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dac 1 (normass/deepe)

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SAIGON, MAY 16—The most important Communist turncoat to date in the war was presented before a barrage of klieg lights and a full battalion of Vietnamese and foreign journalists. In the small ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ cramped, sweltering conference room, amidst the flaring tempers of ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ his inquisitioners, the ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Communist political commissar/ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ *at his press debut* seemed to remain the coolest creature in the room.

The ex-Communist, named Tran Van Dac, had defected to the government side—~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ on April 19—and by doing so, had tipped off the Allied command about the Communists' May offensive which dovetailed with the announced ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ scheduling of the Washington-Hanoi peace talks in Paris. His appearance beckoned not only a large number of Saigon's ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ press corps, but also several military policemen, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ one of which wore a pair of sunglasses dangling from ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ one side of his shirt and a ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ snub-nosed machinegun on the other side.

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dae 2 (normass/deepe)

The 44-year-old commissar talked with his hands, his eyes and his eyebrows as well as with words; soft-SPOKEN hardened dimples, like giant parentheses, framed his lips, whether he was talking or smiling. His intense, narrowly almond-eyes danced through his inquisitioners; he ~~retained~~ <sup>retained</sup> a confident, if not superior or condescending attitude, though under his chair, his ~~and~~ sandalled feet pivoted into the worn ~~and~~ floor boards. He was dressed in a ~~and~~ simple brown sports shirt, but he sported a wrist watch. ~~and~~ His hair bristled out of his head like ~~and~~ that of an overgrown crewcut.



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dae 3 (normass/deepe)

Some Vietnamese journalists thought the commissar holding rank of lt. col. sincere in his

remarks; some Western journalists thought the whole press conference a ruse played by the Vietnamese government to squeeze propaganda value from his words. Whichever the case, many seemed to sense that his was a defection from the Communist side which may have ~~turned~~ <sup>swayed</sup> the fulcrums of history on the battlefield as the Paris peace talks were ~~due~~ scheduled to begin. Two other lieutenant colonels have defected to the Vietnamese government since Dac's action.

Flanked by a dozen radio and tape recorder microphones, the officer answered questions for an hour. Excerpts of the most important questions, based on official Vietnamese ~~to~~ government translation, follow

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doc 4 (normass/deepe)

Q. There did not seem to be a single objective at all to the Communists' second ~~offensive~~ offensive (beginning May 5). What was the single objective?

A. There was a military objective and a political objective for the Communists. Which do you mean?

Q. What was the military objective?

A. The military purpose of the second ~~Communist~~ offensive was an effort to reoccupy the positions ~~they~~ (the Communists) had held during the first offensive (called the Tet offensive, beginning ~~on~~ January 29). They made an effort (during the May offensive) to concentrate their troops in the A, B, C zones ~~of~~ of Saigon, but this time the deployment of their troops is different and the direction of penetration is different (from Tet).



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dae 5 (norma (normase/deepe)

Q. How many troops were involved in this second offensive?

A. I don't know the entire troop strength for the whole offensive. In the flank I was personally involved in, the troops included at least three infantry regiments, one artillery regiment and a number of local units. We were to attack the military installations north of Saigon.

Q. Will he confirm or deny ~~the~~ that many Communist units at this time did not know the objective? Does he know that?

A. It was possibly very true some Communist units did not know what their targets were. However, the Communists had secret teams and cadre go into the city to make reconnaissance of the target areas in the city, but this was not enough. It is easy for the Viet Cong units to get lost ~~in~~ in the city for two reasons. First, because the elements in charge of leading the penetration into the city were not ~~numerous~~ numerous enough. Second, the Viet Cong are used to fighting in the rice paddies and the jungle, rather than the cities.

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dac 6 (normass/deepe)

Q. Did the Communists get much help from the ~~the~~ people of Saigon?

A. During the Tet offensive, the Viet Cong were ~~hoping~~ hoping they would win militarily, but actually they have failed and they did not receive any cooperation from the people of Saigon. In the second offensive, the failure was even worse. ~~¶~~

Q. Was the offensive designed to coincide with the Paris peace talks, and if so, was this the reason for the delay in the offensive?

A. I know the Communists planned to launch their offensive on April 27, but they waited until May 5. One reason for the delay was the Communists wanted to be better prepared for the second offensive ~~because~~ because they had faced many difficulties during the first offensive, because of difficulties of supplies of weapons and ammunition and the operations of the government and Allied troops. The second reason for the delay, it should be because of my rallying to the government side. The third reason ~~is~~ possibly should have been concerned with peace talks.

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dae 7 (normass/deepe)

Q. Did you personally participate in preparation of the second offensive in one way or another?

A. I was involved with the preparation of the second offensive in many ways. I was ordered to make an effort in commanding the Viet Cong units ~~operating~~ operating around Saigon. Second, I sent Viet Cong cadre into Saigon capital to ~~reconnaissance~~ reconnaissance the targets. Third, I was also taking care of the transport of weapons into ~~the~~ Saigon for the second offensive. That was just the ~~preparation~~ preparation on the material side. I also worked on the spiritual side. I was ordered to give indoctrination to my troops, such as, they say the Communists had killed 50,000 enemy; they destroyed two-thirds of South Vietnam's war facilities and they have liberated 1.6 million South Vietnamese people--but I don't agree with that kind of indoctrination and I didn't give my troops that kind of indoctrination. That's one of the reasons I rallied to this side.

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dae 8 (normass/deepe)

Q. What was the political objective of the Communist second offensive?

A. ~~Polit~~ Politically, the Communist objective during the second offensive was they were hoping if they won militarily, the ~~peop~~ people of Saigon would go down the streets and demonstrate and uprising and also if they won militarily, they would have advantages in the peace talks.

Q. Do you believe the Viet Cong are preparing a third general offensive sometime, somewhere?

A. Since I rallied to the government side, ~~in~~ I don't know anything about a third general offensive. We should wait and see.

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dae 9 (normass/deepe)

Q. ~~Do you see a military, self solution~~ Is a ~~military~~ military ~~solution~~

solution possible in Vietnam if the peace talks ~~fail~~ fail? Could the Allies or the Communists win ~~the~~ the war militarily in three to five years?

A. The ~~Viet Co~~ Communists have three types of capabilities. The first is ~~the~~ military, the second is political and the third is troop proselytizing. If they fail in their first two capabilities, then the Viet Cong and North Vietnam must go to the negotiating table. But if negotiations fail, the Communists last resort is to protract the war because the battlefield determines the political situation.

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dac 10 (normass/deepe)

Q. Is this just what you say now, or is this what you learned from political indoctrinations or what you told your troops?

A. This is a problem the Communist high-ranking officials have carefully studied. This subject is not ~~publicized~~ ~~publicized~~ publicized to the lower ranks.

Q. How effective <sup>have</sup> ~~has~~ the Communist first and second offensives been against Saigon. How would you assess it?

A. Hanoi considered the ~~two~~ two offensives as the biggest victory that any Communist country has ever ~~achieved~~ achieved in the world. But, for me, I considered it the biggest failure. Because militarily, the Viet Cong troops could not occupy many ~~very~~ important targets and politically the people did not cooperate with the ~~the~~ Communist troops....

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das 11 (normans/deepe)

Q. How would you approach A Hanoi at the ~~bargainint~~ bargaining table, since you know their way of thinking and their psychology.

A. The Communists used to lie systematically about the results of their military ~~o~~ actions, but sooner or later they will be unmasked. The only measure to fighting against the Communist propaganda lies is to let the people know all about the battles. Like the battle of Phu Tho T Hoa (near Saigon). Many Viet Cong were lying dead there. Or tell the people about the impossibility of Viet Cong units getting into Saigon. That's the thing we should let the people know all about. The Communist propaganda was very well-done. The low-ranking troops believe anything the high-ranking officials says, even when they lie. So, I have sent letters (air-dropped leaflets) to my comrades to for them to realize this and to do what I have done.

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dae 12 (normass/deepe)

Q. What about the transportation of heavy weapons into Saigon?

A. There are two kinds of weapons. Heavy weapons and small arms. The heavy weapons include 122 mm. rockets, 81 and 82 mm. mortars and 75 mm. recoilless rifles. These were transported into Saigon by waterway and the ~~small~~ small arms were issued personally to the troops, who carried them. ~~They~~ Particularly for the second offensive, they made more effort in resupplying the artillery, mostly to be used in support of infantry movements. ==more reuter

~~Q. Did you ever see Ho Chi Minh (President of North Vietnam) or General Vo Nguyen Giap, (North Vietnamese commander-in-chief)? What did you think of them?~~



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dac 13 (normass/deepe)

Q. There is a rumor that you're the eighth highest-ranking member of the COSVN (the Viet Cong high military command). Is that true?

A. No....

Q. Where <sup>D.D</sup> does the Viet Cong ~~repe~~ replacement strength come from after the first offensive?

A. Communist troops were reinforced by three elements for their second offensive. Most of the reinforcing troops were from North Vietnam. The second element were youngsters abducted by the Communists wherever they could. The third element was ~~the~~ from the go guerrilla ranks.

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dae 14 (normess/deepe)

Q. How much time did you speak with General (William C.) Westmoreland (commander of American troop troops in Vietnam) and what did you talk about?

A. <sup>1</sup>The first time I was deeply honored to meet with General Westmoreland ~~was~~ on April 19, the day I defected. It was ~~of~~ only a brief talk. He asked me why I defected and the battlefield situation. I said I defected because I was faced with so many difficulties in commanding my units and I know the Communists ~~won't~~ <sup>will not</sup> ever be able to achieve their ~~main~~ purposes militarily. That's why I rallied to the government side. I enjoyed my conversation with ~~Gen~~ General Westmoreland and he treated me well.

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dae 15 (normass/deepe)

Q. Why does Hanoi always refuse to ~~acknowledge~~ admit they've sent their regular army into South Vietnam?

A. As you know, North Vietnam sends a continuous flow of troops and weapons to the South, but they don't admit it because they consider the ~~act of~~ moving men from North to the South is not an act of ~~an~~ aggression. They consider North and South Vietnam as one country. Yet, ~~the~~ call the act of moving troops from the United States to South Vietnam as an act of ~~an~~ aggression. Hence, they deny sending troops to the South so they won't be labelled as aggressors.

Q. Will <sup>you</sup> he serve the Vietnamese government?

A. Since I've left the Communist side, I decided to serve the South Vietnamese government as much as possible as ~~as~~ soon as possible.



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dac 16 (normass/deepe)

Q. What do you think of ~~coalition~~ coalition government? for South Vietnam?

A. When the Communists talk about coalition, they mean just a cover (or camouflage). But, in fact, deep in their hearts, ~~they~~ they do not think of coalition at all. They are trying to gain coalition so they can seize more power. They will try in time to gain all the power. We high-ranking officers do not discuss this matter; this problem should be discussed at a higher level, but we know the Communists will try three steps. The first step is military-political. If they fail ~~in~~ this, they will accept a transitional government and then they will try to gain as much power as possible until they have all the power. So, I believe a coalition government is just a camouflage to cover the intimate ~~feel~~ feelings of the Communists to gain power. They will talk about the coalition government only at the central government. But, they think they will have full power at the district and village level.

(Hank: I went to the delta yesterday and will file that story plus a long economic story friday and saturday. regards bev).

--end reuter