The following information was released by Headquarters, MACV, in Saigon at 0400 hours (EST) Friday, November 24, 1967.

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 a total of 118,000 regular forces opposing us. 54,000 of these are in North Vietnamese units, and 64,000 in Viet Cong main and local units. Of the latter, more than 10% are now North Vietnamese replacements, so that North Vietnamese now make up more than a majority of the manpower in the regular forces. 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 at 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**

The old intelligence data included an estimated 100,000 to 120,000 in a category of "Irregulars." It broke down these irregulars into three subdivisions---guerrillas, self-defense forces and secret self-defense forces. The old data divided the 100,000 to 120,000 irregulars roughly, putting one-third of them into the guerrilla subdivision and the other two-thirds into self-defense and/or secret self-defense personnel.
As I said, those were acknowledged as rough estimates at best. The Viet Cong guerrilla alone is a full-time fighter who is usually organized into platoons and squads. He sometimes operates in 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, but he has not been as identifiable.

Information from the documents captured this year strongly suggests that the guerrilla forces have been considerably larger than we had believed. They probably totalled well over 100,000 a year ago and some captured VC documents suggest that the early 1966 guerrilla strength was in the 150,000 range. Our recent studies put the probable guerrilla strength today between 70,000 and 90,000. Again, it should be emphasized that these figures are not as firm as the figures for the regular forces.

Whereas the guerrillas are a definite "Military threat," our newest intelligence indicates that the other subdivisions in the old "irregular" total—the self-defense and secret self-defense forces—should not be considered part of the military order of battle.

Self-defense elements, operating at all levels from village to region, are home guards, primarily for the control and light defense of VC-held areas. They are fixed; they perform most of their duties part time; they include personnel of all ages; and they have a high percentage of females.
Some are lightly armed; many are not armed at all. While they are a large element obviously available as a base for recruitment as well as for political and logistical support work, they are not a fighting force comparable to the guerrilla.

Secret self-defense forces are essentially low level fifth columnists, used for information collection. Although they cause some casualties and some damage, they do not represent a continual or dependable force and do not form a valid part of the enemy's military force. We have, therefore, removed them from the order of battle.

The old system, then attempted to break down the 100,000 to 120,000 irregulars into guerrillas and self-defense/secret self-defense forces. The new tabulation eliminates the broad irregular designation, estimates the number of guerrillas now to be between 70,000 and 90,000—actually a decline over a year ago—and removes from the order of battle the self-defense/secret self-defense estimate.

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

1. Regular---118,000 (54,000 in NVA units and plus 64,000 in VC Main and Local units.)

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

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

Total: 223,000-248,000
VIET CONG POLITICAL CADRE

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 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.

The country team has developed the following working 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) which extends from the national level through the village level, and the leadership and administration of a
parallel front organization (National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam).

For a long time, we have carried a figure of 39,000-40,000 for this political infrastructure. This figure was based upon the GVN study from the early years of the war which went down only to the village level. Our increased intelligence now permits us to focus on the infrastructure in much more detail and we have modified that GVN estimate to a figure of 75,000 to 85,000. But this figure, while improved, is not considered at all solid. Hopefully, our estimates will improve as our studies continue over the next few months.

The function of the political cadre is not military. Therefore, we will no longer carry them in our military order of battle. However, the political organization, under orders from Hanoi, controls and directs all phases of the struggle, including the level of military operations. Therefore, 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 a decline in total enemy order of battle; our retroactive analysis estimates the enemy order of battle strength to
have been approximately 285,000 in the July-September period of 1966.

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 75-85,000.

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. They remain 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.