MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Average Battalion Strengths -- Documentary Evidence
Versus MACV's OB

1. In an attempt to derive average battalion strength figures for
VC/NVA Main and Local Forces, we have compared battalion strengths re-
ported in captured documents and from prisoners to strengths of the
same units listed in the MACV Order of Battle (OB) for the period
January 1967 through August 1968. Total observations from documents
and prisoners numbered 205 compared to a comparable listing from the
OB of only 166 observations. About 70 percent of the observations
are from I and II Corps, where the units are predominantly NVA, while
30 percent are from III Corps. Only 2 observations (prisoners) were
made in IV Corps.

2. Of the total number of observations, 18 were combat support
battalions. Their strengths generally were below the monthly,
quarterly, and six month weighted averages calculated from documents
and prisoners, averaging 303. They also were below the strengths listed
in MACV's OB, which averaged 350. Therefore, if only maneuver
battalions were included in the sample, the averages would be somewhat
higher for the documentary evidence and lower for MACV's OB data. The
net result is the gap between MACV's figures and the documents and
prisoners reports would be even greater.

3. The results of the analysis provide a valuable insight into
the deficiencies of the MACV OB over the period of time examined. A
summary of the results is seen in the following tabulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average in Str-Documents</th>
<th>MACV OB</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Half 1967</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Half 1967</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Half 1968</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Of more significance than the absolute figures themselves, is the disparity between the two sets of numbers. Average battalion strengths derived from documents and prisoner reports have remained at a relatively constant level, while MACV's average strengths show an obvious downward tendency. During the first half of 1967, the MACV strength average exceeded the computed average by twelve men. This is an indication that MACV accepted and entered unit strengths into the OB at actual combat effective levels and that the units have not had extensive losses subtracted from them as a result of combat activity during that period. During the next two time periods the MACV sample average strengths dropped by 14 percent and 20 percent respectively. As MACV's averaged dropped, the documentary averages in the sample remained constant; the disparity between the two increased from -47 during the second half of 1967 and -57 men during the first half of 1968.

5. This disparity strongly indicates that the MACV OB average strengths have fallen well below actual or combat effective levels. According to MACV such a decrease in average battalion strengths would mean a considerable decline in overall enemy combat strength. Moreover it implies that units suffering losses do not have the capability to replenish losses and bring units back to combat levels. The documentary evidence, however, points out that the enemy can and does maintain combat effective unit strengths through infiltration and recruitment, despite large losses.

6. The magnitude of the disparity between the two averages is a logical measure for adjusting the MACV OB in order to reflect a constancy in strength levels over a period of time. By the end of the first half of 1968, the need is apparent for an upward adjustment in the MACV OB strength figures in the range of at least 50 men per battalion -- the size of the disparity of the two averages. The trend in MACV's average battalion strength figures in the first half of 1968 suggests that the disparity is likely to increase even further over the next six months.