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2 February 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Support of Viet Cong by ARVN and Civilian Elements as of
021200 EST

1. There is little evidence that either ARVN or civilian elements in the provincial cities and Saigon have supported the Viet Cong during the series of attacks which began 30 January. Reporting for this period has been screened, and the few instances of the VC receiving support are recorded. It is still too early to state that the VC did not receive support in the cities, since more detailed coverage is required. There is yet no detailed reporting on what has occurred in the countryside outside the cities. The problem is further complicated by reports of the VC use of ARVN uniforms and also changing into civilian clothes.

SAIGON

2. The Viet Cong entered Saigon expecting internal support elements to be greater than was actually the case. They had been misled by exaggerated reporting from VC cadre within the city as to their effectiveness in building support for the VC cause [redacted] A VC attempt to organize a demonstration for peace in Saigon failed [redacted]

3.5(c)

3.5(c)

3. At the An Quang Pagoda on 31 January the 2 GVN Marine companies refused to attack, so combat police made the assault but were driven back. There is no evidence that the VC in the An Quang Pagoda have the cooperation of the monks. On the contrary, GVN authorities believed the VC forced their way in and are not assisted by Thich Tri Quang or his supporters [redacted] At 1200H some 30 monks and nuns^{3.5(c)} of the Pho Quan Pagoda in Gia Dinh demonstrated in sympathy with the VC attacks on Saigon and were dispersed by the police.

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4. Several VC prisoners captured by GVN military forces had been bona fide members of GVN Combat Police who had apparently infiltrated that organization [redacted]

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I CORPS

5. In Danang, Dai Viet and Buddhist leaders have cooperated with the GVN in preventing VC sponsored demonstrations. In an attempt to take over the Tin Hoa Pagoda on 30 January, the VC organized a rally and tried to convince the people that the VC had won a significant victory. There was little reaction by the populace, and the police made a number of arrests [redacted]

3.5(c)

II CORPS

6. In Pleiku city during the night of 31 January, the Provincial Reconnaissance Units who were protecting the American civilian compounds were forced to pull back into these compounds after receiving heavy fire from unknown sources believed by some to be ARVN elements [redacted]

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3.5(c)

7. In Ban Me Thuot, the capital of Darlac Province, two American civilian compounds came under .50 caliber MG and M79 grenade fire on the night of 30 - 31 January from an armoured vehicle with indigenous personnel in ARVN uniforms. American advisors attempted to advise the supposed ARVN troops that the compounds were American, and both advisor plus 6 Montagnard guards were wounded when the supposed ARVN troops responded by throwing grenades. The Khanh Hoa Province chief informed 5th USSF in Nha Trang that elements of the ARVN 45th Regiment, 23rd Inf Div., had defected to the VC and joined the fighting in Ban Me Thuot [redacted]

3.5(c)

8. In Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa Province, the National Police Special Branch reported that there are indications the VC attackers on 31 January were being assisted by members of the extreme Buddhists Movement. Five Buddhist nuns were arrested, and the police are attempting to confirm Buddhist involvement. The VC attempted to organize demonstrations in pro-VC hamlets in Bien Khanh District, 10 kms west of Nha Trang. The VC succeeded in gathering about 200 persons, but there is no evidence of a general uprising. According to interrogation of prisoners during the attack on Nha Trang, NVA troops were told prior to the attack they would be able to take and hold Nha Trang because the VC organization within the city had organized the population to assist them. This assistance did not materialize. [redacted]

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9. No information of support.

IV CORPS

10. In Ben Tre city, Kien Hoa Province, a large number of teenage boys were seen riding on bicycles through the streets during the fighting. They were unmolested by the VC and assumed to be acting as couriers for the VC.

11. Prior to Chau Doc city's coming under attack on 31 January, it appears the residents were aware of VC intentions to occupy the city, and they did not inform GVN officials. The populace did not have TET celebrations the night of 30 January but stayed in their homes. During the attacks, many uniformed GVN officials abandoned their uniforms and only put them back on after the town had been secured by friendly forces. (Hqs. Comment: This is not an unusual occurrence in the Delta and has happened previously.)

SAIGON (Additional)

12. Militant Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang said there were no VC in An Quang Pagoda before 31 January and that he and other senior bonzes fled after VC came to pagoda. [redacted] Buddhist Monks in An Quang Pagoda during the police assault on 1 February say there were no VC in the pagoda before or during the attack. [redacted] 3.5(c)

13. The VC effort to impress local intellectual circles with their power and capability has had some success. There are definitely those who feel that the current offensive proves there is no other solution than formation of a coalition government with the NLF. The wife of well-known engineer Nguyen Ngoc Bich advocates creation of such a coalition. [redacted] 3.5(c)

14. A senior GVN official says that if the Viet Cong are not cleared from Saigon within 48 hours the already deteriorating civilian morale will be further reduced and supplies will begin to run short. The mood of the populace is edgy, and its susceptibility to rumors is high. . . . The use of such measures as clearing target areas of inhabitants and firing these areas could prove . . . destructive in terms of psychological support from the people.

[redacted]

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