

VASTRAC

14 February 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Reporting on National Police Activities During
the VC Tet Offensive

1. The information in this report was compiled from Vietnam situation reports available as of 1700 hours EST 13 February 1968. Following the Summary and Conclusions is selected data by corps and province. The map at the end of this memorandum reflects very tentative judgment of police performance for selected provinces.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

2. Reporting on National Police activities and performance during the VC Tet offensive is still very incomplete. Outside the province capitals and independent cities reporting is almost non-existent. Over 70 district towns have been attacked and it is assumed that the police have played some role in the defense of these towns. There is sufficient information on the police in 19 province capitals plus the cities of Saigon, Danang, and Cam Ranh to make a very tentative judgment as to police performance. In 17 of the 19 provincial capitals and the three independent cities (the exceptions being Hue and Phan Thiet), National Police forces appear to have responded in a satisfactory manner to the emergency. There is not sufficient information on the remaining 25 province capitals and the independent city of Vung Tau to make any judgment. The VC opened the jails in Hue, Quang Ngai, and Go Cong releasing approximately 3,000 prisoners. There are no reports of other province jails being opened by the VC. Total National Police casualties are unknown. The limited reporting available lists more than 200 police killed. Our tentative conclusion, drawn from the limited material available, is that the police have generally performed well (with the exceptions noted above) and in some province capitals have shown considerable initiative and energy; this includes the Special Police Branch, the Police Field Forces, and the Combat Police. In several provinces it appears that the Special Police are taking advantage of intelligence gained through interrogations, documents, and agent reports to strike hard and rapidly at the VC infrastructure but there is insufficient information to judge intelligence collection and action by the police country wide.

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SAIGON

3. The National Police and the subordinate Combat Police and Special Police Branch have been heavily engaged with the Viet Cong since the VC attack on 31 January. At least 6 of the 9 precincts and 14 sub-precinct police stations have been attacked (including one sub-station which has repulsed 9 attacks), some have been overrun and others damaged or destroyed. Though the police have generally performed well, popular feelings towards them have been mixed. The police have frequently exposed themselves to considerable danger to save and assist private citizens but have also been criticized for exhibiting occasional foolishness and reckless behavior. People were informing the police of the location of VC and the Special Police Branch stated that it has been receiving gratifying cooperation from the population in combatting VC attacks. There are indications that some students in Saigon have assisted the VC. President Thieu and Vice President Ky described the performance of Director General of National Police Loan as outstanding. Total police casualties as of 12 February were over 100 killed in Saigon.

4. There are some reports that the police have executed a few prisoners but it appears that the police have confined most prisoners and are conducting detailed interrogations. Check points have been increased and house-to-house search operations launched. The Special Police informant and agent networks appear to be functioning well and information reporting is in quantity. There is conflict in the information received on VC intentions caused in part by the limited knowledge of the sources and intentional rumors started by the VC. Viet Cong infiltration of the refugee centers around Saigon is causing the National Police concern.

I CORPS

5. The National Police in Hue are reported to be performing unsatisfactorily. There is not sufficient information to judge police performance in Quang Ngai. In the remaining three provinces and Danang, reports reflect satisfactory to very good performance. There is no information on the police in the districts of I Corps. The Viet Cong released between 2,600 and 3,100 prisoners from the Hue and Quang Ngai jails. There is no estimate of police losses but in Hue the casualties will probably be high.

6. DANANG: It does not appear that the Danang Police were caught off guard by the Viet Cong attack. Prior to the attack information from intelligence sources provided the general VC attack plan. The police began uncovering small VC sabotage units that had infiltrated Danang two weeks

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prior to the attack. Interrogation of the captured VC and exploitable intelligence led to the capture of additional VC and alerted local security forces to the probability that the VC general attack plan was being implemented. Security in and around Danang was increased prior to the attack. After the attack, the police concentrated its efforts toward elimination of the VC infrastructure. Interrogations were being conducted at the Provincial Interrogation Center. House-to-house searches were initiated with the assistance of Police Field Forces and ARVN. In the first phase of the search operations, approximately 750 of the original 1,000 houses earmarked for search had been completed by 3 February. More than 400 persons had been detained which caused an acute problem in finding sufficient interrogators, consequently many prisoners were being held with a minimum of screening. Apparently some persons had been picked up with no firm reason for considering them VC. Every house in Danang was to be searched in the second phase. Individuals without proper identification papers were being detained at a local school. The police reported that the people were generally cooperative, although it was evident that many feared reprisals by the VC should they cooperate with the police. Local residents were providing information on where VC were hiding. The police reacted quickly on information received from the population or intelligence sources, resulting in the capture of nearly 50 VC. By 10 February, it appeared that the search operation was less systematic and thorough than would be desired but it was still being conducted and was keeping the VC on the move. The police believed that another attack on Danang was imminent due to documents taken from a VC courier.

7. QUANG NAM: The police were encountering considerable difficulty in screening and performing other security functions in Hoi An City because of the masses of refugees. They were hearing the refugees about the city but it was difficult, if not impossible, to control them. The police continued to pick up suspects at established check points. On 11 and 12 February the police had detained 50 VC suspects in Hoi An. The Provincial Interrogation Center was operating again, located at police headquarters. The police had jailed more than 100 Buddhists to forestall any political problems or demonstrations.

8. QUANG NGAI: On the night of 30 January, the VC captured the Quang Ngai provincial jail and it was not retaken by ARVN until the morning of 1 February. About 150 prisoners were not inside the jail at the time of the VC ground assault, but ARVN officers claimed they were accounted for. Approximately 70 to 75 POW's in the jail had been removed before the VC gained the area and these POW's remain under detention. As of 4 February, 603 prisoners were unaccounted for.

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9. QUANG TIN: On the night of 31 January, the Provincial Interrogation Center in Tam Ky was used by ARVN as a defensive position during the Viet Cong attack. After the attack ARVN and police elements made continuous sweeps of Tam Ky and surrounding areas, broke up sporadic attempts of segments of the population to form demonstrations and apprehended demonstration leaders.

10. QUANG TRI: As of 12 February, the police had been divided into two groups for night operations. One group was in charge of the police station which had been fortified with sandbag bunkers and interlocking trenches, while the other group was on constant patrol throughout Quang Tri City. By 8 February, the police had arrested 50 suspects and daily screening operations were continuing. From 31 January to 8 February, about 6 Special Police were killed and 4 wounded. The Provincial Interrogation Center (PIC) was still closed, as of 12 February, with the prisoners moved to sector or the National Police jail. The PIC probably will return to normal operations in the near future since it did not suffer any damage during the attack.

11. THUA THIEN: The VC captured the Hue jail and released 2,000 to 2,500 prisoners of which 200 to 300 were hardcore VC. The jail was recaptured by Marines on 3 February. The VC were also reported to have massacred 100 GVN officials and police by 11 February. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 3.3(h)(2)
[REDACTED] The police were confusing the distribution of rice, failing to assist in the refugee problem, and contributing to the looting, which was becoming a problem throughout the city. With proper leadership, [REDACTED] the police probably have the capability of doing their job. The Regional Police Headquarters in Danang moved a newly organized Police Field Force Company to Hue. This Company is comprised of graduates from the police academy, many of whom are from Hue and had had their families killed, wounded, or detained by the VC. The company volunteered to go to Hue. 3.3(h)(2)

II CORPS

12. Except for Binh Thuan Province, where the National Police apparently fell to pieces, limited reports indicate that the police continue to perform satisfactorily in II Corps. The police actions in Khanh Hoa have brought praise by advisors. Information on half the provinces in II Corps regarding the police is too limited or non-existent for any judgment to be made. No jails are reported to have been opened by the VC in II Corps. Police casualties have not been reported.

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13. BINH DINH: According to information received by the Special Police Branch in Qui Nhon and through the interrogation of captured VC, the attack plan on Qui Nhon called for the capture of the police chief and the province chief. The VC were unsuccessful during their attack in accomplishing these two objectives.

14. BINH THUAN: By 5 February, effective police operations in Phan Thiet had not been initiated. The situation between the province chief and the police chief was very poor -- each was criticizing the other for lack of ability to cope effectively with the situation during the attack. The province chief was probably correct for the local police had not been doing their job. They had dispersed and most of them were looking after their families and personal effects. During the height of the battle, many of the police threw away or hid their weapons and mingled with the populace so they would not be connected with the police. On 4 February, out of approximately 800 policemen in Phan Thiet there were probably only 100 on duty. The Special Police Branch Chief was completely ineffective. On 3 February when a VC squad was at the police station he left the scene of action saying that he had sustained a serious injury. Observers said the wound amounted to a slight scrape on his knee. As of 5 February he had not been seen. On 1 February, the Police Chief of Phan Thiet City, with two platoons consisting of administrative type personnel, was in contact with the VC at the Phan Thiet soccer field. This is the only action in which the police were reported engaged outside the police station.

15. CAM RANH: On 6 February the Cam Ranh police had captured 5 members of the local VC infrastructure.

16. DARLAC: The local population was reported, on 4 February, to be telling GVN officials where VC infiltrators were hiding in Banmethuot.

17. KHANH HOA: The VC infrastructure supported the VC attack on Nha Trang, and in so doing made themselves vulnerable to identification and arrest. As of 9 February, the Khanh Hoa Special Police Branch was doing an excellent job of exploiting this opportunity, working rapidly and professionally. During the initial part of the VC attack, the Special Police fanned out through Nha Trang contacting informants and attempting to locate VC/NVA soldiers and sympathizers assisting attackers. They were very successful in both tasks. They passed this information to the Police Field Force and ARVN units for action. A five-man Special Police interrogation team worked almost continuously at the Provincial Interrogation Center which had been turned into a joint POW interrogation center. Information obtained from these interrogations resulted in the arrest of

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16 VC cadre and 50 suspects. The police also arrested 4 VC cadre of which 2 were members of the Nha Trang VC Committee. Their interrogation led to the arrest of 2 more VC cadre. The military captured 14 members of the VC infrastructure and many additional suspects. On 3 February, the VC Commander of the Nha Trang municipal unit was captured by the police. Indications are that the VC have suffered a crippling loss of leading political and local cadre.

18. NINH THUAN: The RDC advisor in Ninh Thuan reports that the National Police in Phan Rang have operated in an outstanding manner throughout the current emergency. They have been fully responsive to the emergency military situation as well as the needs of the people.

19. PLEIKU: One of the primary targets during the VC attack on Pleiku City, 30 January, was the house of the Regional Police Director. By 4 February, the police and ARVN had completed their search of most homes, had apprehended many VC suspects, and had located several arms caches. The Special Police were providing information of VC troop locations.

20. QUANG DUC: As of 1 February, extra police patrols were watching for VC infiltration in Gia Nghia, the capital of Quang Duc.

21. TUYEN DUC: The Dalat City Special Police had regained control of the area around their headquarters by 4 February which had been surrounded for three days. The Provincial Interrogation Center was secure and contained 12 prisoners. The police had captured and detained 55 suspects by 5 February. GVN officials were displaying remarkable initiative in meeting enemy attacks.

III CORPS

22. Casualties suffered by the National Police in III Corps, between 31 January and 6 February, were 22 KIA and 40 WIA. Morale remained high among the police. There were indications that the Special Police Branch reporting has not kept pace with developments throughout III Corps and the National Police Director was not being kept adequately informed. There were no reported casualties among the Special Police. Losses were distributed fairly evenly throughout III Corps with no particular province taking the lions share of casualties. Reports indicate police performance has been satisfactory in 4 of the 11 provinces. Information on the remaining 7 provinces is insufficient to make a preliminary judgment. No jails were reported opened by the VC.

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23. BIEN HOA: As of 3 February, there had been several examples of local people turning in VC pockets of resistance and leading allied troops to enemy locations. The Provincial Interrogation Center Chief was on duty during Tet, the National Police Chief returned to duty on 4 February, and the Special Police Branch Chief returned on 5 February.

24. BINH DUONG: Vietnamese intelligence and security services were reported, as of 3 February, to be going all out on the security of Phu Cuong City. On 1 February the VC had unsuccessfully attacked the police station. By 5 February, the National Police had suffered 5 KIA and 5 WIA in Phu Cuong.

25. BINH LONG: Police activities on 2 February were directed toward security and they were not collecting information about VC movements.

26. GIA DINH: As of 1 February, the Hoc Mon Police Sub-Station was in VC hands and the Hang Xanh Police Sub-Station had been overrun. As of 3 February, a few pockets of enemy resistance still existed, but these were being cleared out by the local police force, who were reported to be doing a good job.

27. LONG AN: The VC attacks of 10 and 11 February on Tan An City caused 20 percent of the police station to be damaged, 10 police killed and 30 wounded, including the police chief.

28. LONG KHANH: On 2 February, a National Police check point at the west end of Xuan Loc was probed by the VC resulting in 5 VC KIA and no friendly casualties. On the night of 2 - 3 February, the National Police Station in Xuan Loc was set on fire by a friendly flare. The police evacuated the station, but damage to the station itself was not known. As of 3 February, a VC squad remained in Xuan Loc but they were surrounded by the police who were attempting to mop them up. The Provincial Interrogation Center was only slightly damaged during the VC attack.

29. TAY NINH: Friendly forces had been forewarned of the 6 February attack on Tay Ninh City by a Vietnamese security service source who has been considered usually reliable. His warning resulted in ambush and defensive sites being increased.

IV CORPS

30. There is only limited information on police performance in IV Corps. It appears that police casualties will run high in the Delta. Very incomplete reporting lists 32 police killed, 25 wounded, and one missing. The VC released 134 prisoners from the Go Cong city jail. No other prisons were reported captured and opened. There is no reporting which indicates the police have performed unsatisfactorily. Information indicates the police performed satisfactorily to very well in the five provinces of Ba Xuyen, Chau Doc, Din Tuong, Kien Giang, and Vinh Long.

31. AN XUYEN: The National Police were holding two senior VC cadre captured by the PRU on 31 January.

32. BA XUYEN: During 2 - 3 February, the National Police and the Police Field Force were very effective in Soc Trang. They maintained the best contact with events through their 16 outposts in the city.

33. BAC LIEU: As of 3 February 5 National Policemen had been killed.

34. CHAU DOC: By 3 February, the chief of police and 15 policemen in Tri Ton district town had been killed and 3 policemen killed and the chief of police missing in Chau Doc town. The Special Police were working well and had captured 8 VC and were detaining 40 - 50 VC suspects in Chau Doc town. By 8 February, the police were beginning to attempt to run house-to-house searches. The Provincial Interrogation Center was functioning.

35. DINH TUONG: The Special Police were cited as having done an excellent job during the fighting in My Tho, especially considering the superiority of the VC weaponry over that used by the police. They also came to the defense of the RDC compound. As of 11 February, 8 National Police had been killed in My Tho and 25 wounded.

36. GO CONG: The VC released 134 prisoners from the city jail on 5 February.

37. KIEN GIANG: The National Police, including the Police Field Force, were part of the defending force for Rach Gia City on 31 January. By 3 February, the police chief had run house-to-house searches with the result that there had been no reoccurrence of terrorism. The National Police, along with other units, were reported to have done an excellent job of defending the city and taking offensive action.

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38. KIEN PHONG: The National Police in Cao Lanh City, along with the PRU, had assumed defensive positions on 4 February.

39. PHONG DINH: The National Police and Special Police in Can Tho, as of 1 February, were collecting information on VC tactics in the province.

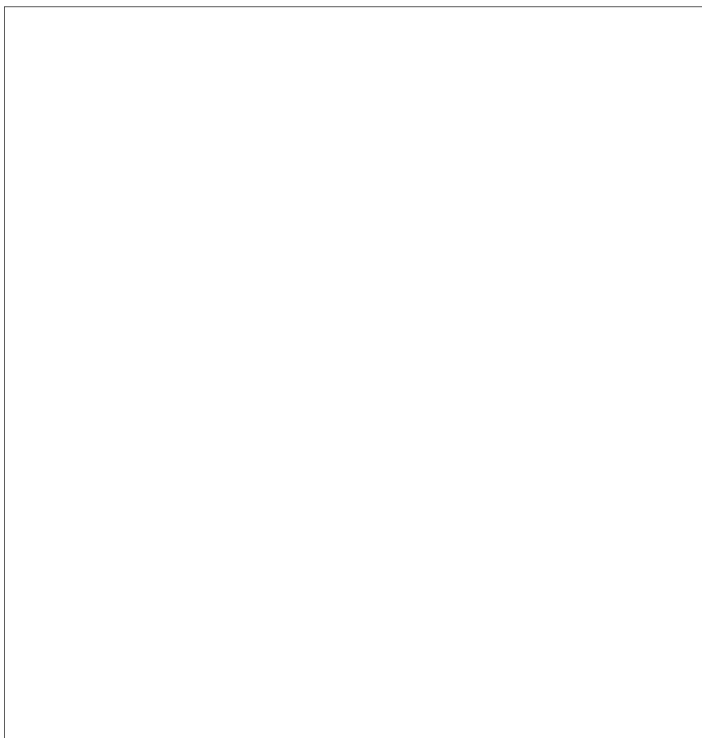
40. VINH LONG: Between 31 January and 7 February, the National Police were reported to be the best organized and coordinated defense force in the city. They seemed to move with efficiency and speed. The Police Field Force had uncovered a large ammunition cache, acting on information provided by the Special Police. The police were attempting to curb looting in the secure areas of the city. The police station was 60 percent destroyed, but repairs were underway and the police had the city under good control. The Provincial Interrogation Center was open and functioning.



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Vietnamese Affairs Staff

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