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~~streets~~—page 1

STREETS (NO. MASS / DEEPE)

SAIGON, February 8—Fighting in the streets, alleys and storefronts of this harried capital is pivoting into a new pattern: Communist mini-mobile warfare.

This tactical pattern is tailspinning the South Vietnamese government of President Nguyen Van Thieu into another round of an increasingly grave crisis in the near future.

In a larger timeframe, this tactical pattern is already succeeding partially in implementing ~~longer~~ long-range Communist strategy of attrition—to chop off the roots of the government at the police precinct and small outpost level within the city limits.

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~~street page 2~~

Streets 2 (Norm ASS / DEEP E).

In short, the Communists appear to be eroding the government strength from the ~~bottom~~ bottom echelon⁴ upwards as a prelude to overthrowing it at the ~~ix~~ top in the future.

Mobile warfare, the ~~militi~~ military tactics in which the Communists semi-conquered ~~the~~ Vietnam's rice paddies, is now being implemented in miniature along the streets and ~~alley~~ alleys of Saigon with enough ~~success~~ success to appall senior officials here.

Thus far the pattern has jelled in the Chinatown section of Saigon, called ~~Chon~~ Cholon, where Communist squads, platoons and one company is establishing a momentary, but mobile frontline with government police stations⁴ and posts and military units. This Phase Two tactic ~~is~~ appears to be an attempt to establish an equilibrium ~~of~~ or ~~biance~~ balance of forces with ~~the~~ government ~~strength~~ in the area. Mobile warfare in the countryside was generally conducted with larger units, from company strength upwards.

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streets ~~number~~ 3 (normass/deepe)

American officials originally predicted the Communists would be routed from the capital city two days after their sensational January 30th assault into the city. ^{BUT} Now the Communists have continued to maintain constant harrassment in at least three of the city's nine precincts.

The three critical ones are the sixth, seventh and eighth precincts, in the Cholon section, most of which includes lower-class working and residential areas, canal-side wharves and warehouses, home industries such as textile spinning, light industry such as rice wine distilling, the racetrack area, and the X "duck farm" and slaughterhouse areas from which produce from the countryside is processed and routed for use in the city. Situated on the ~~six~~ southern extremity of the capital, these three precincts are being so critically harrassed by the Communists that commercial traffice| into the food-producing Mekong Delta has been severed.

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streets 4 (normass/deepe)

"We are now faced with the prospect the Communists can set up a permanent enclave in those three ~~pre~~ ~~encl~~ Cholon precincts," one reliable source explained, "and launch terror raids into other parts of the city from there."

"Even worse, the South Vietnamese government is toying with the idea the only way to solve the problem is to flatten it with bombs," he continued. "That is the cowardly way to ~~do~~ do it--with wretching political overtones."

"But, the police can no longer handle the job. ~~They~~ The Americans have never armed the police with heavy enough weapons--they don't even have basic infantry weapons. And there's not enough infantry ~~leaps~~ troops to wiggle the ~~the~~ Communists out of there."

"Even worse, there's no good intelligence information on how many organized units are in there--or where they are. I asked four different high-level sources today--and got four different answers."

Near the Race Point, And
Some reliable sources estimated one organized Communist battalion inside the city, ~~and~~ assisted by a wide array of local guerrillas, plus four ~~and~~ "fresh" Communist ~~units~~ battalions tucked around ~~outside~~ the city! *beyond the suburbs*

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streets 5 (normass/deepe)

Another source explained: "If the Communists can hold those precincts for three to eight weeks, the results will be just horrific. It's quite possible the government could fall in one way or another."

Large sections of ~~Uch~~ Cholon are barricaded off by the Vietnamese government with puffballs of concertina wire and ~~stop~~ stop signs.

But, now the Communists have started to barricade smaller alleys and side streets with water jugs, rain barrels and the charred remains of ~~tin~~ tin roofing from previous bombing raids near An Quang pagoda. These ~~Communist~~ homemade ~~by~~ Communist barricades become a fluid frontline. AR RESISTANCE WAR ARE

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streets 6 (normass/deepe)

At night, the government forces become ~~barricade~~
~~be~~^{Behind} an island-fortress of barbed wire and pillboxes; the vast sea of population living between posts are living virtually at the mercy of the Communists--a reminescent of warfare in the rural areas for years.

From within this sea of population, roving bands of Communists pounce from government ~~post~~^{to} ~~post~~ or sub-~~precinct~~ precinct station--and now even the three precinct stations have become targets along with American officers billets in the area. Recently, the eighth precinct headquarters was abandoned by the ranking police officer. He, along with 25 policemen who did not desert him, set ~~u~~ up a second line of defense--but the Communists did not attempt to assault the building and it was later reoccupied.

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streets 8/Normass/deepe)

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Almost all of these police posts and subprecinct stations have been harrassed or assaulted in the area--and the Communists are now increasing the pressure on even the ~~maxx~~ fifth precinct, which includes the heart of the wealthy Chinese section. ~~Maximum~~ Some of these Communist attacks occurred during daylight--and set the small posts to flames as they overran it. Some posts held out ~~by~~ against the mounting Communist incidents. Government Ranger battalions are regularly dispatched to the area--and often they get pinned down, or attacked while in a defensive position. MILITARY depots, warehouses and A frame center HAVE BEEN ATTACKED.

Nightly, enough flares are dropped over the heart of Chinese section to "to read a newspaper by," as one source explained. Occasionally, the mini-guns of "Puff the Magic Dragon" C-47 aircraft or ~~the~~ helicopter rockets swoop pounce down to strafe the Communists as they attempt to cross the canals into the heart of Cholon. The government units are protecting the key bridges leading, into the central area, WATER BORNE but the Communists simply line up barges and sampans to form a bridge across which they can move.

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streets ⁸ (Normass/deepe)

While the military officialdom is concerned about organized companies and battalions of Communist strength, far more worrisome ~~to local inhabitants~~ ^{Cholon RESIDENTS} are the local guerrilla and political cadre who know the ~~the~~ neighborhoods and the ~~residents~~ ^{people}. While ~~hundreds~~ hundreds of displaced persons have fled the area to avoid the fighting, ~~anti-Communists~~ ^{behind} those remaining are fearful of a Gestapo-like knock on their door by these local ~~cadre~~ ^{Communist} cadre.

This trend has already set in—and if it snowballs more would be considered ~~lethal~~ ^{CATASTROPHE} for the Vietnamese government.

One Vietnamese Senator in the elected legislature was awakened to find the Communists knocking on doors in ~~high~~ ^{high} neighborhood ~~so~~ ^{NO} they would listen to a propaganda lecture. ~~None~~ ^{HIS} ~~one~~ of the residents even ~~peeped~~ outside their doors, but the next night the Senator moved his family and slept with friends.

One Vietnamese army officer ~~report~~ ^{had} reported he saw a Communist ~~assassinatio~~ ^{had} assassination squad murder another officer—friend strolling along the street with his wife and two children. The assassinated officer was not in uniform at the time—he had been "fingering" by a Communist ~~who~~ ^{ARE} lived two doors away from him for ten years. Police families in the area ~~have~~ ^{NUMEROUS} also been known to have suffered ~~a few~~ reprisals and assassinations in the area—but statistics are unavailable. Government intelligence agents—or Chinese working ~~close~~

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streets ~~to~~ ⁹ (normass/deepe)

~~Vietnam~~

Some ~~of the~~ local guerrilla squads are made up predominantly of ~~Vietnamese~~ Chinese with Vietnamese citizenship, reliable sources report--and many of their numbers ~~are~~ ^{are} highly ag aggressive women, some of whom ^{once} worked in the ~~textile~~ Chinese-owned textile mills in the ^{that have} ~~area~~. ^{Chinese women were} ~~Under government regulations, they are allowed to~~ hold trade union meetings to learn about their jobs--and these have for years been turning into ~~Communist~~ Communist cell meetings, rather than pro-government labor sessions, reliable sources report.

The impact of this has been to make Vietnamese ~~suspicious~~ ^{the} suspicious of other Vietnamese--and under this crust of ~~suspicion~~ ^{surface} suspicion lies a cauldron of anti-Americanism which has yet to bubble over.

"This is the time when every Vietnamese has two feet and two ~~face~~ faces," a tearful housewife explained.

And, as a newly arrived journalist first ~~was~~ witnessed the ~~myc~~ mushrooms of ~~so~~ smoke and flames befogging the city, he scribbled in his notebook, "Is Saigon burning?"

(prohayward: Maybe you'd like to ask Frederick Yu at ~~Coo~~ Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism to ~~write~~ ^{write} ~~up~~ ^{up} a profile of Cholon. Might ask Beb about it for details. Beb--
Church Chuck and An fine. Am relieved John Hughes ^{is} arriving. I'm going out of town Thursday in Saigon area, returning Friday--will file after that.

Yes, let's do the payments as you ~~are~~ suggested on monthly basis with