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turncoat 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, APRIL 30--Nearly ^{two} ~~three~~ weeks ago, a diminutive Viet Cong political commissar, WEARING BLACK PEASANT'S PANTALONS, defected to a dusty, remote Vietnamese government police post more than twenty miles north of the capital--and thus became the most ^{sensational} ~~prominent~~ turncoat known to date in the Vietnam war.

Surpassing even the Hollywood thriller suspense of Alfred Hitchcock and James Bond, ^{DV} the Viet Cong officer simply revealed vast portions of an imminent Communist plan to launch a military extravaganza against Saigon even more spectacular than their surprise Tet offensive. The prodigious battle plan revealed by the commissar called for the ~~equivalent~~ equivalent of at least one and half divisions (15,000 men)--and possibly ~~to~~ two and half divisions (25,000 men) Viet Cong converging to assault Saigon and its outskirts, orchestrated with artillery and rocket attacks on ammunition depots, gasoline tank farms, the American embassy and military billets, the American military command and Saigon's airport, the Vietnamese Presidential Palace and High Command.

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turncoat 2 (normass/deepe)

The resulting military fireworks would have ~~rieto~~ ricocheted politically around the world, especially at a time when Washington and Hanoi were deadlocked on a meeting site for peace talks. The revelations of the Viet Cong commisser indicated that if the Communists had succeeding in launching and implementing their large-scale battle plan, Washington would have had ~~littl~~ lost so much of its bargaining position, it would have had little to talk about with Hanoi.

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turncoat 3 (normass/deepe)

The Viet Cong political commissar, ~~named as Tran Van Dac,~~
defected on Friday, April 19--and since then, Saigon has been suspended
in a ~~suspended stat~~ frenzied state of pandemonium, ~~expect expect~~ ^{THIS STATE IS} expected
to continue until at least May 19, the ^{78th} anniversary birthday of North Vietnamese
~~Presi~~ President Ho Chi Minh. After his defection, the commissar was
transported from the police post to Bien Hoa, the corps headquarters ²¹
twenty miles north of Saigon, and then to Saigon, where Vietnamese
interrogators immediately began to glean information from him. The
government interrogators ~~im~~ decided ^{GENUINELY} the 49-year-old Communist was not a
hoax and that his information had ^{FIN} tipped them off about the impending
Communist offensive. On the Vietnamese government side, several significant
things happened immediately: all Vietnamese forces in the Saigon area
were placed on alert, ^{MORE} with one hundred per cent confinement to barracks,
Vietnamese troops were rushed into the ~~to~~ Saigon defense perimeter,
government employees got wind of the scoop and began telephoning their
friends to stockpile rice, milk, cooking fuels and other necessities.
Then, government sources leaked ~~the story of the colonel commissar's defection~~
to the ^{expected} Vietnamese and Western correspondents, ^{THE STORY} of the commissar's defection ^{FIN} ~~and~~
and the ^{these reports were} fort imminent attack on ~~Saigon~~. Saigon; later climax climaxed
by similar ~~statements~~ pronouncements to the press by the Vietnamese Prime Minister
Nguyen Van Loc, and President Nguyen Van Thieu.

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turncoat 4 (normass/deepe)

Not until the following Wednesday, five days later, did General William C. Westmoreland's American Military Assistance Command (MACV), swing into action. American interrogators, aided by lie detectors, also placed credence in the ~~Gern~~ commissar's story. Alerts to American forces were immediately issued. ~~Was~~ Weapons were issued to headquarters officers, American civilian government employees were told to stockpile two weeks of rations, some military officers were ordered to sleep overnight at the ~~ce~~ large military command complex, called Pentagon East; American billets were placed on 'white' alert.

MACV ^{ly} also reported ~~launched~~ ^{launched} a special operation to find out just who had leaked the story to the press. ~~While~~ But, the command failed; for while MACV wanted the story kept secret so that the Viet Cong would ~~attack~~ ^{ASSault}

^{WHEN} ~~and~~ ^{were Ready} the Allies ~~would be alerted~~ for the attack, the Vietnamese government sources was deliberately feeding ^{more} and more information to the press, ~~for~~ ^{government} these sources argued that the ~~no~~ political-psychological shock of another Viet Cong assault into Saigon--~~is~~ ^{is} even if the Communists lost huge numbers of men--would outweigh any military gains.

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turncoat 5 (normass/deepe)

But, while MACV officially was trying to squelch leaks to the press about the expected imminent attack, its headquarters officers were tipping off their friends about it, the within hours the word had swirled ~~down~~ all the way down to the level of mini-skirted American secretaries. The most open secret in Saigon ^{BOUNCED} ~~swirled~~ ^{THE} through command and ^{GROUND} through the city. Later, ~~Brig~~ Brig. Gen. W. Sidle, General Westmoreland's officer in charge of public information, gave a sketchy briefing of the impending attack to several dozen correspondents, but the briefing was "off-the-record," meaning it could not be published. The Christian Science ~~Monitor~~ ^{Monitor} was not present.

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turncoat ⁶ (normass/deepe)

Vietnamese intelligence sources list ~~to~~ the commissar's name as Tran Van Dac--Dac means "achievement"--and his codenames as ~~(C)~~ Ha No. 8 and Hanoi No. 8. But the ~~see~~ semi-official Vietnam Press identified him as Colonel Tam Ha, and he was still later identified as ~~Colon~~ Colonel Pham Van Thach. It is not unusual for Viet Cong officers to accrue a number of aliases. Vietnamese ~~intelligence sources~~ Press termed him "the most high ranking VC agent who has ever rallied to the national cause," and the news ~~service~~ service bestowed him with the rank of colonel, but other official ~~sources~~ sources said that since he was a political, rather than military, officer, he held only the equivalent rank of lieutenant colonel. Two other Viet Cong ~~high~~ lieutenant colonels have previously defected to the Vietnamese government--but none bringing such ~~pinpoint~~ pinpoint intelligence information as ~~sensational~~ sensational as the Communist battle plan for Saigon.

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turncoat 7 (normass/deepe)

The sources said he was the political ~~commissar~~ ^{for} commissar of the Viet Cong 9th ~~Division's~~ Division, based northwest of Saigon, and deputy political commissar of sub-command 4 of the T-700 region, a new command ~~controlled directly by the Viet Cong supreme command headquarters~~ controlling ~~directly~~ military and political activities in Saigon and surrounding provinces, operating directly under the Viet Cong high command, called COSVN.

The commissar, aged 49, was ~~from~~ reportedly born and raised in Binh Dinh province of central Vietnam. The son of a middle-class family, he ~~fi~~ completed roughly the equivalent of junior high school, and then in 1947, he joined the pro-Communist Viet Minh to fight the French ^{Colonials} during the French Indo-China War.

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turncoat 8 (normass/deepe)

The reaso two reasons he gave for his defection were reportedly highly personal ones. First, he said, he knew alot of civilians had been killed or wounded in saigon during the Tet offensive and the upcoming attack would be even worse for the civilians because of the heavy weapons bombardments planned during the attack. He said he couldn't take it any more; his morale broke; and he hoped that by coming to the government side, he could foil the plan and the Communists would not attack. The second reasons was much more of a long-standing grievance--the Communist Party gave preferential treatment to working-class cadre from the working-class over those of middle-class status, such as himself. Hence, he said, Colonel Hoang Cam had been given command of the Viet Cong 9th Division because he came from a working class family, but when Dac was a major Cam was only a lieutenant and now Cam had risen much faster. Colonel Cam was killed as his units withdrew from saigon during the Tet period, Dac said, and other Viet Cong officers are now disgruntled because they are being severely criticized, and some replaced, because their units suffered such heavy casualties during Tet.

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turncoat 9 (normass/deepe)

The Communist timetable for the executing of the battle plan was imprecise, but the commissar's information was detailed enough to give Allied interrogators rough estimates at the time. The commissar said the first orders he received ^v from the Viet Cong command were that the assigned units should be ready to move by April 16, but that, as of April 19 when he ~~defea~~ defected, no exact date for the assault had been transmitted down to the field echelons. He "guessed" the attack might have come ^{come} a last week-end, but if not, he thought it certainly would come before May 1, a ~~red~~ red-letter Communist holiday. He said ~~that~~ some of the assigned units already had "advance party" officers and ~~xxxx~~ forward ^{to} ~~obs~~ observers for artillery in the areas in which their units were to move. ^{Assault} Some observers here believe that while Dac's information may have tipped the Communists timetable, they no longer need the element of surprise, which they utilized so much during the Tet offensive, ^{effectively} and that if they should ⁵⁴⁷⁷ attack when the Allies already are tipped off ^{alerted} they may be able to gain even more psychological shock than otherwise.

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turncoat 10 (normass/deepe)

The battle plan revealed by the commissar rêve included both vague and precise ^{tactical} information. The vague, unconfirmed information concerned his believe that the spearhead of the Saigon attack would be started by a division of Communist troopers now resting in the Plain of Reeds area southwest of Saigon, near, if not on the other side, of the Cambodian border, ~~at its closest point to Saigon~~ ^{from Saigon} or only thirty miles away. He said he had heard about this division, which would use Lin Piao's tactics called "Bon-Tap"--run-attack--to race from the Cambodian area to Saigon in a matter of hours, and then attack. But, he ~~said~~ said, he had only heard about this division, and since he it was outside of his ^{Responsibility.} ~~own~~ area of command, he could not confirm this information.

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turncoat 11 (normass/deepe)

~~HW~~ tactical

His other information was more precise. The battle plan he knew of included the use of at least six infantry regiments—one and half divisions—plus one heavy-weapons regiment. The latter consisted of one battalion of 28 tubes of $\frac{1}{2}$ 122 mm. rockets, one battalion of 57 and 75 mm. recoilless rifles and one battalion of 82 mm. mortars. These heavy weapons battalions were to be used ~~north and northwest~~ north-northwest of Saigon to harrass American infantry units and installations running from the fringes of Tan Son Nhut Airbase to the Iron Triangle thirty miles away.

The infantry regiments included the 271 and 272 of the Viet Cong 9th Division, the 101st Regiment of the Viet Cong 7th Division, the 274th of the Viet Cong 5th Division, the autonomous Dong Ha Ngai Regiment, ~~and the 88th North Vietnamese Army Regiment~~ ^{UNIT} which was to act as a reserve ~~unit~~ ^{THE LATTER} outside of Saigon while lying in ambush position along Provincial Route 8, ~~geor~~ geographically running through rubber plantations between Chu Cu Chi and Binh Duong and militarily running through the operational areas of the U. S. Army 25th Division and 1st Division, which might be expected to travel the road to reinforce Saigon.

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turncoat 12 (normass/deepe)

In addition, six Viet Cong ~~autnomo~~ autonomous battalions from the Gia Dinh ~~provs~~ the province surrounding Saigon, were to be used along with the 125th sapper and reconnaissance battalion of the F-100 regiment, which attacked the American Embassy and other installations during the Tet offensive.

Dac said the four of the six mainforce regiments had withdrawn into the jungled Iron Tri Triangle area, shortly after the Tet offensive, where they had undergone rest, reconditioning, retraining, ~~critici~~ criticism and self-criticism sessions, brainwashing, reviews of lessons learned and had received replacements for their Tet losses. They were now ~~at~~ These regiments, under the direct command of General Tran Van Tra of the ~~Viet Cong High Command (called VS COSVN)~~, were now ready to attack again, the defector said.

He ~~said~~ said the 272 Regiment of the 9th Division was to drive down to attack Vietnam's biggest boot camp at Quang Trug Trung, on the fringes of Tan Son Nhut airbase, while the 101st Regiment of the 7th Division was to spearhead the drive into the airbase proper. The 271st sister regiment of the 9th Division was to reinforce its sister regiment during the Quang Trung battle and then both were to smash into Saigon proper. If necessary, the 88th North Vietnamese Regiment would steal out of its ambush position to reinforce the two regiments at Tan Son Nhut airbase, ~~Dac~~ said.

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turncoat 13 (norm as/deepe)

Two battalions of the 274th Regiment of the Viet Cong 5th Division, ordinarily based in Phuoc Tuy province, have already moved into Thu Duc district, from which their total 500 men would launch their attack, the sources said.

Inside the ~~ous~~ outskirts of Saigon, these infantry regiments would be aided and guided by the Gia Dinh autonomous battalions and the local Dong Ngai regiment--the hometown cadre who knew the terrain and the people outside of Saigon, and who in turn would also concentrate on specific targets in the fringes of the city, especially ~~Vietnam~~ Vietnamese gov² government district capitals in Gia Dinh province and ~~Vietnam~~ Vietnamese government outposts and installations.

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turncoat 14 (normass/deepe)

One special feature of the assault came from other informed sources, who reported that the North Vietnamese Army had stationed a regiment of armored vehicles across the Cambodian border lateral to Saigon. Other sources said simply that North Vietnamese armored specialists were based there--and that during the ground assault ~~attempt~~ attempts would be made to seize control of Vietnamese government ~~armor~~ armored vehicles, which the North Vietnamese would then drive into Saigon. As incredible as the plan sounded, ~~Asci~~ American sources said the Communists during the Tet offensive had a similar plan--to seize the Vietnamese government armor at Thu Duc district--and then use it in turn to capture other armored vehicles to move into Saigon. The plan ⁶ failed during the Tet attacks--
^{LED} but it has ~~lead~~ to giving ~~the~~ similar information credence at this time.

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turncoat 15 (normass/deepe)

The Viet Cong are known ^{to} to be carrying out extensive propaganda among Vietnamese armor and artillery units. Before Tet, a number of Viet Cong agents would culled out of the armor unit in Vietnamese armor unit south of Saigon, and in the Mekong Delta during the Tet offensive several Vietnamese government tracked vehicles defected to the Viet Cong side, only to be destroyed later by ^{air} airpower.

Reliable sources here believe the Communists would seek three possible military objectives by the launching this new offensive, an offensive they call the "third wave." The first wave was the ground assaults during Tet, the second wave was the rocket and artillery barrages which followed country-wide in February and March and the third wave would may involve both ground assaults and artillery indirect weapons bombardments. The Communist optimum objective would be the simultaneous simultaneous ground attack and artillery bombardment ~~corral~~ coordinated countrywide. The second, less ambitious objective, would be to use artillery and rockets to hit key installations and buildings in the center of the ~~of~~ Saigon, and possibly other cities as well, while using their ground assaults only to sweep clean the government presence in a five or six ~~km~~ mile radius outside each urban center. The least ambitious objective would simply wipe out ~~selected~~ selected, strategic outposts of government ~~rd~~ troops, who will not accommodate with them, without necessary assaulting on the ground the government-held towns and cities.

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turncoat 16 (normass/deepe)

The political objectives, or ~~repercuss~~ predictable
in the Communist Favor
repercussions, would be to influence influence the course of ~~Washington~~
Washington-Hanoi peace talks, on the ~~old~~ diplomatic front. Internally,
~~it~~ the military offensive, if successfully, would ~~further~~ deteriorate
Among the Population
to the anti-Communist spirit in the urban centers, weaken the government
of President Nguyen Van Thieu, and also enhance the prestige of the
COMMUNIST-
~~nearby Viet Cong~~ inspired organization called the Alliance of ~~Nato~~
National Democratic and Peace Forces of Vietnam.

(Hank: I hope you can print ~~hi~~ this as soon as possible,
since M'CV still thinks there will be/an attack on May 1, though I've
tried to play down the specific t dates. I've cancelled by Kien Hoa
trip for today, but am trying to ~~interview~~ set up interviews in the Delta
for this week-end. ~~Regarding~~ I'll try to file tomorrow on the new
Peace Alliance. Regards Bev). ~~end~~ retuer