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DIST 1 FEBRUARY 1968

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 1 FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT VIEWS OF AN ARVN OFFICER ON THE VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (1 FEBRUARY 1968)

SOURCE

[Large Redacted Area]

1. FOLLOWING IS A SERIES OF QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PRESENT SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM (SVN) RESULTING FROM THE CURRENT VIET CONG (VC) OFFENSIVE AND OF ANSWERS TO THOSE QUESTIONS BY A KNOWLEDGEABLE SVN ARMY OFFICER:

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(A) Q: WHAT IS THE REACTION OF THE SVN PEOPLE TO THE VC ATTACKS?

A: THE PEOPLE HAD NO REACTION INITIALLY SINCE THEY THOUGHT THE ACTIVITY WAS CONCERNED WITH A NEW INTERNAL COUP. THIS WAS CAUSED BY A DEFECTIVE INFORMATION POLICY ON THE PART OF GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) LEADERS. THE LATTER SHOULD HAVE GONE ON THE AIR IMMEDIATELY AND IN PERSON TO EXPLAIN WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. COMM3.3(h)(2)

SOURCE SPECIFICALLY NAMED PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU, VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY AND CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF (JGS) GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN AS PERSONS WHO SHOULD HAVE GONE ON THE AIR. SOME PEOPLE NOW THINK THE VC MUST BE VERY STRONG SINCE THEY ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE U.S. THEY ARE ANGRY, HOWEVER, THAT THE VC BROKE THEIR PROMISE TO OBSERVE A TET TRUCE EVEN THOUGH THE ALLIES HAD AGREED TO OBSERVE ONLY PART OF IT. THE SVN PEOPLE DEFINITELY WILL NOT BE PERSUADED TO APPROVE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE OF VC TERROR. THIS IS DUE IN PART TO THE STRONG GVN RESISTANCE AND TO THE VC LOSSES.

(B) Q: WHAT IS THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE TO GVN ACTIONS (OR INACTIONS) IN THIS SITUATION?

A: THE PEOPLE FEEL THEIR ARMED FORCES ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO STOP THE VC AND TO COUNTER THE ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY THE VC. THE POTENTIAL OF THE ALLIES IS MUCH GREATER, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF THEIR AIR POWER. 3.3(h)(2)

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COMMENT: THIS ANSWER OBVIOUSLY REFLECTS SOURCE'S PROFESSIONAL MILITARY STATUS AND NOT POPULAR ATTITUDES.)

(C) Q: WHAT ARE THE POPULAR REACTIONS TO THE MARTIAL LAW DECREE AND ITS VARIOUS SPECIFIC PROVISIONS AND RESTRICTIONS?

A: THE PEOPLE ALL UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THE NECESSITY OF THE DECREE AND ITS RESTRICTIONS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO AS LONG AS THE SITUATION WARRANTS THEM. PROLONGATION OF THE RESTRICTIONS BEYOND WHAT THE PEOPLE FEEL IS WARRANTED WILL LEAD TO ANTAGONISMS WHICH WILL GROW UNTIL THE DECREE IS RESCINDED.

(D) Q: WHAT INTENTIONS DO LEGISLATORS OR OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION?

A: AT PRESENT THE SITUATION IS IN AN INTENSE MILITARY PHASE. UNTIL THIS CHANGES, THERE WILL BE LITTLE THOUGHT OF EXPLOITATION.

(E) Q: WHAT IS THE MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VC COORDINATED ATTACKS AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME?

A: SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 1967, SVN HAS WON LARGE VICTORIES OVER THE VC AND HAS RECEIVED MANY HOI CHANHS (RALLIERS). THE VC WANT TO SET UP A COALITION GOVERNMENT, BUT THE SVN PEOPLE WILL NOT WILLING ACCEPT THIS. THEREFORE, THE VC MUST ATTACK IN A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF STRENGTH AND FORCE, EVEN THOUGH THEY CANNOT LONG HOLD WHATEVER GAINS

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THEY MAKE. THIS IS A CRITICAL TEST FOR THE VC. THEY ARE WILLING TO LOSE MANY MEN TO GAIN WORLD-WIDE RECOGNITION POLITICALLY. THUS, THEIR GOAL IS TO SHOW THE SVN PEOPLE WHAT THEY CAN DO AND ALSO TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE.

(F) Q: WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK OF THE GVN'S OWN INTERNAL RESPONSE TO THE VC CHALLENGE?

A: ASIDE FROM THE INITIAL FAILURE TO NOTIFY THE PEOPLE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THE GVN RESPONSE HAS BEEN CLEARLY ADEQUATE TO THE THREAT.

(G) Q: WHAT POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS SHOULD THE GVN TAKE IN CONNECTION WITH THE VC ATTACKS?

A: MASS MEDIA SHOULD BE USED TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAS HAPPENED AND IS NOW HAPPENING AND WHAT MUST AND SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT IT. ARVN OFFICERS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHING SHOULD GO INTO VC-CONTROLLED AREAS AND ENCOURAGE THE VC TO RALLY TO THE GVN SINCE THEY CAN OTHERWISE HAVE NO FUTURE. STRAFING OF THE VC IN HEAVILY POPULATED AREAS SHOULD CEASE, SINCE THIS IS CAUSING THE DEATH OF MORE INNOCENT CIVILIANS THAN OF VC AND SINCE THE ARVN UNIT CON-

CERNED WITH SUCH MATTERS IS FINDING IT NECESSARY TO ENGAGE IN A LARGE CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM TO COUNTER THE SITUATION BEING CAUSED BY STRAFING.

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