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DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

ES 2017-00978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Distribution

SUBJECT: Declassification of Historical Intelligence Records Concerning the Tet Offensive

REFERENCES: A. Director of National Intelligence Memo, Assignment of Additional Duties to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence Director, Information Management Division, December 9, 2016
B. Executive Order 13526, Classified National Security Information, December 29, 2009

In December 2016, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) instructed the Intelligence Community (IC) Senior Historians Panel (panel) to identify topics of historical interest for declassification and release (Ref A), as part of the IC's transparency effort to enhance public understanding of intelligence activities. The panel has recommended that documents relating to the Tet Offensive be reviewed for declassification and release as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

The Tet Offensive was a series of surprise attacks launched by the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong on January 30, 1968, throughout South Vietnam that targeted multiple prominent sites, including the Presidential Palace and U.S. Embassy in Saigon. While the attacks initially took the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces by surprise, they eventually recovered to soundly repel the Viet Cong. The dramatic nature of the Tet Offensive began to turn U.S. public opinion against the war and precipitated the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. The panel made its recommendation for the following reasons:

- The Vietnam War was a pivotal event in U.S. history—politically, culturally, and militarily. The declassification and release of IC records on the period surrounding the Tet Offensive will help shed light on the background behind key U.S. decision-making.
- The Vietnam War also provided an opportunity for the expansion and refinement of national intelligence skills and services. The Tet Offensive declassification effort will show the evolution of intelligence tradecraft and interagency cooperation in wartime.

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Based on the recommendations of the panel, I request that IC elements review their record holdings to identify classified records pertaining to the Tet Offensive and review them for declassification and release. Documents should be submitted to other IC elements for equity review, if applicable. I will make a public announcement on January 30, 2018, to officially launch this initiative.

Records should include relevant materials on enemy order of battle, plans, and intentions for the period between November 1, 1967, through January 30, 1968; tactical and strategic intelligence reporting regarding the political and military situation in Vietnam between January 30, 1968, and March 31, 1968, including international reactions; and after-action reports, intelligence lessons-learned, retrospective assessments, and historical analyses of the offensive.

IC elements will release all relevant information except for the following: information that continues to meet the standards for national security classification under Executive Order (EO) 13526 (Ref B); information the release of which is prohibited by statute; information the release of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy; or sensitive law enforcement information. IC elements should consider as acts of discretion under EO 13526 whether material that normally would be protected should be disclosed in the public interest.

The declassified documents will be released over a period of 15 months. IC elements should plan to release their initial tranche of declassified documents on July 31, 2018. A second tranche shall be released on January 31, 2019, and a final release of any remaining declassified documents shall be conducted on April 30, 2019, concluding the initiative.

Corresponding to these releases, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence will host on its website, intelligence.gov, a space dedicated to this IC-wide effort. This site will provide an overview of the Tet Offensive and feature highlighted records from each agency with a descriptive narrative (along with URL links to each agency website's posting of the records).

In tandem with the declassification and release of IC records on the Tet Offensive, the historical programs at the IC elements with relevant records shall conduct research and produce contextual materials to explain the records and their significance, both for the IC and for the public.

Thank you for your attention and compliance regarding this matter.



Daniel R. Coats

JAN 04 2018

Date

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