars. US casualties were one killed and 10 wounded. The ARVN headquarters in Da Nang was also attacked by an enemy company-size force and with mortars. The attack was repulsed with heavy enemy casualties.

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