MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, CIA
Attention: Mr. George Carver

SUBJECT: MACV Press Briefing on Enemy Order of Battle

1. A proposed press briefing on enemy order of battle has been developed over the past few weeks; MACV, CIA, DIA and OASD(PA) have been involved. The plan is for MACV to surface these new estimates in a press briefing in Saigon within the next ten days or so.

2. We have just completed several exchanges of messages with Hq MACV, and the attached briefing (Incl. 1) is satisfactory to ASD(PA), COMUSMACV, and Ambassador Komer.

3. At Inclosure 2 are listed the old enemy figures for uniform use in Saigon and Washington in answering press queries.

4. Request your comment or concurrence.

5. Following your concurrence, Secretary Goulding will take the matter up with Secretary McNamara. After final approval here in Washington, the text will be relayed to MACV and an agreed upon date for the briefing will be established.

Daniel Z. Henkin
Deputy Assistant Secretary

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DECLASSIFIED
MACV BRIEFING ON ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE

A new study of the size of the enemy military and political structure in South Vietnam has been concluded. The study has been conducted by this headquarters working with other segments of the intelligence community.

We have re-examined in depth over a period of several months not only the strength of the enemy's organized military units, but also his guerrillas, his administrative services personnel and the Viet Cong political organization.

Intelligence data for some of these categories is much more difficult to collect than is the case for others.

For some time now there has been relatively good intelligence available on the enemy's regular combat elements --- his "hard core" of NVA units and Viet Cong main and local force units. But solid information upon which to base strength estimates for the guerrillas and the administrative services has only become available in recent months and this has made our new study possible. Information on the Viet Cong political infrastructure is also improved, although still spotty.

In 1965-1966, we aimed our collection mostly against the primary threat --- the enemy's hard core forces. We were forced to rely on broad estimates for other categories, knowing that these estimates were based on inconclusive data.
The situation has now changed. Over the past eighteen months, we have improved the quality and the quantity of our intelligence collection programs for all categories. These improved programs, along with the documentation being uncovered by allied search and destroy operations ranging into areas of South Vietnam formerly considered as safe havens by the enemy, plus a marked improvement in quality and quantity of reports from the local populace, prisoners and increasing numbers of defectors, have enabled us to make a better estimate of the enemy's total military strength figures.

I want to emphasize that the new figures we are releasing today cannot and should not be compared with other than the hard core category of the figures we have been using. Although these older estimates were derived from the best information we had at that time, our new, expanded intelligence base has not only resulted in more accurate figures but has also shown us the areas of inaccuracy in our old estimates.

As a result, it is impossible to use the new figures to show that one category has risen or fallen in strength over the last six or twelve months. Except in the category of hard core forces, the old data was incorrect by virtue of being incomplete and founded on an inadequate base. What we have done is essentially to start over from a sound, broader intelligence base.

I would like to describe to you today two basic categories of enemy strength figures—his armed forces and his political infrastructure.
The category of armed forces includes several subdivisions—regular forces (both North Vietnamese and Viet Cong), administrative services and guerrillas.

The political category includes only the political infrastructure.

Let me begin with the new order of battle for the enemy's armed forces, starting with his regular forces.

**REGULAR FORCES**

This category includes North Vietnamese Army units in South Vietnam and the Viet Cong main force and local force units.

The new estimates of the regular forces are essentially unchanged. We currently estimate 53,000 NVA forces and 65,000 VC main and local forces, for a total of 118,000 regular forces opposing us. As I said, our intelligence has been good on the enemy's regular elements and the new study confirms this. I might add that in retroactively adjusting our estimates of enemy regular strength as a result primarily of prisoner interrogation and captured documents, we now estimate that VC/NVA regular strength peaked at 127,500 in September 1966, and has since declined slightly to the present figure.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

The next category is administrative services, which comprises the personnel of military staffs from the national to the district level, as well as non-combat military support units directly subordinate to
those staffs. As mentioned earlier, operations into former enemy safe havens and base areas have uncovered documentation of large numbers of these non-combat military people such as medical, personnel administrators, transportation and support elements.

Previously, we had no record of many of these; the old data indicated an estimated 25,000 in this category. Our new estimates show between 35,000 to 40,000 full-time personnel. Let me re-emphasize that this does not mean an increase of 10,000 to 15,000 of the enemy in administrative services; it means simply that our intelligence data today is better than it was in the past.

GUERRILLAS

Our former intelligence data consistently included an estimated 100,000 to 120,000 in the guerrilla-irregular category. This figure was assumed to consist of full-time guerrillas and other armed irregulars. Our new data base indicated clearly that we included a large number of individuals in the old estimate who could lay no valid claim to this category. Also, we now know that many of those we so classified do not carry arms and fall more properly in the fifth column, fellow traveller, or political infrastructure category. For our current estimate, if they pose a military threat, we count them as guerrillas; if they are associated with political cadre operations, we count them in the infrastructure; if they are merely potential fifth columnists or actual or alleged Viet Cong sympathizers, we don't count them at all since we don't count SVN supporters.
in any particular category.

Based on current knowledge, we categorize a Viet Cong guerrilla as a usually full-time fighter who is normally organized into platoons and squads. He sometimes operates in or near his own village or hamlet and is usually assigned to protect specific villages and hamlets. He collects taxes and conducts terrorist and sabotage activities. He is a definite part of the military threat and often operates in concert with the members of VC/NVA regular units in his assigned area. However, we have considerable documentary evidence that not even all the guerrillas have individual arms.

As I mentioned earlier, information from the documents captured this year strongly suggests that the genuine guerrilla forces were larger in the past than we thought. However, their current strength is clearly down to between 70,000 and 90,000 with strong indications that the actual figure is closer to the lower than the higher limits of the estimate.

To sum up, we now estimate enemy armed forces in the following categories with the current strengths indicated:

1. Regular--118,000 (Composed of 53,000 VNA and 65,000 VC
Main and Local).

2. Administrative Services--35,000-40,000.

3. Guerrillas--70,000-90,000.

Total: 223,000 to 248,000.

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VIET CONG POLITICAL CADRES

Now let me turn to the Viet Cong political structure—through which the enemy forces are directed, controlled and supported. These are the political cadre. They were previously included in the total enemy strength figures. From now on we will carry an estimate of these cadres, but they will not be carried as part of the total military strength.

I should also repeat that our data in this category is not as good as in the case of the military. We have already undertaken additional studies of the political infrastructure to determine just who is important and who isn't. For example, a fifth columnist whom we have transferred from the guerrilla to the political infrastructure category should be further analyzed to determine his impact on the local populace. Obviously, some members of the infrastructure have more influence than others and are therefore more important pacification targets than others. In any case, we hope to have a better fix on this figure in the next few weeks or months.

The country team has developed the following definition for this Viet Cong infrastructure: 'The political and administrative organization through which the Viet Cong control or seek to control the Vietnamese people. It embodies the party (People's Revolutionary Party) control structure, which includes a command and administrative apparatus (Central office for South Vietnam) at the national level, and the leadership and administration of a parallel front organization (National Front...')
for Liberation of South Vietnam), both of which extend from the national through the hamlet level."

For a long time, we have carried a figure of 39,000-40,000 for this political infrastructure. I call your attention to the fact that the definition I just read includes the phrase "extend from the national through the hamlet level." The old figure of an estimated 40,000 was based upon the GV study from the early years of the war which went down only to the village level. Our increased intelligence now permits us to include cadres down to and including hamlet level. Our new estimate, which includes for the first time the infrastructure in the thousands of hamlets, is 75,000 to 85,000.

The function of the political cadre are not military and they do little if any fighting; therefore, as I said, we carry them separately from our order of battle of the VC/NVA armed forces. However, they represent a continuing potential for organizing and motivating the armed forces and they must not be overlooked as key elements who must be overcome along with the armed forces. We must consider them in enemy estimates, even though we have separated them out from the armed forces estimates.

**RECAP**

To sum up, our new, greatly broadened intelligence base has permitted a more realistic evaluation of enemy military and non-military strength.
The total enemy order of battle is now between 223,000 and 248,000.

We believe that this represents some decline in total enemy order of battle, although we do not yet have sufficiently good retroactive analysis to be precise in all categories. As I mentioned, VC/NVA organized unit strength probably peaked at 127,500 in September 1966 and has declined slightly.

Our estimate of the political cadre is 75,000 to 85,000.

In closing, I would like to restate two points once more:

First, the new study has not changed our estimate of the regular forces we face. Our primary intelligence efforts have been directed toward estimations of the regular forces and the number remains at about 118,000.

Secondly, in all other areas the new study has resulted in new figures. But these must not be considered increases or decreases from old figures. Since they are based on new data, they logically cannot be used in conjunction with old data for any firm comparisons of past and present enemy strengths.
OLD ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE AND POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enemy Order of Battle</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>119,000 (composed of 53,000 NVA and 66,000 VC Main and Local)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guerrillas/Irregulars</td>
<td>100,000 to 120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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