The visit by the representative of the Comptroller in the Department of
Defense occurred in _____, 1966. We were puzzled at MACV by the message that
foretold the visit. The specific purpose of the visit, I was told,
was to examine MACV’s order of battle holdings. That was my area. I would
be the host.

“What is the name of God,” I wondered, “is the interest of the Comptroller
of the Department of Defense, in order of battle?” My naive Mississippi redneck
idea of a comptroller was that of a studious accounting type who kept the financial
books and managed the budget.

(he turned out to be an energetic young redhead fellow not long out of college)
I was to learn, through subsequent messages, that the gentleman they were
dispatching would need thorough briefings in every area of order of battle
intelligence, to include source material, holdings, methodologies and criteria.
This was a large order. What security clearances does this man have, I asked
the message center at our people in current intelligence to query the headquarters of CINCPAC through
the fast and direct “back channel.”

“Through TOP SECRET,” was the laceneic answer.

“That won’t do!” I asked my friends in current intelligence message
center to tell them. “This fellow must have a clearance for access
to communications intelligence if he is to be given thorough briefings.”

The answer came back swiftly. It was written by a colonel in the security
branch of CINCPAC. His name was Evans. He had been briefed
in intelligence by our joint staff. The representative from the Comptroller’s office has
been cleared for access to communications intelligence.

This incident reflected two things. There was a sad degree of
obtuseness at the young redhead’s office of origin in not
knowing the criticality of communications intelligence as it affected our
order of battle intelligence and thereby dictating for him such clearances as would
be required. There was baleful sort of arrogance the part of the feel at
the headquarters of CINCPAC who disregarded my plea that the young man be
given the clearances he quite obviously would require to be given, to be informed.

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in order of battle intelligence as as spelled out in the ambitious mission
of this representative of the highest echelon within our own armed forces,
controller or whatever office he represented. We needed all the support at
the Department of Defense, whatever office, we could get to suppert
the credibility of our order of battle holdings in the atmosphere of bickering
and distrust that existed in Washington.

I took the young man in hand at Tan Son Nhut airport and seldom let him
out of sight during his several days in South Vietnam. He was led
through methodology and criteria and the reasons therefor and the strengths
and weaknesses thereof. I took him to CICV and set him down beside other young
men there (the smartest ones naturally) and had them explain to him the
mysteries of identification, locations and strengths. I took him to a Special
about order of battle
Forces camp near the Cambodian border where he learned nothing, but did equip
materials and embellish at will himself with some war stories he could tell when he got back home. But there
was one fatal flaw. He was unable to learn how we could use our collateral
intelligence through the medium of communications intelligence. I could read
him as being favorably impressed at the moment, but not completely sold on just
how good we were getting to be at reading the enemy. His coming, I learned,
was in anticipation of computerization of order of battle statistics. I was
appalled. My God, these enemy units we were reading weren't bales of cotton
and bushels of wheat. A bale was not necessarily a bale, and a bushel was
was something more or less than a bushel. We were piecing together fragments,
extrapolating gaps and making estimative judgements. Many of our
fragments were old and might be replaced tomorrow by something new and fresh
and the estimative judgement would change radically. You can't add and subtract
multiply and divide this stuff in a computer. What goes into a computer and comes
out of a computer is cold and dead, black and white. This stuff was vibrant with life and colored every shade and hue in a rainbow. To understand the answers we presented below the bottom line, you had to understand everything that went into the process of coming up with below the bottom line. These were estimative judgments, good ones for the most part, but certainly not the cold, dead, black and white facts of life.

I learned another thing from this young man that imparted to me a queasiness that I never lost throughout the remainder of my tour and beyond. He introduced me to the "gut feelings" that prevalent in the Washington from which he had come.

A "gut feeling" (the real good ones are experienced in the vicinity of the Potomac River) is an admission of total ignorance of the subject one is having a gut feeling about. It also admits a lack of effort to study the available evidence on the subject. The haver of a gut feeling will normally preface his feeling with the statement, "I don't know why, but . . . ."

After listening to some of this young man's gut feelings on the future course of the war in Vietnam, I began to pay more attention to gut feelings and soon became something of an expert on them.

One of the recurring gut feelings expressed in cables originating in Washington was that the "enemy had gone back into the woodwork," each time that U.S. and ARVN combat forces were unable to find the elusive enemy for several consecutive weeks.

I could only hope that our young visitor had seen enough to during his visit to use and believe the incomplete (and shaky in some areas) order of battle data we had put together. Far better judgements could be made from using it than reliance on the gut.
As the war progressed and the major problems of identification, command structure, dispositions and targeting XXXX techniques were grasped, we were able to give some attention to refinements in the order of battle holdings. Specifically, we would seek to determine more precisely what supportive elements there were to back up his fighting troops.

We had inherited from ARVN XXXXXX XXX holdings on a category which was called ______. We had XXXXXXXX very little on logistics.

EXPAND FROM FILES

Use "A"

We would discover as our analysts waded through the data, that this area was just as murky as the XXXXXXXXXX XX guerrilla area. It is one thing to structure and compose an enemy determin ance the XXXXXXXXXX of a fighting force that XXXXXXXXXX yields prisoners and documents as a byproduct of contact with him on the battlefield. It is quite another thing to determine the XXXXXXXXXX XX structure and composition of his XXXX heavy weapons fire support elements that XXXXXXXXXX yield few prisoners and documents due to their detachment from the field of battle. To be specific how do you identify the unit that was firing the ____ mm mortars at you during your engagement with an element of the 18B NVA Regiment. Was it one of the support units intrinsic to the 18B NVA RegimentX which you knew is equipped with such weapons because yourXXX XXXX "typical NVA regiment" chart shows you they are equipped with such weapons? Or did the fire come from a separate and independent fire support element having no intrinsic relationship to the 18B. You won't ever know unless your unit captures something, a live soldier, XXXXXX the body of a dead one which will somehow reveal that information. Who brought the mortar round to him? Who is bringing in his rice supplies? Who brings his mail? Who treats him when he is wounded? Who buries him when he dies? We were indeed moving...
into the murky areas.

(EXPANDED ON SPECIFICS OF COMBAT SUPPORT AND ADMIN SVCS.)
The elements of the enemy's order of battle which were of most critical concern to the U.S. commanders in the field fighting the enemy were his infantry battalions and regiments. The commanders knew what weapons these Viet Cong and NVA troops carried. These weapons were obvious.

It was also obvious what type of fire support the enemy could provide his troops. In early 1966, the common fire support weapons were the 3.5 inch mortars and the RPG Rocket launchers. As more and more North Vietnamese divisions joined the battle, they brought with them artillery. It was apparent that there was sufficient logistics and administrative support to backup the enemy's fighting troops to the extent that they needed this support for the type of war they were fighting. There were few battle lines. It was a matter of seek, engage, destroy, as much of the enemy as could be done before he could disengage. The action was fluid.

The toughest question to resolve was: Where is the best place to engage him and cause the greatest damage to him. Thus the initial primary effort of our order of battle intelligence was to identify his major fighting elements and determine where they were located. By and large, collateral intelligence told us his identification and his command structure; communications intelligence targeting data told us where he was. For attacks by our air and ground forces on the enemy's logistics bases, was developed through the feeding of massive quantities of information into computers. The idea was basically simple and proved to be sound. All reports of enemy activity of any kind, regardless of the credibility of the information was funneled into the computers. The data was then called out by location of the activity. The readout permitted analysts to plot locations of the enemy's base areas. Thus there was revealed a target that could be attacked.
The old political cadre and guerrilla strength figures which we had inherited from some ancient study hung like a smelly bag of (unidentified) around my neck from the beginning of my tour at MACV. No sooner had I arrived it seemed than the General began to pontificate on our urgency to determine the enemy's political order of battle. Political order of battle? I thought privately. The man is mad. There is no such thing as political order of battle. But the General insisted that the enemy did have a political order of battle, and as I later confided to a young lieutenant at CICV who was grousing to me about the purity of the term, "Eye God, son, if the General says there's an enemy political order of battle, I guess it's just up to me and you to find out what it is."

The Enemy Government in South Vietnam was called the "infrastructure." This murky term had been first used, I understand, by that good, solid analyst, (maybe, the) George Allen, one of the foremost American pioneers in the murky world of Viet Cong (Viet Minh) order of battle, political and military. George Allen accurately had sought and found a term which in those early days described the phantom shadow government which the enemy had formed to carry on the business of directing the affairs of the population and waging war. Well before 1966, this framework had been extended into community operating effectively the every facet of South Vietnam, openly/in areas dominated by the enemy's military forces, less openly and effectively as the degree of military control was contested/shared by the forces of ARVN. Although the term "infrastructure" was still valid in 1966, from the purist's point of view, not all the Americans engaged in conducting the war in South Vietnam and those in the U.S. observing were English and/or political science majors. The term was confusing as hell. It should have been.

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dropped. We should have said, quite simply, the Enemy Government in South Vietman. But perhaps, shades of our point of view inconverting the Viet Minh into the Viet Cong, we just didn't want to make the bastard look legitimate.

What we knew of the enemy's government in 1966 was very general in nature. (It would not be until the Cedar Falls operation in January 1967, etc etc.

There existed line and black charts drawn from dated information. We had some information on the provinces and districts but in not nearly enough detail to give us an accurate picture of how the enemy's government operated down to the lowest level in the villages.

The object of the General's political order of battle project was not only to reproduce sketches of the structure but to identify the individuals in each job down to that lowest level. It was, if he had said, "Start with the Office of the President of the United States, the Congress and the Judiciary, draw for me a sketch of the government structure down through the states, the counties, the county districts, the cities, the towns, and then give me a list of the people in every job, down to the tax collectors, the constables, the game wardens, the dog catchers. The General never lacked ambition.

The General envisioned that when this project was far enough along to warrant publication and distribution, the old worthless political cadre figures we reproduced faithfully each month in our order of battle summary could be thrown away. Political cadre didn't belong in the order of battle. "Gains, we've got of the enemy's armed forces. A rotten apple in our barrel of oranges," he pontificated grandly.

I was beginning to warm to his concept of a political order of battle, a linguistic aberration that it was to my finicky purist conceit.

The instrument for collecting the mass of information which would be needed to give the analysts a data base to work from was to be called "Project Coral."

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Project Carral's purpose was not solely to satisfy academic curiosity concerning the enemy's government structure and the people who made up the government, were the government. The ultimate aim was to "corral" the people, thereby eliminating the government. The word "corral" had several connotations other than penning up cattle. The most sinister was the killing of selected individuals, by whatever means were appropriate. Shocking? Hardly. It was that kind of war. Assassination of RVNAF civilian officials had been a tool of the Viet Cong from the beginning, whenever that was. This was tit become more effective for tat. Hopefully, our tits would their tats. It was a terribly awful war. The total involvement was so total that it was obscene, outrageous. Distinction between military (who expect to die in wars) and civilians (who expect to be spared in war) was so difficult to discern. It would be exemplified eventually and enormously in the pity and the shame of a little village called MY Lai.

CICV's analytical effort on the enemy's political order of battle began in 1966 in the left of the old stifling hanger/warehouse at Tan Son Nhut. Progress would be agonizingly slow.
The guerrillas were another breed of cat. Our sedentary holdings in
1966 had been rocking XXXXXXXX since XXXX when they were developed
in an obscure ARVN study. The guerrillas were a fuzzy lot. The Viet Cong were
modify quite flexible in XXXXXX organization and terminology to suit changing needs
throughout the years. There was inconsistency too, as one might expect, in
such a sprawling amorphous group. But despite the modifications and inconsistencies,
they basically were a loosely organized force which, like the local platoons and
companies, stayed at home to help keep the local population under control and
local to do the XXXX bidding of the Viet Cong XXX political and military hierarchy.
Their duties were many and varied. They set booby traps, served as body guards
for the Viet Cong tax collectors, collected and stored food, served as guides
and supporting groups
 Viet Con from the regular forces and committed acts of terror against XXXXXX
RVN military and civilian people. They were also the war front line
force of the Viet Cong.

(Need more data from files)

About mid-1966, we began to receive at MACV XXXXXXXX intimations through
MACV's cables from DIA and others that someone in the CIA did not regard XXX guerrilla
holdings as immortal. This was not particularly shocking since we ourselves had
been groping for better answers for several weeks. Now that we had our own
built-in analytical capability, we were ready to start. But where does one start?

We had XXXX captured documents in the files which XXXXXXXXXX statements
by various Viet Cong officials XXXXXXXXXX at COSVN level and XXX two thirds
of the provinces sitting goals for guerrilla recruitment and estimates of
how many guerrillas they already had. The documents were old and were typically
the Viet Cong's of the Viet Cong bureaucratic tendency for bragging and exhorting. /Binh Dinh
Province, one of their traditional strongholds, was the source of one of the
documents. An enormous guerrilla strength was claimed, as well it might have

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been, considering the extent of Viet Cong control and influence in that area. A major U.S./ARVN military operation, called Operation Irving, in the area in 1966 had demonstrated the presence of a large As U.S. forces bowled over the enemy opposition, they began to report hundreds of prisoners

(Expand and clarify this)

The bad taste of the prisoner and defector figures lingered for weeks and probably had a permanently adverse effect on the credibility of U.S. enemy casualty statistics from the point of view of the news media and Washington officials. What the Operation did demonstrate was the presence in Binh Dinh Province of a large guerrilla base and the difficulty of separating irregular from regular on the battlefields in South Vietnam.

How were we to go about sorting out these different shades and hues of irregulars or guerrillas and come up with a credible head count. Considering the communications problem involved in reporting up the chain from village and to district to province to region to COSVN, the tendency of officials at all levels to lie a little bit and inflate or deflate figures to suit whatever selfish purpose needed to be served, I considered it extremely doubtful that officials at COSVN knew at any particular time the accurate strength of the irregular people serving the Viet Cong cause throughout South Vietnam. The figures would vary from village to village, district to district, province to province according to the extent of Viet Cong military dominance and political effectiveness. We couldn't start with the squad and interpolate as we did for regular forces. Each village as a microcosm; there was no "type" we could use. This meant that we would not be able to sit in Saigon and find our numbers in the stacks of files
available in Saigon. Monitor the effort, yes. But the grinding, dreary
work of counting the guerrillas was going to have to start at the ARVN district
It was the nature of the situation in South Vietnam that these people
level where our own intelligence people sat beside their ARVN counterparts.
had information that
XXXXXX at the district and province level XXXXXXXXXXXXX that never reached
Saigon. /Our analysts at CICV would make certain that the district and province
people had everything that was in the CICV files pertinent to that particular
district or province. The concept then was to be a pyramid. The project was
dubbed "Project Ritz."

INSERT
There interrogations by ARVN and the National Police of prisoners, XXXX and
defectors that never left the district or province. There were documents that
fell into the hands of local officials that stayed there. As important as anything
else, the intelligence officers at these levels had a day to day knowledge of
things happening in the districts and provinces that could never by transmitted
Headquarters of the
to Saigon. XXXXXXXXXXXX (Not long after MACV had accepted the Sao Vang
Viet Cong Division into its order of battle XXXXXXXX holdings, I happened to
be visiting one of the RVN XXXXXX districts that was in the Sao Vang's operational
area. I happened to drop in to the local police office and note an impressive
display of documents pertaining to Viet Cong order of battle. One of the
documents turned out to be a complete order of battle study the local police had
done on the Sao Vang division. It was a beautiful thing! They had the division
charted from squad to division headquarters through each of the three regiments.
They had personnel strength figures, listing of individual weapons and support
weapons. It was as though the division was on parade before my eyes. What a
thing of beauty! My God, I marvelled, while I was scratching dirt with CICV analyts
XXXXX XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXX I defend our sketchy portrayal of the division,
these people had XXXXXXXXXXXXX this beautiful, irrefutable work of
impress visiting dignitaries who art forced on this table showing it off to whatever might happen as we pass by. It was that kind of war. In Saigon we would get faster distribution of translations of documents shipped into the Document Exploitation Center from battlefields, and if a Viet Cong headquarters had been overrun, some of this might reveal important data on the guerrillas.

END INSERT
RELATIONSHIPS -- CICV and Current -- Field Commands

The General insisted, throughout my years of professional association with him, that the most lucrative source of information on the enemy's order of battle is a knowledgeable person who has served in the enemy's armed forces. It's hard to dispute this theory. If we could have laid our hands on General or General or just any number of lower ranking commanders of staff officers with sponge like minds and/or bulging attache cases filled with information on the enemy's unit structure and strengths and dispositions, how nice it would have been! And how smart we would have looked! But no such luck. Defector Number III was probably the most knowledgeable enemy officer we ever had to lean on. The others, like Captain Dang, knew little or nothing beyond the of their individual jobs. This is not the kind of source who can give you the big picture.

Fortunately, it is a fact of life that any organization, be it the Women of the Church, or the United Crusade, or the armies of the enemy, must maintain records of some sort in order to function. The more sophisticated the organization, the more sophisticated the record keeping process.

Fortunately, too, the Vietnamese Communists loved making records. They wrote planning records, goal records, accomplishment records, records of exhortation, records of criticism, records of praise, and records of blame. They fairly hemorraged records.

The first problem was to acquire the records. They did not publish them openly. There were no "leaks" by disgruntled bureaucrats/obliging reporters. The records had to be captured by our combat forces and our combat forces had to be lucky enough to overrun an enemy headquarters. The element of luck was
an everprevailing factor even though the headquarters might have been targeted as the primary objective for our attacking forces.

Once captured, the documents were baled and dispatched by helicopter to the document exploitation center at CICV for translation.

Then the arduous task of correlation and analysis began for the order of battle analysts. Identifications could seldom be made by direct reference to the particular numerical designation of a unit. There were dozens of substitute or AKA's (Also Known As) designations, XXXXXX The ___th VC Regiment, had ___other XXXXXdesignations which eventually became known to the analysts through patient correlation with locations of the unit at various times, post office numbers, names of XXXXX links with subordinate or higher echelons people known to be associated with the unit and dozens of other keys. It was a plodding, painstaking process that XXX be exciting only to likes of people like Lt. Buck, Capt. Selman, etc. These people chased the enemy through the unrelenting stacks of paper with all the singleminded/diligence of beagles on the trail of a cotton tail.

Thus was built steadily but surely/the structure of the enemy's military forces. XXX Two factors were critical to the credibility of the image being formed. The enemy was constantly enlarging/his force structure in South Vietnam durin 1966 and on through 1967. Some of the enemy's NVA units were in the weeks or even country/months before the XXXX translated documents XXXX came to the desks of the analysts. It was a desperate game of catch up.

The fact that the CICV analysts worked without benefit of communications intelligence made the task of catching up even slower and more arduous. Through the laborious process of backtracking/every known regiment XXXXXXX the CIVC analysts extending throughout a period of several months, XXXXXXXXXX by the fall of 1966 had placed into the hands of the communications intelligence analysts a tool which permitted the latter to pinpoint the current dispositions of these units with telling accuracy. There is no secret...
disclosed here. Any military force must use electronic communications media
to control forces operating throughout a wide area. Any electronic-signal which
is sent into the air is subject to intercept by anyone with the tools to
what the signal is telling its addressee;
do the intercepting. But the eavesdropper, sadly enough, cannot read XXXXXXXXXXX
he can only attempt to analyze it. The task of analyzing the documentary
collateral information was far beyond the capabilities of the limited number of
communications analysts. Thereby evolved the dual system. CICV did the job
of sifting through the mass of collateral and passed their results on to
would then correlate the collateral with
the analysts in current intelligence whoXXXXXXXX the communications intelligence.
This then became the finished product: it was the best and the most we knew
about XXXXXXXXXXX what the enemy had out there and where he was. It XXXXXX
provided the basis for analytical deduction not only as to where he was and
what he was doing, but what he probably was going to do next.

Communications often
COC6688C6688866 intelligence permitted a leap beyond the deductions of the
CICV analysts working solely with collateral. The CICV analyst might be showing
the th XXXX NVA Regiment in one province on the basis of information two months
old, but the current intelligence analysts by benefitting from communications intelligence,
would know that the regiment was miles away in a different province. A modification
of command structure might become apparent in communications intelligence. The
CICV analyst XXXXXXX slogged on in his narrow world blissfully unaware of
these developments until they could be uncovered in his source material. Having
through XXXXXXXknowledge of what was developing in communications intelligence, I could
vague sometimes guide them with/hints, but this had to be done very cautiously to prevent
a serious breach of security discipline. The only valid reason for exercise
of security discipline is to prevent the enemy from knowing how successful or
unsuccessful you are at determining his order of battle. If he finds out, he
will certainly take countermeasures to destroy your capability or he will know
exactly what he can get away with.
Deception is the greatest fear that lurks in the back of an analyst's mind. As he examines each scrap of paper and ponders every dot on his map, he must wonder, "Is this something the enemy has planted for me to find. Does the enemy know what I know about him so well that he has changed his normal system and fixed his electronic signals. Is the ___th NVA Regiment still spurious ___th NVA Regiment? Or is this a sham thing that he maintains on paper and through a continued pattern of signals while the real thing is parading around with a new identification and unknown signals? The garden path is always beckoning and the unwary will disappear into its fragrant maze.