

# Will Congress Face Down the Deep State?

The House Intelligence Committee's vote on Monday to release a memorandum describing alleged malfeasance at the DOJ and the FBI could test constitutional principles, writes Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

With the House Intelligence Committee vote yesterday to release its four-page memorandum reportedly based on documentary evidence of possible crimes by top Justice Department and FBI leaders, the die is cast. Russia-gate and FBI-gate are now joined at the hip.



The coming weeks will show whether the U.S. intelligence establishment (the FBI/CIA/NSA, AKA the "Deep State") will be able to prevent its leaders from being held to account. Past precedent suggests that the cabal that conjured up Russia-gate will not have to pick up a "go-to-jail" card. This, despite the widespread guilt suggested by the abrupt way that several senior-echelon DOJ and FBI rats have already jumped ship. Not to mention the manner in which FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, was unceremoniously pushed overboard yesterday, after Director Christopher Wray was given a look at the extra-legal capers described in the House Intelligence Committee memorandum.

Granted, at first glance Deep State's efforts to undercut candidate Donald Trump at first seem so risky and audacious as to be unbelievable. By now, though, Americans should be able to wrap their heads around, one, the dire threat that outsider Trump was seen to be posing to the Deep State and to the ease with which it held sway under President Barack Obama; and, two, expected immunity from prosecution if Deep State crimes were eventually discovered after the election, since "everybody knew" Hillary Clinton was going to win. Oops.

## **Accountability This Time?**

There seems to be an outside chance, this time, that the culprits who did

actually interfere in the 2016 presidential election in an effort to make sure Trump could not win, and then did all in their power to sabotage him after he his electoral victory, will be held to account by unusually feisty members of the House. It is abundantly clear that members of the House Intelligence and House Judiciary Committees are now in possession of the kind of unambiguous, first-hand documentary evidence needed to get a grand jury convened and, eventually, indictments obtained.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the Republic and the Constitution are at stake. A friend put it the way:

“When GW Bush said of the Constitution, ‘It’s just a goddam piece of paper,’ I thought it was just another toss-off bit of hyperbole as he so often would utter. Not so. He, and many in his administration (and out) sincerely believe it and set out to make it so. They may actually have succeeded.”

### **The Media’s Role**

I almost feel sorry for what is called “mainstream media” and – even more so – for the majority of Americans deceived by the prevailing narrative on Russia-gate. Even though that narrative now lies in shreds, there is no sign so far that the pundits will fess up and admit to spreading a far-fetched, evidence-impooverished story that was full of holes from the get-go.

Even vestigially honest journalists of the old school, who may themselves have been taken in, will have a Herculean challenge if they attempt to write to right the ship of journalism. As for brainwashed Americans, pity them. It is far easier to deceive folks than to convince them they have been deceived, as Mark Twain once wrote.

From today’s online version of the *New York Times*, for example, the lede headline read, “Taunted by Trump and Pressured From Above, McCabe Steps Down as F.B.I. Deputy.”

The *Times* quotes Representative Adam B. Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, giving hypocrisy a bad name. Schiff said yesterday that it had been a “sad day” for the committee and that Republicans had voted “to politicize the intelligence process.”

And this just in: [an op-ed](#) from *NYT* pundit David Leonhardt, titled – you guessed it – “The Nunes Conspiracy.”

“Instead of evidence, the memo engages in the same dark and misleading conspiracy theories that have characterized other efforts by President Trump’s allies to discredit the Russia investigation,” Leonhardt wrote. “But the

substance of the claims isn't really the point. Distraction is the point, and the distraction campaign is having an impact."

And so it goes.

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## Assault on the Embassy: The Tet Offensive Fifty Years Later

On January 31, 1968, Viet Cong forces attacked the U.S. Embassy in Saigon as part of the Tet Offensive, a turning point in the Vietnam War. On the eve of the 50th anniversary, veteran war correspondent Don North takes us back to that momentous event.

By Don North

It was the eve of battle. Ngo Van Giang, known as Captain Ba Den to the Viet Cong troops he led, had spent weeks smuggling arms and ammunition into Saigon under boxes of tomatoes. Ba Den was about to lead 15 sappers, a section of the J-9 Special Action Unit, against an unknown target. Only eight of the unit were actually trained experts in explosives. The other seven were clerks and cooks who signed up for the dangerous mission mainly to escape the rigors of life in their jungle camp near Dau Tieng, 30 miles northwest of Saigon.

On the morning of January 30, 1968, Ba Den secretly met with U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's chauffeur, Nguyen Van De, an embassy driver who was in fact an agent for the Viet Cong. De drove Ba Den in circles around the Embassy compound in an American station wagon. De revealed that Ba Den's mission was to attack the heavily fortified Embassy. Learning the identity of his target, Ba Den was overwhelmed by the realization that he would probably not survive the attack. Pondering his likely death, and since it was the eve of Tet, Ba Den wandered into the Saigon market, had a few Ba Muoi Ba beers and bought a string of firecrackers to light as he had done for every Tet celebration since he was a child.

Ba Den and his team were about to play a small but critical role in what we now call the Tet Offensive, the coordinated attack by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops against dozens of cities, towns and military bases across South Vietnam.

When the bloody fighting ended after 24 days, the Communist troops had been driven from every target and the U.S. declared a military victory. However, the attackers scored a significant political and psychological victory by demonstrating an ability to launch devastating and coordinated attacks seemingly everywhere at once, and by showing that a U.S.-South Vietnamese victory was nowhere in sight. The attack on the U.S. Embassy was a potent symbol of that success.

I've thought a good deal about that attack on the Embassy over the last 50 years. I was there as a television journalist – lying in the gutter outside the Embassy as automatic fire buzzed above my head. Here is what I knew then and what I know now.

Later that night of January 30, Ba Den joined the other members of the assault team at 59 Phan Than Gian Street, the home of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Phe, a veteran Communist agent who ran an auto repair shop next to her home, just four blocks from the Embassy. The 15 sappers unpacked their weapons and dressed in black pajamas with a red sash around one arm. They had trained to breach the Embassy's outer perimeter with explosives and attack with rifle fire, satchel charges and rocket propelled grenades. They were ordered to kill anyone who resisted but to take prisoner anyone who surrendered.

The Embassy attack was to be the centerpiece of a larger Saigon offensive, backed up by 11 battalions totalling 4,000 Viet Cong troops. The operation's other five objectives were the Presidential Palace, the national broadcasting studios, South Vietnamese Naval Headquarters, Vietnamese General Staff Headquarters at Ton Son Nut Airbase, and the Philippine Embassy. The goal was to hold these objectives for 48 hours until other Viet Cong battalions could enter the city and relieve them. North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front leaders expected (or hoped) that a nationwide uprising to overthrow the government of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu would take place.

Of all the targets, the U.S. Embassy was perhaps the most important. The \$2.6 million compound had been completed just three months earlier. The six-story Chancery building loomed over Saigon like an impregnable fortress. It was a constant reminder of the American presence, prestige and power. Other key military and political targets were slated for attack in South Vietnam, like Nha Trang, Buon Ma Thout and Bien Hoa, but most Americans couldn't even pronounce their names, let alone understand their importance. A successful attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, however, would instantly convey shock and horror on an American public already weary of the war, and could turn many of them against the war.

## **Public Relations Blitz**

President Lyndon B. Johnson conducted a massive public relations blitz at the end of 1967 to convince Americans that the Vietnam War was nearing a conclusion. General William Westmoreland, the U.S. military commander in Vietnam, was ordered to support the President's progress campaign. In November 1967, Westmoreland told NBC's Meet the Press that the U.S. could win the war within two years. He then told the National Press Club, "We are making progress, the end begins to come into view." In his most memorable phrase, Westmoreland (derisively known as "Westy" to many members of the press corps) claimed to see "some light at the end of the tunnel."

The massive public relations campaign overwhelmed voices of other experienced American observers who foresaw disaster. General Edward Lansdale had been a senior American advisor to the South Vietnamese government starting in the mid-1950s; he was an expert on unconventional warfare and still senior advisor to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. In October 1967, Lansdale wrote to U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, "Hanoi policy makers saw the defeat of French forces in Vietnam as having reached its decisive point through anti-war sentiment in France than on the field of battle in Vietnam. [The battle of] Dien Bien Phu was fought to shape opinion in Paris, a bit of drama rather than sound military strategy."

Lansdale warned that Hanoi was about to follow a similar plan to "bleed Americans" because it believed the American public was vulnerable to psychological manipulation in 1968. It was an accurate prediction; despite Lansdale's inability to exert influence on policy at that time, he had a better grasp on what was happening in Vietnam than Westmoreland or Bunker – or President Johnson.

### **Detoured to Khe Sanh**

As an ABC News TV correspondent I was sent to the U.S. base at Khe Sanh, located in the northwest corner of South Vietnam, in the weeks before Tet. The base had been under siege by Communist forces and General Westmoreland was predicting a major offensive there, where the Communists would seek to repeat the French military loss at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Since 1968, a majority of U.S. military analysts have suggested the enemy attacks at Khe Sanh were part of a ruse to draw American military forces away from South Vietnam's population centers, leaving them open to successful attacks at Tet. Khe Sanh became a metaphor for Westmoreland's mismanagement of the war.

My cameraman and I were covering the ongoing battle at Khe Sanh. A massive attack on January 30 sent us diving into a trench for protection from incoming mortars and rockets; the effort saved our lives but broke the lens of our camera. We were forced to return to Saigon for a replacement. I thought we would

miss the expected military push on Khe Sanh but flying back to Saigon on the C-130 milk run, it seemed like all of South Vietnam was under attack. As we took off from Da Nang, enemy rockets fell on the runway. Flying south along the coast, we could see almost all the seaside enclaves under attack – Hoi An, Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay. It was a clear night, and as we passed over the besieged cities, we could see fires burning and hear on the military radio frequencies the calls of besieged U.S. troops.

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army battle plan for the Tet Offensive called for coordinated surprise attacks throughout the country, but their plans were seriously compromised by a misunderstanding concerning the attack date. The Communist forces in the Northern provinces mistakenly planned the attack for January 30, whereas zero hour in the Southern provinces was understood to be January 31. As a result, I was in the unique position of watching the Tet Offensive unfold from the North to the South.

### **Convoy to the Embassy**

At 2:30 AM, the Ba Den's sapper unit loaded into a taxi cab, a Peugeot truck and an Embassy car. Guiding them to the target was Nguyen Van De, the Embassy driver, a long-time employee who Embassy staff had nicknamed "Satchmo." Several of the sappers hid in his trunk. Driving with their lights out, the convoy approached the Embassy night gate on Mac Dinh Chi Street and fired their AK-47 assault rifles at two American sentries guarding the gate. Specialist 4 (SP4) Charles Daniel and Private First Class (PFC) William Sebast returned fire with their M-16 assault rifles, then ran through the steel gate and locked it. At 2:47 AM they transmitted "Signal 300" over the MP radio net to alert everyone that the Embassy was under attack. The sappers placed a 15 pound satchel charge against the eight foot high embassy wall, and the explosion created a hole three feet wide. The first two sappers crawled through the breach but were immediately killed by Daniel and Sebast's rifle fire.

Daniel shouted into his radio, "They're coming in! They're coming in! Help me! Help me!" as more sappers came through the hole. In an exchange of gunfire, both Daniel and Sebast were killed, the first two Americans killed in the battle for the Embassy.

The sappers made a concerted effort to break into the Chancery firing rocket propelled grenades through the heavy wooden doors and following up with hand grenades. Several U.S. Marines were wounded by shrapnel and fell behind the Chancery door. Few of the Marine or MP guards were armed with M-16's or other automatic weapons. One Marine fired a shotgun from the roof at the next wave of sappers entering through the hole in the wall. When the shotgun jammed, he continued to fire his .38 caliber revolver. Other American troops began to take

up positions on nearby rooftops, giving them some control of the streets and the sappers inside the compound. Now trapped in the compound and being shot at from multiple directions, the attackers hunkered down behind large concrete flower pots on the Embassy lawn.

At about 3 AM, chief U.S. Embassy spokesman Barry Zorthian, at home a few blocks from the attack, started calling news bureaus; he had few details but told them the Embassy was under attack and there was heavy fire. ABC News bureau chief Dick Rosenbaum then called me around 3:30 and told me – just back from Khe Sanh – to find out what was happening. The ABC bureau, located at the Caravel Hotel, was only four blocks from the Embassy. We headed there in the ABC News jeep but did not get far. Just off Tu Do (now renamed Dong Khoi) Street, three blocks from the embassy somebody opened up on us with automatic weapons. It was impossible to tell who it was – Viet Cong, South Vietnamese Army, Saigon police, or U.S. MP's. A couple of rounds pinged off the hood of the jeep. I killed the jeep's lights and reversed out of range. We returned to the ABC News bureau to await dawn.

At 4:20 AM, Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) issued an order instructing the 716th Military Police Battalion to retake the compound. When the MP officer in charge arrived at the scene, he concluded that U.S. forces had the Embassy surrounded and the sappers trapped inside its walls. He was unwilling to risk lives of his men in a dangerous night assault against an enemy he knew could not escape, so he ordered his men to settle in and wait for morning.

At about 5:00 AM, a U.S. Army helicopter carrying reinforcements from the 101st Airborne Division attempted to land on the Chancery roof. As the chopper hovered before touching down, the surviving sappers opened fire. Afraid of being shot down, the helicopter chief aborted the mission and flew quickly away from the building. Lieutenant General Frederick Weyand, the Commander of III Corps (one of the four major military sectors designated by MACV), was monitoring the Embassy fight and agreed there was nothing to be gained by risking another night helicopter landing into a hot landing zone. He ordered a halt to air operations until daylight.

At first light, my cameraman and I walked to the Embassy. As we approached, I heard heavy firing and saw green and red tracer bullets cut into the pink sky. Near the Embassy, we joined a group of U.S. MPs moving toward the Embassy front gate. I started my tape recorder for ABC Radio as the MPs loudly cursed the South Vietnamese troops for running away after the first shots. Lying flat in the gutter that morning with the MPs, we didn't know where the Viet Cong attackers were holed up or where the fire was coming from, but we knew it was the "big story."

Several MPs rushed past, one of them carrying a Viet Cong sapper piggy-back style. The sapper was wounded and bleeding. He wore black pajamas and, strangely, had an enormous red ruby ring on his finger. I interviewed the MPs and recorded their radio conversation with colleagues inside the Embassy gates. There was no doubt they believed the Viet Cong were in the Chancery building itself. Associated Press reporter Peter Arnett crawled off to find a phone and report the MPs' conversation to his office.

### **Just One Mag**

Sporadic gunfire continued around the Embassy and one by one the sappers were either wounded or killed. I lay flat on the sidewalk in front of the Embassy as bullets ricocheted around. I found I was lying next to a seriously wounded sapper wearing black pajamas and a red arm band and bleeding from multiple wounds. Years later after reading declassified interrogation reports of the three prisoners, I discovered the wounded sapper lying next to me was Captain Nguyen Van Giang, alias Ba Den, who had lit firecrackers in the Saigon market the night before his mission and was one of the first through the hole blasted in the wall. Giang spent the remainder of the war as one of three prisoners of the Embassy attack in the infamous French-built prison on Con Dao Island just off the Southeast coast of South Vietnam.

Around 7:00 AM, Army assault helicopters land thirty-six heavily armed paratroopers from the 101st Airborne on the Embassy roof. The troopers quickly started to clear the building from top floor down searching each office for possible Viet Cong infiltrators. On the ground, MPs from the 716th stormed the front gate. My cameraman and I followed them onto the lawn which was littered with the bodies of dead and dying Viet Cong. I stepped over the Great Seal of the United States which had been blasted off the Embassy wall. We rushed into the once elegant Embassy garden where the battle had raged. It was, as UPI's Kate Webb later described, "like a butcher shop in Eden."

We paused to assess our film supply. "Okay, Peter how much film have we got left," I shouted to my cameraman. "I've got one mag," he replied. "How many do you have?" I had no mags left. "We're on the biggest story of the war with only one can of film," I groaned. "So it's one take of everything including my stand-upper" – a TV reporter's closing remarks.

VC green tracer bullets still stitched the night sky as red tracers from the U.S. weapons arced down from the Embassy roof and from across the street. The MPs took three wounded sappers prisoner and marched them off for interrogation. Nguyen Van De, the Embassy driver who had aided the sappers, lay dead on the lawn along with another armed Embassy driver. Two other Embassy drivers died as well. Orders crackled over a field radio from an officer inside the Chancery.



"This is Waco, roger. Can you get in the gate now? Take a force in there and clean out the Embassy, like now. There will be choppers on the roof and troops working down. Be careful not to hit our own people. Over."

Colonel "Jake" Jacobson, the CIA chief-of-station assigned to the Embassy occupied a small villa adjacent to the Embassy. He suddenly appeared at a window on the second floor. An MP threw him a gas mask and a .45 caliber Army pistol. Surviving sappers were believed to be on the first floor and would likely be driven upstairs by tear gas. The last VC still in action rushed up the stairs, firing blindly at Jacobson but missed. The colonel later told me, "We both saw each other at the same time. He missed me and I fired one shot at him point blank with the .45, taking him down." The battle was over.

At 9:15 AM, the U.S. officially declared the Embassy grounds secure. Scattered about the grounds were the bodies of 12 of the original 15 sappers, two armed Embassy drivers who were considered double agents and two drivers killed by accident. Five Americans were dead, including four Army soldiers: Charles Daniel, Owen Mebust, William Sebast, Jonnie Thomas; and one U.S. Marine, James Marshall.

### **Westmoreland Briefs**

At 9:20 AM, General Westmoreland strode through the gate in his carefully starched fatigues, flanked by MPs and Marines who had been fighting since 3 AM. Standing in the rubble, Westmoreland held a briefing for the press. "No enemy got in the Embassy building. It's a relatively small incident. A group of sappers blew a hole in the wall and crawled in. They were all killed." He cautioned us, "Don't be deceived by this incident." Westmoreland's relentless optimism struck most of us reporters as surreal, even delusional. Most of us there had seen much of the fighting. The General was still spinning that everything was just fine. In the meantime, thousands of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops were fighting hard to take back the four other Saigon targets the VC had occupied – as well as the City of Hue and other targets of the offensive around the country.

Also, contrary to Westmoreland's briefing, it was not correct that all of the 15 sappers were killed. Three were wounded but survived. Army photographers Don Hirst and Edgar Price, and Life Magazine's Dick Swanson took dramatic photos of the wounded sappers being led away by 716th Battalion MPs, before being turned over to the South Vietnamese – and never heard from again during the war. No one admitted that some sappers survived, and it was a closely guarded secret that at least two of the dead Embassy drivers were Viet Cong agents.

The Embassy siege showed the effectiveness of U.S. Marines and Military Police,

non-tactical troops fighting as infantry without benefit of heavy weapons or communication to overcome an enemy.

### **A TV Report Stand-Upper**

Using our last 30 feet of film, I recorded my "stand-upper."

"Since the Lunar New Year, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have proved they are capable of bold and impressive military moves that Americans here never dreamed could be achieved," I said. "But whatever turn the war now takes, the capture of the U.S. Embassy here for almost seven hours is a psychological victory that will rally and inspire the Viet Cong."

A rush to judgement? Perhaps, but I was on an hourly deadline and ABC expected the story as well as some perspective, even in the early hours of the offensive – a first rough draft of history. Still my instant analysis never made it onto ABC News. Worried about editorializing on a sensitive story, a senior producer in New York killed the on-camera close. Ironically, my closer ended up in the Simon Grinberg library of ABC out-takes and was later discovered by director Peter Davis and used in his film "Hearts and Minds."

The rest of our story package fared better. The film from all three networks arrived on the same plane in Tokyo for processing and editing, causing a mad scramble to be the first film on the satellite for the evening newscasts in the U.S. Because we only had 400 feet to process and cut, ABC News made the satellite in time and the story led the evening news. NBC and CBS missed the satellite deadline and had to run catch-up specials later in the evening.

### **An Information Curtain Falls**

Our group of 50 journalists in the Embassy compound were then escorted out and the gates were locked. An information curtain descended around the Embassy for the following weeks. No interviews were allowed with Marines or MP's who had fought the Embassy battle and won. Journalists were told the only comment on the Embassy battle would come from the State Department or White House, and that an investigation was under way and would be released in due course. That report – if there was ever such a report – has yet to be declassified. Without access to the stories of the American defenders of the Embassy, their heroism went largely unreported, thus increasing the public perception that the Tet Offensive had been a U.S. defeat instead of the military victory it actually was.

In March 1968, just two months after Tet, a Harris poll showed that the majority of Americans, 60 percent, regarded the Tet Offensive as a defeat for U.S. objectives in Vietnam. The news media was widely blamed for creating the antiwar sentiment. Research by a senior U.S. officer in Vietnam, General Douglas Kinnard,

found 91 percent of U.S. Army generals expressed negative feelings about TV news coverage. However, General Kinnard concluded that the importance of the media in swaying public opinion was largely a myth. That myth was important to the U.S. Government to perpetuate, so officials could insist it was not the real war situation to which Americans reacted, but rather the media portrayal of that situation.

### **Embassy Demolished, Memorials Remain**

The imposing U.S. Embassy that withstood the attack fifty years ago was demolished in 1998 and replaced with a modest one story Consulate. In a garden closed to the public is a small plaque in honor of the five American soldiers who died defending the Embassy that day: Charles Daniel, James Marshall, Owen Mebust, William Sebast, and Jonnie Thomas. A few steps away, on the sidewalk outside the Consulate, is a gray and red marble monument engraved with the names of Viet Cong soldiers and agents who died there on January 31, 1968.

### **Three Surviving Sappers Imprisoned on Con Dao Island**

The fate of the three surviving Viet Cong sappers was a closely held secret by the U.S. Embassy. Following a hot dispute between U.S. Army MPs and the South Vietnamese military as to who should have custody, the POWs were turned over to the South Vietnamese and imprisoned in the infamous old French prison on Con Dao island. U.S. Army interrogators questioned them and in 2002, the reports were declassified. If the three POWs were a fair indication of the 15 sappers who conducted the siege, it would seem they were not a highly trained elite force, but rather older soldiers of low rank, some holding down clerical and cooking duties for their units.

Ba Den, 43, was the senior survivor of the attack and among the first through the hole blown in the Embassy wall. He had been born in North Vietnam and migrated south to join a Viet Cong cadre in Tay Ninh.

A second sapper prisoner was Nguyen Van Sau, alias "Chuck," the third man through the wall hole. Shot in the face and buttocks, the 31 year-old Buddhist was captured by MPs at first light. Sau was born on a small farm near Cu Chi and was forced to join the VC when a recruiting raid entered his village in 1964 and seized 20 men. Sau's main complaint was that he didn't get enough to eat but remained with the VC as most of the young men from his village were also members and had endured the same hardships. With information divulged by Sau, Saigon police raided the garage where the sappers mounted their attack and arrested the owner and ten others linked to the group.

The third sapper, 44 year-old Sergeant Dang Van Son, alias "Tot," joined the

Viet Minh in North Vietnam in 1947 and was sent down the Ho Chi Minh trail. He became cook for an infantry company in Tay Ninh. During the attack, Son was wounded in the head and leg, captured by the South Vietnamese and woke up in a Saigon hospital several days later.

Ba Den was released from prison in 1975 and returned to his village North of Saigon. There was no word of Dang Van Son or Nguyen Van Sau, who are believed to have died in Con Dao prison and are buried in the vast cemetery there.

### **Biet Dong Committee of Ho Chi Minh City**

Now that the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive and the Embassy attack is here, Vietnamese who honor the dead according to traditional custom will remember the estimated one hundred thousand Communist soldiers who died and renew their efforts to identify the burial grounds of their comrades. So it's surprising that even top North Vietnamese field commanders had little praise for the 15 sapper martyrs of the Embassy attack.

North Vietnamese General Tran Do, in communication with the Saigon command a few days after Tet, asked, "Why did those who planned the attack on the Embassy fail to consider the ease with which helicopters and troops could be landed on the roof?" However, their boldness and bravery against such overwhelming odds has made them heroes to be remembered in Vietnam. Although in recent years there has been U.S. cooperation in identifying burial grounds of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops, there has been no recognition of a possible mass grave for the sappers killed at the Embassy.

### **Something Truly Stupid**

Washington military analyst Anthony Cordesman has often observed, "One way to achieve decisive surprise in warfare is to do something truly stupid." As revealed in the interrogation reports of the sapper POWs, the planning and execution of the Embassy attack was "truly stupid" and carried out by poorly trained Viet Cong, but its effects marked a turning point of the war and earned a curious entry in the annals of military history.

Another Washington military analyst, Steven Metz, explains "counterinsurgency" and why Tet became a dramatic turning point in the war. "The essence of insurgency is the psychological. It is armed theatre. You have protagonists on the stage, but they are sending messages to a wider audience. Insurgency is not won killing insurgents, not won by seizing territory; it is won by altering the psychological factors that are most relevant."

In Vietnam, this "truly stupid" attack on the U.S. Embassy changed the course of the war. It may have been "a small incident" as General William Westmoreland

claimed, but seen through the political and psychological prism of insurgency warfare, it may have indeed been the biggest incident of the war.

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