

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Intelligence Information Cable

• ROUTINE
IN TELEPOUCH

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DIST 12 MARCH 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 30 JANUARY - 29 FEBRUARY 1968 17 21 03 Z

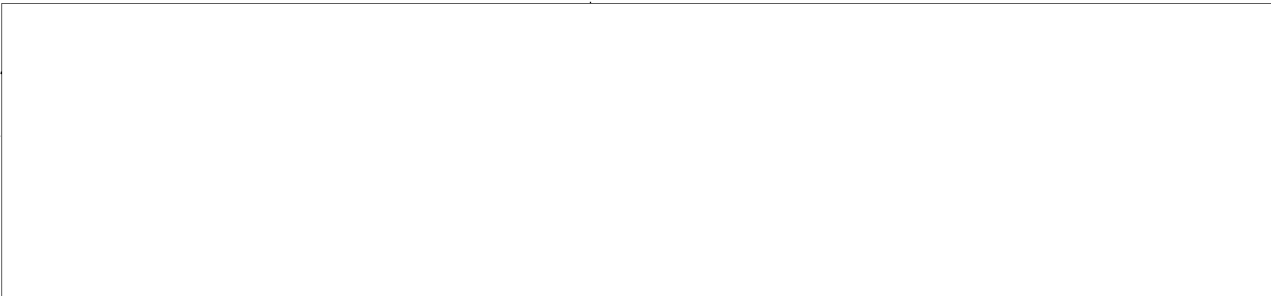
SUBJECT GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM LOSS OF POPULAR CONFIDENCE
FOLLOWING VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE IN PHU VINH CITY,
CAPITAL OF VINH BINH PROVINCE

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SOURCE



1. THE VIET CONG /VC/ LUNAR NEW YEAR ATTACK ON PHU VINH CITY,
CAPITAL OF VINH BINH PROVINCE, OVERRAN THE CITY SO QUICKLY THAT
THE PEOPLE HAVE LOST ALL CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF
VIETNAM /GVN/ AND NOW SPEAK OF A PROBABLE VC VICTORY AGAINST THE
GVN.

2. IN CONTRAST TO THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GVN, THE
PEOPLE PRAISED THE DEFENSE CONDUCTED BY THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

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OF VIETNAM /ARVN/ GARRISON, WHICH OFFERED THE ONLY ORGANIZED RESISTANCE TO THE VC IN THE ATTACK. A MAJOR PART OF THE POLICE FORCE WAS WIPED OUT BY THE INITIAL VC ATTACK IN WHICH THEY TOOK OVER THE MAIN STREET INTERSECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THE PROVINCE CHIEF FLED HIS POST EARLY IN THE BATTLE AND WAS NOT SEEN AGAIN, WHICH LEFT THE DEFENDING FORCES WITHOUT AN OVERALL COMMANDER. THE POLICE STATION WAS QUICKLY OVERRUN AND BY DAWN ON 30 JANUARY THE VC WERE EFFECTIVELY IN CONTROL OF THE CITY. THE ONLY PLACE WHICH HELD OUT WAS THE ARVN COMPOUND, WHICH THE VC WERE UNABLE TO CAPTURE DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE VC HEAVILY OUTNUMBERED THE ARVN SOLDIERS. THE PEOPLE CREDITED THE CONTINUOUS ARVN DEFENSE WITH PREVENTING THE VC FROM EXECUTING MORE THAN A FEW DOZEN PERSONS.

3. THE VC DRAMATIZED THEIR DEFEAT OF THE GVN WITH THEIR TAKEOVER OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES THE MORNING OF 30 JANUARY. THEY FORCED A LARGE PART OF THE POPULACE TO ASSEMBLE BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING TO WITNESS THE VC TAKEOVER OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVINCE AND TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT TOTAL "LIBERATION" OF THE COUNTRY WAS A CERTAINTY WITHIN A SHORT TIME. AT THIS TIME IT WAS NOTED THAT MANY OF THE

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VC CADRES SPOKE CAMBODIAN. IT WAS NOT UNTIL TWO DAYS LATER THAT ARVN FORCES REENTERED THE CITY, AND IT REQUIRED 18 DAYS OF COMBAT TO REMOVE THE LAST VC PRESENCE FROM THE CITY, DURING WHICH IT WAS BADLY DAMAGED BY ARTILLERY AND AERIAL BOMBARDMENT.

4. BY THE END OF FEBRUARY POPULAR MORALE WAS STILL EXTREMELY LOW. THE PEOPLE FEARED ANOTHER VC ATTACK AND DOUBTED THE GVN'S ABILITY TO DEFEND THEM. LOCAL GVN ADMINISTRATION WAS STILL DISORGANIZED, NO ACCURATE ESTIMATE OF LOCAL DAMAGE AND CASUALTIES HAD BEEN MADE, AND NO EFFORT TO CLEAR AWAY THE DEBRIS OR TO REASSURE THE PEOPLE HAD BEEN ATTEMPTED. [Redacted] COMMENT-- [Redacted]

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[Redacted] DOUBTED THAT ANYTHING THE GVN MIGHT SAY OR DO COULD RESTORE POPULAR CONFIDENCE IN THE GVN./

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