

telex to 94521 Alphomega Boston

DEEPE - PAGE ONE.

SAIGON, January 31--The unprecedented Communist commando

raids into the Vietnamese government's heartland of ~~cities~~ <sup>this tense capital</sup> and provincial ~~capitals~~ <sup>beginning of the</sup> marks the pivotal politico-military showdown between the two blocs here.

Strategically, the unparalleled <sup>military</sup> moves would seem to indicate the Communist side is attempting to either set the stage for negotiations on their terms--close to an American ~~and~~ political capitulation--or else continue the war ~~at~~ with ~~even~~ deadlier blows and ~~at~~ swifter pace. In short--the beginning of the end of the war via negotiations or the beginning of the ~~beginning of a bigger war.~~ <sup>beginning of a bigger war.</sup> ~~pacificaly,~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~spontaneous~~ extravaganza of attacks indicate ~~are~~ marks a major turning point ~~in~~ for these reasons:

1. It means the war in South Vietnam <sup>Both</sup> has moved/sideways

and downwards ~~simultaneousl~~ simultaneously--and a skyrocketing upwards escalation ~~is~~ is expected soon. The ~~coordinated~~ coordinated, spectacular RAIDS HAVE ~~attacked~~ <sup>RAIDS HAVE</sup> carried the war laterally from ~~the~~ the countryside into once relatively secure cities, including their most defended strongpoints, such as Tan Son Nhut airbase, the Vietnamese high command, ~~throughout~~ several American billets filled with officers or enlisted men, and the cantonments of Vietnamese tanks and paratroopers. More Deepe

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2. The downward movement of the war is the armed ~~propaganda~~ <sup>And PSYCHOLOGICAL</sup> pounding of the Viet Cong into the urban centers, especially into those higher economic and educated levels of society which were formerly solidly anti-Communist, and now are becoming frightened, if not panicked. A week before the dramatic attacks in the ~~city~~, cities, the Viet Cong commando propagandists <sup>GAVE</sup> gave half-hour speeches and ~~they~~ pulled up the flag at the Central Market area in the heart of Saigon, in the ~~Su Van Hanh~~ section of the Chinese twin-city of Cholon, <sup>And</sup> in the Hoa Hung section near Tan Son Nhut airbase and Saigon's military garrison. And in the ~~Khank~~ <sup>armed</sup> Hoi area near the Saigon port, Viet Cong women guerrillas knocked at the homes of government informers and officials, killed one policeman and wounded several others.

The upward movement of the war is expected soon along the Demilitarized zone ~~and~~ and in the ~~North~~ northern provinces where full-fledged positional warfare of the classical Phase Three level would be conducted on a sustained basis. This would presumably be roughly similar to the Dien Bien Phu--the conventional-styled battle which marked the political-military defeat of the French in the French Indo-China War ~~and~~ fourteen ~~fifteen~~ years ago. More Deepe

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The Communist military commando raids ~~are made~~ into the cities and towns also is in contrast, or counter-balance, to the American strategy of conducting the war. While the American troops are attempting to pin the Communists down in their isolated stronghold areas and along the ~~border~~ borders of South Vietnam; the Communists have then hit into the relatively safe enclaves in the Allied rear. More Deepe

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In an international sense, the ~~XXXXXX~~ Communist assaults handed the Allies a propaganda gift with red bouquets wrapped ~~around~~ <sup>BY</sup> it—breaking the Tet ceasefire which the Communists had themselves announced. \* The Communists ~~XXXXXXXX~~ in their radio broadcasts claim ~~this~~ <sup>IP</sup> the attacks were ~~launched~~ <sup>in</sup> in retaliation for the Allies initiating offensive operations against them, but this will probably get lost in the shuffle of their dramatic attacks themselves. Internally, <sup>PEOPLE</sup> \* President Thieu used the attacks to ~~argue convincingly~~ <sup>TELL THE VIETNAMESE</sup> that the word of the Communists can not be trusted—an argument he will probably use time and again in the ~~future~~ <sup>GOVERNMENT</sup> future as evidence that Communist promises on negotiations and coalitions are worthless. But, this argument is also a little obscure for the Vietnamese people who are daily harrassed by the effects—and now the bombardments—of the war.

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3. The extravaganza symbolizes not simply the failure of the ~~summit~~ high-priority pacification program—but also its ~~obsolescence~~ <sup>PARTIAL</sup> obsolescence. The common commando raids are considered

<sup>A</sup> the prelude prelude to bigger attacks in the cities in the future, even though the Tet truce period opened to them the easier opportunity for the move. The cancellation of the Vietnamese midnight to 4 a.m. curfew, plus increased family visitations allowed the Viet Cong to filter into the city at the most advantageous moment. But, they have also gained the advantage of testing Allied defenses and

<sup>Obtaining</sup> gaining a knowledge on their tactics and reactions. Even so, many of the Viet Cong are presumed to have been living in Saigon before the truce periods. Many of the dead wore civilian clothes—not uniforms.

The importance of coordinated country-wide attacks would ~~indicate~~ <sup>Allied failure</sup> despite the ~~Allied preoccupation~~ with the pacification program in the countryside—the narrow belt of hamlets surrounding cities and strategic areas <sup>(V)</sup>—it has failed to make any significant inroads there. Likewise, ~~both~~ both the Vietnamese government and Allies have ~~failed~~ <sup>for too long</sup> ignored the plights and problems of the cities, which have themselves been turned upside-down by the war without feeling its bombardment before. <sup>This week</sup> In this sense, the extravaganza may produce the ~~most~~ <sup>most</sup> favorable government-Allied reaction of ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> supplementing the pacification of the countryside with the social welfare escalations in the cities. More Deepe



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The strategic principle of Communist guerrilla warfare is to conquer the countryside and then encircle the cities until they crack and fall, taking the existing government with them. Now, the Communists have cracked the cities with military thrusts--but not yet with political insurrection. More Deepe

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The most significant development may well be ~~that~~ not the attacks themselves—militarily, they did not account for a high casualty or equipment total—but the ~~naïve~~ <sup>By Enacting</sup> Vietnamese government's reaction to the attacks in the form of government rule by decree. This strong reaction of ~~that~~ President Nguyen Van Thieu and his government will be a significant move, if the decree-rule lasts for a long time, for it effectively casts aside the Vietnamese constitution and the legislative ~~power~~ <sup>—if not the existence</sup> powers of the duly-elected House of Representatives and Senate. ~~the~~

In short, Thieu has undercut the legitimacy of his own existence and his legislature—which President Lyndon Johnson ~~and~~ so strongly supported. While details of the decree-rule are still obscure ~~and preliminary here, if they are sustained for a long period, Thieu may well find himself not so much a President as a just another junta general, just another "dictator," and as anti-government~~ and preliminary here, if they are sustained for a long period, Thieu may well find himself not so much a President as <sup>8</sup> just another junta general, just another ~~and~~ "dictator," ~~and~~ as anti-government oppositionists have said about his many predecessors. And hence, he runs the risk of becoming more "dumpable" in the future, as his predecessors may become more "dumpable" in the future. predecessors have in the past.

(Mark: sorry for the rush job. on this. I'm telexing this because

Reuters is close to palace where there's still rifle firing. Appreciate any suggestions on this and tips on Washington moves. Regards Bev).

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