The 1968 Tet Offensive

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February 25, 2008
Agenda

- Prelude to the Tet Offensive
- The Concerted Attack
- The Military Consequence
- The Political Consequence
- Conclusion
PRELUDE: Stalled momentum in 1965

Set Battles

- Communists decision to hold ground
- Engagements of regiment size
- The Communists failure, heavy losses

Major operations
Into Communist strongholds

- Denying enemy sanctuary
- Denying chance attack
- Sapping enemy supply ability
PRELUDE – Capability: Supply from North

- Infiltration from North Vietnam:
  - 4,500 troops monthly
  - More than 22,300 tons of supplies before Tet
PRELUDE - Capability: Infrastructure

- Infrastructure intact in SVN
- Logistic system in Mekong Delta
- Financial Support
OFFENSIVE: Diversionary Attacks

- The siege of Khe Sanh
- The attacks at border outposts
- The final attacks at Khe Sanh
- Failure to distract American defense
- Psi-war succeeded in distracting SVN
OFFENSIVE - All Out Attacks: Go for Broke

- General Offensive
  - 25 Major Cities
  - Several minor cities, townships
- Total forces committed
  - 97 independent battalions
  - Many commando units
  - Six others Main Force regiments
OFFENSIVE: in Saigon Capital

- 15 Communist battalions (6000 in strength)
- 2 commando battalions
- Main targets:
OFFENSIVE: Hue Theater

- 7,000 troops attack
- Communist seizing control of city
- Digging in the old fortified Citadel
- Occupation and massacre
- At least 3,000 victims of massacres
MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

- Combat Losses
- On the run
- Downward Trend
- Loss of sanctuaries
- Disintegrated infrastructure
POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE

- Weakened presence inside South Vietnam
- Gaining points on media scale
- Big political gain in Washington
- Paris peace talks
Conclusion: Lessons Learned

- Media and American intelligentsia
- Performance of the South Vietnamese Army.
- Communist atrocities and media collusion
- “WWII” versus “VN War” America