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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

2 March 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable William Bundy  
Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
Department of State

SUBJECT : Captured 31 January 1968 COSVN Situation Assessment

Per Mr. Smyser's request, relayed on your behalf, I queried our Station with respect to the alleged COSVN document captured by the (US) 9th Infantry Division. (A clean text of this document, much more readable than the original MACV version, has been transmitted by the Embassy as Saigon [redacted]) The Station's reply to my query reads as follows: 3.3(h)(2)

"1. Station translation section states CDEC translation is excellent job and they cannot improve on it. Experienced translator states that language, tone, and format of original document strongly suggests it is genuine. Following comments prepared by Mr. George Allen after discussion with Station analysts who concur.

"2. Despite minor inconsistencies and ambiguities, we believe the document is genuine. It represents a sober but positive assessment of the initial results of the general offensive/general uprising, a realistic appraisal of weaknesses in its execution, and guidelines for action to exploit the limited success of the first blow. The document probably was hastily composed, as evidenced by internal inconsistencies and duplications, and appears to reflect collective parochial views of several specialists rather than normal, well-organized and thoroughly staffed directive. The assessment accords generally with that reflected in the MRV document acquired in Danang, is consonant with more recently dated documents which appear designed to implement guidelines of this document, and is in general agreement with interrogations of [redacted] and with agent reports from the area which outline future enemy plans. Moreover, its provisions are reflected in general pattern of activity conducted by the enemy since date of document. We feel that the assessment could have been made by evening of 31 January, considering fact that pattern of only limited success would already have been evident, especially in II Corps where action began on 29 January.

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"3. In essence, document indicates that the Viet Cong, as of 31 January, recognized that they had failed to achieve all their objectives, but nevertheless considered the campaign partially successful since it created conditions favorable for further exploitation. The authors reason that plans and concept were sound, but there were weaknesses in execution. Most serious of these were failure of political cadre to motivate masses for uprising, ineffective troop proselyting and propaganda efforts, sluggish command and liaison functions, and general failure to coordinate effectively the military, political and subversive arms of the attack. They note that failure to pursue their basic strategy, 'to develop the uprising, ' and to attack continuously would return initiative to the allies and enable them to recover and counterattack, 'creating new difficulties' for the Communists.

"4. Assessment goes on to reemphasize the sustained character of the general offensive-general uprising phase. Initial results proved that the campaign could succeed, but only after sustained effort over three to four month period, which apparently was anticipated by an earlier COSVN directive. Initial guidelines for plan remain valid if implemented vigorously, if basic principles are followed, and if various facets are closely coordinated with each other. General guidelines offered in exhortatory fashion are: to heighten the will to fight continuously and over a sustained period and develop revolutionary spirit of the masses; concentrate on specific vulnerable targets, especially ARVN (emphasizing subversion), attacking United States troops only after careful preparation to avoid disproportionate losses; focus on disrupting allied rear installations and lines of communications; effectively combine military offensive with uprising; arm the populace and bring rural people to cities to assist in combining urban uprising with seizure of rural areas; develop political and military strength rapidly, i. e., expand political apparatus, and solve troop replacement problem; expand logistic support elements; step up propaganda, intimidation, and subversion; consolidate newly liberated areas politically and militarily by organizing administrative elements and creating self defense forces; and strengthen effectiveness of party and military leadership at all levels.

"5. Most significant points would seem to be: A. The reflection that the Communists had anticipated that first blow might not be climactic and that a sustained effort would be necessary to achieve their objectives; and B. the all encompassing broad nature of the campaign, extending to rural areas as well as urban areas and requiring optimum performance by all military and infra-structure elements to insure victory. This latter point may, indeed, be the fatal flaw in the plan, since it would appear that less than optimum performance by any key component of the Communist organization -- urban cadre, supply elements, rural guerrillas, combat units, troop proselyting specialists, etc. -- could lead to failure of the entire effort. Although the document refers to 'protracted war' the context suggests that this relates to the resolutions of the Central Committee in Hanoi which called for 'preparation for protracted war while seeking victory in the shortest possible time.' Despite some ambiguity, this document can be

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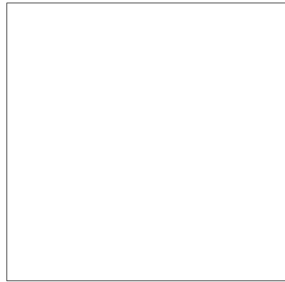
interpreted as consistent with that concept. It warns against hope for immediate success, but implies that concerted effort can achieve victory by end of this winter-spring campaign."



3.5(c)

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

cc:



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O/DCI/SAVA:GACarver/mec

Orig - Addressee

1@ - cc's

1 - [redacted]/DCI

1 - [redacted]DDCI/ER

1 - DDI

1 - D/OCI

1 - C/OCI/IC

1 - D/ONE

1 - C/ONE/FE

1 - D/OER (for [redacted])

1 - DDP

1 - AC/FE

1 - C/VNO

1 - VC Tet Offensive

1 - VAS Chrono

1 - GAC Chrono ✓

1 - VAS/RAC

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