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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

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SUBJECT

PRESIDENT THIEU'S CONCERN OVER ATTEMPTS
UNDERMINE HIS POSITION; ANALYSIS OF THE
VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE

Mandatory Review
Case # NLJ 910-261
Document # 12b

ACQ

VIETNAM, SAIGON [REDACTED] FIELD NO.

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SOURCE

[REDACTED]
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SUMMARY: PRESIDENT THIEU IS TROUBLED OVER WHAT HE DESCRIBED
AS ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE HIS POSITION AS PRESIDENT. HE NAMED
VICE-PRESIDENT KY, NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR LOAN AND OVERSEAS
SECURITY SERVICE CHIEF MAT DEN AS HIS DETRACTORS. THIEU
DESCRIBED THE VIET CONG (VC) TET OFFENSIVE AS ORIGINATING
FROM WEAKNESS. THE VC LAUNCHED IT TO GAIN A PSYCHOLOGICAL
VICTORY SINCE THEY REALIZE THEY CANNOT WIN A MILITARY WAR.
HOWEVER, THE VC WILL BE A SERIOUS THREAT OVER THE NEXT FEW
S-E [REDACTED]

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE

5/27/98

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MONTHS AND WILL PROBABLY LAUNCH THE NEXT PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE IN MAY OR JUNE BEFORE THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS. IN THE POLITICAL FIELD, THIEU SAID THAT HE IS NOT OPPOSED TO ANTI-COMMUNIST FRONT GROUPS, BUT HE THINKS IT IS BETTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THEM.

END SUMMARY.

1. [REDACTED] PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU SAID THAT HIS MAJOR PROBLEM AT THE PRESENT TIME IS A PERSONAL ONE WHICH INVOLVES ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO UNDERMINE HIS POWER AND PRESTIGE AS PRESIDENT. THIEU NAMED VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE NGUYEN NGOC LOAN AND CHIEF OF THE OVERSEAS SECURITY SERVICE MAI DEN AS THE INSTIGATORS OF THIS EFFORT. THIEU FEELS THAT HE HAS BEEN BACKED INTO A CORNER, AND ALTHOUGH HE IS GENERALLY FAIR AND GENTLE TO ALL PEOPLE, HE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE SOME ACTION TO ASSERT HIMSELF AGAINST SUCH DETRACTORS. ALL THIEU WANTS IS TO BE A GOOD PRESIDENT FOR THE FULL FOUR YEARS OR EVEN THESE FIRST FIVE MONTHS, IF HE DOES NOT SURVIVE THE PRESENT FIGHTING, THOUGH HE HAS NO FEARS FOR HIS PERSONAL SAFETY.

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OF THE VIET CONG (VC) THREAT OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. HOWEVER, HE WOULD LIKE A FORMAL U.S. AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THESE ADDITIONAL TROOPS BEFORE TAKING POSITIVE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT MOBILIZATION.

4. THIEU ASCRIBED THE VC TET OFFENSIVE TO HANOI'S REALIZATION THAT MASSIVE AMERICAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN VIETNAM HAS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE COMMUNISTS TO WIN A MILITARY VICTORY. THUS, THE TET OFFENSIVE IS AN EXPRESSION OF WEAKNESS. IT HAD AS ITS PRINCIPAL PURPOSE PUTTING THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM INTO A STRONG POSITION IN PREPARATION FOR THE INESCAPABLE DAY WHEN NEGOTIATIONS MUST BEGIN. IN FACT, THE VC ARE SO WEAK THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO WAIT UNTIL THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY OF NEXT YEAR'S TET UNTIL THEY ATTACK.

5. THE TET OFFENSIVE REPRESENTS A LAST DITCH MILITARY EFFORT WHICH CAME ABOUT BECAUSE THE VC WERE FAILING ON ALL OTHER FRONTS. THE VC ATTACKED THE CITIES IN ORDER TO CREATE MAXIMUM PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT. A FEW ROCKET OR MORTAR ROUNDS CAUSE MINOR DAMAGE BUT CREATE A GREAT PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT WHEREAS 50 HAMLETS TAKEN OVER BY THE VC COULD PASS LARGELY

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UNNOTICED BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THIEU CITED THE VC ORDER TO TAKE AND HOLD THE CITIES FOR 48 HOURS AS AN INDICATION THAT THE VC REALIZED THEIR WEAKNESS.

6. THIEU BELIEVES THAT THE VC WILL LAUNCH THE NEXT PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE IN MAY OF JUNE BECAUSE THE VC REALIZE THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS FOR THE MAXIMUM PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION.

7. THIEU IS IN FAVOR OF A UNITED ANTI-COMMUNIST FRONT GROUP. HE SAID THAT THERE IS NO REASON WHY HE SHOULD BE OPPOSED TO FRONT GROUPS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THEY ARE ORGANIZED IN SUPPORT OF HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THIEU DOES NOT THINK THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD OFFER ITS SUPPORT TO THESE FRONT GROUPS SINCE THE MEMBERS WOULD ASSUME THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO EXPLOIT THEM AND WOULD RESIGN CAUSING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FRONT. THIEU BELIEVES THAT IT IS BETTER FOR HIM TO CONTINUE SEEING SELECTED POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM TO COOPERATE IN BRINGING THEIR FOLLOWERS INTO A UNITED FRONT GROUP WHICH WILL OPPOSE COMMUNISM AND OFFER ITS SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT. THIEU

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SAID THAT EVENTUALLY CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE FRONT GROUPS MAY FORM THE BASIS FOR A POLITICAL PARTY ALTHOUGH THIS SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP WITHIN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIEU ADDED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF FRONT GROUPS AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIETNAM OVER THE YEARS, AND FEW HAVE HAD ANY REAL COHESION OR BEEN PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE IN BROADENING THEIR POLITICAL BASE.

8. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR BUNKER, POLITICAL COUNSELOR, MR. ZORTHIAN) USMACV (GENERAL WESTMORELAND, GENERAL ABRAMS, AMBASSADOR KOMER, CHIEF OF STAFF, J-2) 7TH AIR FORCE (GENERAL MOMYER ONLY) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF REPORT CLASS SECRET [REDACTED]

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