

8.67 EDITIONS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Intelligence Information Cable

ROUTINE
IN TELEPOUCH

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DIST 12 MARCH 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

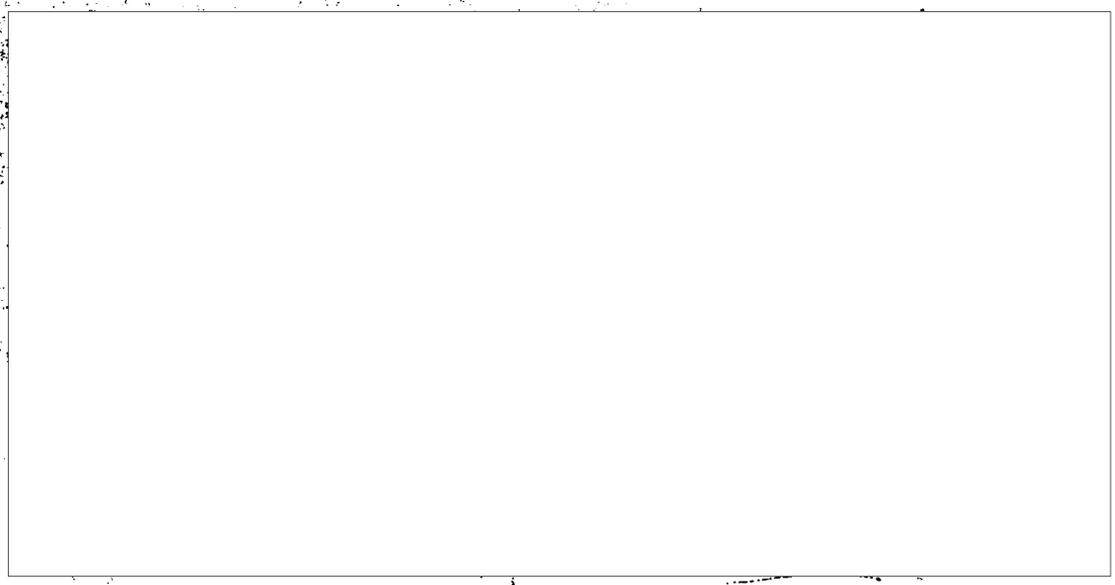
DOI 31 JANUARY - EARLY FEBRUARY 1968

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SUBJECT POPULAR REACTIONS TO THE VIET CONG TET ATTACK
ON CAN THO CITY

ACQ
SOURCE



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1. THE ABILITY OF THE VIET CONG /VC/ TO ENTER THE CITY OF
CAN THO DURING THE TET /LUNAR NEW YEAR/ ATTACK ON 31 JANUARY 1968
SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY IN
THE ABILITY OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM /ARVN/ TO

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DEFEND THE CITY. MANY TOWNSPEOPLE COMMENTED THAT IF ARVN
COULD NOT DEFEND ITS OWN CORPS HEADQUARTERS CITY, THE ENTIRE
DELTA REGION MUST BE EVEN MORE VULNERABLE TO VC ATTACK AND SEIZURE.
POPULAR MORALE IN THE CITY WAS BADLY DEPRESSED FOLLOWING THE
VC ATTACK AND FEAR OF A SECOND ATTACK WAS WIDESPREAD. THE
PEOPLE CRITICIZED ARVN MORE FOR ITS POOR INTELLIGENCE IN
NOT HAVING ANY PRIOR WARNING OF THE VC ATTACK THAN FOR THE
MANNER IN WHICH THE TROOPS FOUGHT ONCE THE ATTACK WAS UNDERWAY.
NEVERTHELESS, MANY PEOPLE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE VC WOULD HAVE
OVERRUN THE CITY ON 31 JANUARY IF THE ATTACK HAD NOT BEEN
STOPPED BY U.S. AIR FORCE AERIAL BOMBARDMENT. DESPITE
THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE BOMBING, MANY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE
TOWN WELCOMED THE AIR ATTACKS, REASONING THAT MORE LIVES WOULD
HAVE BEEN LOST BY A VC SUCCESS THAN WERE LOST IN THE BOMBING.

2. DESPITE LOW POPULAR MORALE RESULTING FROM THE ATTACK, NO
ONE IN THE CITY WAS KNOWN TO HAVE JOINED THE VC SIDE DURING OR
AFTER THE ATTACK. NOTHING WAS HEARD OF ANY BELIEF AMONG THE
TOWNSPEOPLE THAT THE VC WOULD WIN THE WAR. RUMORS OF A COALITION
GOVERNMENT INCLUDING THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH
VIETNAM WERE NOT WIDESPREAD IN THE CITY.

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3. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BATTLE ENDED, THE PROVINCE CHIEF AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES BEGAN TO SET UP REFUGEE RELIEF SERVICES, WHICH WERE APPRECIATED BY THE PEOPLE. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] CALLED THE REFUGEE RELIEF EFFORTS 'REMARKABLE.' /

4. PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU'S SPEECH TO THE NATION ON 2 FEBRUARY HAD A GENERALLY GOOD EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE IN CAN THO, NOT AS MUCH FOR WHAT HE SAID AS FOR THE FACT THAT HE ADDRESSED THE NATION AT A TIME OF MUCH DOUBT AND FEAR WHEN EVIDENCE OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY WAS NEEDED.

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