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REF: DIRECTOR 76712 * Requested contribution to SNIE titled "Short-term outlook in Vietnam." GENERAL

1. WHATEVER STRATEGY IS FOLLOWED BY THE ENEMY OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, IT WILL DERIVE NEITHER FROM A POSITION OF DESPERATION, NOR FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH. HE STILL HAS MOST OF HIS MILITARY FORCES INTACT. TENUOUS INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE SUBSTANTIALLY BUILT UP HIS FORCES IN THE MONTH PRIOR TO THE TET OFFENSIVE AND IS NOW BUSILY RECRUITING IN THE FORMER GVN-CONTROLLED AREAS WHERE MANPOWER WAS NOT PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE TO HIM. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE TOTAL OF MAIN, LOCAL AND GURERRILLA FORCES AVAILABLE TO HIM TODAY IS NOT SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW THAT AVAILABLE TO HIM ON 1 JANUARY, DESPITE THE CONSIDERABLE LOSSES INFLICTED ON HIM SINCE THAT DATE. MOREOVER, HE RETAINS THE OPTION OF SENDING IN ADDITIONAL FORCES FROM THE NORTH EITHER AS NEW UNITS OR TO SERVE AS REPLACEMENTS, IF HE SO CHOOSES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LOSS

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OF IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF THE VC INFRASTRUCTURE, THE IMPRESSMENT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF UNTRAINED PERSONNEL INTO THE LOCAL FORCES, THE LOSS OF MANY TRAINED ELEMENTS SUCH AS SAPPER PERSONNEL AND MIDDLE-LEVEL UNIT COMMANDERS, TOGETHER WITH HEAVY EXPENDITURES OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION, SUGGEST THAT THE COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ENEMY FORCES HAS SUFFERED AT LEAST A TEMPORARY DECLINE. MOREOVER, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE ENEMY IS CONCERNED OVER THE MORALE OF HIS FORCES IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PROMISES OF AN EARLY FINAL VICTORY. IN ANY EVENT, IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT THE SCOPE AND INTENSITY OF THE REMAINDER OF THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN WILL DECLINE SOMEWHAT IN THE MILITARY SPHERE, AND INCREASE CONSIDERABLY IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE.

SHORT RUN CONSIDERATIONS

2. THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN, WHICH APPARENTLY WAS FORMULATED SOMETIME IN THE SUMMER OR FALL OF 1967, WAS TO CONSIST OF THREE PHASES: OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 1967; JANUARY TO MARCH 1968; AND APRIL TO JUNE 1968. CAPTURED VIET CONG (VC) DOCUMENTS AND PRISONER STATEMENTS AMPLY DEMONSTRATE THAT THE COMMUNIST VIEW THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN AS THE

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"DECISIVE" PHASE OF THE WAR, CRUCIAL TO ITS ULTIMATE OUTCOME. INDEED, IT APPEARS THAT THE COMMUNISTS IN ASSESSING THE SITUATION BELIEVED THAT THE MOMENT FOR AN ALL-OUT PUSH HAD COME, AND THAT THERE WERE GOOD PROSPECTS FOR A VICTORY VIA THE "GENERAL UPRISING" WHICH WOULD PUT THEM IN A VERY STRONG POSITION FROM WHICH TO "NEGOTIATE" A UNITED STATES WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH VIETNAM.

3. THE FACTORS THAT LED THE COMMUNISTS TO THIS ASSESSMENT ARE MANY AND VARIED. THREE, HOWEVER, STAND OUT AND APPEAR TO BE ENDEMIC TO THE COMMUNISTS. FIRST, THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS ARE VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN DOCTRINE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SORT OUT COMMUNIST INTENTIONS FROM THE RHETORIC OF THEIR DOCTRINE, BUT IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE COMMUNISTS ACTUALLY SUBSCRIBED TO THE OFT-REPEATED SHIBBOLETHS THAT "THE LONGER WE FIGHT, THE STRONGER WE BECOME;" "THE MORE VICIOUSLY THE ENEMY FIGHTS, THE CLOSER HE IS TO COLLAPSE;," AND "THE PEOPLE SUPPORT US AND WHEN THE URBAN PEOPLE HAVE THE CHANCE TO RISE UP OUR VICTORY WILL BE ASSURED." THIS DOCTRINAL BLINDNESS IS FED BY THE GROSS MIS-REPORTING EMANATING FROM LOWER-LEVEL ECHELONS TELLING THE COMMUNIST

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SUPERIORS WHAT THEY WANTED TO HEAR, NAMELY THAT THE WAR WAS GOING WELL. FINALLY, AND PERHAPS WITH MORE BASIS IN FACT, THE COMMUNISTS BELIEVE FERVENTLY THAT THE EVER-INCREASING UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR AND, PERFORCE, IN VIETNAMESE SOCIETY WAS CREATING WIDESPREAD "CONTRADICTIONS" BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) AND BETWEEN THE GVN AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WHICH WOULD LEAD INEVITABLY TO A NEW GOVERNMENT, TO SENDING THE AMERICANS HOME, AND TO ENDING THE WAR.

4. GIVEN THIS BACKGROUND, THE COMMUNISTS APPARENTLY BELIEVED THAT A CONCERTED ATTACK AGAINST THE CITIES WOULD LEAD TO THE LONG-AWAITED AND MUCH HERALDED "GENERAL UPRISING" IN WHICH: THE PEOPLE WOULD RALLY TO THE VIET CONG OR THE PAPER FRONTS WHICH THEY PLANNED TO CREATE; THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DEFECT OR FOLD UP AGAINST THE VC ONSLAUGHT; AND THE GVN WOULD DISINTEGRATE. THE END RESULT OF ALL THIS WOULD BE THE FORMATION OF A "COALITION GOVERNMENT" WHICH WOULD ORDER THE UNITED STATES TO LEAVE. THUS THE TET OFFENSIVE. IN TERMS OF ITS MAXIMUM GOALS, THE OFFENSIVE OBVIOUSLY WAS A FAILURE: THE PEOPLE

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DID NOT RISE UP, ARVN AND THE GVN DID NOT COLLAPSE, AND NO GOALITION GOVERNMENT WAS CREATED. WE DO NOT KNOW, HOWEVER, WHAT MINIMUM GOALS THE COMMUNISTS HAD IN MIND FOR THIS PART OF THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN, BUT, DESPITE THEIR CONVICTION THAT THEY WOULD SUCCEED, IT IS PROBABLE THAT THEY ALSO HAD LESSER GOALS. GIVEN THE ENORMITY OF WHAT THEY COMMITTED IN THEIR ATTEMPT, THEY MAY HAVE ACHIEVED SOME OF THESE.

~~COMMITTED IN THEIR ATTEMPT, THEY MAY HAVE ACHIEVED SOME OF THESE.~~

THEY CERTAINLY DEMONSTRATED A CAPABILITY FOR COORDINATED ACTION AND FOR SUSTAINING SUCH ACTION WHICH WENT BEYOND WHAT WE HAD PREVIOUSLY ASSUMED. THEY HAVE UNDERMINED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE GVN'S ABILITY TO PROTECT THEM. THEY HAVE INFLICTED RECORD LOSSES ON THE FREE WORLD FORCES. THEY SCORED A PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY IN THE WORLD-WIDE, AND TO SOME EXTENT, THE UNITED STATES PRESS. MORE IMPORTANT, THEY MADE AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN TREMENDOUS

GAINS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PARTICULARLY IN THE ~~SAIGON IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PARTICULARLY IN THE DE~~ *★* ~~455#3 #C9, 945#34, 045~~

NORTHERN PROVINCES OF F CORPS
THIS WILL GO FAR

TOWARD ALLEVIATING THE FOOD AND MANPOWER SHORTAGES THAT WERE PLAGUING THE VC.

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5. WE CAN ANTICIPATE THAT THE FUTURE STRATEGY OF THE COMMUNISTS WILL SEEK TO EXPLOIT THE GAINS ALREADY MADE, WHILE AVOIDING THE HEAVY LOSSES SUSTAINED IN THE PAST. THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED THAT THE TET OFFENSIVE DID NOT SUCCEED, BUT THEY ARE EQUALLY LIKELY TO VIEW IT AS A STEP TOWARD FUTURE SUCCESS IN THAT IT BROUGHT THE WAR HOME TO THE CITIES, FURTHER BURDENED AN ALREADY OVER-BURDENED AND SOMEWHAT INEFFECTIVE GVN, AND, IN VC EYES, SPEEDED UP THE PROCESS OF CREATING CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE AND THE AMERICANS. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COMMUNISTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WHERE THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO MOVE INTO THE VACUUM LEFT BY THE WITHDRAWAL OF SECURITY FORCES. IN ANY EVENT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL LOOK AT THE TET OFFENSIVE AND REASON THAT IF IT WAS NOT THE FINAL BLOW, IT STILL GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE FINAL BLOW, AND ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS FOR THE COMMUNIST FORCES TO PRESS FORWARD EVEN HARDER TO BRING IT ABOUT. IN SHORT, THE "LOGIC" AND REASONS BEHIND THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN STILL HOLD, AND THE CAMPAIGN HAS YET TO RUN ITS ALLOTTED COURSE.

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SHORT-TERM STRATEGIC CONCEPT AND CAPABILITIES

6. CAPTURED DOCUMENTS, AGENT REPORTS, AND INTERROGATION REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE ENEMY'S STRATEGY FOR THE SHORT TERM IS TO KEEP HIS MILITARY FORCES POISED AGAINST THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WHILE CONSOLIDATING HIS HOLD ON RURAL AREAS. HE PLANS TO KEEP FRIENDLY FORCES OFF-BALANCE BY ATTACKING BY FIRE KEY MILITARY BASES, URBAN AREAS, LINES OF COMMUNICATION, AIRFIELDS, AND PORTS. HE APPARENTLY PLANS TO AVOID LARGE SCALE ATTACKS AGAINST UNITED STATES FORCES BUT TO TRY TO ISOLATE THEM. BY FOLLOWING SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION, HE EXPECTS TO KEEP POPULAR TENSION HIGH, TO DISRUPT THE URBAN ECONOMIC STRUCTURE, TO EXACERBATE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARVN AND ALLIED FORCES, TO DETER FRIENDLY UNITS FROM COUNTERATTACKING, AND TO EXPLOIT MILITARILY ANY OPPORTUNITY THAT MIGHT ARISE. AT THIS TIME, THE ENEMY REPORTEDLY EXPECTS TO BE IN POSITION, MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY, TO CONCLUDE THE WAR BY WINNING A BIG VICTORY OVER A KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE, SUCH AS SAIGON, KHE SANH, OR IN THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS. HOWEVER, MOST SOURCES DO NOT INDICATE THAT HIS SPECIFIC TARGET IS PREDETERMINED BUT THAT

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OPPORTUNITY, EMBODYING THE KEY FACTORS OF PREPARATION AND SURPRISE, WILL DETERMINE WHICH TARGET WILL BE CHOSEN.

7. GIVEN THE ENEMY'S RELATIVELY EXPOSED POSITIONS AND EXTENDED SUPPLY LINES, HE IS NOW MORE VULNERABLE TO ALLIED ATTACKS THAN PREVIOUSLY. AGGRESSIVE ALLIED COUNTERATTACKS WOULD GREATLY REDUCE THE ENEMY'S CAPABILITY TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM. A MISCALCULATION BY THE ENEMY AT THAT TIME AS TO HIS RELATIVE STRENGTH COULD LEAD TO LARGE SCALE ASSAULTS ON A NUMBER OF URBAN AREAS WHICH WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN HEAVY LOSSES. IN SUCH A CASE A REVISION TO THE PRE-TET PERIPHERAL STRATEGY IS POSSIBLE. THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE PLACEMENT OF ENEMY MAIN FORCES NEAR BORDER SANCTUARIES TO PROVIDE SAFEHAVENS, SHORTEN HIS SUPPLY LINES, PROVIDE MORE FAVORABLE COMBAT CONDITIONS, AND ALLOW HIM TO PREPARE TO EXPLOIT ANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION. AT THE SAME TIME, EMPHASIS WOULD BE PLACED ON GUERRILLA TACTICS AND SMALL UNIT ACTIONS TO CONTEST CONTROL OF THE RURAL POPULATION.

8. IN RESPECT TO THE ENEMY'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS OF

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MANY UNITS HAS BEEN REDUCED BECAUSE OF LOSSES DURING THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN. THERE IS GROWING EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT THE ENEMY SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED HIS FORCES PRIOR TO THE TET OFFENSIVE BOTH THROUGH EXPANDED INFILTRATION AND IN-COUNTRY RECRUITMENT. SINCE TET THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS INDICATIONS THAT THE ENEMY IS EXTENSIVELY RECRUITING AND IMPRESSING ADDITIONAL MANPOWER FROM THE AREAS PREVIOUSLY DENIED TO HIM. THUS IT IS POSSIBLE

THAT THE ENEMY'S TOTAL STRENGTH MAY NOT HAVE BEEN REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY THOUGH HE IS QUALITATIVELY WEAKER THAN WHEN HE INITIATED HIS WIDESPREAD TET ATTACKS. THIS REDUCTION IN EFFECTIVENESS MAY BE OFFSET TO SOME DEGREE BY HIS RECENTLY GAINED ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE WHICH WILL GO FAR TOWARD ALLEVIATING THE FOOD AND MANPOWER SHORTAGES THAT HAVE PLAGUES HIM OVER THE PAST YEAR.

9. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY REPORTS OF A "SECOND PHASE" OF EXTENSIVE ATTACKS, BUT LACKING THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE AND THE COVER OF TET, WE BELIEVE THE ENEMY LACKS THE CAPABILITY FOR ANOTHER MASSIVE EFFORT AGAINST THE CITIES SUCH AS AT TET. THE CONTROL AUTHORITY WHICH DIRECTED THE RECENT COORDINATED ATTACKS REMAINS BASICALLY INTACT

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AND HAS ORDERED MAIN FORCE ELEMENTS TO MAINTAIN THEIR PRESSURE ON THE CITIES. THE ENEMY ALSO HAS HIS FORCES DEPLOYED IN A THREATENING POSTURE NEAR NUMEROUS URBAN AREAS.

WE THINK IT LIKELY THAT IN THE SHORT RUN HE PLANS TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE URBAN AREAS THROUGH HIS PRESENCE AROUND THE CITIES AND BY EXTENSIVE ATTACKS BY FIRE^{EM}, MOUNTING GROUND ASSAULTS ON SLECTED TARGETS ONLY WHERE THE BALANCE OF FORCES IS FAVORABLE. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOW IN A MORE VULNERABLE POSITION, THE ENEMY IS PROBABLY CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING LOOSE ENCIRCLEMENT OR MANY URBAN AREAS, INTERDICTING LINES OF COMMUNICATION, AND MOUNTING ATTACKS BY FIRE ON CITIES AND MILITARY INSTAL-
LATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE ENEMY NOW REALIZES THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER MAJOR URBAN AREAS FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. HE ALSO REALIZES THAT HE MUST MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON ALLIED FORCES TO KEEP THEM TIRED DOWN, KEEP THEM FROM REORGANIZING, AND MOST IMPORTANT, KEEP THEM FROM LAUNCHING COUNTERATTACKS.

10. REGARDLESS OF WHAT SHORT-RANGE MILITARY STRATEGY THE COMMUNISTS EMPLOY, IT ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN INTENSIFICATION OF POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL

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AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES AIMED AT UNDERMINING THE AUTHORITY OF THE GVN, SUBVERTING THE GVN FORCES, STIMULATING DISCONTENT AND FEAR AMONG THE POPULATION, AND BUILDING UP ITS NEW FRONT STRUCTURE. A STEPPED-UP CAMPAIGN OF TERRORISM, ESPECIALLY IN THE CITIES, CAN BE ANTICIPATED. WHERE POSSIBLE, THE COMMUNISTS SEEM LIKELY TO TRY TO INTERDICT LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS TO INTERFERE WITH FOOD SUPPLY AND OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

11. IN THE DIPLOMATIC FIELD, HANOI IS LIKELY TO PROBE THE UNITED STATES POSITION, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO FUEL THE ENGINES OF WORLD OPINION PRESSING THE UNITED STATES FOR A CESSATION OF BOMBING AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM (NVN). IT IS POSSIBLE, MOREOVER, THAT AT SOME POINT DURING THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN THE COMMUNISTS WILL VIEW THEIR POSITION AS BEING CONDUCTIVE TO SERIOUSLY UNDERTAKING TALKS. THIS MOVE MIGHT OCCUR IF THE COMMUNISTS BELIEVED THEY HAD SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED THE STRATEGIC BALANCE OF FORCES WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM TO TALK FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH--A LONG HELD TENET IN THEIR STRATEGY CONCERNING

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THE WAR. THE CAPTURE OF ONE OR MORE PROVINCE CAPITALS OR A MAJOR MILITARY VICTORY MIGHT BE VIEWED BY THE COMMUNISTS AS BRINGING ABOUT THIS SITUATION.

LONGER TERM CONSIDERATIONS

12. IF AT THE END OF THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SUSTAIN THE GAINS THEY HAVE MADE TO DATE, THEY ARE LIKELY TO FIND THEMSELVES IN AN UNFAVORABLE POSITION. MANY OF THE ADVANTAGES THE COMMUNISTS HAVE GAINED BY THEIR ALL-OUT EFFORT DURING TET WILL BEGIN TO DISSIPATE. GIVEN TIME, IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE ALLIED FORCES WILL GET BACK INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE GVN WILL FOLLOW-IF SO, THE GVN AND UNITED STATES WILL PROBABLY MANAGE TO ACCOMODATE THE WORST AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE TET ATTACKS. MOREOVER, DESPITE THE INCREASED ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE, ATTRITION WILL TAKE ITS TOOL FROM THE COMMUNIST FORCES. IN ADDITION, THE COMMUNIST CADRES AND TROOPS HAVE BEEN PROMISED IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT 1968 WOULD SEE THE WAR BROUGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. DESPITE THE ABILITY OF THE COMMUNISTS TO VERBALIZE DEFEAT INTO VICTORY, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THERE WILL BE INCREASING

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DISAFFECTION WITHIN COMMUNISTS RANKS IF THE COMMUNIST POSITION AGAIN BEGINS TO DECLINE. THE VC DO NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO WIN, BUT THEY DO NEED TO SHOW MOMENTUM IN THAT DIRECTION IF THEY ARE TO AVOID SUCH DISAFFECTION.

13. WE VIEW THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN AS BEING A CRUCIAL PERIOD FOR THE COMMUNISTS IN FORMULATING THEIR STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE. THEY WILL PROBABLY MAKE A MAJOR ASSESSMENT OF THEIR POSITION AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CAMPAIGN. IF THEY HAVE NOT CONTINUED TO REAP ADVANTAGES IN THE WAR, AND SEE NO WEAKENING IN UNITED STATES AND GVN DETERMINATION, THEY MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT " VICTORY" AS DEFINED IN PARAGRAPHS 2-5 ABOVE IS NOT LIKELY. THUS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS OF THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN COULD BE TO BRING THE COMMUNISTS CLOSER TO THAT MOMENT OF TRUTH WHEN THEY WILL HAVE TO MAKE BASIC DECISIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE COURSE OF THE WAR.

14. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE TO SAY WHAT HANOI MIGHT DECIDE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN. THERE IS, OF COURSE, THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE ALONG THE SAME COURSE AS PRESENT PERHAPS ONLY BECAUSE IT WOULD BE UNABLE TO COME TO A DECISION ON WHAT COURSE TO TAKE.

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THE SITUATION IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ALL GOOD OR ALL BAD, AND IT MIGHT CALCULATE THAT ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS FOR ONE MORE HARD PUSH, PARTICULARLY IF COMMUNIST FORCES STILL HAD ACCESS TO MUCH OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND HAD A STRONG BASE FOR WHICH TO LAUNCH THE PUSH. IF THEY SENSE A WEAKENING OF THE HOME FRONT IN THE UNITED STATES, THEY MIGHT CALCULATE THAT NO RADICAL CHANGE FOR THE PRE-TET STRATEGY IS NEEDED, THAT PROTRACTED STRUGGLE AIMED AT FRUSTRATING GVN/UNITED STATES PACIFICATION GOALS WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A FAVORABLE SETTLEMENT.

15. BEYOND MERELY CONTINUING WHAT THEY ARE DOING, THE COMMUNISTS WOULD HAVE THREE BASIC OPTIONS IF THEY DECIDED TO ADOPT A NEW STRATEGY. THEY COULD DRAMATICALLY ESCALATE THE WAR, PERHAPS BY MOUNTING AN ALL-OUT OFFENSIVE FROM NORTH VIETNAM AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM AND EVEN CALLING OF CHINESE COMMUNIST COMBAT TROOPS TO PROTECT NVN. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HANOI WOULD OPT FOR THIS STRATEGY; IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT CONSIDER THE PROSPECTS ^U ~~NO~~ SUCCESS AS PROMISING; THE LIKELIHOOD OF MASSIVE UNITED STATES COUNTER-ACTION WOULD BE VIEWED IN HANOI AS BEING HIGH; AND HANOI ALMOST CERTAINLY

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DESIRES TO REMAIN MASTER OF ITS OWN DESTINY, A POSITION IT WOULD ENDANGER, IF NOT SACRIFICE, BY INVITING LARGE-SCALE CHINESE INTERVENTION IN THE NORTH. NEVERTHELESS, IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES IN THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN AND THE TET OFFENSIVE CAPABLE OF TAKING RATHER MOMENTOUS TURNS IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR.

16. RATHER THAN SIGNIFICANTLY EXCALATE THE WAR, WE THINK IT MORE LIKELY THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS WOULD RENEW THEIR EFFORTS TO MANEUVER FOR SOME TYPE OF TALKS OR NEGOTIATIONS. THERE ARE ALREADY SOME INDICATIONS THAT THEY ARE GINGERLY UNDERTAKING THIS TASK. ALTHOUGH THEY COULD VIEW SUCH TALKS SOLELY AS A RUSE WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM A RESPIRE IN WHICH TO RECOUP, WE BELIEVE IT MORE LIKELY THAT AT THIS STAGE THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT. PRESUMABLY, HANOI, IF IT CHOSE THIS APPROACH COULD COUNT ON THE ACTIVE ASSISTANCE OF THE SOVIET UNION. INDEED, THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT MOSCOW, VIEWING THE SITUATION AFTER THE WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN, WOULD BE MORE WILLING TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN COUNSELING HANOI TO BE FORTHCOMING CONCERNING

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NEGOTIATIONS. PEKING WOULD REMAIN OPPOSED TO THE IDEA OF TALKS, BUT WOULD BE VERY UNLIKELY TO TAKE ANY POSITIVE ACTION AGAINST HANOI IF (T) DECIDED TO TAKE THIS OPTION.

17. THE THIRD OPTION OPEN TO HANOI WOULD BE TO RESORT TO GUERRILLA WARFARE AND GIRD FOR A LONG-TERM STRUGGLE. THIS OPTION, OF COURSE, IS NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH NEGOTIATIONS SINCE IN NO EVENT WILL NORTH VIETNAM ABANDON ITS ULTIMATE GOAL OF DOMINATION AND REUNIFICATION OF VIETNAM UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL. THE COMMUNISTS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SOME DIFFICULTY IN SELLING THIS APPROACH TO ALL OF THEIR ADHERENTS IN THE SOUTH, BUT BY ITS VERY NATURE, PROTRACTED WAR DOES NOT REQUIRE A SUPER-ABUNDANCE OF PERSONNEL. IT DOES REQUIRE, HOWEVER, A HARD CORE OF DEDICATED CADRES WHO ARE WILLING TO FOLLOW COMMUNIST DIRECTIVES NO MATTER WHAT, COME WHAT MAY. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE, AND UNDER ANY FORESEEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE, ENOUGH SUCH CADRE FOR THIS PURPOSE. FACTORS AFFECTING ABILITY OF GVN TO WITHSTAND NVA/VC PRESSURES

18. THE QUALITY AND COHESIVENESS OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS THE KEY FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE GVN'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND VC POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES.

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THE GVN COULD STIMULATE AND GUIDE THE CONSIDERABLE ENERGIES AND TALENTS OF ITS PEOPLE IN A BROAD EFFORT AGAINST THE VIET CONG IF IT ENJOYED INSPIRATIONAL AND EFFICIENT DIRECTION AT THE TOP. THE ~~PRESNET~~ LEADERSHIP IS ABLE ENOUGH AND PROBABLY DEDICATED ENOUGH BUT IT IS NOT WORKING TOGETHER. MOREOVER, THE PRESIDENT LACKS THE INSPIRATIONAL QUALITIES SO NEEDED IN A COUNTRY AT WAR AND WEARY OF WAR AT THAT.

HE LACKS A SENCE OF URGENCY AND SEEMS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO DELEGATE AUTHORITY. ON MANY ISSUES HE IS INDECISIVE AND CAUTIOUS. HIS DIFFERENCES WITH VICE PRESIDENT KY, WHILE NOT INSURMOUNTABLE, ARE COMPLICATED BY SHARP DIVERGENCES OF PERSONALITY AND METHOD; THEY ARE AGGRAVATED BY AMBITIOUS AND SCHEMING COTERIES OF ASSOCITES. KY COULD PROVIDE BYNAMIC LEADERSHIP, BUT WHEN HE DOES ASSUME THAT ROLE HE IS SUSPECTED OF FURTHERING HIS PERSONAL POLITICAL POSITION. THE RECENT CRISIS TEMPORARILY BROUGHT AN APPEARANCE OF UNITY AT THE TOP, BUT THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO SEEMS NOW TO HAVE BEEN AGGRAVATED DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS. THE PRIME MINISTER IS INTELLIGENT BUT, LACKING GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION, IS INCAPABLE OF RUNNING A GOVERNMENT.

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19. THE PROSPECTS ^{OF} ~~FOR~~ ^F ~~FOR~~ IMPROVEMENT OVER THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS ARE NOT GOOD. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT LOC COULD BE REPLACED TO SOME ADVANTAGE BUT POLITICALLY VIABLE AND CAPABLE SUCCESSORS ARE NOT IDENTIFIABLE AT THE MOMENT. THE PRESIDENT MIGHT ENCOURAGE KY TO TAKE ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES BUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF LIBERATING KY'S FULL ENERGIES ON TERMS ACCEPTABLE TO THIEU IS SMALL. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE A GOOD INTELLECTUAL GRASP OF THE PROBLEMS FACING THE GOVERNMENT BUT WILL PROBABLY FAIL TO TAKE ACTIONS ^R FORCEFUL ENOUGH OR EARLY ENOUGH TO TRANSLATE THAT UNDERSTANDING INTO TRULY MEANINGFUL PROGRAMS.

20. A SECOND FACTOR IS THE ABILITY OF THE GVN TO ^D DEAL WITH THE DESTRUCTION AND DISLOCATIONS CAUSED BY THE TET OFFENSIVE. DESPITE POLITICAL WEAKNESSES AND MANAGERIAL PROBLEMS, THE GVN AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED, FULLY BACKED BY THE UNITED STATES WITH PERSONNEL AND FUNDS, HAS BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION. THE IMMENSE TASK OF CARING FOR 500,000 EVACUEES AND RESUMING SOMETHING RESEMBLING NORMAL ECONOMIC INTERCOURSE IN THE CITIES HAS BEEN APPROACHED WITH REASONABLE EFFICIENCY AND

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DRIVE. THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE MECHANISM WORKED RATHER WELL. WHILE IT BENEFITTED FROM THE AMERICAN INPUT IT WAS IN MANY WAYS A VIETNAMESE SHOW. SLOW TO BEGIN OPERATIONS IN THE PROVINCES, THE COMMITTEE IS BEGINNING TO MOVE RESOURCES AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. WHILE THERE WILL BE PERSISTING COMPLAINTS AND DISCONTENT, THE LEVEL PROBABLY WILL NOT BUILD TO A BREAKING POINT UNLESS A SECOND, OR THIRD, WAVE OF DEVASTATION HITS. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS THE GVN ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISM WOULD BE SEVERELY TAXED. IF THE VC WERE, AT THAT TIME, BEATEN OFF AND A LENGTHY RESPITE EARNED, THE GVN COULD PROBABLY STILL MANAGE AN ACCEPTABLE EFFORT AT REHABILITATION.

21. THERE ARE MANY AMBIVALENCES IN ATTEMPTING TO ASSESS THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE MASSES AND ELITE TO SUPPORT THE GVN. ALTHOUGH THE VC GAINED NEW RESPECT FROM THE PEOPLE FOLLOWING THE TET OFFENSIVE, IT ALSO CREATED A STRONG FEELING OF ANTAGONISM TOWARD THEM, AND WE DOUBT THAT ATTACKS HAVE GAINED THEM MANY NEW FRIENDS. DURING THE PAST MONTH CONFIDENCE IN THE GVN HAS WEAKENED AND DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE AMERICAN PRESENCE HAS INCREASED, BUT THERE REMAINS

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SOME APPRECIATION FOR THE FACT THAT GVN/UNITED STATES FORCES DID, AFTER ALL, REPULSE THE ATTACK ON THE CITIES AFTER REELING UNDER ITS INITIAL IMPACT. THOSE DIRECTLY AND ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE GVN/UNITED STATES COUNTERATTACK, SUCH AS DESTRUCTION OF HOMES AND LOOTING, CONSTITUTE ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION. THE PEOPLE AT LARGE REMAIN FEARFUL, INCREASINGLY WEARY, ANXIOUS FOR BREAK IN THE LONG TENSION. OUTWARDLY, THEIR DOMINANT REACTION HAS BEEN, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN RESIGNATION AND PASSIVITY-STEMMING IN PART FROM THE ORIENTAL BELIEF IN AN INEXORABLE FATE, AND IN PART FROM A FEAR OF BECOMING OPENLY INVOLVED WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF THE UNKNOWN VC SYMPATHIZER. POPULAR REPOSE TO FURTHER VC SUCCESSES, EVEN IF TEMPORARY, WILL PROBABLY BE FURTHER WITHDRAWAL. ALTHOUGH THE PEOPLE ARE NOW MORE VULNERABLE TO ENEMY PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACK, WE DOUBT THAT THE VC WILL BE ABLE TO MOBILIZE ANY ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT, VOLUNTARY SUPPORT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE URBAN MASSES DO NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LOSER, AND AT THIS POINT THE ALLIES' ABILITY TO RESTORE CONTROL IN THE CITIES PROBABLY IS THE

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PREDOMINANT FACTOR IN THEIR ATTITUDE.

22. AMONG THE ELITE POLITICAL GROUPS, THE PREDOMINANT TREND HAS BEEN TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT AND CONDEMN THE VC, ALTHOUGH THE THIEU-KY SCHISM AND LACK OF DYNAMISM IN THE GVN WILL PROBABLY PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTI-COMMUNIST FRONT FROM REACHING ITS FULL POTENTIAL. WITHIN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, A REFLECTION OF BOTH ELITE AND POPULAR OPINION, THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN GENERALLY CONSTRUCTIVE WITH BOTH HOUSES CALLING FOR A CLOSING OF RANKS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS AN UNDERCURRENT OF CRITICISM-CURRENTLY SUPPRESSED IN THE INTEREST OF UNITY-AGAINST THE ARMY FOR ITS LACK OF PREPAREDNESS AND THE INCOMPETENCE OF SOME ARMY COMMANDERS, AND AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INITIAL INEFFECTUAL RESPONSE TO THE VC ASSAULT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO DEEP CLEAVAGES BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND THE LEGISLATIVE AND FOR THE SHORT TERM, THE OUTLOOK FOR CONTINUED COOPERATION APPEARS GOOD.

23. THE MOST CRITICAL ELEMENT AMONG THE ELITE IS THE YOUNG OFFICERS GROUP, WHO ARE CHAFING OVER THE POOR QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP, THE LACK OF AN EFFECTIVE COMMAND STRUCTURE

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CONTINUED AND RAMPANT CORRUPTION, AND THE LACK OF AN AGGRESSIVE POSTURE ON THE PART OF ARVN. THESE OFFICERS APPEAR AWARE OF THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF A COUP, PARTICULARLY THE IMPACT IN THE UNITED STATES, AND DO NOT SEEM INCLINED TO MOVE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS MANNER. THEY ARE CONCERNED HOWEVER, THAT THE CONTINUED FAILURE ON THE PART OF THE TOP POLITICAL LEADERS TO SHOW GREATER PROGRESS WILL INCREASE SENTIMENT FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WHICH THEY REGARD AS A EUPHEMISM FOR DEFEAT. THEY APPEAR TO BE SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE BROAD FRAMEWORK OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM.

24. WHILE DIFFICULT TO EXPRESS IT IN TERMS SUITABLE FOR A NATIONAL ESTIMATE, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE GVN'S CAPABILITY TO FACE UP TO THE FUTURE VC CHALLENGE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO APPLY "LEVERAGE" ON THE GVN LEADERSHIP TO MOVE FORWARD MORE RAPIDLY. THIS WOULD BE RESISTED BY THE VIETNAMESE, WHOSE SENSIBILITIES IN RESPECT TO AMERICAN INFLUENCE APPEAR TO HAVE INCREASED MARKEDLY DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS. THE SPECIAL AGGRAVATIONS CAUSED BY RUMORS OF ALLEGED AMERICAN

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SUSCEPTIBILITY TO A COALITION GOVERNMENT COM^{PL CA}MITTED ^{THE}~~IPFG~~ AMERICAN ROLE UP TO THE EVE OF THE TET OFFENSIVE. HOWEVER, THE PROVIDING OF COUNSEL, RATHER THAN DIRECTIVES, TO THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT PRODUCED ACTION AND PROGRESS BROADLY OR RAPIDLY ENOUGH. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ONLY A GREATER APPLICATION OF LEVERAGE, TO WIT, AN IMPLIED IF NOT EXPLICIT INDIC^ATION THAT FUTURE UNITED STATES SUPPORT IS CONTINGENT UPON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ESSENTIAL AND STATED GOALS. GIVEN VIETNAMESE SENSITIVITIES, IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT SUCH^A MOVE WOULD ACCOMPLISH THE DESIRED RESULT-

THE VIETNAMESE PRINCIP^ELES, CONFIDENT THAT THE UNITED STATES COULD NOT SIMPLY PULL OUT, MIGHT WELL FEEL THAT THEIR HONOR AND SELF-RESPECT DEMANDED A REJECTION OF SUCH BLATENT AMERICAN PRESSURE. ANY INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE VIETNAMESE WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASED SUPPORT, IF NOTHING ELSE AS EVIDENCE OF OUR INTENTIONS TO REMAIN BY THEIR SIDE.

25. FROM A MILITARY STANDPOINT, THERE ARE NUMEROUS WEAKNESSES IN THE GVN'S ARMED FORCES WHICH WILL AFFECT ITS ABILITY TO WITHSTAND FUTURE VC PRESSURES. ARVN IS NOT EXPLOITING ITS OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE THE ENEMY AGGRESSIVELY

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AT A TIME WHEN HE IS IN AN EXPOSED POSITION, OPERATING FAR FROM HIS BASES, AND AT A LOW LEVEL OF COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS, INSTEAD THE GVN FORCES HAVE PULLED BACK INTO THE CITIES INTO A GENERALLY PASSIVE, DEFENSIVE POSTURE. THIS IS A REFLECTION^{OF} POOR AND UNAGGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP WHICH RANGES FROM THE HIGH COMMAND ON DOWNWARD, ALTHOUGH THIS IS BY NO MEANS UNIVERSAL. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE ARVN FORCES IS ALSO REPORTED TO BE BADLY^V SHAKEN IN THE FACE OF SUPERIOR FIREPOWER DEMONSTRATED BY EVEN THE LOCAL VC FORCES, AND THE INCREASING APPEARANCE OF HEAVY ARMAMENT AMONG THE ENEMY FORCES. THE STEPPED-UP MOBILIZATION DECREE AND THE CHANGE IN TWO CORPS COMMANDERS AND APPARENTLY SEVERAL PROVINCE CHIEFS WERE STEPS IN THE RIGHT^D DIRECTION, BUT AN ACCELERATED CAMPAIGN TO REMOVE INEFFECTUAL UNIT COMMANDERS AND PROVINCE CHIEFS^E, AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE COMMAND STRUCTURE, BETTER COORDINATION BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND^I ARVN AT THE CORPS AND DIVISION LEVEL, AND IMPROVED WEAPONRY FOR THE GVN MILITARY, PARAMILITARY AND POLICE FORCES ARE^J ESSENTIAL IF THE INITIATIVE AGAINST THE VC IS TO BE REGAINED.

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