

Almost as soon as the Shooting phase of TET was over, the larger question - in each command area, like the southern half of Vietnam which was the responsibility of II Field Force - was 'what got hurt - US and South Vietnamese?'

From the hectic tumble of messages that came in the first three days, I had concluded a far different result from the Tet 'offensive' than the frantic Press - who made out as if the whole nation had collapsed and US and Vietnamese military with it.

In my first quick letter home after Tet, I wrote "...this is the biggest blunder the VC could ever have been made. They failed everywhere, militarily, took enormous losses (the reported US casualties and Viet Cong body counts were quite accurate), they failed to win any support in the cities...I think they beat themselves and shortened the war by years"

Of course it did, but the OTHER way - we quit in the end. Why? Because the Vietcong objective was NOT the destruction of US and Vietnamese Forces, even though they tried - but the WILL OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

As I have repeatedly said ever since Vietnam, the greatest ally Insurgents have is the US PRESS AND MEDIA.

While in point of fact, not a SINGLE US Military Army or Platoon was defeated or overrun, the US Press declared TET as a US 'MILITARY' disaster, when it was only a VC POLITICAL victory.

You have to credit the Communists who undertand the American public AND its Press better than they do.

The 'VC TET OFFENSIVE RESULTS BRIEFING'

There were so many places simultaneously hit by the Viet Cong, that it would take more than a few staff officers just scanning incoming messages to get the 'bigger' picture. For the corollary question was

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'Who won what and who lost what' from this countrywide series of small attacks.'

So, no surprise to me, I and my G-3 Plans section was tapped to do a rapid study and prepare a comprehensive briefing for General Weyand and the senior commanders and staff in II Field Force.

It took time - more than a week - to gather all the facts - reports from every US unit, and all the South Vietnamese Units who take longer to report, analyse them, put them all into a fully illustrated - map and charts - briefing.

But when it was done - reflecting exactly what I had concluded two days after TET - that the Viet Cong suffered an overwhelming military defeat - the briefing I gave to General Weyand was so convincing, he wanted General Westmoreland to see it Westmoreland wanted General Wheeler - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Washington - to see it (and he took back a book of it I prepared) which started the most amazing series of briefings by me to every Military AND US Civilian VIP AND the world Press over the next month.

I was dubbed in Saigon by the end of March as "The greatest living expert on the VC TET Offensive"

Before I was done I had briefed US Ambassador Bunker, the Saigon staffs of the Embassy, US AID, USIS (Information Service), Ambassador Laise, the CIA, General Lansdale, biligually to the Senior Vietnamese Government and Military Command, the 7th Air Force Commander General Momeyer - and before I was done he asked me to come back to Ton Son Nhut Airbase and breif it to General Ryan the Air Force Commander of all the Pacific (PACAF). There were 23 Air Force Stars in that room that date. They asked if they could video tape it and take it back to Honolulu. The still classified version.

Westmoreland was so exited about what it showed - and proved - he sat in a second time himself as I briefed it, and when Barry Zorthian,

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head of Information asked if it could be 'sanitized' enough to be given to the Press, he said yes.

So I had to revise the classified portions, and then to an absolutely packed room (perhaps 100 journalists - and I was sure some Communist Agent 'Press') during one of the "5 O'Clock Follies" - which the press dubbed their daily briefing by MACV, I delivered it yet again - and handled all their questions.

It was the hottest property in the Pacific, and I was the star.

But of COURSE, the Press and Media had already made up THEIR minds - regardless of the facts - that it was a major defeat for the US, preferred to run on television news in the US, repeatedly, the scenes of the Viet Cong getting inside the wire of the US Embassy (never inside the buildings) and declared it a disaster.

But YOU can read the long Unclassified Press Briefing (without maps, but plenty of facts) right here - which, in summary showed that we killed over 12,000 Viet Cong during TET while suffering only 300 killed US soldiers during the same 20 day period.

Just click on the PDF file below and read what the Press Corps got about TET from the US perspective.

<http://davehugheslegacy.net/images/PDFs/tetbrief0001.pdf>