

March 20, 1975

**Cable No. 870 from Dien Bien [Central Military Party
Committee] to COSVN Military Headquarters and
Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung]**

Citation:

"Cable No. 870 from Dien Bien [Central Military Party Committee] to COSVN Military Headquarters and Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung]", March 20, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 157-160. Translated by Merle Pribbenow. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/175986>

Summary:

On behalf of the Central Military Party Committee, Hoang Van Thai sent out a cable to report on the successful results of the attacks and uprisings of the soldiers and civilians of South Vietnam and in Central Highlands.

Credits:

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Translation - English

1. The attacks and uprisings of the soldiers and civilians of South Vietnam have only gone on for a short period of time, but they have won a tremendous victory. This initial victory is strategically important. For the first time, we have liberated a vast, wide area by liberating the entire Central Highlands. An initial review reveals that we have essentially destroyed the 23rd Division; we have destroyed two ranger groups (the 21st and 23rd), two tank/armored squadrons (the 8th and the 21st), and 25 RF battalions; we have inflicted heavy losses on the 47th Regiment/23rd Division; we have killed almost 30,000 enemy troops and captured 6,000 prisoners (including three colonels); and we are now appealing to enemy troops who fled into the local areas to turn themselves in. We have completely liberated the provinces of Darlac (Ban Me Thuot), Gia Lai (Pleiku), Kontum, Phu Bon (Cheo Reo), and the portion of Quang Tri province that we had not previously occupied. We have captured large quantities of guns and ammunition, almost 100 artillery pieces, 48 tanks and armored personnel carriers, 600 military vehicles, one helicopter, and a large quantity of other supplies.

2. After being taken totally by surprise and suffering a painful blow, the enemy has been forced to beat a hasty retreat, abandoning the bulk of the important areas of Military Region 2. It is clear that the strength of the enemy has weakened, that the posture of the Americans has declined, and that the U.S. is suffering problems across the board. That is why up to this point the U.S. has not dared to intervene, and without the American support and assistance they had received before the puppet are increasingly falling apart. They cannot withstand our attacks. This large initial withdrawal has completely upset the enemy's strategic deployment posture. The enemy has been forced to begin a large-scale strategic withdrawal and regrouping to deal with our attacks. The abandonment of the Central highlands has caused a high level of fear and wavering in the enemy's ranks that has affected the other battlefields. That is why on 19 March the enemy was forced to abandon Quang Tri. A number of other locations, such as Hue, Dalat, Quang Ngai, and Quang Duc are also in a state of panic. They have allowed the civilian population to flee and are burning their documents. We need to continue to closely monitor these developments.

The enemy's large-scale pullback and regrouping of forces is aimed at trying to save his manpower strength from destruction, to move these forces back to defend a number of strategic targets that are militarily and economically important, and to defend and cling to the heavily populated areas that have plentiful rice crops, all in an effort to deal with our current offensive. The enemy is conducting his pullback early in order to avoid falling into a posture of complete collapse that would leave him with no foundation from which to "bargain" with us when sitting back down at the conference table. The enemy may pull back and regroup to defend the following large areas:

-One, Saigon and the surrounding area, from Ba Ria up through Xuan Loc, Ben Cat, Binh Duong, Trang Bang, Cu Chi, Tan An, and Ben Nuc.

-Two, the Mekong River Delta.

-Three, the Danang-Hue area, and he might also abandon Thua Thien-Hue if he is heavily attacked there.

-Four, the Cam Ranh-Nha Trang-Dalat-Phan Rang area.

-Five, the Qui Nhon-Binh Dinh area, initially, at least, to block the strength of our attack down Route 19, but if he comes under serious threaten there he might also abandon this area.

The situation is continuing to change, and if all of our battlefields continue to operate

consistently and well, we do not exclude the possibility that the enemy will abandon all of Central Vietnam from Thua Thien-Hue down to Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan and will mass his forces in a large defensive concentration occupying and defending the Saigon area and the Mekong Delta.

Of the above-named areas, Saigon is the area that is most important to the enemy.

The enemy's large-scale strategic withdrawal when the enemy's strength and posture has seriously deteriorated across the board. In Cambodia the Lon Nol puppets are on their death-bed, and with the U.S. currently facing a host of problems, both domestically and abroad, this will cause the already declining morale of the Saigon puppet army and puppet government to deteriorate even further. This may lead to new collapses that will exceed even the worst fears of the U.S. and Thieu.

3. Because the strategic and campaign plans formulated by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee were accurate and correct, because our preparations were rather complete and pro-active, because we were able to maintain secrecy and surprise, and because our guidance and command in the primary sector was flexible and bold, in a very short period of time we have gained a tremendous victory of strategic significance.

This victory has created new and extremely favorable conditions that have opened up many new possibilities for us and has given us ample conditions to be able to win even greater victories at a much more rapid pace than we had previously anticipated.

The entire nature of the situation in South Vietnam is now entering a period that is extremely favorable for our side and extremely difficult for the U.S. and their puppets. We need to clearly recognize the new characteristics of the situation and fully comprehend the enemy's new state of serious collapse.

All battlefields need to have a clear vision of the overall situation and exhibit a highly aggressive spirit. They must boldly and resolutely seize opportunities and be flexible in taking action, mass their forces to make powerful attacks, quickly annihilate entire enemy units, exploit our three-pronged attack [military, political, and military proselyting], incite the people to rise up, and sweep away the enemy's instruments of repression.

They must liberate individual sectors and areas to create a posture that presses in close to the enemy, forming a posture that surrounds, cuts off, and divides the enemy both on the campaign and the strategic level. They must create conditions that will enable us to boldly destroy enemy forces as the enemy conducts his strategic withdrawals and shatter the enemy's plan for strategic withdrawal and consolidation.

4. Recent experience in the southern Central Highlands has revealed that the reasons we won such a rapid and large victory in a short period of time were that our attack was extremely bold, we took the enemy by surprise, and we organized good combined arms coordination, even though this task was very complex. However, our experience has also exposed a number of weaknesses: our thinking and our working style has not kept pace with the extremely rapid development of the situation. We hold too many meetings and argue and discuss things too much, and we have not had individuals step forward to take decisive action. We are still too detail-oriented and small-minded, so we missed many concrete opportunities (for instance, we had radios but only used field telephones; we had trucks and prisoners who could drive them but we did not dare to use them and instead had our troops move forward on foot; the enemy was falling apart but we still insisted that we must have a period of preparation first, thereby missing many opportunities, etc.). The situation is developing rapidly, and other locations may easily face the same kind of situation.

The General Staff wishes to remind all locations to pay attention to this problem.

[signed]

Thanh [Hoang Van Thai]