COSVN REPORT OUTLINES VIET CONG 'SECOND OFFENSIVE' TACTICS

Last February 21 the top communist leaders in South Vietnam met to discuss the military tactics they should adopt in the aftermath of setbacks suffered in their earlier Tet offensive. Their preliminary conclusions are summarized in a captured document released today.

No further large-scale attacks upon major cities should be attempted in the immediate future, the conference agreed. Instead, an effort should be made to "besiege" the cities and towns "by using special action teams, sapper/guerrilla units, and artillery shellings to harass the enemy every night so as to keep him under constant stress."

The document containing this and other guidance was a report from the Central Office of South Viet-Nam (COSVN), the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese command complex in the South, to VC Sub-Region 4, a part of Bien Hoa and Gia Dinh Provinces due east of Saigon.

The report was signed "Bao Hong". According to North Vietnamese officers who have recently rallied to the Government of Vietnam side, this name is a pseudonym used by Pham Hung, first deputy premier of the Hanoi government who is reported to have succeeded Nguyen Chi Thanh as head of COSVN. General Thanh died on July 6, 1967.

The Standing Committee of COSVN and the South Vietnam Military Affairs Party Committee met on February 21 to study a "second offensive phase" then under way, the report says.

Significant victories were claimed for the completed first phase, the Tet attacks which had been launched at the end of January in a "general offensive general uprising" attempt.

However, the conference conceded that a number of VC shortcomings were displayed during the first phase and said the gains had been too few. Furthermore, the GVN and its allies had strengthened their defense of the cities and the Viet Cong could not count on the element of surprise in future operations.
COSVN then called for harassing actions rather than large "take-and-hold" efforts like those of Tet. It said the harassment should be combined with intercepting food supplies from the countryside and with appropriate "political struggle" to foment urban unrest and undermine the GVN armed forces. In an apparent revision of original "general uprising" hopes, it said: "Large-scale demonstrations are not necessary."

Special stress was placed on suburban areas surrounding the major cities. "In the suburban areas," the COSVN report said, "especially those which can be developed into springboards to besiege the enemy, we must quickly set up stable popular organizations, and recruit militiamen and guerrillas to convert the areas into combat villages. These villages will eventually become hide-outs for our troops to carry on the siege in the event of enemy sweep operations."

While carrying out limited attacks on the major cities, the report added, the communist forces should not neglect smaller population centers or rural areas. "In respect to the district seats and capitals," it said, "eighty per cent of them should be destroyed by concentrated attacks whenever and wherever conditions permit. If such favorable conditions are not available, besiege them with small-scale attacks, using similar tactics for major cities. This will permit our main force to wipe out GVN controlled hamlets and villages in order to liberate the rural areas or to intercept enemy rescue forces." (Underlining as in original).

The overall aim of attacks, according to the report, should be "to destroy and disintegrate the entire puppet army and government." COSVN agreed that "in the immediate future, if we continue to fail to carry out repeated attacks, fail to improve our leadership of the penetration units in towns and cities, and fail to strengthen our position quickly in the suburban areas and provide timely material support to our units in cities and towns, we will meet numerous difficulties in our coming offensive phase."

An element of the U.S. First Infantry Division captured the document in Binh Duong Province.
FROM: R / Central Office of South Viet-Nam  
TO: SUB REGION 4 / Part of GVN Bien Hoa Province  

1. On 21 February, the Standing Committee of COSVN and the South Viet-Nam Military Affairs Party Committee met to study the developments of the first days of the second offensive phase. The following preliminary conclusions were drawn:

a. Although the enemy was no longer surprised and became more cautious than before, in areas from Region 6 / to the CAMAU Peninsula/ we continued to carry out a series of attacks on a large front. Most of these attacks were directed at key military, economic and political installations of the puppet army; air bases and storage facilities of the U.S.-puppet armies; a large rural area and important lines of communication. New victories were scored.

The most outstanding achievements were our harmful attacks on almost all important airfields, such as Tan Son Nhat, Bien Hoa, Tra Noc, Soc Trang and Vinh Long, and important storage facilities, such as Long Binh and Nha Be; these inflicting heavier material losses on the enemy. The increasing attacks in the Saigon-Cholon areas as well as those directed at towns and cities (such as Phan Thiet, Vinh Long, My Tho, Ben Tre, Tay Ninh and Phuoc Long) and other U.S. bases also caused heavy personnel losses and additional difficulties to the enemy.

These victories are very significant in the political and military fields. This second offensive phase and the aforementioned victories have highly motivated the masses and strengthened our positions in all areas of operations. They also have caused / further / weakening of the enemy's deteriorating position. The puppet army has continued to deteriorate spiritually and physically. The puppet government has continued toward collapse. These / victories/ have disrupted the U.S.-conspiracy of stabilizing the puppet army and puppet government. There is also a discernable deterioration of troop morale and combat effectiveness among the U.S. forces, which are presently required to disperse into elements even smaller than those in the past in order to prevent possible mass disintegration of the puppet army.

Nevertheless, we continued to display many shortcomings which we must make maximum efforts to correct. The number of enemy troops, especially the ringleaders killed by us, was still too small. Our sieges of towns and cities and sabotage of bridges and lines of communication were still too poor. The employment of our main forces to raid enemy units from their rear created these inflictions heavier material losses on the enemy. The increasing attacks in the Saigon-Cholon areas as well as those directed at towns and cities (such as Phan Thiet, Vinh Long, My Tho, Ben Tre, Tay Ninh and Phuoc Long) and other U.S. bases also caused heavy personnel losses and additional difficulties to the enemy.

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Nevertheless, we continued to display many shortcomings which we must make maximum efforts to correct. The number of enemy troops, especially the ringleaders killed by us, was still too small. Our sieges of towns and cities and sabotage of bridges and lines of communication were still too poor. The employment of our main forces to raid enemy units from their rear area was still limited. The command system continued to fail to keep abreast with situations even though it was improved in some areas. The reporting system continued to be too slow.

At present, the enemy is inclined to concentrate his efforts to reinforce his defense in cities and towns. Sweep operations are carried out in suburban areas in conjunction with an effort to cut off lines of communication in an attempt to drive away our units and to re-establish his lines of communication. At the same time efforts are made to stabilize the puppet units by re-assembling the reactionary and tyrannical elements and conscripting replacements in order to save them / puppet units / from total disintegration. However, due to the deteriorating morale, countless contradictions, and limited facilities resulting from a thin dispersal of forces, the enemy counter-offensive efforts were weak and became defensive upon meeting our attacks. Nevertheless, in the immediate future, if we continue to fail to carry out repeated attacks, fail to improve our leadership of the penetration units in towns and cities, and fail to strengthen our position quickly in the suburban areas and provide timely material support to our units in cities and towns, we will meet numerous difficulties in our coming offensive phase.
To maintain and expand our past victories and at the same time to carry out continuous attacks on the enemy in order to successfully prepare for large-scale operations in the future, this headquarters wishes to invite special attention of all Region Party Committees and Military Region Party Committees to the following:

a. In leadership, effort should be made to appreciate fully the relations between cities and towns and the rural area; This is sea-saw fighting, and we must at this time continue to carry on our sieges and offensive against cities and towns and simultaneously liberate the rural area completely. If we fail to carry out continuous attacks the enemy will be able to expand his offensive over the rural areas. Again, if we fail to be able to expand his offensive over the rural areas we will not be able to besiege and press the enemy to liberate the rural area, we will not be able to besiege and press the enemy to liberate the rural area. Consequently, close coordination should be maintained on both fronts. Troops should be committed accordingly, with flexibility.

b. The primary requirement at the present time is the destruction of enemy manpower and war facilities. Our attacks should serve the primary objective, which is to destroy and disintegrate the entire puppet army and government. Consequently, proper objectives for each attack must be selected in order to liberate the rural areas. The ring leaders of each district or province administration must be destroyed; all airbases and storage facilities must be attacked repeatedly; those supplemental troops and satellite country troops should also be destroyed at all costs in the event they are engaged in a counterattack. However, preparations should be made to repulse enemy counterattacks in the implementation of sieges or attacks by fire. Such circumstances should be considered as favorable conditions to annihilate enemy troops when they are not protected by fortifications. We should also attack the mobile elements of the puppet regular forces so as to destroy puppet divisions and regiments.

c. In regard to towns and cities, it is advisable not to conduct large-scale attacks in the immediate future because the enemy defense therein has been strengthened recently. We must set up positions to besiege cities and towns. We should also use special action teams, sapper/guerrilla units, and artillery shellings to harass the enemy every night so as to keep him under constant stress. It would be absolutely to our disadvantage to cause a see-saw firefight completely in cities and towns. This should be observed in conjunction with increasing efforts to intercept food supply; flows from the rural areas and to increase political struggles through appropriate means. Large-scale demonstrations are not necessary. The main objective of present political struggles is to demand improvements in living conditions, compensation for war damages, protest against bombings, etc. These political struggles should also aim at disintegrating the puppet army. In preparation for a large-scale three-front, all-out attack to seize the main objectives when the time is ripe. In respect to district seats and province capitals, eighty per cent of them should be destroyed by concentrated attacks whenever and wherever conditions permit. If such favorable conditions are not available, besiege them with small-scale attacks, using similar tactics for major cities. This will permit our main force to wipe out GVN controlled hamlets and villages in order to liberate the rural areas or to intercept enemy rescue forces.

d. In rural areas, leadership must be exercised in such a way as to resolutely wipe out agencies of the puppet army and puppet government, liberate them and establish a revolutionary administration. The masses should be motivated to participate in the revolutionary organizations and increase farm production. In areas where the enemy continues to exercise his control through small outposts which cannot yet be destroyed, we should besiege them and remove them through sporadic activities and in conjunction with economic blockades and military proselytizing efforts.

In the suburban areas, especially those which can be developed into spring boards to besiege the enemy, we must quickly set up stable popular organizations and recruit militiamen and guerrillas to convert the areas into combat villages. These villages will eventually become hide-outs for our troops to carry on the siege in the event of enemy sweep operations. Special attention should be paid to the rural areas. The surrounding areas of cities and towns are extremely important at this time.
e. Important land roads and waterways should receive maximum sabotage attempts. We must oppress against and control all important bridges and prevent the enemy from repairing the damaged ones in order to disorganize and isolate the enemy, strengthen our position and effectively support the liberation of rural areas. It is also essential to motivate the masses living along lines of communication to rise and destroy enemy administration and establish a revolutionary administration. Guerrillas and other organizations should be motivated to sabotage the sensitive roads and to prevent the enemy from repairing them.

f. To accomplish the above, Party Committees should rely heavily upon propaganda motivation. They should promote self-determination and motivate the masses; establish revolutionary administration, develop Party agencies and Youth Group organizations as well as other popular associations. They should also provide specific guidance for hamlet and village authorities in accordance with directive previously issued by COSVN.

g. In the course of accomplishment, motivate the youths to enlist in military units so as to timely replenish units of R/COSVN/ regions and provinces. Additional sapper, special action and engineer units should be activated so as to become more powerful.

h. At present, proper assignment of each individual should be made by each Party Committee. One member should be assigned to handle civilian proselyting activities, one should take care of administrative work, and one should work on economy and supply. This should also be applied for those agencies operating in cities, towns and suburban areas. Timely reports are essential. All members in charge of current affairs should keep abreast of the actual situation, fully understand our policy, work out plans, and supervise implementation so as to be able to provide effective leadership in the activity of each area. In Military Region 4, specific instructions on each main effort were given previously by COSVN.

BAY HONG