

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Intelligence Information Cable

EO 13526
• PRIORITY 3.3(h)(2)
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IN 46118 3.5(c)
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GROUP 1
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~~SECRET~~

071858Z CITE [redacted] 3.5(c)

DIST 7 FEBRUARY 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 6 FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT VIETNAMESE ANALYSIS OF VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (6 FEBRUARY 1968) [redacted]

SOURCE

[redacted]

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NAME	ACT	INFO
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actions

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1. THERE HAS BEEN NEAR UNANIMOUS PRAISE BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS FOR NORTH VIETNAMESE GENERAL VO NGUYEN GIAP'S PLAN OF ATTACK, WHICH WAS BRILLIANTLY CONCEIVED AND AUDACIOUSLY EXECUTED. HOWEVER IN RETROSPECT , THERE WERE ALSO SERIOUS ERRORS IN THE PLAN. THE LACK OF ARTILLERY IN THE ATTACK ON SAIGON IS

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SOMEWHAT SURPRISING. A NUMBER OF THEORIES ARE ADVANCED, ONE BEING THE DISCOVERY OF A LARGE ARTILLERY CACHE BY THE AMERICANS. ANOTHER ATTRIBUTES THE ABSENCE OF ARTILLERY TO THE ELIMINATION OF A NUMBER OF KEY ENEMY LEADERS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE ATTACK, CAUSING A BREADOWN IN COMMAND DECISIONS. IN OTHER WORDS, FOR POLITICAL REASONS, THE VIET CONG (VC) / NORTH VIETNAMESE (DRV) LEADERS WANTED TO HOLD OFF ON THE USE OF ARTILLERY IN ORDER NOT TO JEOPARDIZE THE HOPE THAT THE POPULACE WOULD RISE AND SUPPORT THEM. POSSIBLY, IT IS CONJECTURED, IF THIS PART OF THE PLAN FAILED, A COMMAND DECISION COULD BE MADE TO BRING UP SUPPORTING FIREPOWER. HOWEVER, BY THE TIME THE LACK OF A POPULAR UPRISING BECAME APPARENT, KEY ENEMY LEADERS HAD EITHER BEEN KILLED OR PUT TO FLIGHT OR WERE WITHOUT COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEIR TROOPS.

2. MANY GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) OFFICIALS FEEL THAT THE BREAKDOWN OF WHAT HAD TO BE A VERY INTRICATE AND DELICATE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK MAY HAVE BEEN A SERIOUS FLAW IN THE VC MASTER PLAN. COVERT AND COORDINATED, NOT TO MENTION COMPARTMENTED, MOVEMENT OF SUCH LARGE NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL INTO SAIGON AND THE OTHER POPULATED AREAS ATTACKED, MUST HAVE PLACED A SEVERE STRAIN ON AN ALREADY DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION PROBLEM. IN THE EARLY

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ORGANIZATION PHASE THE ENEMY WAS ABLE TO BENEFIT GREATLY FROM THE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE OF TET, A PERIOD WHEN THERE IS MUCH MOVEMENT IN THE CITY. BUT THESE FRAGILE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS MUST HAVE BROKEN DOWN FAIRLY RAPIDLY TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE ATTACKING FORCE.

3. THE LACK OF SUFFICIENT AREA KNOWLEDGE BY THOSE MEMBERS OF THE ATTACK FORCE NOT INDIGENOUS TO SAIGON WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY CONSIDERED. AFTER INDIGENOUS LEADERS WERE KILLED, OTHERS IN THE ATTACK FORCE MADE SERIOUS ERRORS DUE TO A LACK OF PROPER AREA KNOWLEDGE, LEADING TO THEIR CAPTURE OR DESTRUCTION.

4. THE MAJOR FLAW IN GIAP'S PLAN WAS LACK OF TRUE APPRECIATION FOR THE FEELINGS OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. PROBABLY VC CADRES FROM SAIGON AND ELSEWHERE HAD CONVINCED THE DRV THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WERE SO DISCONTENTED WITH THE THIEU/KY GOVERNMENT THAT THEY WOULD RISE UP AND WELCOME THE INVADERS AS COMRADES IN ARMS, ESPECIALLY IF THE INVADERS COULD MAKE AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF FORCE. THE TOTAL LACK OF SUPPORT MAY CAUSE THE DRV TO REEVALUATE ITS PRESENT POSITION IN THE SOUTH.

5. A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL VIETNAMESE THINK THIS MAY HAVE BEEN A LAST GASP EFFORT BY THE VC AND THEIR DRV

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ALLIES. THEY POINT OUT THAT MOST BRILLIANT LAST GASP EFFORTS SUCH AS THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN AND MANY OF THE MOVES OF FIELD MARSHAL ROMMEL WERE STAGED "BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO THEM AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME IN HISTORY". IN BRIEF, IT IS ALTOGETHER POSSIBLE THAT GIAP ORDERED THE ATTACK NOT BECAUSE HE FELT THAT HE WAS OPERATING FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH, BUT BECAUSE HE WAS OPERATING FROM A POSITION OF DESPERATION.

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