

2020 828

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shift 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, SEPTEMBER 9--Allied military successes have induced the Communists to shift the timing, sequence and style of their current third off offensive. But, the heart of their Communist strategy remains unchanged--the eventual assault into South Vietnam's major cities, informed sources report.

The Communists' ground offensive thus far has been seriously--but not decisively--weakened by Allied defensive actions and maneuvers--especially the ARVN U. S. Navy capture of the Communist battle plan to attack Saigon.

But, no repeat no Allied officials here are so optimistic as to state that the Allied success thus far have totally "pre-empted" the Communist ~~future~~ city-assault, or that the Communists are so weak and confused they have ~~definitively~~ chosen to call off indefinitely their big-unit ~~of~~ ground thrusts into the cities. *future*

--more reuter



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shift <sup>2</sup>/<sub>6</sub> (normass/deepe)

Up to this point, however, the Communist ~~thrust~~ <sup>AND Lobby</sup> ground actions have been so ~~unsuccessful~~ and unsuccessfully nebulous that some pro-neutralist diplomats and non-aligned military observers are debating whether this is a ~~true~~ of true offensive, a ~~pseudo~~ pseudo pseudo-offensive, a quasi-offensive or simply the first phase of an offensive. Yet, most of these informed sources of varying political colorations agree that the Communist offensive thus far has been ~~relatively~~ a relatively weak show of force in which the Communists have suffered a substantial number of casualties without a proportionate political-psychological gain either internally or internationally.

These intellectual debates, however, center around nuances of esoteric military definitions and attempts to second-guess Communist future moves. More significant is that Communist radio broadcasts, some captured documents and prisoners explicitly state that the third offensive has begun--and that the Communists intend to keep it rolling for "bigger and bigger victories."

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shift <sup>3</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (normass/deepe)

But, if the Allied troops have not repeat not totally blocked the Communist roll-in ~~in~~ for their city-attacks, they have done the second best thing--captured a document revealing key portions of the Communist battle plan for assaulting Saigon. The document was invaluable to the Allied commands here--it revealed the Communist intention of moving ba ttalions, sapper and commande units into Saigon and its fringes, their routes of entry into the city, and it also specified the time frame of the attack. ~~It was~~ The ~~is~~ third offensive was set for early August--~~presumably~~ presumably to attempt to influence the American political ~~part~~ party conventions during the that pivotal month.

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shift 4 (normass/deepe)

✓ L. 904  
In the light of "retrospectability"--as one American intelligence officer termed it--appraising Communist past actions--informed sources her now believe the Allied capture of the document forced the Communists to make a strategic reassessment. Their most probably options ~~are considered to be~~

1. Launch the ~~off~~ offensive ~~anyway~~. <sup>EVEN THOUGH THE ALLIES WERE PREPARED FOR IT.</sup> The Communists tried that option again during the May offensive--when the Allies had also been bequeathed the Communist battle plan by a ~~defector~~. high-ranking defector. The Communists chose to attack anyway--probably to dramatize their position as the Paris peace talks opened. So, they attacked--and they lost thousands of troops without compensating political-psychological gains. (Official ~~claim~~ American sources claim they lost 30,000 men around Saigon alone during ~~the~~ six weeks during May and June). <sup>COMMUNISTS</sup> For their August offensive, the Communists rejected this option. <sup>OBVIOUSLY</sup>

2. Cancel the whole <sup>COUNTRYWIDE</sup> city-battle plan. <sup>STRATEGY.</sup> This would have been an all-round catastrophe. <sup>FOR THEM.</sup> They had promised their troops in the field, <sup>HAD</sup> their negotiators in Paris, and their Vietnamese <sup>HAD</sup> warned the Vietnamese nationalists and Allied politicians that 1968 was ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> year of decision. "Just for the Communists to sit still indefinitely is for them to lose," one informed source said. ~~In the Communist mind, in making a decision for them, their two probable~~ --more reuter



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shift 5 (normass/deepe)

The quintessence of 1968 for the Communists was to shorten the war—  
either through victory on the battlefield, U. S. capitulations in Paris  
or at the ballot box. If they fail in 1968, in this decisive <sup>3-4-68</sup> de  
their/decisive year of 1968, their two most probably alternatives are  
to ~~settle~~ end the war through the best possible negotiations they can  
get in Paris—but far from victory—or else to protract the war on and on  
and on.

3. To continue the <sup>war</sup> ~~stra~~ with their planned third strategic  
offensive, targeted against the cities—but to shift the timing,  
sequence and style of the ~~tactical~~ at the tactical level.

--more reuter



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shift 6 (normass/deepe)

*th.s Now is considered <sup>(IN)</sup> in <sup>1st</sup> circle  
Here the options the Communist leadership chose*

As to the ~~chain~~ change of the timing of the offensive, informed sources here believe the Communists delayed ~~their~~ the beginning of their offensive from early August to ~~August 15~~. the new ~~large~~ target date of August 15. In fact, ~~they seemed to have begun~~ *their offensive began* on August 18th with coordinated attacks in Tay ninh/p provincial attacks in Tayminh, and concentrations of ~~atta~~ attacks in pockets of the northern half of the country.

*Now, A more recent*  
Another captured document suggests that the "first ~~eye~~ phase" of their third offensive runs from August 15 to September 15; the ~~second~~ second phase of their ~~att~~ offensive runs from September 15 onwards.

Vietnamese government sources place more credence in this document than does the American command. The American command takes a more conservative view that the Communists can <sup>or</sup> will attack anytime; and many Americans ~~wish~~ officers wished the Communists would have

~~procue~~ ~~procu~~ produced the main thrust of their attacks in early September so they would have run out of steam <sup>before</sup> by the time of the American elections

in November. <sup>BUT</sup> The Vietnamese government officers <sup>believe</sup> ~~seem to~~ view the Communist offensive "second climax" of the Communist "climax" of the third offensive will be timed to mesh with the American elections--although it is debatable here what ~~the~~ that will gain them.

--more reuter



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shift 7 (normass/deepe)

A fringe viewpoint held by ~~no~~ <sup>qualified</sup> qualified "outsiders," such as ~~think~~ "think-tank" analysts and diplomatic military experts is that the pivotal political period for ~~them~~ <sup>The Communists</sup> to make a spectacular battlefield push is not the American elections—but the inauguration of the new American President in January. Hence, the main-thrust of the ~~real Communist~~ <sup>stated</sup> ~~extravaganza to them~~ will not be ~~opened~~ until January of next year.

~~As to~~ the shift in the sequence of the offensive, was probably more significant than the timing—and this has led to some of the confusion about the definition of the offensive. The ~~origin~~ original sequence, according to captured documents, including the prize ~~wx~~ <sup>one</sup>, was to <sup>Super</sup> <sup>Countryside</sup> strike a lightning blow into the major urban centers, <sup>AND</sup> <sup>then</sup> hold as long as possible, <sup>would</sup> and then as the troops ~~witnd~~ withdrew back into the countryside, <sup>AND</sup> to crush isolated Vietnamese government outposts, <sup>they</sup> ~~Allied~~ installations, and smash the pacification program government's pacification program and over-run government-held towns and villages. Hence, the first battlefield was the cities and the second was the countryside. Now, this sequence has obviously been reversed—and has been since August 15. The first battlefield is the countryside; the second the cities.

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shift 8 (normass/deepe)

The Communist requirements for this phase betl beginning August 15 were deliniat delineated in this high a high-e high-level document this way: "1. annihilate and wear down the enemy war potential. The principal targets are the puppet armed forces at the grass-roots level, the puppet main forces and the U. S. mobile forces. Strive to destroy war facilities, and teen technical installations a such as: aircraft, mechanized vehicles, ships, artillery pieces....2. continue to encircle the enemy and incite the uprisings. Step up the political and military proselyting in towns, cities and district towns...enlarge liberated areas by making use of the people's forces and local armed forces, and unceasingly strengthen the liberated rural areas."

--more router



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shift 9 (normass/deepe)

This is precisely what the Communists have been doing ~~in~~ since their offensive began on August 18; just how much success they have had in the quasi-military areas is difficult to judge. <sup>IN</sup> On the pure-military <sup>Confounding</sup> battles, they seem to have lost ~~more battles than~~ a number of tactical battles, <sup>Some Personnel</sup> but they have been inflicting material ~~losses~~ and property losses <sup>on</sup> in the <sup>Allied</sup> sectors as well.

The Allies can and do claim credit for slowing down the Communist ~~drive~~ in diminishing the level of the Communist offensive, but even for the American command here <sup>During up A</sup> seems to have difficulty in assessing the win-loss balance sheet.

"We know how many Communist units we pin down and how many we kill," one ~~the~~ Allied source explained. "But we don't know how many <sup>COMMUNIST</sup> ~~we~~ are slipping around our units. We know how many rockets and mortar ~~shells~~ <sup>Do Not capture.</sup> ~~we~~ ~~capture~~ caches we capture, but we don't know how many we ~~are capturing~~. Are we catching 10 per cent or 90 percent of their men and supplies moving in ~~and~~ around the cities? We don't know. It is very difficult to judge the order of magnitude at this time."

--more reuter



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shift 10 (normass/deepe)

~~Once this phase of th~~

COULD NOT

Once the Communists judge they have accomplished—or ~~failed to~~  
~~accomplish—these~~ <sup>THEIR</sup> requirements during the current this phase of the  
third offensive, then presumably they will roll in to attack the cities—  
if the Allies have not smashed them in the meantime.

CHANGE IN

THE COMMUNIST

The timing and ~~space~~ sequence of events ~~during this~~ offensive seem  
~~only~~ slightly more <sup>CHANGE IN</sup> significant than the style. Their tactical style is ~~that~~ <sup>current</sup>

to concentrate their military activities in the countryside, while

harrassing the ~~ur~~ major urban centers with rockets, mortars ~~and~~

COMMANDO

~~ground raids of commandos and an increase in the~~ <sup>SPECTACULAR</sup> ~~terrorist, both the~~

~~spectacular type of blowing up buildings and the in minute type of~~

AND UN-NOTICED

~~assassinating village~~ <sup>OR</sup> ~~government workers in the cities.~~ Rather

than forgetting about the urban centers, as they did ~~before~~ <sup>BEFORE</sup>

<sup>while fighting in the countryside,</sup> ~~in other pre-offensive periods,~~ the Communists seem to be softening them. up.

(Hank: I'll file several more peice pieces early in the week,  
but unless there's a change in the situation, I thought I might visit  
Long An province outside Saigon Friday, returning Saturday. What do you  
think? Regards Bev).

==end reuter