

2020 006

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mood 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, MAY 7--The increasingly war-worried Saigonese are counting the seconds before peace talks begin in Paris.

Few expect instant peace. But they do hope for a brief respite from the continued low-key, yet fearsome ~~Communist~~ Communist offensive into the Chinese twin-city of Cholon, with ⁴ Saigon city limits, and on the outskirts of the military-civilian airport.

"We have only two more days to go before Paris talks begin," one Vietnamese intellectual explained. "But maybe the Communists will delay the Paris talks to see the results of this offensive. I suspect that even if the Communists fail this time, they will try another push into the cities."

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mood 2 (normass/deepe)

Both Vietnamese and Western sources ^h sources here believe that a primary objective of ~~the~~ the current Communist military thrusts into the capital--the ~~hardest~~ ^{most} intense urban battlefield ~~in~~ ^{thus far} in the offensive--~~it~~ ^{was} were designed to mesh directly with the beginnings of the peace talks in Paris. This would be consistent with their articulated strategy of "fighting while negotiating!"

"The Communists seem to be looking for impact and headlines--making them seem stronger as talks get closer--and stronger than they actually ~~are~~ are," one informed source explained. "The Communists haven't actually shown much strength yet, but ~~th~~ we are ~~a~~ all prisoners of our experiences and the Communists went to Geneva to negotiate with the French the day they accepted the surrender of ~~Di~~ Dien Bien Phu (in 19~~40~~ 1954). Maybe the offensive was designed to strengthen their hand, but on the surface they don't seem strong enough."

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yy ljp

mood 3 (normass/deepe)

Or as a Vietnamese military source explained: "I'm sure that the Communists will seize some district or ~~provincial capital~~, weak provincial capitals--such as Phuoc Long or Quang Duc along the Cambodian border. But, ~~what~~ what will it mean to them? It won't have the political boom around the world during negotiations as it does to ~~them~~ for them to be able to say they have some Communists in the capital."

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mood 4 (normass/deepe)

while
Informed sources believe the ~~Am~~ Allied command has the military situation basically under control at this time, some Vietnamese sources believe the small-unit Communist activity will continue at least for another month--no matter what happens at the Paris talks. Official sources believe the next few days--before the beginning of the Paris talks--will be the militarily pivotal ones, with the Communists faced with three choices: ORGANIZED either to reinforce their ~~small~~ units now in the city, to withdraw their units or to run the risk of losing them. But, Vietnamese sources see as a fourth alternative--and a growing reality--that the Communists have de-escalated their larger units into roving bands of three to six men, which are capable to carrying on sniping, harrassing, and if equipped, high-impact mortaring on ~~the~~ selected targets at will for a long duration.

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yy ljp

mood 5 (normass/deepe)

"Militarily, it's really not significant for the Communists to drop indiscriminate mortar and artillery rounds into the city," one informed source explained. "But, it does have a high psychological impact to terrify the people, as do these sniper teams they have placed on the some of the high buildings in Cholon."

The sniper teams have been rather ~~successful~~ successful in grazing down on ~~jeep~~ ^{Vietnamese} jeeps-ful of ~~police~~ police officials and of military officers, reliable sources report. One senior ~~Vietnam~~ ³ Vietnamese police official was gunned down in his jeep by the sniper teams in Cholon, not far from the area where four Western journalists were killed on the first day of the offensive, last Sunday.

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Informed sources refuse to estimate ^{how} many Communists in organized units are currently in the city. A preliminary estimate ^{2+300,} made Monday, ~~20~~ 0 already seems out of date. However, these sources say that ²⁷² two battalions of the ~~2nd~~ Regiment of the Viet Cong Ninth Division, which is heavily honeycombed with North Vietnamese ~~and~~ replacements, are known to be fighting in north of the Phu Tho racetrack and south of the outer perimeter of Tan Son Nhut airbase.

At least one battalion of the U. S. Army 199th Brigade was sent Tuesday to reinforce Vietnamese troops in the area. The American Brigade was the same unit sent to the same ~~3~~ racetrack area during the Tet offensive.

For more than twelve ~~hours~~ hours, American helicopter gun ships raked and rocketed the outer periphery of a canal leading from Long An province into Cholon, where a significant number of Communists had been sited. The helicopter rocket and machinegun runs began at 3:30 in the morning--which sent Saigonese tossing in their beds ~~and~~ or running to their ~~balconies~~ balconies--and twelve hours later a tornado-shaped smoke cloud ascended from the area and hovered over Cholon.

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mood 7 (normass/deepe)

tomorrow

(Hank: I'll try to give you a long political appraisal, with ~~as great~~ of human interest too, ~~to~~. Have you run the women's piece sent last week? If not, I can update it with inserts about Communist women during this offensive. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Also, I ~~unintended~~ understand you can transmit ~~servi~~ service messages to me via Reuters and they'll telephone me, which I suggest using since will be faster than through ~~the~~ commercial channels. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Cholon looks as tho it will be a hot area for at least a week. Any chance of the Cholon zeepager by the Columbia professor? ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Regards Bev).

--end reuter