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SECTION 1 OF 2

VIETNAM STATION REPORT [redacted] (3-9 DECEMBER 1967)

THE WINTER-SPRING OFFENSIVE - A BIG GAMBLE?

RECENT ENEMY COMBAT ACTIONS, THE MOVEMENT OF POSSIBLY TWO ADDITIONAL DIVISIONS FROM NORTH VIETNAM, AND SEVERAL PIECES OF EVIDENCE [redacted] AND DOCUMENTS COMBINE TO INDICATE THAT THE VC/NVA ARE UNDERTAKING SOMETHING VERY MUCH LIKE AN ALL-OUT PUNCH DURING THE 1967-1968 WINTER-SPRING OFFENSIVE. ON THE FACE OF IT, THIS SEEMS A MAD THING TO DO, AND IT FLIES RIGHT IN THE FACE OF THE DICTA OF THE GIAP ARTICLES OF ONLY THREE MONTHS AGO ABOUT CONSERVING FORCES FOR A PROTRACTED WAR.

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WHAT IS THE ENEMY UP TO AND WHAT POSSIBLE REASONS ARE THERE FOR HIS ODD BEHAVIOR? OUR VIEWS ARE NECESSARILY SPECULATIVE; WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING AS A "THINK PIECE."
STRANGE ACTIONS

THE ENEMY'S STUBBORN PROLONGATION OF THE BATTLES OF LOC

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NINH AND DIK TO IN THE FACE OF HEAVY LOSSES (AND AN EXTREMELY UNFAVORABLE CASUALTY RATIO AT LOC NINH) INDICATE A NEW WILLINGNESS TO MAINTAIN SUSTAINED COMBAT WITH LARGE FRIENDLY FORCES OUTSIDE THE DMZ AREA. AT THE SAME TIME, ENEMY FORCES HAVE DISPLAYED A MARKED INCREASE IN AGGRESSIVENESS ON A SMALLER SCALE THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM. THIS IS REFLECTED NOT SO MUCH IN THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS AS IN THEIR SIZE AND INTENSITY. NOW IS THE TIME.

PRISONERS TAKEN AT LOC NINH SAY THEY HAD BEEN INDOCTRINATED BEFORE THE BATTLE TO MAKE A HEROIC DO-OR-DIE EFFORT TO DESTROY A MAJOR FRIENDLY UNIT. THIS IS IN LINE WITH STATEMENTS OF OTHER PRISONERS AND DEFECTORS THAT AN ALL-OUT EFFORT IS TO BE MADE IN THE WINTER-SPRING OFFENSIVE. TO BE SURE, IT IS STANDARD PRACTICE FOR VC INDOCTRINATIONS TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF UPCOMING CAMPAIGNS, BUT THIS TIME THERE ARE DIFFERENCES. THERE IS A "THIS-IS-IT" TONE, AND THERE ARE IMPLICATIONS--EVEN SOME APPARENTLY EXPLICIT STATEMENTS--THAT THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN IS THE GREAT FINAL EFFORT THAT WILL BRING VICTORY FOR THE VC.

INTERROGATION REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS SPEAK OF ITS "HISTORIC

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SIGNIFICANCE" AND "DECISIVE" NATURE. TRAINING MATERIAL CAPTURED IN LONG AN PROVINCE, DATED 17 OCTOBER 1967, SAYS THAT THE YEAR 1967-1968 WILL CONCLUDE THE REVOLUTION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. A 22 OCTOBER REPORT OF THE VC BA BIEN PROVINCE FORWARD SUPPLY COUNCIL SAYS: "IN THE DISCUSSION OF OUR OVERALL FAVORABLE SITUATION, OUR COMRADES CONFIDENTLY REALIZED THAT WE HAVE SUFFICIENT CAPABILITIES TO CRUSH THE UNITED STATES IMPERIALISTS' AGGRESSIVE SCHEME AND WIN COMPLETE VICTORY IN THE 1967-1968 WINTER-SPRING PERIOD." OTHER DOCUMENTS ASK LESS PAT ABOUT

PROMISING COMPLETE VICTORY AS AN IMMEDIATE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN, BUT THEY CONSISTENTLY SPEAK OF THIS WINTER-SPRING ^{inc. decisive} BEING ~~3-66;3~~. AN UNDATED COMMUNIQUE OF THE CENTRAL TRUNGMCBO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT CAPTURED ON 12 NOVEMBER CONTAINS EIGHT ARTICLES GOVERNING BEHAVIOR DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THE "LIBERATION" OF TOWNS AND CITIES.

A VC PLATOON LEADER AND TECHNICIAN WHO RALLIED IN LONG AN PROVINCE ON 28 SEPTEMBER SAYS THAT IN THEIR SEPTEMBER INDOCTRINATION COURSE HE AND HIS FELLOW CADRES AND SOLDIERS WERE TOLD THAT THEY WOULD ACHIEVE "ULTIMATE VICTORY" DURING THE WINTER SPRING CAMPAIGN. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST

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"DECISIVE VICTORY" AND THE LAST BIG STEP BEFORE THE "COMPLETE VICTORY," WHICH MEANS UNIFICATION OF ALL VIETNAM UNDER AN OPENLY COMMUNIST REGIME.

THE THIRD FACTOR MAY SEEM ON THE SURFACE TO BE CONTRADICTORY TO THE OTHERS, BUT IT IS NOT. THE COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE, NORTH AND SOUTH, ARE HURTING BADLY FROM THE ACCUMULATED DRAIN OF THE PAST TWO YEARS. THEY ARE LOSING HEALTHY YOUNG MEN AT THE RATE OF ABOUT 180,000 A YEAR FROM THEIR POPULATION BASE OF ABOUT 22 MILLION. THEY FACE THE LOSS OF A GENERATION. THE ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAIN IS ALSO SEVERE.

THE COMMUNIST LEADERS MAY THEREFORE QUESTION WHETHER THEY CAN SUSTAIN PRESENT LEVELS OF ACTIVITY EVEN FOR ONE OR TWO MORE YEARS, LET ALONG THE 5, 10, OR 20 YEARS OF THEIR PROPAGANDA BOASTS. THEY HAVE TWO ALTERNATIVES: TACITLY TO ADMIT WEAKNESS AND REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY, RISKING THE GENERATION OF A REVERSE MOMENTUM, A COLLAPSE OF MORALE, AND THE DESERTION OF ALL BUT THE HARD CORE; OR, TO USE THEIR STILL FORMIDABLE ASSETS BOLDLY IN A FIERCE ATTACK THAT WILL GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF GREAT STRENGTH AND POSSIBLY WIN THEM A PARTIAL VICTORY ("DECISIVE VICTORY", IN THEIR TERMS) WHICH WILL END

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THE DRAIN ON THEIR RESOURCES AND PUT THEM IN A POSITION TO GAIN THEIR MAXIMUM OBJECTIVES WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME. THEY APPEAR TO HAVE CHOSEN THE LATTER COURSE.

IN SUM, THE ENEMY APPEARS TO BELIEVE HE HAS THE CAPABILITY OF FORCING US IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS TO PULL OUT OF VIETNAM AND LEAVE THE COUNTRY UNDER A COALITION GOVERNMENT DOMINATED, PERHAPS COVERTLY, BY THE COMMUNISTS. HE HAS LAUNCHED AN ALL-OUT WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN ON THIS BASIS AND HAS WHIPPED UP A LAST GREAT BURST OF ENTHUSIASM AMONG HIS ACTIONS TESTIFY THAT HE BELIEVES HIS WORDS.

HAVING SAID THIS, LET US HASTEN TO STRESS THAT OUR VIEW OF THE PROSPECTS IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE ENEMY'S. WE BELIEVE HE HAS DRASTICALLY MISREAD THE SITUATION, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO MILITARY CAPABILITIES. IF HE CONTINUES HIS PLANNED OFFENSIVE, HE WILL CAUSE US SOME PAINFUL LOSSES, BUT HIS LOSSES WILL BE STAGGERING. THE MASSING OF ENLARGED FORCES PLAYS TO OUR GREAT ADVANTAGE IN FIREPOWER, ESPECIALLY AIR POWER. HE HAS TAKEN A GAMBLE THAT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO FAIL, AND THAT FAILURE WILL HAVE A CRUSHING EFFECT ON HIS FORCES. BEFORE THE TERM OF THE WINTER-SPRING OFFENSIVE IS FINISHED, HE WILL

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PROBABLY RECOGNIZE HIS ERROR AND BE FACED WITH A DECISION WHETHER TO CUT HIS LOSSES BY BACKING DOWN, WITH ALL THAT WOULD ENTAIL, OR TO PLAY OUT THE GAME REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

IN EITHER CASE, THE ENEMY WILL HAVE PUT HIMSELF IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION, AND AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN TO EXPLOIT THIS SHOULD PAY OFF HANDSOMELY.

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