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ANNEX A -- 1ET OFFENSIVE IN RETROSPECT

(U) On 30 January 1968, the enemy violated his announced ceasefire in recognition of the Buddhist Lunar New Year holiday (Tet) and launched a country-wide attack on the major cities of SVN (See Figure A-1). He was well aware that, during the holiday period, the populace would be visiting with families and that RVNAF would be at a reduced status due to the granting of leave to its members. Also, a unilateral 36-hour stand-down, from the evening of 29 January through the early morning of 31 January, had been declared by the GVN and its allies, thus creating an ideal opportunity for the attack.

(C) It was inconceivable to the SVN citizens that the VC/NVA would stage such a large scale attack on the most sacred night of Tet -- 29 January. Celebrations, church services, and parties in every city were attended by patrons of the normal security elements, regardless of the RVNAF organization to which they belonged. As a result, RVNAF strength on 29 January was reduced to about 50 percent and, due to the inadequacy of the Vietnamese communication system, the effective notification of the bulk of these forces when the truce was broken was impossible. Consequently, when the major attacks came on 31 January, the RVNAF effective strength was still approximately 50 percent. The RF/PF units, whose members normally live near their outposts, were at approximately 70 percent strength.

(C) Past experience had indicated the probable violation of the truce set by the enemy and all of RVNAF and the Free World Allies expected his use of the truce to build up his logistics base for future operations. GVN and RVNAF authorities had also expected that the enemy would launch an attack either before or during the Tet holiday season; consequently, rehearsals and coordination of defense plans were accomplished during January. However, despite the many intelligence indications of a major offensive, including the possibility of a significant assault on urban areas, the magnitude of the attack came as a surprise. One reason, of course, was that any major attack on the cities represented a completely new departure from past enemy strategy.

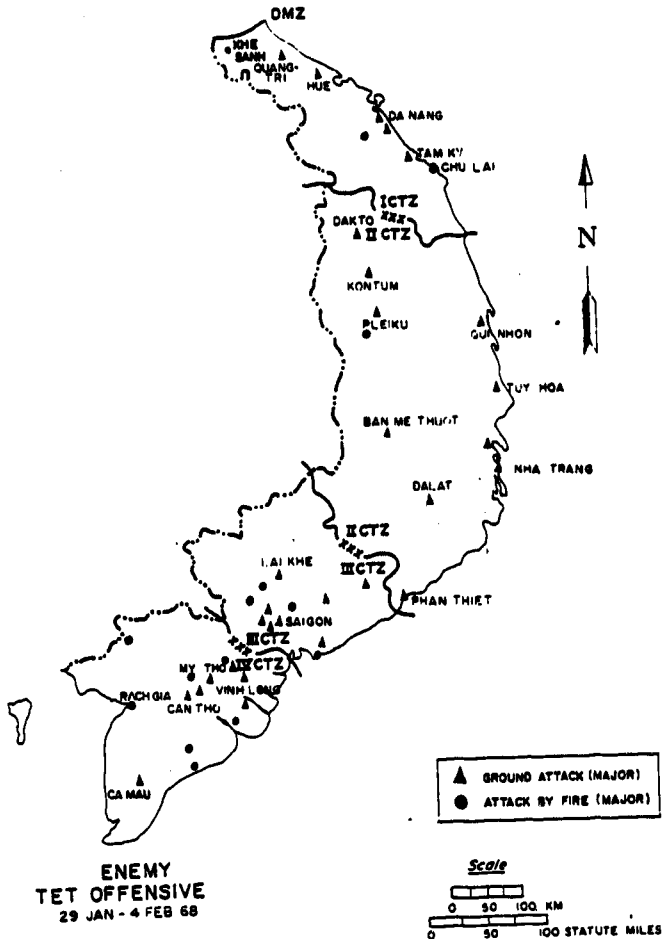
VC Strategy and Plan

(U) According to various sources and VC documents captured in the weeks just prior to the Tet Offensive, the main VC/NVA strategy was based on the fact that "the war will reach a culminating point in 1967-68 with the objectives of forcing US and FWM forces to withdraw from Vietnam and the GVN to accept a coalition government," which the NLF/SVN could dominate.

(U) The objectives of forcing US and other FWM forces to withdraw and gaining a coalition government were to be achieved by a general counter-offensive featuring large-scale, powerful, continuous attacks utilizing reserve forces supported by newer and larger weapons. This counter-offensive was to coincide with a general uprising of the people in SVN who would assist the VC in destroying the GVN. The attacks were to be directed at political and military targets, such as provincial and district capitals, GVN in Saigon, RD Cadres, and National Police; widespread attacks by fire designed to demonstrate the failure of GVN to protect the people; and finally, the destruction and/or demoralization of the RVNAF.

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FIGURE A-1

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(U) The enemy went to extensive effort to infiltrate the nation's cities prior to his first attacks by fire. His men slipped in, particularly Hue and Saigon, among the crowds of holiday travelers, on produce trucks, and in everyday traffic. Local force units were the first to infiltrate the cities, leaving larger main force units in reserve to await the expected popular uprising -- which did not materialize -- before being committed. He used funeral processions to smuggle in weapons and arms. Other quantities of arms and ammunition were smuggled into the towns in market baskets, in vegetable trucks, under lumber, or in false bottomed sampans.

(U) In order to divert a major portion of our resources to a remote area while he attacked the major cities of RVN, the enemy had moved in strength on our border outpost at Khe Sanh in northwest Quang Tri Province prior to the commencement of Tet. Khe Sanh was a critical position in that it guarded the approaches to Quang Tri City and Dong Ha. (COMUSMACV was resolved to hold Khe Sanh, for we could not permit the VC/NVA to establish another threatening base area within easy access to NVN and Laos, as they had done in the A Shau Valley in 1966).

#### I Corps Tactical Zone

(U) During the fall of 1967, an increasing number of documents and PW reports obtained by Allied intelligence in the I CTZ indicated a possible large-scale enemy offensive was to be directed against cities and major military installations. Further information obtained in the Da Nang area left little doubt that the attacks would be not only Corps-wide but probably country-wide. A crash security program by the enemy in the southern two provinces of I CTZ tended to confirm the offensive. The Americal Division reported large-scale movements of enemy troops and equipment and noted that district and regional forces were moving out of their local areas to consolidate with other units. During December it was discovered that the entire 320th NVA Div had infiltrated into the two northern provinces of I CTZ.

(C) By December, only one major unit, the 1st ARVN Div at Hue, took exception to the view that a major night offensive against population centers would come. This division could neither credit the enemy with "the intent" nor "the capability to launch a division size attack against Hue."

(C) With this single exception, all major I Corps commands were fully alerted by mid-December to the likelihood of a large-scale enemy offensive. So certain was III MAF HQ of the enemy's intentions, that a plan (Operation CLAXTON) was developed which included the detonation of controlled demolitions and fire bombs at Da Nang Air Base, Marble Mountain Air Facility, and the Force Logistics Command to represent a rocket attack on these installations in order to deceive the enemy into prematurely launching his attack. It was assumed that a major rocket attack by the enemy would be used to signal a ground attack in the Da Nang area.

(C) On 20 December, the plan was tested and although no enemy ground attack occurred, enemy rocket units were deceived into disclosing their positions. As a result, the positions were taken under fire by artillery and ground units and a possible enemy rocket attack was thwarted.

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(C) Despite the fact that Operation CLAXTON had failed to trigger a large-scale enemy attack on Da Nang, there was still little doubt that an enemy offensive was forthcoming. With the hard intelligence available, III MAF commanders were strongly opposed to any truce in the I CTZ and approximately six hours prior to the time the truce was to go into effect, the decision to cancel the Tet truce in I CTZ was announced. COMUSMACV and CG, III MAF agreed that, in view of the increasing enemy threat to Khe Sanh and the likelihood of a large-scale attack on population centers, the proposed truce would have an adverse effect on the tactical situation in I CTZ. All units in I Corps were at 100 percent alert on 30 January when the enemy began his effort.

(U) Beginning in the early hours of 30 January with widespread attacks on Allied installations throughout the I Corps area, the enemy Tet Offensive was met everywhere by resourceful and aggressive Allied countermeasures which denied the enemy his major objectives and forced him back on the defensive. Only at Hue City, aided by bad weather and tactical surprise, was the enemy able to hold his objective for more than a few hours.

(C) The enemy main effort in Quang Nam, as expected, centered on Da Nang and Hoi An. At 0330 on 30 January, the enemy initiated rocket and mortar attacks against the Da Nang Air Base, Marble Mountain Air Facility, and the I Corps Hq Compound, followed by a ground attack on the I Corps Hq. A few of the enemy succeeded in penetrating the compound but caused only minor damage before being driven out by a reaction force from the 4th ARVN Armd Cav Regt. The reaction force pursued the enemy; being joined later in the day by elements of the 1st ARVN Rngr Gp and the 1st MP Bn. The retreating enemy force suffered heavy casualties and lost their battalion commander before they were finally able to break contact and withdraw.

(S) One major enemy objective during Tet was to inflict major damage on Allied aircraft and facilities throughout the Republic. The attacks on the Marble Mountain and Da Nang airfields were significant examples of damage inflicted on air assets in the Republic. In the attack on the Marble Mountain Airfield at 300300 January, 17 helicopters and one observation plane were damaged. At Da Nang Air Base in the attack at 300330 January, 2 F4B, 1 F4C, and 1 A-6A were destroyed while 27 tactical aircraft were damaged.

(C) While the Da Nang area had been under attack, the enemy had also made a determined effort to capture Hoi An. Here the attacking forces, supported by heavy mortar fire, attempted to penetrate the city through the 102d Engineer Compound. The Engineers, supported by APCs and flare ships, repelled the attack but not before substantial enemy forces had infiltrated the city. The remainder of the attacking force retreated to a dependent housing area east of the compound where they were badly mauled by direct fire from ARVN artillery. Meanwhile, three companies of the 2d ROK Bde had been dispatched as a reaction force and began gradually forcing the enemy out of Hoi An towards the northeast. A fourth ROK company, supported by USMC tanks, moved into the city from the northwest to protect the Provincial Capital and the MACV Compound areas.

(C) Although GEN Lam, I Corps Commander, had granted the 2d ROK Mar Bde permission to employ all supporting arms necessary to clear the city, GEN Kim, Brigade Commander, undertook to position his forces in a manner which would permit the enemy to withdraw to the northeast as pressure was applied. This decision, although somewhat prolonging the battle, undoubtedly prevented the destruction of much of Hoi An and saved many civilian lives. By 0700 on 31 January, the ROK Mar Brigade and ARVN units occupied most of the city and had forced the enemy through the gap to the northeast where he was engaged by the 10th Company of the ROK Mar brigade and ARVN rangers and suffered heavy losses before completing his withdrawal. A

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second attack on Hoi An on 6 February failed to penetrate the city and was repulsed in less than five hours.

(C) The enemy's only success in Quang Nam Province was his occupation of the Duy Xuyen Subsector Headquarters. Fearing that his headquarters was about to be overrun, the Province Chief of Duy Xuyen had withdrawn his forces west to Tra Kien and within a few hours the enemy entered unopposed. However, Duy Xuyen was reoccupied by elements of the 2d ROK Mar Brigade on 3 February.

(C) The second phase of the enemy's offensive in Quang Nam Province was marked by the attempt of the 2d NVA Div to attack the city of Da Nang from the south. The division was late in starting and was unable to close on Da Nang in time to take advantage of the local force attacks of 30 and 31 January. However, by 6 February it was apparent that the enemy would move in force against Da Nang and that the two battalions of the 1st Mar Div, which had blunted all his major thrusts, would probably be insufficient to stop the enemy's main attack. Accordingly, CG, III MAF decided to reinforce the defense with two additional battalions from the Americal Division. These battalions, the 2d Bn, 1st Inf, and the 1st Bn, 6th Inf, were moved north and almost immediately were in contact with elements of the 2d NVA Div.

(C) COMUSMACV, who was then on an inspection tour of I Corps, suggested that the Americal units be deployed as a reinforcement element to Da Nang. In conference with GEN Robertson, CG, 1st Mar Div, GEN Korter, CG, Americal Division, and GEN Murray, DEP CG, III MAF, a plan was evolved to interpose the two Americal battalions, reinforced by two 1st Mar Div Bns, between Da Nang and the enemy. Meanwhile, the lead enemy battalions, advancing north on the night of 7 February, began a heavy attack on Combined Action Platoon E-4. This was the enemy's fatal error.

(C) By turning aside to eliminate this small unit, the enemy revealed his exact position and was promptly engaged by elements of 1st Bn, 3d Mar Regt and 1st Bn, 6th Inf. The enemy suffered over 250 KIA and his attack on Da Nang was decisively broken up. By 10 February, he was in full retreat from the Da Nang TAOR.

(C) In Quang Tri Province, the enemy also met with little success. A heavy ground attack, supported by mortars, against Quang Tri City on 31 January was repulsed with the enemy suffering heavy losses. Later in the day, five companies of the 1st Bde, 1st Air Cav Div, supported by elements of the 1st ARVN Regt, smashed into the enemy's assembly area east of the city, inflicting heavy casualties and driving the enemy from his positions. By 0700 on 1 February, the enemy was in full retreat from the city area.

(C) Elsewhere in the province, efforts to mount an attack on the Hai Lang District Headquarters and Trien Phuong District Headquarters were frustrated by Allied artillery and aggressive spoiling attacks by elements of the 1st Air Cav Div and the 1st ARVN Regt.

(C) The Cam Lo District Headquarters, which came under attack on 2 February, was defended only by an eight-man advisory team and a single platoon of US Marines since all Vietnamese personnel had abandoned their posts and sought cover. This small force, with artillery support, nevertheless succeeded in repelling an attack by an estimated five battalions of the 320th NVA Div inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

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(C) In Quang Ngai Province, the enemy made his main effort in the early morning of 31 January with a five-pronged attack against Quang Ngai City supported by mortars, rockets, and recoilless rifles. The enemy failed to secure most of his objectives but did succeed in occupying the provincial jail and the hospital. A counterattack by RF/PF forces, supported by a platoon of APCs and Americal gunships, cleared the hospital, but the enemy retained control of the jail and fighting continued throughout the day. The last enemy positions were finally reduced by 0800 on 1 February. Allied forces, pursuing the retreating enemy units, inflicted heavy casualties and captured numerous heavy weapons.

(C) At the same time that Quang Ngai City came under attack, the enemy launched heavy ground attacks against Allied installations in the Tam Ky area of Quang Tin Province. These attacks were repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy. Quang Tin Provincial Headquarters was briefly occupied by the enemy, but within a few hours, a counterattack by the 4th Bn, 5th ARVN Regt had restored the area to friendly control.

(C) The enemy's only real success in the I Corps area was his 26-day occupation of Hue City. Launching his attack on the city at 0340 on 31 January, the enemy achieved complete tactical surprise. He was aided by the absence of many ARVN personnel who had left the city on Tet leave and by the rivalry between the NP and ARVN, which had prevented ARVN from stationing substantial numbers of troops in the city.

(C) In the Hue area, the enemy had ready access to the city from his base in the A Shau Valley. A covering outpost like the one at Khe Sanh covering Quang Tri City was not available. Consequently, enemy regular units (eight VC/NVA battalions under the command of the 6th NVA Regt) were able to move rapidly and directly into the city. Before the battle was over, some 16 NVA battalions had been identified in the city.

(C) Fortunately our forces had been well positioned in the Hue area prior to the attack. The 1st Cav had been moved from II CTZ to the Quang Tri area in January in preparation for planned offensive operations into several enemy base areas along the Laotian border. At the same time, the 1st Mar Div operational area had been extended northward to Hue.

(C) Within a few hours the enemy was in control of the Citadel and the sector south of the Perfume River which contained the MACV Compound, the University, and a heavily populated residential area. The recapture of Hue was a hard, bitter fight. It involved house to house fighting and a slow but deadly process of routing the entrenched enemy from the heavily walled ancient fortress of the Imperial City. Two USMC companies, one each from the 1st Bn, 1st Mar Regt and 2d Bn, 5th Mar Regt, were employed with ARVN units on 1 February in an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the enemy. The results of this attempt indicated that the number of enemy troops had been underestimated. Two more companies from the 2d Bn, 5th Mar Regt were committed to the battle. Despite the handicap of poor weather, which severely restricted the use of supporting arms, especially air, the four Marine companies succeeded in clearing the area south of the river by 9 February and accounted for over 1,000 enemy KIA. However, as long as the enemy could retain control of the southwest wall of the Citadel, he could still reinforce and resupply his troops north of the river. Elements of the 1st Air Cav Div, after encountering stubborn enemy resistance west of the city, succeeded in clearing the southwest wall on 24 February and effectively isolating the enemy.

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(C) Meanwhile, beginning on 12 February, elements of the 5th Mar Regt and Vietnamese Marines began an attack on the Citadel area from the north and northeast. Still hampered by bad weather, the attacking forces encountered fierce enemy resistance which obligated GEN Lam to authorize air strikes and heavy naval gunfire against the citadel. On the afternoon of 24 February, the Vietnamese Black Panther Company assaulted and seized the Imperial Palace, and on 25 February the Citadel was declared secure and the city of Hue returned to GVN control.

(C) A local failure in intelligence and population control had allowed the enemy to penetrate and occupy large sections of Hue and several miscalculations in the first few days of fighting had allowed him to secure his position within the Citadel and prolong the fighting in Hue. These errors were:

1. Piecemeal commitment of friendly reaction forces over a period of five days.
2. Failure to seal off the western wall of the Citadel for the first 25 days of the fighting. This had allowed the enemy to reinforce and resupply his forces. Once his means of resupply and reinforcements were cut off, the enemy's position deteriorated rapidly.
3. Initially, a policy had been established that the city was not to be bombed or shelled in order to prevent damage to the historical buildings and areas. This policy later had to be abandoned.
4. An initial failure to supply heavy direct fire weapons to ARVN units. Lack of these heavy direct fire weapons contributed to the long time frame required by ARVN to drive the enemy out of the Citadel.

(C) During the battle for Hue, Navy river patrol boats and support craft came under repeated enemy fire while engaged in continuing supply and evacuation operations to and from the embattled city.

(C) A high point of the Hue battle occurred on 24-25 February 1968 when the 2d Battalion, 3d ARVN Regt and the Black Panther Company, 1st ARVN Div initiated the offensive action which cleared the Citadel. While elements of the 3d ARVN Regt and the Black Panther Company cleared the western wall and palace area, the 2d Bn, 2d ARVN Regt conducted a night attack which secured the southern wall and the Vietnamese Marines swept all the way to the southeast wall by nightfall. By the evening of 25 February 1968, only one enemy platoon was still resisting. Losses inflicted on the enemy by the 3d ARVN Regt and the Black Panther Company during the period 31 January to 29 February were 1,084 KIA, 22 PW's captured, and 268 individual and 88 crew-served weapons seized. Friendly losses included 113 KIA and 67 weapons.

(C) Unavoidable wide destruction of the city and Citadel occurred and 116,000 civilians were made homeless as a result of the battle. It was a costly battle, one in which the enemy lost 5,000 killed in the city and an additional 3,000 to the immediate north, compared to 500 US and ARVN troops KIA. Tragically, while the enemy was in possession of the city, he singled out and executed over 1,000 government officials, school teachers, and citizens of known government loyalty, a horrible demonstration of what could occur were the Communists to succeed in their cause to gain control of SVN.

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(C) From a purely military standpoint, the enemy's many-pronged Tet Offensive in I CTZ met with failure. Except at Hue, the enemy had been unable to hold a sizable population center for more than a few hours. Everywhere, VC/NVA forces had suffered severe losses and some units had been virtually destroyed. Moreover, in most areas the enemy had been unable to interfere with Allied offensive operations which continued unabated throughout the Tet Offensive. Generally speaking, the ARVN units, which bore the brunt of the initial enemy offensive in many areas, performed in a highly satisfactory manner. Time after time, they had met their VC/NVA counterparts and forced them to withdraw with heavy losses.

(C) Politically and psychologically the enemy's efforts proved, in the long run, to be self-defeating. The Communist attacks failed to spark the popular uprisings which the VC had hoped for and expected. In addition, the enemy's cynical disregard for civilian lives and his widespread destruction of religious shrines and historic monuments served to further alienate the Vietnamese population. Finally, the enemy suffered tremendous losses with no concrete gains to show for his efforts.

(C) Perhaps the most serious effect of the Tet Offensive was the setback suffered by RD. Many American advisors commented on the adverse effects produced by the actions of RD personnel who had abandoned their villages at the first sign of the enemy attack and now showed a great reluctance to return. An erroneous but widespread belief that the VC would soon launch a "second offensive" kept many RD teams in the cities.

(C) Among the most important lessons learned from the Tet Offensive was the value of timely intelligence correctly interpreted. All major I Corps commands, except for the 1st ARVN Div at Hue, were fully alerted to the probability of a major enemy offensive and had fairly accurate knowledge of the location and strength of the enemy's larger units. This state of readiness on the part of all commands contributed markedly to the Allied successes during the initial Tet attacks.

(C) At the tactical level, many American advisors stressed the need for more aggressive patrolling and ambushing by ARVN and local force units to deny the enemy the opportunity to mass troops undetected.

(C) The operation at Hue marked the first time in the Vietnam conflict that Marines had engaged in house to house fighting. Nevertheless, as the Commander of the 3d Bn, 5th Mar Regt observed in a taped interview, individual Marines were quick to adapt to the techniques of fighting in built-up areas, although few had previous training or experience in this type of combat.

(C) Overall, the Allied successes in the Tet period were due to skilled intelligence evaluation, effective use of supporting arms, and the fine performance of ARVN, ROK, and American units.

(C) The performance of elements of the 2d ARVN Div and the associated RF/PF units in the defense of Quang Ngai and Tam Ky on 31 January 1968 was worthy of the highest praise for results gained, area secured, and enemy losses inflicted.

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(C) By and large, this action of the 2d Div was an ARVN show. In less than 24 hours (0400-2400), enemy losses inflicted by ARVN forces were: 1,223 KIA (body count), 111 PWs captured, and 384 individual and 56 crew-served weapons captured. Friendly losses were: 75 KIA, 203 WIA, and 17 weapons. These results were achieved with minimal US combat support consisting of normal advisory effort, two helicopter gunships at each city, and artillery support and air strikes directed by attached USAF Forward Controllers and elements of the 1st Bn, 1st Cav.

(C) Although the enemy achieved some limited penetration of the two cities, he was unable to capture and hold any significant objectives. Where the enemy did manage to penetrate, ARVN units counterattacked promptly and vigorously, driving them out and destroying them in place. ARVN units were alert, aggressive, and performed with distinction. 2

### Results of Tet Offensive in I CTZ

(C) Everywhere, VC/NVA forces had suffered severe losses and some units had been virtually destroyed. Enemy casualties for the period 30 January to 25 February were 17,342 KIA, 742 PWs captured, 70 returnees, and 3,584 individual and 769 crew-served weapons captured. Friendly casualties during this period were: USMC: 944 KIA and 6,582 WIA; USA: 361 KIA and 1,576 WIA; USN: 3 KIA, 25 WIA; ROKMC: 66 KIA and 226 WIA; and ARVN: 1,133 KIA and 3,277 WIA.

### II Corps Tactical Zone

(U) Within the II CTZ, the enemy made a concerted effort in the last quarter of 1967 to halt or, at least, limit Allied initiative and offensive successes which were making increased and dramatic inroads against the VC/NVA. Allied forces successfully met the test, however, and each phase of the enemy Winter-Spring Offensive campaign failed, despite a significant commitment of men and material.

(U) Due primarily to the need for additional forces in other corps areas, significant changes had been made between November 1967 and just prior to Tet. In November there was a total of 78 Allied maneuver battalions in the II CTZ. At Tet there was a total of 67.

(U) The enemy was losing control of the population; lines of communications were being opened; and he was becoming increasingly dependent on infiltration in order to maintain his forces. In a bold effort to reverse his misfortunes in the II Corps area, the enemy launched the opening phase of his Winter-Spring campaign in Kontum Province at Dak To in early November 1967. The enemy forces suffered severe losses in nearly three weeks of heavy fighting in Kontum, but for the first time he abandoned the practice of backing off when the fighting became costly.

(U) During the lull which followed Dak To, it became more and more apparent that the enemy was regrouping and repositioning his forces in order to renew the offensive at a time and place of his own choosing.

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(U) During December 1967 and January 1968, enemy activity was generally confined to shifting maneuver elements, terrorism, sabotage, interdiction of LOCs, and attacks by fire. In general, the enemy attempted to avoid large ground contacts with Allied forces. One exception was in Binh Dinh Province where ARVN, ROK, and US operations against the 3d NVA Div exacted a heavy toll, killing over 3,000 of the enemy's best troops; consequently, major elements of the 3d NVA Div were unable to participate to any great degree in the Tet Offensive.

(U) In January, intelligence indicated that the enemy was preparing to launch another phase of his campaign. The future battle plan for the Pleiku Provincial Unit was captured in Pleiku Province in early January and an increasing number of reports of enemy plans and preparations were received. Accordingly, in late January, military units in II CTZ were alerted to the probability of enemy activity just prior to or after Tet.

(U) Within II Corps, as the country-wide offensive began on 30 January, elements of the 3d NVA Div attacked a major LZ in Binh Dinh Province while local force elements and a sapper company attacked Qui Nhon, the province capital. The fighting in and around Qui Nhon lasted from 30 January to 5 February. During this period, elements of the 90th Local Force (LF) Bn and three sapper companies attacked Allied installations and GVN offices in and around the city. Key targets were the Military Security Service (MSS) Headquarters, 2d Railway Security Compound, radio station, and Bach Dang village. The enemy occupied all target areas despite their defense by RF/PF elements. The first reaction forces to contact the enemy were four RF platoons that were stationed in the Bach Dang area. The 405th Scout Company and 1st Bn, 41st ARVN Regt were also committed into the Bach Dang area. RF/PF, NP force, and Province Headquarters Task Force surrounded the enemy occupying the radio station and were later reinforced by three companies of the Capital ROK Division's 1st Regt. Two CIDG companies were committed against enemy forces controlling the railroad station. By 31 January, all areas were secured. Enemy casualties were 276 KIA, 58 PWs captured, and 162 individual and 11 crew-served weapons captured. Additionally, 12 members of the infrastructure were killed and 31 captured.

(U) In Phu Yen Province, from 30 to 31 January and 5 to 6 February, elements of the 5th Bn, 95th NVA Regt were engaged in and near Tuy Hoa; key targets appeared to have been C Battery of the 6th Bn, 32d Artillery, Binh Tin Hamlet, the Tuy Hoa North Airfield, and the Province Prison. By 0600 on 30 January, Company D, 4th Bn, 503d Abn Inf and two companies of the 2d Bn, 28th ROK Regt attacked the enemy force that had been attacking C Battery, 6th Bn, 32d Artillery, Tuy Hoa North Airfield, and the prison. By 0730 on 31 January, the enemy force had been surrounded and destroyed in Binh Tin hamlet. Two battalions of the 47th ARVN Regt and two RF companies attacked an enemy strongpoint in the center of Tuy Hoa on 5 February and reduced the strongpoint by the following day.

(U) During the fighting in and around Tuy Hoa, the enemy forces lost 316 KIA, 104 PWs captured, and 104 individual and 10 crew-served weapons. Infrastructure losses were unknown.

(U) In Khanh Hoa Province, elements of the 18B NVA Regt emerged in an aggressive role for the first time since their limited objective attacks around Ninh Hoa and Nha Trang in October and November. Elements of the 11th Company, 7th Bn, 18B NVA Regt and the H-71 LF Company attacked facilities in Ninh Hoa on 30 January. The main objective was the RF/PF Training Center. Enemy forces attacking the center were caught between the cross fires of the MACV Compound and the Ninh Hoa Police Station. At 1200 hours on 30 January, seven companies of the 2d and 3d Bn, 29th ROK Regt moved to blocking positions around the city and, on 31 January,

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closed their encirclement and reestablished control. Though there were reports of sporadic contacts through 4 February, the heavier fighting terminated on 31 January. The enemy force lost 45 KIA, four PWs captured, and 12 individual and one crew-served weapon. Though no infrastructure members were killed, five were captured.

(U) As the enemy proceeded with his systematic, coordinated city offensive, he attacked Nha Trang on 30 January with elements of the 7th Bn, 18B NVA Regt, the T-88 Recon Company, the T-89 Engineer Company, and the K-90 and K-91 Sapper Companies. These forces launched their attacks against the sector and province headquarters, the military and civil jails, the radio station, railroad station, and the Roberts Compound area. The enemy suffered heavy losses in his abortive attempt to take these key objectives in the city. From 30 to 31 January, 15 Mobile Strike Force (MSF), CIDG and Ranger Companies of the 5th Special Forces Group(SFG); the 272DMP Company; the 11th Company, 30th ROK Regt; and US, ARVN, and ROK Headquarters personnel attacked enemy strongpoints and by 1 February eliminated all but scattered pockets of resistance. In five days of fighting, enemy killed numbered 274 while 76 PWs and 169 individual and 21 crew-served weapons were captured. Eight infrastructure members were killed and 109 suspects detained.

(U) For the first time in several months, the 482d VC LF Bn and the 840th VC Main Force (MF) Bn launched a major attack in Ninh Thuan Province. At 0315 on 31 January, elements of the 482d and 840th launched an attack against Phan Thiet. Key targets included the MACV Compound and water point, Binh Thuan Sector Headquarters, an ARVN artillery platoon, LZ Betty, the Province Prison, and points along the perimeters of the city. Though the heavier contacts terminated on 4 February, sporadic fighting continued into 10 February. In many instances, the enemy units reportedly concentrated in schools in the northern portion of the city as well as in a large pagoda in the western part of Phan Thiet. He felt certain that these structures would not be fired upon. As the fighting in the city died out, it appeared the enemy was withdrawing back to his base areas.

(U) At 0630 on 31 January, the first reaction forces to contact the enemy were four PF platoons, an RF platoon, and a province reconnaissance platoon northwest of the town at Xuan Phong. From that time, the 3d Bn, 506th Abn Inf and the 4th Bn, 44th ARVN Inf reinforced by the 3d Bn, 44th ARVN Inf; two Mobile Strike Force (MSF) companies; three RF companies and 15 PF platoons drove the enemy out of most of the city and secured the area by 9 February. On 18 February the enemy again attacked Phan Thiet and overran the prison, releasing 500 prisoners. By 23 February the enemy attack had been defeated and the city was under friendly control. Enemy losses were 1,256 KIA, 48 PWs captured, and 253 individual and 88 crew-served weapons. The infrastructure suffered 60 killed or captured.

(U) The enemy launched attacks in the western highlands against Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province, Pleiku City in Pleiku Province, and Kontum City and Tan Canh in Kontum Province.

(U) The attack at Ban Me Thuot, which began on 30 January and terminated 6 February, involved three battalions of the 33d NVA Regt, the E-301 VC LF Bn, and up to five provincial local force companies. The apparent key targets included the 23d ARVN Division Headquarters, the MACV Compound, both airfields, the province chief's house, the ARVN military compound, the RF/PF training center, and the province bank. Additionally, two churches, missionary buildings, and a leprosarium were destroyed. The initial attacks were met by the RF and PF companies and platoons performing their normal security operations. By noon of 30 January,

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the 23d Recon Company, the 8th ARVN Cav, and three battalions of the 4th ARVN Regt were in contact. In the early hours of 1 February, the 23d ARVN Rngr Bn was deployed to the city, and on 2 February the 1st Bn, 503d Abn Inf had reinforced from Pleiku. Final search and clear operations were completed by these forces on 6 February. The enemy lost 919 KIA, 186 PWs captured, and 161 individual and 10 crew-served weapons. Infrastructure losses were 25 captured.

(U) The attack on Pleiku City, which commenced early on 30 January and terminated on 4 February, involved the N-15 VC LF Bn, the 40th Sapper Battalion, and four district companies. Key targets were the Pleiku Sector Headquarters, the MACV compound, the 71st Evac Hospital, the PW camp, New Pleiku and Camp Holloway airfields, the province chief's quarters, and the Montagnard Training Center.

(U) As the enemy attacked, elements of the 22d ARVN Rngr Bn and the 3d ARVN Cav moved to alert positions throughout the city. Company A, 1st Bn, 69th Armd deployed to the contact areas and reinforced ARVN forces as did two MSF companies and one RF and one PF company. Elements of the 4th Div Engineer Bn were airlifted southwest of the city and, moving in with two MSF companies, conducted a coordinated attack on enemy strongpoints. By 3 February, the joint US/ARVN task force had secured the city and clean-up actions were begun. Enemy losses included 632 KIA, 182 PWs captured, and 179 individual and 10 crew-served weapons. Twenty-five infrastructure members were killed and 160 suspects detained.

(U) Kontum City was struck early on 30 January by three battalions of the 24th NVA Regt, the 304th VC LF Bn, and the 406th VC Sapper Bn. Some of the heaviest fighting during the Ist Offensive occurred when the enemy forces attempted to take the MACV compound, post office, finance office, province chief's headquarters, the airfield, and the 24th Special Tactical Zone Headquarters. As a result, the prisoner interrogation center and a church were destroyed.

(U) The initial enemy assault was met by two Montagnard scout companies (-), the 2d Bn, 42d ARVN Inf (-), two CIDG companies, and RF/PF forces. By noon, it was apparent reinforcements were required and the 1st Bn, 22d Inf; D Troop, 7th Sqdn, 17th Cav and C Company, 1st Bn, 69th Armor were moved into the city. ARVN reinforced with the 3d Bn, 42d ARVN Inf and two scout companies. By 3 February friendly forces, conducting search and clear operations, were meeting light resistance and all action ceased on 4 February.

(U) The enemy suffered extremely heavy casualties in Kontum, losing 1,189 KIA, 56 PWs, and 166 individual and 29 crew-served weapons.

(U) The last major city to be struck was the autonomous city of Dalat in Tuyen Duc Province. Elements of the 186th VC MF Bn, reinforced by a part of the 145th VC MF Bn, infiltrated the city and attacked at 0100 on 1 February.

(U) The initial attack was met by an RF platoon, armored car platoon, and sector headquarters personnel. Two RF companies and the armored car platoon, supported by gunships, were the first reaction force to drive the enemy out of the center of the city on that day. On 4 February, three CIDG companies reinforced the hard-pressed regional forces and on 5 February, the 23d ARVN Rngr Bn moved into the city. On 8 February the CO, 23d ARVN Div assumed control of all forces in Dalat and, reinforced by the 11th ARVN Rngr Bn, on 10 February attacked the enemy force and secured Dalat the next day.

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(U) The enemy forces in and around Dalat lost 208 KIA, eight PWs, 40 individual and three crew-served weapons in 12 days of fighting. Infrastructure losses were 17 killed and 15 captured.

#### Results of Tet Offensive in II CTZ

(U) As of 1 February, the enemy had committed forces against major population centers in nine of the 12 provinces in the zone. As a result, the enemy lost 5,405 KIA, 704 PWs, and 1,327 individual and 127 crew-served weapons. Allied losses were 427 KIA, and 1,524 wounded - a ratio of 11.8 to 1.

(U) The results of the Tet Offensive were generally viewed by the people in the II CTZ as a victory for the GVN. In the few weeks immediately following the offensive, it seemed that the majority of the population would most likely remain neutral. This noncommitted attitude was due primarily to the fact that the people were still subjected to the influence of both the VC and the GVN. The people's confidence in the GVN to protect them had been greatly reduced as the VC propaganda, prior to the Tet Offensive, indicated that the cities would be attacked and entered and the VC did exactly what they had promised.

(U) Although many of the people had a noncommitted attitude, most advisory personnel in the II CTZ agreed in general with a statement made by the Province Senior Advisor in Kontum when he stated, "The VC/NVA Tet Offensive has caused the military and the civilian population to solidify in their efforts against the VC. There is a distinct unity of effort, the realization of a national purpose." Additionally, there was a marked indication that the people of Kontum were now "acting in behalf of their province and city, instead of reacting."<sup>3</sup>

#### III Corps Tactical Zone

#### Events Leading Up To Tet

(C) By November 1967, the operations of II FFORCEV and III Corps within III CTZ had succeeded in driving the bulk of the VC/NVA main forces away from the more heavily populated areas into the sparsely settled border regions. Intelligence indicated that the enemy had suffered three times the losses in 1967 as in 1966. The threat in Gia Dinh Province was reduced to the point that the 199th Lt Inf Bde was able to phase out Operation FAIRFAX and move into War Zone D, leaving tactical responsibility for the security of the Capital Military District (CMD) to the 5th ARVN Rngr Gp. The 1st Inf Div had been successful in opening Highway 13 to Quan Loi, splitting War Zone C from D, and facilitating civil and military movement north of Saigon. The 9th Inf Div had commenced clearing Highway 1 from Saigon to the II/III Corps boundary. The Revolutionary Development Program was accelerating, and public administration training was underway in all provinces. Economic activity was improving and LOCs were being opened.

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(C) It appeared that the enemy had decided to employ the majority of his main force units along the Cambodian border and, in particular, to strengthen and consolidate his hold over Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Quang Duc Provinces. Intelligence data indicated that, after a Tet truce period during which he would massively resupply and reinforce across SVN borders, he would launch a major dry season offensive.

(C) In order to destroy the enemy's main force units when they could be found and to frustrate any larger-scale infiltration from Cambodia during the Tet truce, II FFORCEV adopted a border strategy in December whereby a major number of US battalions would be committed along the southern border of III CTZ. However, II FFORCEV did not execute the December border unit placement once evidence began to amass that the VC had changed their own strategy and were going to aim their main force offensive at the populated areas of III CTZ, which was largely covered by ARVN.

(C) Several attacks against district and province capitals, such as Bao Tri and Trang Bang in Hau Nghia Province and Tan Myen in Bien Hoa Province, broke the pattern of earlier enemy operations. The attacks signalled a change in the objectives of the VC forces and the size forces he planned to use in the attacks. Also, plans for attacks on other capitals were discovered. Besides these indications of a definite shift of enemy forces toward the base area in III CTZ, there was evidence the enemy was reequipping his troops with AK-47s, RPG-2s and RPG-7s. NVA fillers were being infused into local force battalions, and there were persistent reports of a major offensive being planned.

(C) Despite the many reports and indications of a major offensive in populated areas, it was not concluded by early January that the attacks would occur during, and in violation of, the Tet truce or that the main objective would be Saigon itself.

(C) On 10 January, COMUSMACV approved the abandonment of the original Tet posture in the III CTZ and CG, II FFORCEV, throughout January, gradually shifted the center of gravity of his forces to meet the newly developing threat.

(C) The VC buildup of weapons and ammunition caches in and around Saigon began as early as November. These were for the purpose of resupplying attacking local force units, arming recently recruited personnel, arming civilians who would rally to the VC cause during the expected "uprising," and arming the VC prisoners to be released from Chi Hoa Prison.

(C) Based upon a study of commercial traffic, ammunition and demolitions were smuggled into the city by vehicles representative of the normal prevailing traffic.

(C) The major VC units that participated in the attack on Saigon proper (exclusive of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base) were the 1st through 6th VC Bns, all of which normally had operated in or on the periphery of the CMD. They were familiar with Saigon, did not require an extensive commo-liaison network to assist their movement into the city, and were able to move about as ordinary citizens.

(C) When it is considered that the VC infiltrated Saigon, a city of 2,500,000 and suburbs of an additional 800,000, with 4,000 troops, the infiltration is placed in its proper perspective. Four thousand people moving into a city that size during the busy Tet season while 20,000 ARVN soldiers were on leave would be extremely difficult to detect.

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(C) The other battalions and regiments that took part in the offensive made normal tactical marches over established routes, through established base camps, and known base areas. These units were held in assembly areas at 9 to 12 hours marching distance from their targets for the coordinated assault. However, the enemy encountered many difficulties which prevented these reserve units from reaching their destination. Guides and units became separated or lost, columns became intermixed, some units attacked from a march column without deploying, and other units waited for following elements that never arrived. A significant example of faulty execution was the failure of two VC companies to rendezvous, as planned, in a rubber plantation adjacent to the Bien Hoa PW camp. When they arrived in the area and found no rubber trees (the area having been cleared of all vegetation one month earlier by Rome plows), they became confused and departed.

(C) In the 48 hours preceding the main VC attacks in III CTZ, intelligence indicators of an imminent attack multiplied and both ARVN and US forces made precautionary adjustments.

(C) On 29 January at 1615, CG, II FFORCEV sent out a Flash message to all OPCON units warning of probable VC violation of the Tet truce and directing a maximum alert posture during the Tet period.

(C) On the night of 29 January, heavy attacks occurred in I CTZ, causing GVN to cancel the Tet truce on 30 January at 0945. III Corps and II FFORCEV immediately resumed offensive operations. However, there was only one significant contact in III CTZ on 30 January which occurred when TACAIR and a light fire team attacked a convoy of 25 oxcarts and 200 VC south of Tay Ninh, killing 40 VC and destroying 8 oxcarts.

#### The Battle of Long Binh

(C) The first indications of a ground attack came at 0035 on 31 January when elements of the 199th Lt Inf Bde detected and engaged a VC force north of the Dong Nai River moving south toward Bien Hoa Airbase, and killed 47. A long-range patrol of the 199th Bde also detected approximately 90 VC who double-timed past their position just north of Long Binh.

(C) At 0330 the 2/47 Inf Bn, 9th Inf Div moved to the Long Binh area from its position on Rt 15, in the vicinity of Bearcat. At 0430, two battalions of the 275th VC Regt launched a ground attack through Ho Nai village, south across Highway 1, against the northern perimeter of Long Binh. At the same time, the U-1 LF Bn harassed the eastern perimeter, covering efforts by sapper units to penetrate the main ammunition dump. One company of the 275th VC Regt attempted to seize the ARVN PW compound which contained approximately 2,000 PWs.

(C) Elements of the 199th Bde engaged the enemy throughout the area and, by a series of platoon and company moves, converged on the 275th VC Regt which was under heavy fire from gunships of the Air Cav Troop, 3/17 Air Cav Sqdn. Several sapper teams did penetrate the ammo dump and set time charges, many of which were removed by EOD teams before 4 of the 100 pads of ammo detonated at 0800.

(C) It became apparent at 0600 that the 199th Bde, reinforced by units of 9th Div and supported by one troop of the 3/17 Air Cav Sqdn, had encircled the bogged-down assault elements of the 275th VC Regt and were killing them at a sustained rate.

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(C) At 0800, Company B, 4/39 Inf Bn combat assaulted in the grass helicopter pad opposite II FFORCEV Hq, then quickly moved out of the hot LZ, departing the area through the Widows Village.

(C) A company sized force from the 199th Bde, together with ARVN MPs, repulsed the attack on the PW compound.

(C) From this point on, the battle of Long Binh consisted of the systematic destruction of the defeated VC Regt by air, artillery, ground sweeps, ambush, and long-range patrol activities.

#### The Battle of Bien Hoa

(C) Simultaneously with the 0300 attack on the eastern portion of Long Binh, Bien Hoa Air Base received about 25 rockets followed closely by a mortar-supported ground attack. The air base received a total of 100 mixed rocket and mortar rounds during the attack which destroyed an F-100 and one A-37 and damaged 23 other aircraft. Two battalions of the 274th VC Regt attacked from the east while the 238th VC LF Company, reinforced, attacked III Corps Headquarters.

(C) The VC attacking the air base were initially engaged by the east bunker line manned by an RF platoon and the MP Base Reaction Force. The VC breached the perimeter wire but did not get onto the airstrip. The 57th RF Bn, dispatched by the Dong Nai Sensitive Area Command, reinforced the defenders of the air base at 0420 and the VC penetration was erased.

(C) At 0820, the 2/506 Abn Inf was deployed by helicopter from its operational area in the MANCHESTER AO to the 101st Abn Div Hq at Bien Hoa Air Base and commenced an attack south through the east gate.

(C) A Troop, 3/5 Cav Sqdn from the 9th Div, which had been ordered to reinforce III Corps Headquarters, departed from Blackhorse Base Camp, fought right through the middle of the 275th VC Regt astride Highway 1 and plowed into the flank of the 274th VC Regt attacking Bien Hoa Air Base, inflicting and suffering heavy losses. It linked up with the 2/506 Abn Inf and assisted in securing III Corps Headquarters. Air strikes, gunships, and artillery saturated the VC approach routes east of the air base. Despite the heavy ground attack, air operations were not halted at Bien Hoa except between 0300 and 1300 on 31 January.

(C) By late afternoon on 31 January, the immediate ground threat to Bien Hoa and the III Corps Headquarters had been eliminated. Several hundred VC were killed in this action. It was to take three more days and the concerted efforts of the 199th Bde, elements of the 101st Abn Div, II Armd Cav Regt, and the 9th Inf Div to drive out or destroy the remnants of the five VC battalions in the Bien Hoa/Long Binh area. The major ground attack from the 5th VC Div, however, was eliminated on the first day of the offensive.

#### The Battle of Tan Son Nhut

(C) The attack on Tan Son Nhut commenced at 0321 on 31 January when heavy fire was received on the base from around the entire perimeter. The main attack by a three-battalion

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force was launched from the west at Gate 51 while secondary attacks were aimed at eastern Gate 10 and northern Gate 58.

(C) The VC force apparently attacked in a column of battalions, prepared to pour through a breach in the perimeter bunker line. The heavy weapons companies of the enemy battalions were set up in the Vinatexco Textile Mill, a structure west of Gate 10. Anti-aircraft weapons were placed on the roof and apparently a cache of weapons had been assembled there to supply those recruits in the force that were not armed.

(C) The initial assault defeated several bunkers guarding Gate 51, and the leading battalion penetrated the defenses and got approximately 200 meters inside the wire in the direction of the main runway.

(C) Forces from the 377th Security Police Squadron with a two-platoon USARV Task Force (TF35) and mixed ARVN elements executed their counterattack plan in time to block the penetrating force.

(C) At approximately 0430, two companies from the 8th ARVN Abn Bn counterattacked the penetration, sustaining heavy casualties.

(C) The Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area Commander and his advisor requested assistance from US combat forces. The 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav, 25th Inf Div was committed. The squadron was deployed on Route 1 from the Hoc Mon Bridge, 8 miles from Tan Son Nhut, to Go Day Ha. C Troop, at the Hoc Mon Bridge, responded first. It was guided cross-country, past potential blocking positions, by the squadron commander who dropped flares from his command helicopter. This technique permitted the troops to arrive before light, at 0600, avoiding VC planned ambushes.

(C) C Troop attacked the VC forces from the northwest, drawing heavy fire from the textile mill and succeeded in cutting off the trailing VC battalion from their source of weapons in the mill. It then became heavily engaged with the VC forces in the vicinity of Gate 51, losing over a third of its strength, while destroying the capability of the VC force to continue the attack. This was the decisive force and action which defeated the main VC assault on Tan Son Nhut.

(C) VNAF and USAF airstrikes were directed on the textile mill in the morning hours and partially neutralized its fire.

(C) At 1219 a mixed US and ARVN force of 25 men from Tan Son Nhut launched a counter-attack against the depleted VC force inside the base and overran them, closed the gate, and ended the threat. During this action, the Vietnamese Commander, Deputy Commander, and US Deputy Senior Advisor were wounded.

(C) At 1300, the remainder of the 3/4 Cav Sqdn, having completed the neutralization of the textile mill, arrived at Gate 51 and engaged the disorganized VC forces. The threat was eliminated from the west when the 3/4 Cav Sqdn arrived. Over 500 VC dead were counted within the base and west of Gate 51.

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(C) On the north perimeter of Tan Son Nhut, elements of an ARVN battalion blocked the strong VC/NVA attack which had already swept through Go Vap. Two VN Marine battalions from the Delta were assaulted into the JCS Hq area during the morning, and one, the 4th VNMC Bn, counterattacked toward Go Vap from inside Tan Son Nhut.

(C) In Go Vap, the VC overran the Co Loa artillery camp and captured 12 105mm howitzers. The defenders had removed the breach blocks, however, so the weapons could not be used. These artillery pieces were later recaptured intact. By 1000, the Armored Command Headquarters was also penetrated. The VC assault force was accompanied by NVA tank crews who expected to capture and use tanks from the headquarters. Fortunately, these tanks had been removed two months previously. The counterattack by the 4th VNMC Bn restock the Co Loa area by nightfall, having killed over 100 VC and sustained losses of seven KIA and 52 WIA.

(C) During the initial attack by fire on the air base at 310342JAN, fourteen aircraft were damaged. Later, on 18 February, three tactical and two transport aircraft were destroyed and 35 aircraft damaged when 100 rockets and mortars were fired onto the air base.

#### The Race Track

(C) The Phu Tho Race Track was the focus of another series of battles. The VC seized and tried to hold the race track for several reasons, including the following:

1. It was a good rallying point for VC unfamiliar with Saigon.
2. It was the center of a good road net.
3. It had a large covered area suitable for a hospital.
4. Its control denied the US forces a large LZ inside the city.
5. It was within 82mm mortar range of Tan Son Nhut.

A strong VC force converged and assembled at the track after overrunning the police station there. A US MP platoon engaged them but was pinned down. One company of the 3d Bn, 17th Inf reinforced by a platoon of D Troop, 17th Cav, moved in from Binh Chanh by truck and counterattacked, linking up with the MP force. This force cleared the race track so that the 3d Bn, 7th Inf was able to assault onto the track.

(C) The 33d ARVN Rngr Bn from Nha Be District joined the 3d Bn 7th Inf and the combined force commenced to clear the area. By nightfall, an area three to four blocks in radius was cleared. The 6th VC LF Bn, which had the objective of seizing the nearby Chi Hoa Prison, was the principal enemy unit engaged. In the course of the heavy fighting in the vicinity, the VC battalion was virtually destroyed and it never reached its objective.

(C) The fighting which occurred around the race track ebbed and flowed for several days because VC troops continued to rally there. Eventually, personnel from every VC unit in the attacks on Saigon were identified at the race track.

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### US Embassy

(C) The US Embassy was a particular target singled out by the VC. Elements from the C-10 Sapper Battalion--a unit whose members lived in Saigon itself--breached the wall with satchel charges and attacked the main building with RPG and automatic weapons fire. The Marine guards defended from inside the building and were reinforced by both MPs and a small Marine reaction force. Navy helicopter fire teams supported US forces during the battle. One platoon from C Company, 1/502 Abn Bn was dispatched from Bien Hoa by helicopter and successfully landed on the roof pad at 0810 after having been driven off by fire at 0500. The Embassy grounds were secured by 0900 and 19 VC were KIA.

### Other Attacks in Saigon

(C) JGS Hq was attacked from the north at 0930. The VC succeeded in entering peripheral buildings but were unable to reach any vital installations. They were opposed by the 8th Abn Bn until ARVN reinforcements arrived and undertook the slow task of rooting them out.

(C) The Presidential Palace received RPG and automatic weapons fire from an unfinished hotel located across the street from the palace grounds. ARVN troops, US MPs, and NP, supported by two ARVN tanks, cordoned off the area. They kept the building under a state of siege for two days until all the VC were either killed or captured.

(C) Attacks were made against police stations, particularly in the 6th and 7th Precincts. Hotels and other embassies were attacked by fire.

(C) The studio portion of the National Broadcasting Station was seized and held until the 1st ARVN Abn Bn drove the VC out.

(C) BOQs and BEQs throughout Saigon received attacks by fire and police and combat unit forces were dispatched to the relief of US personnel in their quarters.

(C) Throughout the day on 31 January, ARVN and US forces reinforced the CMD. The VC failed to prevent reinforcement either by overland routes or by air. By midnight, US and ARVN forces had brought more maneuver battalions into the CMD than the VC had in their initial assault.

(C) In order to control combat units in the CMD, CG, II FFORCEV dispatched his Deputy Commander to Saigon with a small staff to take operational control of US units. This operational headquarters, Task Force WARE, was co-located at CMD Headquarters and was operational by 1100, 31 January. It remained operational until 18 February.

(C) Outside the CMD, besides widespread attacks by fire, there were four major ground attacks. These attacks were initiated against Ben Cat, Duc Hoa, My Tho, and Ben Tre.

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Ben Cat

(C) The Phu Loi VC Local Force Battalion, C-10 VC LF Company, and an element of the C-10 VC Sapper Bn attacked the 8th ARVN Regt Hq and the Ben Cat District Headquarters at 0355 from the east. By 0429, the VC were inside the ARVN perimeter and had captured the 155mm howitzer position. The town of Ben Cat was also occupied. The 1st Sqdn, 4th Cav and C Company, 1st Bn, 18th Inf counterattacked with the 2d Bn, 8th ARVN Regt, supported by 1st Div Arty, 5 light fire teams, and an Air Force C-47 Gunship (Spooky). The armored cavalry relieved the district headquarters just before it was about to fall. The attack was halted and contact broken by the VC at 0600.

Duc Hoa

(C) Elements of the 506th VC LF Bn attacked the 25th ARVN Div Hq and the MACV compound in Duc Hoa at 0625. At 0640, they entered the market place.

(C) First, a FAC from Tan An and a light fire team from Cu Chi arrived at 0640. At 0720, the 4/49 Inf Bn, 2/10th Cav Sqdn and the Div Recon Company -- all ARVN -- arrived and counterattacked. The VC withdrew to the southwest at 0900.

(C) Ground attacks were launched on 1 February in Phu Cuong, Cu Chi, and Ba Ria. The Engineer School at Phu Cuong and portions of the city were seized. Although sections of the city were occupied, the province headquarters was held. An ARVN reaction force cleared the city by 1830. At Cu Chi, the VC penetrated and burned 50 percent of the MACV compound and opened the jail. US and ARVN units reached the center of Cu Chi at 1030 but contact continued by ARVN until 1830. Ba Ria in Phuc Tuy Province was attacked on 1 February. At 0700 the VC captured the airstrip and at 0830 elements of the Royal Australian Regiment counterattacked down Highway 2 and broke the VC grip on all the key centers while two ARVN units completed clearing the town of VC. The VC effort shifted to Hong Dien and it was not until 4 February that the VC were eliminated from the area. Xuan Loc was also attacked on 1 February. The VC attack was directed against the province headquarters and other Allied positions. Their first attack was repulsed on 1 February; however, the enemy reinitiated the attack at 2245 on 2 February. They were again repulsed and the city was cleared for the last time. This action cleaned the last pocket of VC from the area between Bien Hoa and Long Binh. A combined US/VN attack broke the back of the VC northwest of Go Vap on 1 February.

(C) A VC headquarters was discovered in the An Quang Pagoda in Cholon on 1 February. The NP and VNMCC encircled the pagoda in the early afternoon and, after air strikes, the building was seized by 1705.

(C) In spite of the heavy fighting throughout Saigon on 1 February, it was apparent that the VC neither controlled nor had they put any critical installation out of action. GVN was still intact and there were no signs of a popular uprising. The 48-hour period before relief was scheduled for the local force units was running out and no relief was in sight. The VC were on the defensive everywhere in Saigon.

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(C) A pattern of attempted LOC interdiction southwest of Saigon began and was to continue well into March. The period 2-5 February was characterized by a transition from a predominance of VC initiated attacks to the regaining of the initiative by US, FV, and ARVN forces.

(C) An attack by elements of the 273d VC Regt on 2 February against the Thu Duc District Headquarters, the NP, the large power plant, and the water treatment works was anticipated and repulsed.

(C) There were many sightings of VC units and groups moving during daylight around Saigon trying to consolidate. Harassment by gunships, artillery, and sweeps by US or ARVN units prevented the massing of any kind of major enemy force.

(C) By 5 February, RVNAF units began taking over sole responsibility for clearing Saigon of VC, and US units began to operate against VC attempting to base in the outer districts.

(C) After 5 February, the battle around Saigon changed in character. Separate attacks against outlying province and district capitals continued but they occurred in diminishing frequency and intensity.

(C) One US unit, the 3d Bn, 7th Inf was redeployed on 9 February to the Phu Tho Race Track where, acting on RVN intelligence, they found the VC command post in a pagoda 2 km west of the race track. The VC defending force was destroyed, the headquarters captured, and GEN Tran Do, COSVN Political Chief in command of all VC forces attacking Saigon, was killed.

(C) In spite of the failures of their attacks and the losses suffered by their assaulting forces, the VC high command insisted on continuing their offensive action. The enemy attempted to establish a dispersed stronghold north and northwest of Saigon from which they could launch rockets against Tan Son Nhut.

(C) Elsewhere in III CTZ, a VC local force attempted to launch a major attack against Tay Ninh City. Forewarned, the Province Chief deployed his recon platoon in an ambush of the enemy force and, with the help of gunships, routed the enemy with heavy losses.

(C) Captured documents show that COSVN ordered a second wave of attacks on 17-18 February which were to be stronger than the first attacks on 31 January. However, they were feeble by comparison with earlier Tet assaults. There were 20 ground attacks and 57 attacks by fire. As action subsided on 18 February, it was clear that the enemy lacked the strength to mount serious new attacks against the key areas in III CTZ. The essentially defensive battle of Tet was over.

#### Results of Tet Offensive in III CTZ

(C) From 29 January through 19 February, US forces lost 453 KIA and 3,625 WIA; ARVN lost 471 KIA and 1,290 WIA; and FV forces lost 20 KIA and 83 WIA.

(C) No US, FV, or ARVN maneuver units of company size or larger were destroyed or rendered combat ineffective during the offensive. Only one RF company was rendered combat ineffective by hostile action.

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(C) There were a few cases of RF/PF outposts being defeated by treacherous action from within. In one significant case, 37 RF/PF and 2 US were murdered in the La Cua outpost in Hau Nghia Province by VC who had penetrated the organization.

(C) The Tet Offensive caused a setback in the pacification program in III CTZ as many RD cadre were withdrawn from their assigned hamlets to regain or maintain security in district or province capitals. By 1 March, cadre were back in 83 of the 92 hamlets occupied prior to Tet.

(C) The offensive created well over 100,000 refugees in the III CTZ and 67,000 in Gia Dinh. At least \$20 million damage was done to industrial and commercial enterprises. VC/NVA forces lost 12,614 KIA, and 864 personnel and 3,087 weapons were captured in III CTZ during the offensive. Losses of many of the enemy's political cadre left the VC infrastructure particularly vulnerable at the district and city level. <sup>5</sup>

#### IV Corps Tactical Zone

(U) On 25 January the SA, IV CTZ issued a warning to all subordinate elements that, during the impending Tet holiday cease-fire period, the Viet Cong were expected to resupply and move into position for a post-Tet Offensive.

(U) Then, on 29 January, he further advised all subordinate elements that intelligence information indicated the enemy could be expected to deliberately violate the truce by approaching friendly installations during the night of 29 January or early morning of 30 January. All provincial senior advisors were directed to take action to insure maximum alert posture through the Tet period.

(U) At approximately 1000 on 30 January, the SA, IV Corps was informed by MACV Hq that the Tet truce had been cancelled. This information was immediately disseminated to all IV Corps elements. US controlled assets were directed to attack VC targets located during 30 January. Several large concentrations of sampans were destroyed in Sa Dec and Vinh Long Provinces during the offensive of 30 January.

(U) At 0230 on 31 January, a Corps-wide series of attacks by VC forces began. Within the first 24 hours, 10 of the 11 VC designated province capitals had been attacked and some occupied. In the same period, 13 of the 16 GVN province capitals had been struck.

(U) Initially, in the 44th Special Zone, intense fighting broke out in Chau Doc, Moc Hoa, and Tri Ton. In both Chau Doc and Tri Ton, the heavy fighting lasted approximately 36 hours. Both cities were infiltrated by VC units but in neither case were the VC able to capture vital military or political installations. Navy river craft and SEAL teams contributed significantly to the defense of Chau Doc. The VC units were rapidly driven out of Moc Hoa and by 0700 on 2 February, the situation was quiet except that supply operations in the province were disrupted for the next few days.

(U) On 3 February at 0130, Cao Lanh was mortared but no ground attack occurred. At 1000 the same day, ARVN units trapped an estimated 300-man VC force outside the city. Air-strikes and gunships were called in and an estimated 200 VC were killed. On 4, 6, and 9

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February, Cao Lanh and the province capital headquarters were attacked again; however, the attacks were not pressed and died out by nightfall in all three cases. Three other district towns were also hit during the initial period, but none were seriously threatened.

(U) In the Upper Delta area, the two hardest hit cities were My Tho and Ben Tre, although practically all of the province and district towns received either a mortar or ground attack. My Tho and Ben Tre were both infiltrated during the evening of 30 January, and fighting started at 0300 on 31 January. Two VC units, the 261st Bn and the 207th Company, entered My Tho from the northwest, penetrating at the PBR and RAG bases. PBR fired against the Viet Cong infiltration from waterways adjacent to My Tho and Ben Tre rivers, and Navy helicopter fire teams were engaged in continuous operations during the battles. The 261B VC Bn attacked My Tho from the north, engaging the 32d ARVN Rngr Bn, and the 514th VC Bn attacked from the west. Heavy fighting raged throughout the city until dawn of 2 February when the main VC units disengaged. The next day, clearing operations started and on 4 February heavy fighting took place again in the city. By 5 February, the VC units had been pushed out of the city, but operations to clear the area surrounding the city lasted well into the middle of the month with moderate to heavy fighting north of the city.

(U) Highway 4 was interdicted in 62 locations and six bridges were damaged between 6 and 8 February. Efforts to open the road were begun on 11 February, and by 16 February the route was open from the III Corps boundary to the Mekong River. The route remained open continuously for at least a portion of each day.

(U) The VC also infiltrated two battalions into Ben Tre on 31 January, occupying key locations near US and ARVN installations. Mortar and ground attacks against the city started at 0300, and heavy fighting lasted for the next two and a half days. By nightfall on 2 February, fighting had subsided, and the next morning search and clear operations started. From 3 to 14 February, sporadic contact was made with VC units, but the danger to the city gradually diminished after the initial onslaught.

(U) Go Cong, the capital of Go Cong Province, was mortared at the outset of the offensive but not until 5 February did it receive a ground attack. During the attack, which lasted only one day, the VC liberated 100 prisoners from the city jail. Another half-hearted attack was launched against the city on 8 February but was quickly beaten off.

(U) During the fighting in the 7th ARVN Div area, two US brigades assisted the ARVN units in My Tho and Ben Tre. Two battalions of the 1st Bde, 9th Div were in Ben Tre on 1 and 2 February and two battalions of the 2d Bde, 9th Div, supported by a fire support base, were in My Tho on the same dates.

(U) In the 41st DTA (Division Tactical Area), the two primary objectives of the VC were Vinh Long City and airfield and Tra Vinh City. Heavy fighting lasted in Vinh Long from 0315 31 January, until late on 4 February when the city was cleared of VC soldiers. Navy helicopters of TU 116.2.4 flew extensive missions in support of US forces at Vinh Long Air Field and surrounding areas. Units sent to reinforce the city on 3 February were the 4th Bn, 16th ARVN Inf, 3d Bn, 15th ARVN Inf, 3/2 ARVN Cav, 43d ARVN Rngr Bn and the Hq and Recon Company of the 15th ARVN Regt. Additionally, on 4 February, two battalions of the 9th Div were inserted south of the city to engage VC units in the area which were threatening the airfield. By 8 February, the situation in Vinh Long had been restored to near normal, and no major threat occurred after that date.

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(U) Tra Vinh City was also attacked on 31 January, although not as strongly as Vinh Long and by the next day, 1 February, it was clear of major VC units, although minor activity continued until 6 February.

(U) In the 42d DTA, determined efforts were made by the VC to take Can Tho and airfield, and Soc Trang and airfield. Lesser attacks took place against Ca Mau and Rach Gia on 31 January. Soc Trang, Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, and Rach Gia had been cleared by 1 February but heavy fighting raged in Can Tho until 5 February when the VC forces were finally routed out of the university. Periodic heavy fighting took place in the area west of Can Tho. The VC units in the area seemed determined to remain and harass the airfields at Can Tho and Binh Thuy, which they did two or three times a week. On 13 February, the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF) of the 9th Div joined the ARVN units in their efforts to clear the VC out of the Ba Sa road and thus expand the Can Tho defensive perimeter to safer limits. The MRF remained under the OPCON of the SA until 4 March.

### Lines of Communication

(U) The VC Tet Offensive was particularly punishing to military and public engineering activities in the IV CTZ. VC deliberate destruction was directed primarily against the land LOCs: National Highway 4; and Interprovincial Routes 31, 7, and 6A. Damage to airfields, fortifications, and cantonments was a by-product of the ground fighting and by comparison to LOCs, relatively insignificant. There was no damage to the canal system in the Delta. During the period 31 January through 14 February, Highway 4 was interdicted constantly; seven bridges were destroyed and seven damaged.

(U) On the nights of 31 January and 1 February, Highway 4, Provincial Roads 6A, 7, 8 and 31 were interdicted in a sufficient number of places to close the roads to any but the most localized traffic. The initial lack of security elements to accompany military engineer effort to restore the trafficability on the routes resulted in a period of about 10 days before any significant sections of Highway 4 were open to traffic. While the many craters and cuts in the road required extensive engineer effort to fill and repair, the limiting factor to opening sections of Highway 4 was the repair/replacement of destroyed or damaged bridges. Although the engineer effort to open the roads was continuous, nightly VC interdiction in the form of mining, cratering, berms, obstacles, and hand labor digging caused much of the initial repair work to be repeated. Thus, sections of Highway 4 were finally opened to at least one-way traffic, as follows:

1. 10 February - Vinh Long to Sa Dec.
2. 12 February - My Tho to Gia Duc.
3. 14 February - Vinh Long to Can Tho.

(U) At the end of the reporting period, Highway 4 was open to both commercial and military traffic each day although a combination of security requirements and engineer effort reduced the usable time period to generally the afternoon hours.

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## Casualties in IV CTZ

(U) Casualties through 14 February were VC: 5, 252 KIA, 564 detained, and 408 returnees; ARVN: 437 KIA and 1, 524 WIA; US: 85 KIA and 443 WIA; and ROK: 2 KIA. There were 1, 940 VC weapons captured.

## Revolutionary Development

(U) The Tet Offensive in IV Corps had a devastating effect on the Revolutionary Development Program. During the final half of February, RD officials, both US and GVN, were assessing the degree of remodeling that would be necessary in the 1968 plans. It was noteworthy that few RD areas and hamlets were attacked by the VC in spite of reduced security. Extensive damage was done to provincial towns by friendly forces in their efforts to dislodge VC elements from populated areas. Performance of military units in support of RD during the period was generally good; however, some reports were received of extensive looting in Vinh Long by elements of the 9th ARVN Div and the Rangers.

(U) Many of the RD cadre were brought into the province cities or district towns at the beginning of the offensive. Some were quickly returned to their 1967 Phase II hamlets -- 55 teams at the end of February. Some were in 1968 Phase I hamlets -- 18 at the end of February. Seventy-two teams were still in province or district towns at the end of February. Forty-five teams were in rural areas other than 1967 or 1968 pacification hamlets (38 village teams in An Giang; two each in Bac Lieu, Ba Xuyen, and Co Cong; and one in Phong Dinh) -- a total of 190 RD teams. The fact that the team was listed as being in a hamlet merely meant that the flag was there, not necessarily that the full team was there. For example, in An Xuyen, two-thirds of the five teams listed in 1967 Phase II hamlets were in fact in Cau Mau City. In Kien Hoa, on 23 February, there were 11 teams listed in the 1967 Phase II hamlets in the Ba Tri RD area, but the total cadre present for duty was 45 -- the balance located either in Ben Tre or missing.

(U) During February, approximately 90 percent of the cadre that were accounted for were involved in security and/or relief/refugee work. All provinces were moving the teams out into the rural areas as soon as the local situation stabilised. This had to be a provincial decision due to the varying conditions although orders were issued directing that all teams would be returned to RD areas as soon as possible but not later than 1 April.

### Lessons Learned

(U) Several valuable lessons were learned as a result of the Tet Offensive, the more important ones being:

1. Personnel absences be more stringently controlled. Positive actions be taken to regulate the number of personnel authorized leave "permission" so that the combat unit strength would not be depleted during national holidays or truce periods.

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2. Major population centers should have counterattack plans identifying, as a minimum, the control measures on an overlay. These plans should be disseminated to units in consonance with security.

3. Infantry and armored cavalry units should be trained to operate as combined arms and to fight in built-up areas. This training should include instructions on techniques and principles of mutual support, assault and reduction of positions; clearing of buildings; employment of supporting fires; and security of an area once it had been cleared.

4. Coordination must be conducted between provincial forces, government agencies, and ARVN to better control the civilian population. Civilians in cities contributed to the confusion experienced by the reaction forces during the first day of the offensive. Additionally, they were used as intelligence-gathering sources by the VC. This was particularly evident on 31 January and 1 and 2 February during the mass exodus from My Tho.

5. A check point or traffic control system should be established to keep the civilians from interfering with military operations.

6. Defensive positions in compound areas or base locations must be continually maintained and improved. Improvements which should be included are: rebuilding and strengthening bunkers; installations of communications trenches; installation of barrier materials to include flame mines, trip flares, and booby traps; construction of overhead cover, and increased alertness of the personnel occupying the positions. The casualty rate during the days following the offensive was extremely low because the above mentioned actions had been taken.

7. When practical, engineer personnel, equipment, and material should be prepositioned along LOCs so that they can be immediately responsive to repair the interdiction LOC.

8. Emergency landing facilities, capable of receiving landing crafts or tactical military crafts should be constructed adjacent to critical ferry sites.

### Results of the Tet Offensive

(U) Throughout the country, the Tet Offensive was exceedingly costly to the VC/NVA. The enemy suffered losses in three areas: men, material, and morale. Between 29 January and 11 February, he suffered 31,754 KIA, 5,821 detained, and lost 7,505 individual and 1,276 crew-served weapons. Allied losses were 1,001 US and 2,082 ARVN and FW personnel KIA. By the end of February, the number of enemy killed rose to over 37,000 out of an estimated force of 60,000 committed to the Tet Offensive. Weapons lost by him numbered over 13,000. In the first two months of 1968, the VC/NVA lost over 35,000 KIA -- two-thirds as many as in all of 1967.

(U) The enemy's actions during Tet served his purpose to a degree. Many of his dead, however, were irreplaceable hard-core VC and infrastructure. More important than the number of enemy killed was the fact that the enemy initiated his offensive during a sacred Vietnamese holiday which disenfranchised the VC/NVA from the people, provided a newfound respect for RF/PF forces who responded magnificently, and welded the RVNAF into a more determined, effective, confident, and aggressive fighting force. The enemy had been soundly beaten militarily; however, the cost in civilian lives and property lost was a tragic event.

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(U) In spite of his catastrophic defeat on the battlefield in Vietnam, his Tet Offensive did obtain an unheralded psychological success abroad, particularly in the US.

(U) Equally as astounding as the enemy's losses were the number of refugees created by the VC/NVA Tet attacks. By 1 March, new refugees in SVN numbered over 600,000, with some 30 percent of this number concentrated in the Saigon/Gia Dinh area. This problem, coupled with ARVN's need to draw back from the countryside to the cities during Tet, caused a major setback in the pacification program. After the dust had settled, the situation was evaluated and although there was no permanent damage to the program, Allied forces did need to retrench and rework the pacification programs. It took until October to reach the pre-Tet pacification standing.

(U) Within the population centers, severe property damage was done, particularly in Hue and Saigon/Cholon. The national government was in a state of shock and failed to react immediately to relieve the plight of the refugees. At US urging, the government formed the Inter-ministerial Central Recovery Committee under the direction of Vice President Ky and organized Project Recovery, which undertook country-wide emergency assistance to the refugees and distribution of goods, supplies, and building materials. Project Recovery gave the refugees a modicum of faith in the central government even though its initial energy and sense of emergency soon slowed. However, if it had not been for Project Recovery, it is entirely possible that the Communists might have made some progress in fomenting a small uprising against the government.

(U) Following the first wave of attacks, the enemy broke contact and withdrew to the countryside to reequip and await replacements. He was woefully short of manpower, weapons, and ammunition.

(U) It was expected that the enemy would continue to exert pressure on urban areas through attacks on lines of communication, imposing economic blockage, eroding GVN control by propaganda assassination, and repeated raids on towns, cities, and district capitals.

(U) The second wave of the enemy's Winter-Spring Offensive was a failure. On 18 February, he attacked by fire over three days the cities throughout the II, III, and IV CTZs but did not follow-up with a ground assault. He had suffered too severely in the previous three weeks to mount another major ground assault so soon. The resolute defense and aggressive tactics of US, FW, and ARVN forces once again had defeated him. In all, the second wave was no more than a weak and ineffective effort. Even his spectacularly desperate attempt to land, simultaneously, four trawlers loaded with supplies, arms, and ammunition on 1 March was an utter failure. US and VN naval forces sank three of the trawlers and the fourth turned back before entering the Republic's contiguous zone.

(U) In reaction to the VC attacks on Saigon, the RVNAF JCS launched Operations TRAN HUNG DAO I and II to clear out the area surrounding Saigon during the period 5 February to 8 March. Six VNBC, four Ranger and five airborne battalions accounted for over 1,600 enemy killed and ended the Tet threat in Saigon.

(U) In March, RVNAF joined with elements of our 1st, 9th, and 25th Divisions in Operation QUYET THANG (Resolve to Win). Scouring the Capital Military District and its five surrounding provinces, the combined force accounted for 1,420 enemy killed and numerous arms caches uncovered. On 7 April, QUYET THANG I was followed by another combined US/ARVN operation TOAN THANG, a III CTZ wide operation using 79 maneuver battalions. It was the

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biggest operation of the war and by the time it terminated on 31 May, it had accounted for over 7,000 enemy killed. Even more important, TOAN THANG I did much to preempt VC/NVA plans for a second wave attack on Saigon. TOAN THANG II was initiated simultaneously with the termination of TOAN THANG I and continued into 1969. <sup>6</sup>

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