Mr. President:

This is the military-political assessment of probably the best
(or one of the two best) Vietnamese
Corps commanders.

As in the U.S., the lower house
is O.K.; the Senate is giving trouble.

W. W. Rostow
ITS PRETENTION OF BEING COMPETENT TO INVESTIGATE AND DETERMINE IF THEY
ARMED FORCES DEFENDED THE PEOPLE PROPERLY. END SUMMARY.

1. ON 11 FEBRUARY 1:30 III CORPS WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM (SVN). HE
FEELS THAT THE ENEMY MADE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO CAPTURE
SAIGON AND THAT HIS DECISIVE DEFEAT HAS SHORTENED THE
WAR BY AT LEAST SIX MONTHS AND WILL BRING AN ALLIED
MILITARY VICTORY IN 1968.

2. CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS UNLIKELY
THAT THERE WILL BE A SECOND ATTACK, SIMILAR TO THE FIRST,
ON SAIGON, IF AN ATTACK SHOULD OCCUR IT WILL BE ESSENTIALLY
AN ATTACK BY FIRE," IN WHICH THE ENEMY WILL UTILIZE HEAVY
MORTARS AND PROJECTILES BUT NO MAJOR GROUND FORCES. THE
HEAVY LOSSES SUSTAINED BY THE ENEMY DURING THE FIRST
ATTACK WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO MOUNT
ANOTHER MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST SAIGON FOR AT LEAST THREE
OR FOUR MONTHS AND POSSIBLY NOT BEFORE THE WAR ENDS.
(FIELD COMMENT. 7 FEBRUARY, ALSO REPORTED THAT
CONSIDERED IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE VC WOULD
LAUNCH A SECOND ATTACK ON SAIGON.)

3. FEELS THAT, IN SOME RESPECTS, ENEMY LOSSES
ARE EVEN HEAVIER THAN THE STATISTICS INDICATE. THE ENEMY
NOT ONLY LOST OVER HALF OF HIS ATTACK FORCE, BUT
SUFFERED AN ESPECIALLY SERIOUS BLOW IN HEAVY LOSSES
AMONG THE OFFICERS AND LEADER CADRES. A LARGE NUMBER OF
SAPPERS, WHO WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO REPLACE, WERE
KILLED. MORALE OF ENEMY TROOPS UNDOUBTEDLY HAS DROPPED
SHARPLY DESPITE EFFORTS BY THE VIET CONG (VC) AND THE
GOVERNMENT OF NORTH VIETNAM (DRV) TO KEEP THE CADRES AND
TROOPS FROM LEARNING THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEFEAT.

4. SAID THAT THE FACT THAT ENEMY TROOPS
WHICH ATTACKED SAIGON WERE, ON THE WHOLE, VERY YOUNG
AND POORLY TRAINED AND THAT MANY WERE NEW REPLACEMENTS
IN THEIR UNITS DID NOT INDICATE THAT THE ENEMY
HAD COMMITTED POOR TROOPS WHILE HOLDING THE GOOD ONES
IN RESERVE. A REPRESENTATIVE CROSS SECTION OF THE
ENEMY TROOPS KILLED AND CAPTURED IN THE SAIGON
CAMPAIGN DOES NOT DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THOSE
CAPTURED IN OTHER MAJOR ENGAGEMENTS. HOWEVER, THE
HIGH PERCENTAGE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY (NVA)
REPLACEMENTS IN VC UNITS IS SIGNIFICANT. THE VC ARE
FINDING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO GET INDIGENOUS
REPLACEMENTS AND ARE BECOMING MORE DEPENDENT ON NVA
PERSONNEL.

5. SAID THAT THE ENEMY OBVIOUSLY HAS NOT
GIVEN UP HIS PLAN FOR VICTORY BUT WILL CHANGE ITS
STRATEGY. THE ACTIVITY WILL BE DESIGNED TO WORSEN THE
LIFE OF THE PEOPLE; ESPECIALLY THE REFUGEES, IN THE
HOP THAT THEY WILL CAUSE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR THE
GOVERNMENT. HE EXPECTS THAT THE ENEMY WILL:

A. MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO CUT ROUTES LEADING
INTO SAIGON IN ORDER TO DISRUPT THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF
THE CAPITAL.

B. LAUNCH A "MAJOR POLITICAL OFFENSIVE"
DESIGNED TO SOW DISUNITY AMONG THE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY
THOSE IN THE REFUGEE CENTERS IN THE CAPITAL.

C. POSSIBLY LAUNCH TERRORIST ATTACKS ON

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FINAL SECTION OF TWO CITE
VITAL INSTALLATIONS IN SAIGON, SUCH AS THE WATER
WORKS AT THU DUC.
6. _Said that the number of enemy troops
remaining in Saigon proper is very small and that
enemy activity during the next few days will be mainly
limited to sniper and possibly terrorist activity.
However, he feels that the present curfew should,
and will be extended for at least one month or longer.
The hours of curfew will be reduced gradually, but it
will be some time before the more liberal hours of
the pre-curfew is justified because security is
predominant in the minds of the people and they find it
reassuring to see soldiers and policemen, side-by-side,
watching over the empty streets at night.
7. _Is convinced that the VC attack on Saigon was not simply
a diversignary effort or designed to produce a psychological victory
only he is certain in his own mind that the VC genuinely believed
they could take over Saigon and set up a revolutionary "people's
government" he has, for example, seen a number of captured documents
and proclamations which this people's government was to promulgate
after it took over. —_ Feels the VC based their hopes for success on
three ideas:
A. The people hated the government of Vietnam (GVN) and would rise
up and overthrow it if the means to do so were at hand.
B. GVN leadership was so seriously divided that it would collapse
completely if confronted by a serious and continuing crisis.
C. The morale of ARVN officers and men was very low, and the troops
would give up or flee when confronted with a determined enemy
force.
8. _Said there was a good deal of truth in the enemy analysis.
The enemy's mistake was to overlook a number of compensating factors.
While most people do not like or at best are indifferent to the GVN,
many strongly dislike the VC. If compelled to make a choice, a
majority would choose the GVN over the VC. Hatred of the VC
involves a number of factors. Catholics, for example, are strongly
opposed to any communist regime and will take active steps to avoid
one. Although the vast majority of the people in Saigon may not like
the GVN, they do like the standard of living it provides. A cyclo
driver, for example, may be poor but he enjoys a high standard of
living compared to that of a north Vietnamese.
9. _Noted that the enemy also erred in placing too much impor-
tance on the reputed friction between President Nguyen Van Thieu and
vice president Nguyen Cao Ky and the incompetence of prime minister
Nguyen Van Lcn. In doing so, he overlooked the fact that the military
institution lends behind-the-scenes cohesion to the GVN apparatus
and that in times of crisis the military is always firmly united.
—_ Also feels the enemy put too much credence in foreign press

Approved for Release: 2019/04/17 C00193282
10. ALTHOUGH HE EXUDED CONFIDENCE OVER THE MILITARY SITUATION, WAS THE SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS. HE FELT THER WERE NO REASONS TO NOT PRACTICE EXPEDITIOUS LEADERSHIP. HE HELD THE LITTLE HOPE FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE'S RELIEF (JOINT GVN/U.S. TASK FORCE) BECAUSE IT WAS DOMINATED BY CIVILIANS. HE NOTED THAT MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG, THE COMMITTEE'S CHIEF OF STAFF, HAD ANNOUNCED HE WAS RESIGNING BECAUSE THE CIVILIANS WERE "ALL TALK AND NO ACTION." ADDED HE HAD BEEN ADVISED BY THANH THAT MORNING THAT THE LATTER HAD NOT ATTENDED THAT MORNING'S COMMITTEE MEETING. SAID HE HAD ARRANGED TO SEE THANH LATER IN THE DAY TO TRY AND RESOLVE HIS PROBLEMS. FELT THAT ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION WOULD BE THE APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF GENERAL CAO VAN VIAN AS DEPUTY TO KY, WHO CHAIRS THE COMMITTEE. VIEN COULD THEN ISSUE THE NECESSARY ORDERS ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE MILITARY WHICH, IN THEIR VIEW, IS THE ONLY GROUP EQUIPPED TO GET A JOB DONE IN A HURRY. CIVILIANS, SAID, HAVE DIFFICULTY GETTING THINGS DONE AT ANY TIME AND ARE HOPELESSLY LOST IN A CRISIS. AS AN ILLUSTRATION, NOTED THAT SINCE HE HAD SUPPLIES OF A NUMBER OF COMMODITIES IN LONG AND HE HAD TELEPHONED THE HEAD OF THE GVN SUPPLY DIRECTORATE AND OFFERED TO MAKE THESE SUPPLIES AVAILABLE FOR THE RELIEF OF THE PEOPLE. IN REPLY, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL HAD GIVEN HIM NUMEROUS EXCUSES AS TO WHY HE WAS UNABLE TO PICK UP AND USE THE FOODSTUFFS. SAID HE HAD THEN CALLED THE DIRECTOR OF GVN COMMISSARIES, WHO IMMEDIATELY MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO BRING THE SUPPLIES TO SAIGON.

1. HE CONCLUDED THAT THE ANSWER TO THE PRESENT DILEMMA IS TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT THE VICE PRESIDENT TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AS PRIME MINISTER. WHAT IS NEEDED IS TO CONCENTRATE GOVERNMENT POWERS IN THE HANDS OF ONE MAN WHO CAN GIVE ORDERS AND CUT THROUGH THE EXISTING MAZE OF REDTAPE. THUS, REMOVAL OF LOC WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT IN ITSELF SINCE THERE WOULD STILL BE DIVIDED AUTHORITY. SAID HE DID NOT THINK THE APPOINTMENT OF A MILITARY MAN—THANG OR VIEN, FOR EXAMPLE—AS PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE AN ANSWER. THE NEED IS FOR UNIFIED LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP AND, UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THIS COULD BEST BE ACCOMPLISHED BY VESTING POWERS IN KY. EMPHASIZED HE DID NOT PLAN TO TAKE STEPS TO BRING ABOUT THIS CHANGE. HE SAID HE KNEW VIEN AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN NGO LOAN ALSO FAVORED THIS SOLUTION.

12. EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE LOVER HOUSE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE VC TET OFFENSIVE, BUT HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF MANY SENATORS. HE SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY THE SENATE'S PRETENSIONS TO HAVING SUFFICIENT COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE TO INVESTIGATE THE VC ATTACK AND DETERMINE IF THE ARMED FORCES HAD DONE A GOOD JOB IN DEFENDING THE PEOPLE. HIS SUBORDINATE OFFICERS, CONTINUED, FEEL THAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD VOTE THEN AN UNQUALIFIED EXPRESSION OF THANKS. INSTEAD, THE SENATE APPEARS TO BE SAYING THAT THE ARMED FORCES HAVE ITS THANKS AS LONG AS THE FIGHTING CONTINUES BUT THAT AS SOON AS THE CRISIS SUBSIDES IT WILL CHARGE INCOMPETENCE ON THE PART OF MANY ARMED FORCES'LEADERS. KHAM SINGLED OUT SENATORS TRAN VAN DON;'ON THAT-DINH AND TRAN NGOC NHUAN FOR PARTICULAR CRITICISM. ADDED THAT THIHE HIMSELF WAS SURPRISED BY THE ENEMY'S ABILITY TO LAUNCH SUCH WIDESPREAD,COORDINATED ATTACKS, IT WAS NOT TRUE THAT THE ATTACK ON SAIGON WAS A SURPRISE IT HAD BEEN KNOWN THAT SUCH AN ATTACK WAS POSSIBLE, AND A NUMBER OF STEPS TO CUT OFF THE ENEMY'S ACCESS TO SAIGON HAD BEEN TAKEN SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE BEGAN.

13. FIELD DELEGATE: AMBASSADOR BUNKER, DEPUTY AMBASSADOR, POLITICAL COUNCILOR) USMACV (GENERAL WESTMORELAND, GENERAL ABRAMS, AMBASSADOR KOMER, CHIEF OF STAFF, J-2) 7TH AIRFORCE (GENERAL MONYER) DIJ/JUSPAO (MR. ZORTHIAN ONLY) CINCPAC PALT ARPAC FACAF