AGENDA

I. Order of Battle Briefing
   Revised text to be tabled by DOD

II. Bunker Trip
   Dates, proposals for official handling

III. Habib/Jackson Oregon situation
     Pakistan operations

IV. Weinberger
     What is GVN doing?

V. O'Brien on Douglas Command

VI. Population Control Briefing
    Follow-up on State 61937
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.

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By NARS, Date 7-25-83
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 about 127,000 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 that there are least 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, while not firm today, is now better than it was in the past.

GUERRILLAS
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 give us a better understanding of how the political apparatus is organized, the missions of its component parts and their command relationship to each other. 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 the organization in the next few months. Once that is established, we will also have a better fix on its size.
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 about 127,000 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.