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SC No. 07431/68

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
4 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam, No. 13
(As of 8:30 A.M. EST)Summary

There were no major new attacks by Communist forces during the night of 3-4 February.

Allied forces continue to clear dug in enemy elements from the city of Hue. All major urban areas in the II Corps area are now in friendly hands but sporadic mortar and sniper fire is still reported in several of the provincial capitals. No major fighting occurred during the night in the Saigon area, although a few scattered skirmishes with small enemy remnants took place within the city. Enemy activity in the Delta provinces was characterized by a series of small unit assaults against district towns, outposts, and night defensive positions.

Despite the present relative calm, there are continuing indications that the Communists are planning new offensives, particularly in the Da Nang area and north and west of Saigon in South Vietnam's III Corps area.

The trends previously reported on the initial reaction of the populace to the attacks, continue to be evident. The assaults apparently produced fear and surprise over the VC presence and strength, and revulsion at the gross enemy violation of the sacred Tet holiday in about even proportions. Evident also is a strong undercurrent of belief that, if the government does not move speedily and with vigor to normalize the situation in the cities, and restore its presence and authority in the countryside, it will lose heavily in terms of popular confidence.

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I Corps

1. No significant Communist offensive activities were reported during the night of 3-4 February; however, several small-scale mortar attacks and ground probes took place.

2. Hue: At mid-morning on 4 February, sporadic contact between allied and enemy forces continued within the walled citadel area of the city just north of the Perfume River. South Vietnamese have complete control now of the citadel airstrip and, together with US units, are continuing to sweep sections of the city outside the citadel. The enemy is still holed up in scattered city buildings on the south bank of the river.

3. Interrogation of a prisoner taken in the Hue fighting reveals that at least some of the attacking force was composed of Viet Cong or regroupees. The captive claimed that the Hue city municipal unit and the 800th Viet Cong Battalion of the North Vietnamese 6th Regiment were tasked with attacking the MACV compound for three days and if resistance proved heavy, to continue the attack for an additional four days. He also claimed that if these forces were reinforced, the fighting could continue for 15 days.

4. Other elements of the North Vietnamese 6th Regiment probably were also given target areas within the city to attack. The enemy's stubborn resistance within the city may stem from their intention to follow the battle plan or in anticipation of additional enemy forces coming to their aid. There have been reports of large groups of enemy troops--probably reinforcing elements--on the outskirts of town, but allied blocking maneuvers have effectively kept them from joining up with the enemy within the city.

5. Quang Tin Province: A South Vietnamese field position and a nearby refugee area some 10 miles north of Tam Ky were attacked yesterday. The enemy penetrated the refugee camp and destroyed 71 buildings with grenades and explosive charges. Twenty-five civilians and one soldier were killed and another 19 civilians wounded during the action.

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6. No further details are available on the large-scale action reported earlier between US Marine and enemy units several miles south of Da Nang; however, an additional subordinate of the North Vietnamese 2nd Division has joined the build-up of Communist units in the coastal flatlands between Hoi An and Da Nang.

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[redacted] a terminal serving the Headquarters of the North Vietnamese 21st Regiment some nine miles west of Hoi An, placing it in close proximity to all major elements of the NVA 2nd Division and to the North Vietnamese 31st and 368 B Regiments which are in the same general area. The 21st Regiment normally operates to the south in Quang Tin Province.

7. This massing of enemy main force elements in this important area along the coast, together with the reported positioning of a regimental-size enemy force near the strategic Hai Van pass just north of Da Nang, suggest a Communist effort may be underway to cut off Da Nang. This could lead to, or be connected with, further attacks, including rocket and artillery, on the key US airbase as well as the city itself.

II Corps

8. There has been little significant enemy activity in central South Vietnam thus far on 4 February. The situation in the coastal city of Phan Thiet, capital of Binh Thuan Province, has improved and all major population centers are now under friendly control.

9. Phan Thiet: On the morning of 4 February sporadic firing was continuing around the outskirts of town following the successful allied drive to repel three Communist battalions which attacked during the night. A prisoner stated that one of the enemy units involved in the fighting--the 840th Viet Cong Battalion--is withdrawing to a secret base camp northeast of the city. Early on 4 February a company-sized Viet Cong force attacked a small village just north of Phan Thiet, possibly as a diversionary tactic to cover the retreat of the other units.

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10. Ban Me Thuot: The city remains quiet, however, reports continue on the build-up of North Vietnamese troops--numbering as many as 2,000--near the city. The 3rd Battalion of the North Vietnamese 33rd Regiment has been [redacted] [redacted] relocating just south of this high-land provincial capital.

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11. Kontum: Light enemy mortar and small arms fire was still coming in at several points in the city at noon on 4 February. Sporadic sniping has also continued during both nighttime and daytime hours. A probing attempt against the airfield was made during the night, but was swiftly beaten back.

12. Dalat: Only sporadic sniper fire has been reported in Dalat as South Vietnamese reinforcements continue to move into the city.

Saigon and III Corps

13. No major fighting occurred in Saigon during the night or early on Sunday. Elsewhere there were several assaults on the US base facilities and district towns during the night.

14. Saigon: Several sharp clashes took place between bands of Viet Cong and South Vietnamese police and Rangers. In at least two instances, government forces had platoon size enemy forces surrounded in Saigon buildings and were preparing to attack and clear them out. In one case a group of terrorists were reported as having taken refuge in a school house. They are armed with automatic weapons and grenade launchers and had a machine gun on the roof of the school.

15. Build-up: Captured documents and an enemy defector indicate that the 9th Viet Cong Division--which normally operates in northwest III Corps along the Cambodian border--may be moving closer to Saigon.

16. One document--a notebook captured several days ago about 30 miles northwest of Saigon--outlines a "new mission" for the 9th Division. According to the notes, higher headquarters recently ordered the

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9th to undertake a "long march" which would be the greatest march in the history of the war against the Americans. The notebook indicates that at least elements of the division were to leave Cambodian territory on 21 January, move through Tay Ninh Province, and arrive in Cu Chi District northwest of Saigon on 30 January. The division was to operate in an area where the terrain features were extremely complicated, an area never experienced in the past. During the march every effort would be made to maintain march schedule, security, and noise discipline.

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17. Other documents captured in the same area identify the 9th Division's 271st Regiment and probably elements of the 272nd Regiment. In addition

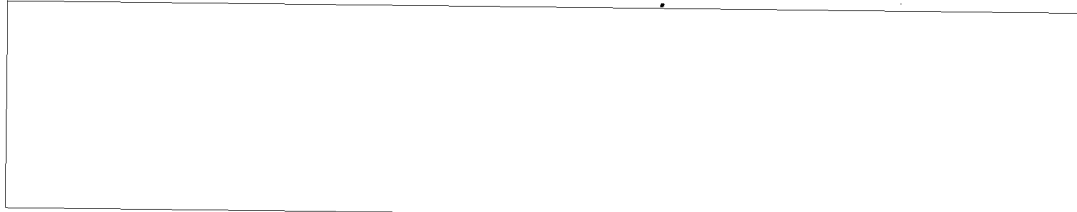
[REDACTED] the 9th Division's third regiment, the 273rd, was deployed just to the north of the capital in southern Binh Duong Province and Thu Duc District, Gia Dinh Province. The latter district headquarters is located only five miles northwest of Saigon.

18. A South Vietnamese Marine base in Thu Duc district came under a sharp, but unsuccessful, enemy attack on 3 February, possibly by a battalion of the 273rd Viet Cong Regiment. During the past few days all of the US bases located in an area around Saigon from northwest to northeast--Cu Chi, Ben Cat, Lai Khe, and Bien Hoa--have been shelled repeatedly, in many cases with heavy 122-mm. rockets which are held only by main force units. The 274th and 275th Regiments of the 5th Viet Cong Division were identified in the attacks on Bien Hoa, northeast of Saigon. Now there is fairly good evidence that the 9th Division is applying pressure from the northwest. The general Communist strategy may have been for these forces to follow-up and reinforce the initial attacks in the Saigon area which are believed to have been conducted by Viet Cong local forces and special squads. Failing this the 9th and 5th Divisions may hope to spread out US forces and tie them down on the outskirts of the capital.

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Other III Corps:

20. In other action in the III Corps area, a US base camp and district town in Binh Long Province came under attack last night. There was no report of casualties, but the US base was hit by heavy 122-mm. rocket fire. There has as yet been no attack on An Loc, the capital of Binh Long, but reports today indicate that the Viet Cong have taken over control of most of the hamlets in the province and can move at will. They have also set up roadblocks on the routes leading into An Loc. A somewhat similar condition exists in Tay Ninh Province where Revolutionary Development Teams have had to withdraw from their hamlets to their respective district towns.

21. An attack was reported last night on Tam Uyen district town in Bien Hoa Province. An unknown size Viet Cong force breached the town's protective wire barrier, overran several sections of the town and at last report was advancing on the district headquarters. There was no word on casualties. US Army sweeps in Hau Nghia and Binh Duong Provinces reported sporadic contact with enemy troops yesterday afternoon.

22. Xuan Loc, the capital of Long Khanh Province northeast of Saigon, was quiet at last report yesterday evening but the town was tense. Some Viet Cong are still believed to be in the town and allied authorities anticipated further attacks on their compounds during the night.

23. The intention of the enemy to continue his pressure on urban areas is continuing to be borne out by prisoner interrogations and now, by captured documents. One such document captured at the Tan Son Nhut Airbase perimeter states that in order to be victorious, the VC must expand attacking forces

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and guerrilla war to the cities, and increase attacks on lines of communications so as to isolate the urban areas.

IV Corps

24. All of the major provincial capitals in the delta are in friendly hands, although on the periphery of several cities, sporadic contact with Viet Cong forces is still reported. During the night of 3-4 February, the Communists launched small unit attacks on district towns, outposts, and allied field positions.

25. Sa Dec: Early this morning, an undetermined size Viet Cong force attacked Sa Dec city and a nearby district town. The MACV compound was penetrated before the attackers were driven back after a two-hour fight. This attack followed one late on 3 February which was directed against the Chieu Hoi center and the provincial headquarters building. At last report, elements of the enemy force were still in the city.

26. Cao Linh: This capital city of Kien Phong Province was attacked today by an estimated two Viet Cong companies. The enemy withdrew after one hour of fighting; no casualties were reported.

27. Other Delta Actions: In Dinh Tuong Province, five different South Vietnamese outposts were struck with recoilless rifle barrages late on 3 February. In Phong Dinh Province, the Thuan Nhon District town and the Binh Thuy airfield were hit by Viet Cong mortarmen. Twelve aircraft were damaged at Binh Thuy. In Vinh Long Province, the provincial capital of Vinh Long, its airfield, and a nearby district town were all attacked with harassing mortar and small arms fire. Ben Tre and the nearby district town of Mo Cay, in Kien Hoa were hit by light mortar attacks during the night. Other scattered district towns were also lightly mortared on 3-4 February as the Viet Cong continued to maintain pressure on populated areas throughout the delta provinces.

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