

# Intelligence Information Cable

IN 54115

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GROUP 1  
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THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.

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DIST 19 FEBRUARY 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 18 FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT III CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL KHANG'S COMMENTS ON POSSIBI-  
LITY OF FUTURE VIET CONG ATTACKS AND ON PROBLEMS RELA-  
TING TO VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (18 FEBRUARY 1968) [redacted]

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SOURCE [redacted]

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SUMMARY: ON 17 FEBRUARY, VICE PRESIDENT KY, III CORPS COMM-  
ANDER GENERAL KHANG, CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF GENERAL VIEN  
AND MAJOR GENERAL THANG URGED PRESIDENT THIEU TO TAKE A STRONGER

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STAND AND TO SHOW MORE LEADERSHIP. KHANG ALSO OFFERED HIS RESIGNATION ON GROUNDS HE DID NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH A WEAK GOVERNMENT AS THE PRESENT ONE. THIEU TOOK THE RESIGNATION UNDER ADVISEMENT AND MADE NO COMMITMENT ABOUT CHANGING HIS WAYS. KHANG DOES NOT EXPECT HIS RESIGNATION TO BE ACCEPTED. ON 18 FEBRUARY, KHANG SAID HE CONTINUED TO DOUBT THAT THE VIET CONG WOULD LAUNCH A SECOND-WAVE ATTACK, ALTHOUGH HE EXPECTED THEM TO TRY TO ISOLATE SAIGON. KHANG IS PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DIVISION COMMANDERS. GENERAL VIEN, ACCORDING TO KHANG, IS NOT PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCES OF II CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL LOC AND IV CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL MANH. KHANG EXPECTS MANH TO BE REPLACED BY GENERAL THANG AS SOON AS THE LATTER CONCLUDES HIS DUTIES WITH THE TASK FORCE. HE IS LESS CERTAIN THAT LOC WILL BE REPLACED BY GENERAL LAN. DURING THE MEETING WITH THIEU ON 17 FEBRUARY, THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATED ATTACKS IN THE FUTURE BY CATHOLICS AGAINST BUDDHISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. III CORPS COMMANDER LIEUTENANT GENERAL LE NGUYEN KHANG SAID ON 18 FEBRUARY THAT DURING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU ON THE MORNING OF 17 FEBRUARY, HE, VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY, CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF (JGS) GENERAL CAN VAN VIEN AND MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG HAD ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE A STRONGER AND, IF NEED BE, TOUGHER LINE TOWARD THE CIVILIAN MINISTRIES. THIS WAS THE TIME FOR DIRECTIVES AND ORDERS, NOT

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DEBATE. IF A PARTICULAR MINISTER EITHER COULD NOT OR WOULD NOT IMPLEMENT THE PRESIDENT'S ORDERS, HE SHOULD BE DISMISSED. IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THIEU CLEARLY INDICATE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, IN TERMS NOT ONLY OF GENERAL POLICY BUT OF SPECIFIC TASKS. KHANG SAID THAT EVERYONE PRESENT, INCLUDING KY, STRESSED TO THIEU THAT THE PEOPLE ARE NOW IN THE MOOD FOR STRONG GOVERNMENT AND WILLING TO MAKE SACRIFICES TO GET IT. IF THIEU WAITED TOO LONG AND THE THREAT OF VIET CONG (VC) ATTACKS BEGAN TO DECLINE, THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE.

2. KHANG SAID THAT DURING THE MEETING HE HAD OFFERED HIS RESIGNATION TO THIEU, NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM OF HIS PERFORMANCE DURING THE CRISIS BY SENATORS AND DEPUTIES AND HE THUS WANTED TO GIVE THIEU THE CHANCE TO APPOINT A NEW CORPS COMMANDER IF HE WISHED. KHANG SAID HE ALSO TOLD THIEU HE WAS UNHAPPY WITH THE WEAKNESS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO CONTINUE IN HIS PRESENT POST UNLESS THIEU COULD GIVE HIM SOME ASSURANCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MORE FORCEFUL IN THE FUTURE. KHANG COMMENTED THAT THIEU TOOK HIS RESIGNATION UNDER ADVISEMENT, ADDING THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT THIEU TO ACCEPT IT. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT THIEU DID NOT SUGGEST HE PLANNED TO REVISE HIS POLICIES OR HIS APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT. RATHER, HE JUST LISTENED AND THANKED EVERYONE FOR HIS VIEWS.

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3. KHANG SAID HE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE A SECOND-WAVE VC ATTACK ON SAIGON INVOLVING A LARGE COMMITMENT OF GROUND FORCES WAS UNLIKELY. THE VC, HE SAID, WILL MORE LIKELY RESORT TO ATTACKS BY HEAVY MORTAR AND ROCKET FIRE. KHANG SAID HE BELIEVED THE ENEMY WILL ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE SAIGON BY INTERDICTING ROADS AND BRIDGES LEADING INTO THE CITY AND WILL RELY HEAVILY ON POLITICAL WARFARE, ESPECIALLY AMONG REFUGEES.

4. KHANG SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF ALL THREE ARVN DIVISION COMMANDERS IN HIS CORPS AREA AND THOUGHT THAT THE POLICE FIELD FORCES HAD PERFORMED WELL. HE HAD HAD SOME MINOR PROBLEMS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN VERY LITTLE SUCH ACTIVITY IN PROPORTION TO THE OPPORTUNITIES.

5. KHANG SAID THAT JGS CHIEF GENERAL VIEN VIEWS AS INADEQUATE THE PERFORMANCES DURING THE RECENT CRISIS OF II CORPS COMMANDER LIEUTENANT GENERAL VINH LOC AND IV CORPS COMMANDER MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN VAN MANH. VIEN IS ANGRY AT LOC FOR NOT HAVING BEEN IN HIS CORPS AREA WHEN THE VC ATTACKS BEGAN. LOC HAD COME TO SAIGON WITHOUT NOTIFYING THE JGS AND RETURNED TO PLEIKU ON THE MORNING

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OF 31 JANUARY. HE THUS WAS NOT IN COMMAND DURING THE INITIAL HOURS OF THE ATTACK. MANH IS UNDER FIRE BECAUSE OF THE POOR OVER-ALL PERFORMANCE OF ARVN TROOPS IN HIS AREA. THE 7TH DIVISION IN PARTICULAR SHOWED UP POORLY. ALSO, PACIFICATION IN IV CORPS HAS SUFFERED A SEVERE SETBACK IN THE DELTA, WITH ALL REGIONAL AND POPULAR FORCES TROOPS MANNING THE HIGHWAY FROM MY THO TO CAN THO OUT OF ACTION.

6. KHANG SAID HE BELIEVED MAJOR GENERAL THANG WILL REPLACE MANH IN IV CORPS AS SOON AS THANG CONCLUDES HIS DUTIES WITH THE COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE'S RELIEF. HE WAS LESS CERTAIN ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT OF LOC BY MAJOR GENERAL MUU MONG LAN. KHANG SAID HE AND VIEN ARE PERSONALLY OPPOSED TO LAN'S APPOINTMENT BECAUSE THEY FEEL HE IS AND HAS BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION AND IS NOT AN ESPECIALLY GOOD FIELD COMMANDER. KHANG SAID LAN GIVES A GOOD BRIEFING AND SUPERFICIALLY MAKES A GOOD IMPRESSION. HE HIMSELF, HOWEVER, DOES NOT THINK LAN WOULD MAKE A GOOD CORPS COMMANDER.

7. REVERTING TO THE 17 FEBRUARY MEETING WITH THIEU, KHANG SAID THE MEETING HAD BEEN HELD PRIMARILY TO WITNESS THE FORMAL RETURN TO KHANG BY VIEN OF THE SAIGON COMMAND. HE EXPLAINED THAT DURING THE FIRST FIVE DAYS OF THE ATTACK HE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEFENSE OF BOTH SAIGON AND III CORPS AND HAD FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO FULFILL HIS SAIGON AND BIEN HOA DUTIES SIMULTANEOUSLY.

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VIEN HAD THEREFORE ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAIGON, WITH KHANG AS HIS DEPUTY. KHANG COMMENTED THAT DESPITE REPORTS TO THE CONTRARY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC LOAN WAS NEVER IN COMMAND IN SAIGON. HE WAS AND IS NOW KHANG'S DEPUTY FOR SAIGON'S DEFENSE. MOREOVER, LOAN NEVER ASSUMED DIRECT COMMAND OF ANY ARVN TROOPS, ALTHOUGH ARVN AND POLICE FIELD FORCES DID CARRY OUT COORDINATED ACTIONS AND LOAN, AS THE SENIOR OR MOST FORCEFUL COMMANDER ON THE SCENE, MAY HAVE APPEARED TO BE THE OVERALL COMMANDER.

8. KHANG SAID THAT DURING THE MEETING THOSE PRESENT BRIEFLY DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATED CLASHES BETWEEN CATHOLIC AND BUDDHIST GROUPS IN THE FUTURE IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SHOW IT IS PAYING SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO THE DEFENSE OF THE PEOPLE. ACCORDING TO KHANG, A NUMBER OF CATHOLIC LEADERS BELIEVE THAT IN SEVERAL INSTANCES MILITANT BUDDHISTS WERE IN COLLUSION WITH THE VC AND AIDED THEM IN KILLING MILITANT ANTI-COMMUNIST CATHOLICS. AS A RESULT, IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PROJECT A STRONG IMAGE

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AND INDICATE IT HAS THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL, ISOLATED CATHOLIC GROUPS MIGHT TRY TO TAKE REVENGE ON THE BUDDHISTS.

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