Intelligence Failures
in Vietnam: Suggestions
for Reform
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Introduction and Summary

The conduct of United States intelligence during the Vietnam conflict has been characterized by a lack of foresight, a neglect of fundamentals, and an absence of clear central direction. Those qualities, in turn, caused three massive intelligence failures.

First, US intelligence failed to gauge the scope of the war, which has always been larger than the intelligence community has portrayed it. We underestimated the enemy Order of Battle, his recruitment and infiltration rates, the number of people he controlled in the South, and, finally, his losses. At first, the misjudgment arose from simple neglect: three of the four main categories of the enemy Order of Battle were not even looked into until late 1965, over a year and half after our military intervention. Thereafter, the misjudgment was compounded by changing definitions, faulty accounting techniques, and attempts to juggle figures. In addition to these problems was the omission by the research arm of CIA to assign anyone to study southern Viet Cong manpower until the closing months of 1967.

The results of the misjudgment of the war's scale and scope have been dramatic. The US has planned its troop deployments to Vietnam on the basis of force ratios between Allied and Communist armies which were far out of line with reality. Had we realistically estimated the enemy's numerical strength at the outset, the US government might have sent more troops sooner; or, it might have decided not to intervene at all.

The second basic failure has been -- until very recently -- the relative neglect by US intelligence of the wellsprings of the enemy's power, the Communist Party and its related bureaucracies, collectively called the "infrastructure". In early 1967 for example, the CIA -- despite a plethora of evidence -- was scarcely aware of the existence of its principle adversary in Vietnam, the Viet Cong Security Service, which is roughly equivalent to the Soviet KGB. Likewise, we are only now beginning to inspect the strength and effectiveness of the enemy's large and well-organized Military Propaganda apparatus, which is devoted to undermining the morale of the Allied armies, and which has thousands of contacts in ARVN ranks. Part of the reason for the neglect has been the omission by intelligence components in Washington to study the infrastructure systematically. Even now, the number of intelligence officials in Washington with a working knowledge of the infrastructure is woefully inadequate.

The consequences of the relative neglect of the Communist Party organization have been momentous. In misunderstanding where the enemy's
main strength lay, the US devoted a disproportionate share of its resources to attacking the enemy's army (whose principle function is to shield the activities of party bureacrats). The Allies best-conceived and most ambitious scheme to attack the infrastructure, the PHENIX program, did not begin to get off the ground until some time last year.

Furthermore, the US has never systematically addressed the implications of infrastructure's activities. For example, the imbalance in intelligence — a condition evidenced by the probable presence in South Vietnamese government and military ranks of over 10,000 Viet Cong agents, compared to fewer than a hundred the Allies have in the VC structure — has had several important, but largely overlooked consequences. First, the imbalance has allowed the enemy to deploy his forces far more efficiently than the Allies. Thus comparisons of Allied and Communist numbers, as usually put forward by American intelligence, are extremely misleading, because they do not capture effective power. Second, the imbalance gives the enemy the initiative, and therefore allows him to control his losses; an ability which throws into question any policy which calls for a war of attrition. And third, the imbalance tends to be self-reinforcing. The more counter-intelligence penetrations the enemy has in US ranks, the harder it is for the Allies to recruit agents among the Viet Cong. A final result of the imbalance may be that the PHENIX program is so permeated with Viet Cong agents that it has little hope of success, except in the very long term.

The third basic intelligence failure has been the frequent inability of the Allies to fathom the enemy's intentions. The most prominent example of this was our failure to predict the scope and initial targeting of the enemy's largest attack so far, the Tet offensive. Part of the reason for our failure to guess the enemy's intentions at Tet was that we had greatly misjudged his capabilities. National Intelligence Estimate 14-3-67, agreed to by the entire community, and completed less than three months before the Tet onslaught, enormously underestimated his numerical strength in the south and his ability infiltrate replacements from the north. It effectively precluded, thereby, a forecast of an attack as large as the enemy launched. Also, the intelligence community had not fully addressed the capability of the enemy's urban apparatus to infiltrate large numbers of soldiers into the cities. We thus hardly considered the possibility of a massive urban assault, such as the one which occurred.

The final reason for the intelligence community's failure to predict the Tet attack was the scarcity of spies in the enemy organization who could have told us what he was going to do. The CIA's relative lack of success in espionage has had at best three basic causes: we started late (in mid-1964); few of our case officers in the field speak Vietnamese (about three); and most CIA officials have only an imperfect knowledge of the enemy. The average CIA case officer assigned to the provinces prior to August 1965 seldom had more than ten hours of instruction on Viet Cong organization and dynamics before arriving at his post.
The recommendations at the end of the memorandum fall into three main categories:

A. A general recommendation for a Board of Inquiry to examine the overall conduct of intelligence in Vietnam and elsewhere. The recommendation is advanced on the premise that the Vietnam conflict has demonstrated that American intelligence has several basic deficiencies, which need to be precisely identified and corrected.

B. Short-term recommendations concerning Vietnam, put forward to cover specific problems which beset our intelligence effort in Vietnam. The most important concern the PHOENIX program, which has greater potential for damaging the Viet Cong than any of our previous programs, either civilian or military. For example, one recommendation is designed to prevent PHOENIX reporting from degenerating into a numbers game, like those we have indulged in in the past.

C. Longer term recommendations transgressing Vietnam, principally designed to correct basicills endemic to intelligence research, which has been at the root of much of our predicament in Vietnam.

Until the basic deficiencies are corrected, the US runs the risk of finding itself, willy-nilly, in situations similar to the one it was in in late 1954 prior to our intervention. Should such a situation arise, US intelligence must be in a position to tell policy-makers what they are getting into, so that they can decide -- on the basis of careful intelligence -- the cost of policy alternatives.

My recommendations are neither all-encompassing nor absolute. They are set out in the hope that American intelligence will take a serious look at itself to determine how it can do a better job than the performance it has turned in during the Vietnam struggle.
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I. Foreword

1. Some reasons for intelligence deficiencies in Vietnam are simple, others extraordinarily complex. This memorandum explores only the more obvious technical shortcomings, and offers tentative explanations on how they were about. I have limited it, as far as possible, to subjects I am familiar with. It therefore reflects only of my personal experiences. Concerning the probity of American policy in Vietnam, I would hope the memorandum is neutral.

II. The First Failure: Misjudging the State of the War

2. The war in Vietnam has always been a lot bigger than US intelligence has portrayed it. The consistent underestimate of the problem has not only affected policy — as touched on in the Introduction — but has also made it exceedingly difficult to render coherent judgments on the war. The enemy "manpower balance," as pictured by the intelligence community, has often been ludicrously skewed. Even discussions of problems seemingly unrelated to size, such as enemy morale, have frequently isolated other-worldly air.

3. In April 1966, for example, I wrote a memorandum which suggested the Viet Cong had dangerously bad morale. The memorandum was based on evidence that the enemy was losing large numbers of men through desertion. After deducting the deserters from the existing Order of Battle (OB), and making allowances for recruitment and infiltration estimates, I came to the erroneous conclusion that the Communist army would waste away to ineffectiveness in the then foreseeable future. The well-founded skepticism which greeted the memorandum's conclusion led me to inspect its premises, including strength figures carried in the OB.

4. The underestimates have been large, pervasive, and closely related.

The MACV Order of Battle

5. The MACV OB, begun in April 1962, has had a history of understatement with few parallels in the annals of modern intelligence. Until recently, it has been divided into four parts:

A. The Main and Local Forces, consisting of combat units subordinate to the Party apparatus at district level and above.

B. The Guerrilla/Militia or "irregulars," consisting of troops subordinate to the Party apparatus in the villages and hamlets.*

*In September 1967, the Militia were dropped from the OB, which now carries guerrillas only in the irregular category.
C. The Administrative Services, consisting of headquarters and service military personnel subordinate to district level and above.

D. The Political OD, or "infrastructure," consisting of political and administrative non-military personnel serving at GS/W through hamlet levels.

6. For the official definitions of the components, see the Appendix. I will discuss them in the order I originally took them up.

The Guerrilla/Militia ("irregulars")

7. Although the Vietnam struggle has frequently been described as a guerrilla war, US intelligence made no attempt to find out how many guerrillas there were between April 1962 and late August 1966, when I found the official OD books for the Guerrilla/Militia category were too low by about one hundred percent. (See Chart 1, which compares the size of the Guerrilla/Militia force as carried in the OD with its size as estimated from 70 documents.) The number of irregulars in early 1965, when the US intervened, was about double that carried in the OD.

8. Informed of the August discovery, MACV began to put its irregular books in order in late 1966. Its intelligence command in Saigon (J-2) directed MACV provincial intelligence advisors to prepare new guerrilla/militia estimates locally and to send them forward for inclusion in a nationwide estimate. Unfortunately, the advisors, who had averaged somewhat less than six months in their provinces, frequently did not know what irregulars were, and so forwarded MACV-supplied head counts, almost invariably low because of incomplete reporting. J-2's countrywide totals have reflected local underestimates since late 1966.

9. While underestimates at the local level were sometimes unavoidable, nationwide underestimates are more difficult to comprehend. High-level Viet Cong documents are available indicating the size of the irregular forces countrywide in 1965, 1966, and 1967. These documents, some of which have been gone over exhaustively and found to check out with lower level documents, have listed numbers at least double those derived from local reporting. MACV has been aware of the documents, but has never attempted to reconcile them systematically with totals compiled from reports sent in from the provinces.

10. Meanwhile, between August 1966 and March 1968, the CIA, torn between realistic estimates derived from documents and various numbers emanating from MACV, published both, alternately. It did not assign an
analyst to study irregulars full-time until December 1967. Versions of this analyst's estimates, which followed earlier estimates derived from documents, have been used by the CIA since its post-Tet re-evaluation of enemy strength in March 1968.

The Administrative Services

11. The neglect and confusion attending Guerrilla/Militia estimates has also prevailed for estimates of the so-called "Administrative Services." US intelligence accepted a patently low ARVN figure of from 15,000-20,000 enemy service troops countrywide in late 1964, and continued to do so until well into 1967. I discovered the anomaly in late 1966, and on the largely unresearched theory that the Communists had about one soldier involved in service activities for every regular combat soldier, estimated there were about 100,000 enemy administrative service troops in South Vietnam. This estimate was included in a limited distribution memorandum published by the CIA in May 1967: the first time, to my knowledge, that any component of US intelligence had attempted to gauge the size of the enemy's service force. The estimate, modified to 75,000-100,000, was included in the first draft of National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 14.3-67 in June 1967. It became one of the points of controversy during the NIE discussions which lasted until November 1967.

12. Under pressure, because of the NIE, to come up with an estimate of administrative service troops, MACV made its first attempt to do so in July 1967. The number it arrived at was 35,000.

13. By July, however, evidence was beginning to pile up that the one-to-one theory (of service to regular combat soldiers) was fairly reasonable. On the basis of this evidence, I challenged MACV's July estimate at a meeting of NIE 14.3-67 in August. To meet the challenge, MACV twice amended its administrative service estimates.

14. An 'incoherence' of MACV amendments to their Administrative Service estimates between July and September was the lack of relationship between totals and components. For example, between August and September 1967 MACV's unofficial estimate for one of the components of the overall Administrative Service total rose from zero to 5,000, while the total itself dropped from 35,000 to 29,000. I also found out in

Since well over half of the US soldiers in Vietnam are service troops, overall comparisons between Allied and Communist forces are unrealistic without a reasoned appraisal of the enemy support apparatus.
September that in the process of arriving at its original figure and its later estimate, MACV "scaled down" the number of Administrative Service troops appearing in VC documents by counting only a certain percentage of those listed. In some cases, MACV counted from one-third to one-half of the documented numbers. The suspicion has arisen that MACV was tempering with the evidence to produce a low total.

15. Although the discrepancies between the totals and components in MACV's Administrative Service estimates and MACV's "scaling down" of the evidence were pointed out to participants at meetings over NSC 143-67, the intelligence community accepted a compromise of "at least 35,000-40,000." I have yet to hear an adequate explanation of why it did so.

16. After the Communist offensive at Tet, the CIA went back on the numbers it had agreed to in the NSC, and put forward in March 1968 an Administrative Service estimate of from "30,000-65,000," derived from a modified version of the one-to-one theory. MACV continues to use variations of the NSC number. In September 1968, its GS listed 35,000 such troops.

17. The intelligence community has yet to conduct a systematic and detailed study of the size of the enemy's support apparatus. The CIA assigned no one to look into the matter until March 1968. At last report, MACV pleaded that it needed more time to come up with such a study.

18. The number of Administrative Service troops in early 1965, when the US intervened, was probably at least five times higher than the number carried in the GS.

The Infrastructure

19. Muddle and neglect have also been the hallmarks of counting Viet Cong political cadres. The original estimate for the size of the so-called "infrastructure" was drawn up by ARVN in June 1965. The number ARVN arrived at, "39,175," was accepted and carried on US books from then until late 1967, although the ARVN study clearly indicated that it did not include cadres serving at hamlet level, where they are most numerous.

20. In late 1966, however, MACV questioned the study and began to draw up its own estimate of the size of the infrastructure. This was the first time US intelligence had tried to do so.

21. MACV's early efforts to tabulate political cadres suffered from the same defects as its attempts to count irregulars. Local
19. The MacV figures were frequently based on head counts, usually incomplete. Countvwide totals reflected local underestimation. In addition, there was the continuing and basic problem as to who should be counted.

22. MacV finally came up with an unofficial total of about 90,000 political cadres in February 1967. In May, however, the head of the MacV Political Order of Battle section, which drew up the February figure, informed me confidentially that he thought it was more likely that the actual number -- as MacV interpreted the definition of "infrastructure" -- was at least 100,000 and that the total might exceed 200,000. As noted earlier, MacV officially carried the old ARVN number of 19,773 until late 1967. It thus appears that components of MacV maintained three sets of books for political cadres between early and late 1967. Asked what was behind the unofficially advertised figure of 90,000, the Political OB head replied it represented the "90,000 most important."

23. Meanwhile, during this period, there was no one in CIA headquarters working full time on the southern Viet Cong political infrastructure and its size. I tried, from June through November 1967, to get the CIA to push for an estimate of at least 100,000, but failed. My efforts were partly based on a desire to reflect the personal views of the chief of the MacV Political OB section, the only component in the US intelligence community thoroughly familiar with the problem. The efforts were also based on my own studies, which emphatically confirmed the Political OB chief's beliefs concerning higher numbers.

24. Finally, in March 1963, the CIA unofficially put forward an estimate of 90,000-120,000 as the number of political cadres. This estimate had two components: MacV's basic figure (by this time over 50,000), plus "10,000-30,000" other cadres presumed to be missing from MacV's figure because of faulty methodology. The missing cadres were estimated on the basis of very limited research. The CIA continues to use the 90,000-120,000 estimate and has no one assigned full-time to counting political cadres. MacV continues to jigger with its old number.

25. Meanwhile, the basic problem in estimating the size of the infrastructure is unresolved. There is no agreed-upon interpretation of its current definition (See Appendix). A tight interpretation might yield a number of a few thousand. A loose interpretation might end up with a total in the hundreds of thousands. No steps are being taken to get the various components of the intelligence community together on the matters of definition and interpretation.

26. The problem involved in trying to estimate a number before deciding what the number consists of is highlighted by current reports
from the Saigon-based PHOENIX headquarters, responsible for the Allied
task on the infrastructure. Each month PHOENIX reported the number of
"VCI" (Viet Cong infrastructure) eliminated. In September 1968, it
reported 1,121 such eliminations. The trouble with the number as reported
monthly is that it bears no relationship to any published base: least of
all to NACV or CIA estimates of the size of the infrastructure. If
PHOENIX used the same set of criteria to estimate the infrastructure's
size that it apparently employs to count "eliminations," the number of
political cadres as so defined might conceivably exceed 200,000.

The Main and Local Forces

27. I am told that the history of intelligence accounting procedures
concerning the regulars of the Communist Main and Local Forces between
1962 and late 1964 was marked by a consistent NACV attempt to portray
the enemy strength as falling. Because I am unfamiliar with the details
of these earlier underestimates, and have learned of them only through
hearsay, I do not feel qualified to discuss them in detail.

28. When General Westmoreland became head of NACV in 1964, the
Main and Local Forces G3 -- as well as other parts of the Order of
Battle -- took a sharp upturn towards reality. The wide assumption
thereafter was that, whatever the faults of other parts of the G3,
estimates made for the Main and Local Forces were fairly accurate. For
example, NIE 14.3-67 of November 1967, stated that it was "reasonably
confident" of the Main and Local Force total of "about 178,000." The
statement was unusual in the southern manpower portion of the Estimate
in that the intelligence community actually believed it.  

29. A close inspection of the books kept on the Main and Local
Forces indicated that such confidence was misplaced. A study I prepared
in late February 1963 showed an underestimation on the order of 40,000.
The reasons for the underestimation included:

   A. The omission from the G3 of large numbers of small Local
Force units.

   B. The omission from the G3 of units known through communi-
cations intelligence.

   C. The exclusion from the G3 of large numbers of support units
integral to divisions and regiments.

"The portion in NIE-14.3-67 having to do with southern manpower
represents one of the low points in US intelligence history. See my
Memorandum for the Record, "Comments on the Current Drafts of the Intro-
ductive Note and Text of National Intelligence Estimate 14.3-67," of
9 November 1967."
30. Many, but not all, of these troops have since been included in
the PAVN. How they managed to stay out for so many years of war is
difficult to comprehend, particularly in view of the large numbers of
analysts working in the PAVN and Local Forces portion of the enemy CB.

Population Control

31. Viet Cong documents almost invariably claim many more people
under their "control" than Allied statistics, as usually presented, give
then credit for. In 1965, for example, a Communist document indicated
they "controlled" some six million people. GUS statistics of 1966 -- which we used -- gave them credit for controlling something
over three million. In early 1966, a captured high-level report indic-
ated they controlled five million people. Allied statistics allowed them less than three million. Communist official
reports after the Tet offensive indicated they believed they had
gained control of a million and a half people. Hamlet Evaluation System
(HES) statistics, as liberally interpreted, gave them at most an
additional million. (See Chart 3, which compares Allied and Communist
statistics for the number of people in VC area.)

32. I do not believe the differences can be charged off merely to
Communist internal propaganda, or to their wishful thinking. Many of
the documents' seem so consistent that it is my opinion that the popu-
lation control figures contained in them represent what the Communists
consider a realistic appraisal of their population assets in the south.
At least three problems exist concerning the differing statistics.

33. The first is one of criteria. The Communists and ourselves
have different definitions of "control." While we frequently refer
to hamlets evaluated as "D" and "E" by HES as "contested," the Communists
probably evaluate many of the same hamlets as "liberated," or VC. Thus,
in such cases as these, Allied and Communist statistics are not
necessarily contradictory; they may merely reflect the different
definition.

34. The second problem is one of presentation. While US officials
familiar with the mechanics of HES know that some "C" hamlets are in
fact hotly contested, official presentations usually lump all "C"
hamlets together as "government controlled." The presentations seldom
make clear that the control exercised in a "VC" hamlet is extremely
tight (with a virtual absence of government influence) while "E" and
even "A" hamlets probably contain a Communist infrastructure."

"HES grades are like those given at school. An "A" hamlet is one
that has passed with flying colors; "B," "C," and "D" hamlets are pro-
gressively less satisfactory; and "E" hamlets are considered flunking
but permissible; and "VC" hamlets are beyond the pale.
36. The final problem is that in some areas Allied population statistics have considerably understated the extent of Communist influence. Large numbers of VC hamlets are listed with no population, although often they are clearly inhabited. At times such understatements have given rise to extraordinary reporting anomalies. In December 1967, for example, MACV listed neither VC hamlets nor villages in Kontum Province. Yet for the same month, the HNS reported the Communists in Kontum had some 1,700 guerrillas. The reports taken together would thus seem to indicate that the Communists had drawn 1,700 village and hamlet soldiers from a zero population base. Viet Cong documents of early 1966 showed that the HNS data was further from the truth than MACV's guerrilla estimates.5

36. The general history of Allied underestimates of Viet Cong capabilities, the seeming consistency of Viet Cong population documents, and the size of the enemy's organization, lead us to believe that Viet Cong statistics and methods of presentation are more accurate than ours. Regardless of who is closer to the truth, the US intelligence community has yet to make a realistic try at reconciling VC population statistics with those of the Allies.

**Recruitment**

37. I do not have a detailed knowledge of the derivation of Allied estimates of VC recruitment in South Vietnam, and therefore defer in this matter to a recent study of captured documents, painstakingly put together in my office, concerning Communist recruitment in the south in 1965 and 1966. The paper indicates that VC recruitment rates in 1966 were somewhat higher than our estimates of the periods, and that the rate for 1967 was more than double official intelligence estimates for last year. The paper's 1967 estimate was 13,000 recruits higher than the official 1967 estimate.6

**North Vietnamese Infiltration**

38. Likewise, until this year, it is likely that estimates of North Vietnamese infiltration were far too low.

39. Prior to 1968, MACV estimates of enemy infiltration rested on an accounting technique similar to that used in tabulating Main Force units. MACV intelligence officers usually required evidence in the form

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5The documents indicated the guerrilla estimates were also low.

6See CIA Office of Economic Research Project 52.5427, not yet published, but due out shortly.
of captured documents or POW reports before they would accept an infiltration group as having marched south. The infiltration "estimates" were not therefore projections from available evidence, but rather compilations of many small bits of information.

42. It has been suggested that coming up with realistic numbers for earlier years was impossible because of a paucity of evidence. The suggestion deserves a two-fold rejoinder:

A. First, old accounting methods assured an underestimate.

B. Second, the suggestion is incorrect. The amount of evidence about earlier infiltration is voluminous, but was never exploited in enough detail. A competent CIA analyst familiar with information about infiltration commented recently that there had never been so little done with so much.

Communist Losses

43. Paradoxically, low estimates of enemy strength, recruitment, and infiltration have caused the US intelligence community to designate his losses. The understatement of losses came about because of the
desire to avoid a sharply diminishing US as the scale of the war increased. I have touched on my own experience in the latter in my discussion of a paper on defections. (See paragraph 3.) The high defection rate the paper suggested, although well-documented, was never officially accepted because it meant that the G3 would collapse at a time it showed no signs of doing so.

24. I do not intend to discuss in detail the much-disputed accuracy of body-count statistics. My own impression is that despite their shortcomings they provide a reasonable basis for estimating enemy dead. US intelligence has clearly made large understatements of other types of VC losses, however. These include underestimates of deserters, wounded, sick, injured by accident, discharged, retired, and died from natural causes.

25. The extent of the understatement is far from clear. However, it offers a partial explanation of why the enemy's strength is not higher than it is, despite the newly discovered evidence of much larger infiltration and recruitment rates than hitherto estimated.

Conclusions

26. The results of the underestimates have been at least threefold:

A. The US planned troop deployments on the basis of inadequate intelligence. "Force ratios" used to determine our early deployments were woefully out of line with reality.

B. The continued upward adjustments of the enemy strength -- which occurred as we inspected each unresearched segment of the G3 -- contributed to the so-called "credibility gap," which, in turn, helped undermine popular support for the war.

C. Although US intelligence has a moderately good handle on enemy strength now, we cannot compare it to its past force levels, since we know so little about them not having done the research.

27. The reasons for the underestimates are many. MACV was at fault for not keeping a running account of all facets of enemy strength between 1962 and 1967. In 1967 and 1968, it erred in attempting to use inconsistent strength estimates to buttress its position that the enemy was weakening.

28. Between 1962 and late 1965, CIA was at fault for not questioning MACV strength estimates of obviously doubtful validity. Aware after late 1965 that enemy strength was much higher than MACV portrayed it, CIA did not demonstrate sufficient resolve in challenging MACV's strength figures. Furthermore, it was negligent in not assigning an analyst to
work on Viet Cong manpower until the latter half of 1967. Then CIA finally challenged MACV's numbers directly in June 1968, it was too late. The Tet offensive had swept the countryside.

III. The Second Failure: Neglect of the Party and its Bureaucracies

49. The source of Viet Cong strength is the Party and its complex of administrative, political, and intelligence structures, collectively called the "infrastructure." (See Chart 5, A Corporate Viet Cong Provincial Organization). Without the infrastructure, the enemy army, which largely exists to protect it, would shortly collapse into impotence. Long aware of the thesis, the US government has revised against the infrastructure a series of programs, the most successful of which is PHOENIX, begun in mid-1967. The concept of PHOENIX, whose main executors serve at district level, is sound.

50. Unfortunately, sound concept and recognition of basic principle have often been accompanied by a systematic lack of detail, at least until recent times. An inspection of certain Viet Cong bureaucracies, and the attention US intelligence has paid them, demonstrates the neglect.

The Security Section

51. The Security Section, subordinate to the Party hierarchy at every echelon, is the enemy's main organ of political control. Equivalent to the Soviet KGB, it contains the Viet Cong internal political police, their counterintelligence spies, and their constabulary for public order. The section runs Viet Cong political prisoners, investigates suspected Allied agents or sympathizers, and mounts large numbers of operations in government-controlled territory. Its targets include Allied intelligence and security organizations, South Vietnamese political parties and religions, and almost all groups and programs which have been sponsored by the CIA. The target programs include Revolutionary Development, Viet Cong Informant, and Provincial Reconnaissance, and Census Grievance.

52. Thus the Viet Cong Security Service poses the central threat to the CIA, just as the Viet Cong Army is MACV's principle adversary. The CIA's interest in the Security Service, however, has been erratic. In 1959, the Agency's Foreign Documents Division routinely translated and put into report form some tracts concerning the service produced by the French Surete in the early 1950s. In 1961, the CIA's Deputy Directorate of Plans (DDP) published a short memorandum about the security apparatus based on a few documents captured by the South Vietnamese a year earlier. The 1959 report and the 1961 study were both classified "Secret No Foreign Dissemination" (excluding wide distr-
bribe in Vietnam) and apparently neither received broad currency. For some time, these two publications constituted the principle evidence of the Agency's concern for the enemy service.

54. The existence of this vast counter-intelligence organization and its connection with the IGS in North Vietnam came largely as a surprise to DDF and research personnel in Washington. Ignorance of the service was also pervasive in the field, although it had been the Agency's main protagonist in Vietnam since at least the early 1950's. Some province officers I talked to while in Vietnam in early 1967 were unaware the service existed. Those who knew of it had only the sketchiest knowledge of what it did. Because the CIA had no training program or the US apparatus, (See Paragraphs 103-101.) and since almost no organized material was available in the provinces to describe the service's organization and techniques, the ignorance was understandable. This gap was partially filled when the Counter Intelligence (CI) Staff of the DDF published a 125-page study on the service in July 1967. Classified "Confidential," it received broad distribution in Vietnam.

55. In preparing the study, I discovered a number of phenomena:

B. A coherent system for handling security prisoners was non-existent, nor were there any interrogation guides for them.

C. The number of operations against security apparatus by the CIA, as far as I could determine, was nil.

56. Conditions have improved since mid-1967. Knowledge that the service exists is now widespread, and the CI Staff has been able to devote a small number of personnel to combating it. Still, to my knowledge, there is no coherent, detailed program designed to counter the security apparatus as a whole, and efforts against it are largely uncoordinated.
The Military Proselyting Section

57. The Military Proselyting Section, subordinate to the Party apparatus from national through hamlet levels, is devoted to saving disaffection in the Allied -- particularly South Vietnamese -- armies. The section operates the enemy's military prisons, conducts large-scale face-to-face propaganda campaigns for ARVN dependents, etc. through its Fifth Column component, is in regular contact with large numbers of GVN soldiers. The Military Proselyters were active and relatively successful prior to our intervention in early 1965. They have been less effective since then, but are now preparing to take advantage of our possible withdrawal. The Vietnamese Communists consider military proselyting one of the three fronts on which they are conducting the war. The other two fronts are military and political.

58. Until late 1967, US intelligence showed virtually no interest in military proselyting. Then certain US intelligence components became interested in the subject, but primarily for operational reasons.

59. The intelligence community is only now beginning to take the substantive threat posed by the VC military proselyting apparatus into systematic consideration. The following observations are in order:

A. No major study on the organization and methods of operation of the apparatus has been published for general distribution, although the Viet Cong's Fifth Column within the GVN army is large, well-placed, and potentially dangerous, particularly if US troops begin to withdraw.

B. A coherent system for handling military proselyting prisoners and defectors is non-existent, and, to my knowledge, no questionnaire exists specifically designed for their interrogation.

C. The amount of material available to US intelligence on military proselyting is enormous.

Other Neglected Bureaucracies

60. Similarly, other Viet Cong bureaucracies have been given short shrift. I will not dwell on the details of the neglect, but would merely point out some of the areas largely overlooked:

A. The Political Struggle Section, subordinate to all Party echelons, was created in 1965 to coordinate the infrastructure's attempts to foment trouble in the cities. The Buddhist struggle movement, which nearly toppled the South Vietnamese government in mid-1963, was partially instigated, and once underway, encouraged by the Section. To my knowledge, no systematic study on the Section...
has been produced.

B. The Postal Transport and Communications Section and the
US Military Post Office, serving at all echelons down to village
level, are responsible for delivering the military and Party mail.
Although these organizations (and other types of Viet Cong courier
systems) are probably more susceptible to allied penetration than
others, a study on them was not undertaken until 1965 (by MACV),
and isolated attempts to take advantage of their vulnerability
have been largely unsuccessful. MACV's study was short and general
in nature.

C. The Party and bureaucracy's administrative components, in-
cluding the Organization Section and the Administrative Office of
the Current Affairs committee have not received, to my knowledge,
detailed and systematic attention. Although access to those com-
ponents is difficult, they contain a large share of the Party's
key bureaucrats and handle its most important correspondence.

The Results of the Neglect

61. The results of the neglect, until recently, of the Communist
Party and its bureaucracies have been numerous. See example:

A. The US government has never systematically addressed the
implication of the imbalance of intelligence in the enemy's favor.
Nor has it faced up to the implications of Viet Cong penetration
and sometimes control of South Vietnamese government programs.

B. The PHOENIX program against the infrastructure was started
late, without a systematic inquiry into the scope of the problem.

62. A cursory inspection of captured enemy incriminants and POW re-
ports gives a strong indication of the imbalance in intelligence. The
evidence suggests the enemy's four main espionage components are collect-
ively in regular contact with well over 10,000 South Vietnamese govern-
ment officials and soldiers. These contacts are a spectrum, on one end
of which are highly trained and motivated Viet Cong penetrators (some-
times in place since 1956). The other end of the spectrum contains large
numbers of low-level, less well-motivated agents. The agents are un-

"For example, a captured Viet Cong Military Propagator recently in-
dicated that in the relatively small area where he worked the propagators
were reportedly in contact with 392 Allied military personnel. Of these,
he stated, 20 were rated as the "most efficient penetration agents and
regarded as faithful members of the VC."

- 14 -
A. Hundreds handled by the North Vietnamese strategic intelligence service (the Cú Úy). Most are thought to be penetrations with medium or high-level access.

B. Thousands handled by various Viet Cong military intelligence components subordinate to the Military Intelligence Bureau of GVN. Most are low-level agents within GVN military ranks. They also include civilians working in or near Allied bases.

C. Thousands of GVN soldiers, handled by the Communist Military Propaganda system. Although the principle task of the persuaders' Fifth Column is subversion, a secondary function is espionage. The Fifth Column's regular contacts are mostly low level, but have included several GVN officers of field grade.

D. Thousands run by the Viet Cong security service. They include GVN police, NS cadres, Allied intelligence officials, and a variety of GVN politicians. Some hold high rank.

63. In addition to the agents within GVN territory, the Viet Cong run large informant networks in all areas of South Vietnam. Regular informants handled by the VC security service almost certainly number in the tens of thousands, including many "secret security" informants in GVN-controlled regions, who compile blacklists of government sympathizers. Viet Cong military intelligence has a parallel organization which also handles tens of thousands of regular informants.

64. The formidable nature of the espionage threat becomes particularly apparent when it is compared to the Allied effort. Allied intelligence has no more than a few dozen contacts in Viet Cong ranks, mostly low-level and unproductive. A large proportion are double agents run by the Viet Cong. Similarly, Allied intelligence has only a few thousand regular informants.

65. An important benefit the Viet Cong derive from their agents in the South Vietnamese government and army is the acquisition of cryptographic key lists. The Viet Cong probably read most important encrypted traffic of the South Vietnamese government and army. We read little Viet Cong traffic.

66. There are obvious implications to be drawn from the imbalance of intelligence:

A. The Viet Cong can deploy their assets more efficiently than we. Their army, not tied down to static defense to the
come extent as the Allies, is more effective than its raw numbers would indicate. Our intelligence estimates do not usually take this factor into account.

B. The Viet Cong, with few exceptions, have the strategic and tactical initiative. Our large, expensive, and time-consuming sweeps seldom make contact unless the Viet Cong want them to, while Communist offensive operations almost invariably hit their target, usually under conditions of tactical surprise. The concept of conducting a war of attrition under conditions where the enemy determines the level of his losses is questionable.

C. The imbalance in intelligence is now so great it is self reinforcing. The more counter-intelligence penetrations the VC have in GVN ranks, the more difficult it is to recruit agents in the VC. Likewise, the reputation of their security service for efficiency makes potential agents reluctant to cooperate with the Allies.

67. Captured documents as well as a variety of Allied intelligence sources suggest that Viet Cong agents -- in addition to spying -- carry on extensive activities to foil Allied programs against the infrastructure. These activities have included the extensive destruction or falsification of files, the release of important Viet Cong prisoners, the large scale theft of blank identification papers, bribery of key officials, and the mounting of spurious GVN operations, in addition to such standard techniques as sabotage, subversion and terror directed against GVN officials.

68. That the Viet Cong conduct such activities is well-known. Virtually every American returning from Vietnam has suspected that one or more of his South Vietnamese colleagues worked for the enemy. Most returnees also have a fund of anecdotes on how certain of their projects have gone awry. Although some of these mistakes were doubtless caused by South Vietnamese lethargy and incompetence, others were engineered by Communist agents.

69. The principle problem concerning Viet Cong intelligence and covert action programs is not therefore our awareness that such things exist, but that we have never tried systematically to measure their scope, or faced up to their effect on our overall position in Vietnam. There has never been, for example, an overall study, with conclusions, concerning the plans and accomplishments of the Viet Cong clandestine apparatus in GVN territory. Such a memorandum would go much further in explaining our predicament in Vietnam than still another study on the doings of the Communist Main Forces.

70. The PHOENIX program was therefore launched in mid-1967, in the
absence of a clear appreciation of what it was up against. US intelligence is still ignorant of the approximate numerical size of PHOENIX's target -- never having decided who belonged to the infrastructure. (See Paragraph 25-26). Furthermore, PHOENIX has never, to my knowledge, systematically addressed the effect of enemy penetration of its operations. It may well be that PHOENIX is so penetrated with Viet Cong agents that it has little hope of success, except in the very long term.

Reasons for the Neglect

71. As the US intervened in early 1965, the reasons for slighting the Party and its bureaucracies were deep-seated. First, the US had never experienced a subversive threat like that in Vietnam. Second, our successes in World War II and Korea, when armed force was enough to vanquish or contain foes in militarily simple situations, blinded us to the need for the detailed police intelligence necessary to understand and root out a deeply entrenched Communist structure. Finally, most American military leaders saw the struggle primarily in traditional military terms, and perhaps through weight of numbers, persuaded the rest of the intelligence community to accept many of its premises.

72. Since the war's outset, the neglect of the Party has been far more pronounced in intelligence circles in Washington than in Saigon. The research community in Washington, largely unaware of the importance of the Party's bureaucracies, did little to accommodate itself to the unfamiliar problem. As one analyst has commented, Washington attempted "to fit the war to the organization, rather than the organization to the war."

73. The response of CIA's research arm, the Deputy Directorate of Intelligence (DDI), was typical. No DDI office was prepared to work on the details of Party organization and methods of operation. Analysts of its Office of Current Intelligence were so busy processing day-to-day traffic, much of it from MACV, that they did not have time to do the in-depth research which might have demonstrated the key nature of the Party bureaucracies. The DDI's Office of Research and Reports was primarily involved in such things as logistics and hardware. The DDI evinced little interest in the Party apparatus until well into 1969, and even now maintains that research on the Party is primarily a function of the field.

74. The Defense Intelligence Agency, interested in military matters, has almost totally neglected the infrastructure.

For example, controversy over the accuracy of body counts represents the acceptance of the military premise that body counts are important.
75. The clearer understanding by CIA field personnel of the Party arose because of their proximity to the problem. Since province officers usually relied on first-hand evidence from captured documents, PCBs, and defectors for their information, the Viet Cong, they could hardly avoid developing the solid impression that the Party apparatus was the moving force behind the enemy’s army. The use of first-hand evidence in the field contrasted sharply with the neglect of such sources by Washington, where captured documents were not read systematically until the latter half of 1967. 8

76. The CIA Station’s awareness of the Party’s importance is reflected in part by the history of its Collection branch. The Branch was conceived relatively early, in 1964, to provide research support for Station operations against the Party. Unfortunately, it did not begin to function effectively until much later. Throughout 1965 it operated with few personnel, and little detailed information of what it was supposed to do. Reconstituted by a large contingent of DDI personnel in late 1965 and early 1966, the Branch continued to rack time until mid-1966, when, amid a Station reorganization, it received a clear idea of its mission and detailed instruction on the type of information it was supposed to produce. The start was late, but in the right direction. 98

77. Interestingly, Collection Branch personnel (mostly low-level DDI analysts selected from a small pool of volunteers) have turned out to have a far firmer grasp of the dynamics of the war than almost any other group of American officials. The reason for this is their intimate and continuing contact with primary evidence. The present output of the Branch (now called the Research and Analysis Staff) represents some of the best material currently being written on the Viet Cong.

78. Unfortunately, the Branch’s peculiar expertise failed for some time to transmit itself to Washington. The DDI, which had been reluctant to send analysts to Vietnam in the first place, paid little attention to the Branch, and did not bother to ascertain what it was up to until the latter half of 1967.

79. In late 1965, MACV also created a branch which conducted research on the Party apparatus. Much of the material the branch has produced has been good, but, like the Collection Branch’s output, it

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9”During the same reorganization the Station created a Viet Cong Branch (VCB) to operate unilaterally against the enemy. Although late, it was also in the right direction. (See Paragraph 95, about the VCB.)
received little currency in Washington until relatively recent times. The CIA, for example, did not begin to receive MACV's political research products regularly until well into 1967. One of the branch's most difficult problems -- a situation which has bedevilled MACV's entire intelligence efforts -- has been its high turnover of personnel. The intelligence tour to Vietnam, like the infantry tour, lasts only one year. MACV political analysts are sent home just as they become familiar with the apparatus.

30. A final problem concerning the production of coherent intelligence on the Party bureaucracy has been a lack of central direction. There is no one in Washington or Saigon surveying the overall intelligence output on the apparatus. As a result, there have been holes in coverage in some areas, and duplication in others.

The Third Failure: A Frequent Inability to Predict

31. The Communists have often surprised us tactically. We are also frequently unaware of their longer-range plans. The Tet offensive, the enemy's largest so far--thought by many to be the watershed of the Vietnam war -- is a prime example of both tactical and strategic surprise. Rather than catalogue a host of lesser surprises, this memorandum uses Tet as an example of our frequent inability to predict, for which there have been at least two reasons:

A. We have misjudged the enemy's capabilities, and

B. We have had few spies in his ranks, who could tell us what he was going to do.

Misjudging the Scope of the Offensive

32. US Intelligence knew the Tet offensive was coming but did not divine its magnitude. Our misjudgement of the scope of the attack had its roots in our underestimates of enemy numbers. Prior to the offensive, the MACV GS (as accepted by the rest of the intelligence community in National Intelligence Estimate 14.3-67 of November 1967) either seriously underestimated or omitted each element of the enemy's military force structure:

A. The Main and Local Forces were understated by at least 33%. Among the more prominent omissions in the category were the overwhelming majority of specialized combat units which spearheaded the attack (including city, sapper, intel-recon, engineer, and other special formations).
B. The Administrative Services, which supported the attack, were underestimated by at least 100%.

C. The Guerrillas -- large numbers of whom were upgraded to reinforce the regular Main and Local Forces prior to the attack -- were underestimated by at least 50%.

D. The Self Defense Militia, of whom there were over 120,000, had been dropped from the OB in September 1967 as militarily insignificant. The Militia replaced many of the guerrillas upgraded to the regular army and in some areas took part in the attack. For example, a captured document indicated some 50 self defense units were associated with the attack on Hue, parts of which the Communists held for over three weeks.

E. The well-organized, partly armed, and uniformed Assault Youths have never been included in the OB. Several thousand participated in the offensive primarily as front-line support troops.

61. Thus our principle problem in contemplating the possibility of an assault as large as the Tet offensive was that we conceived of our enemy as being much smaller than he actually was. This conceptual problem has been largely resolved since Tet.

**Misjudging the Target of the Offensive**

34. The intelligence community did not foresee that the initial targets of the Tet offensive were going to be the cities. One of the main reasons it failed to do so was that we knew so little about the enemy's urban apparatus, which laid much of the groundwork for the attack. Largely ignorant of the strength and capabilities of the city infrastructure, we did not face up to the limitations of the South Vietnamese government's security apparatus. Thus when Viet Cong regiments surfaced in Saigon, we were astonished. The surprise was unnecessary.

35. Pre-Tet expectations around Saigon were an example of the general urban complacency. The complacency had arisen in the capital city in part from a series of apparently successful operations against the Viet Cong urban structure in the latter half of 1967. Prior to Tet, South Vietnamese security forces in Saigon had arrested several nets of Viet Cong cadres and sympathizers, many subordinate to Communist's Saigon-Sonlon-Gia Dinh Special Zone. The number of such captives was unusually large. Field reports noted the influx of prisoners and concluded that the Viet Cong apparatus in the Saigon area had been seriously damaged. The tone of Agency and MACV reports to Washington in the weeks and months prior to Tet reflected the lack of apprehension.
The manner was more apparent than real. Most of the captives were connected with the Zone's least threatening sections: Women's Propaganda, Later Propaganda, and Intellectual Propaganda. The most dangerous parts of the infrastructure, including the enemy's numerous security organization in the Saigon area, largely avoided police dragnet, and were on hand to aid in the offensive.

Apparently, Allied officials in Saigon were not knowledgeable enough about the local apparatus to realize that they had inflicted little real harm. A CIA official relatively familiar with the organization of the Saigon area infrastructure has since said that he was struck with the ignorance of it on the part of both American and Vietnamese officials.

While the intelligence community made much of the arrests, it paid little attention to more ominous information which came available on the Viet Cong infrastructure's ability to forge identification papers. Captured documents translated in late 1967 indicated that a single forging cell in one of the Saigon zone's six subregions was manufacturing false papers at the rate of several hundred per quarter. Not all the papers it distributed were manufactured. The cell had received from higher echelons a large number of blank National Police ID cards, together with an official seal from police headquarters in Saigon's Seventh Precinct. The papers and seal had probably been stolen by agents of the VC security service.

The oversight (or perhaps dismissal) of such information contributed to our lack of appreciation of the vulnerabilities of the CIA urban police apparatus. Although some intelligence officials were aware of the system's weakness, their knowledge was never fully translated into an active awareness in Washington of the Viet Cong's capability to enter the cities at will. It was never advertised in Washington, for example, that tens of thousands of Saigon's slim residents owed no identification papers whatsoever.

Some of Washington's and Saigon's complacency may therefore have arisen from an apparent inability to see the obvious. As early as 1965, for example, Bernard Fall stated that "if the VC set (their) mind to it, (they) could go on a rampage that would leave most Vietnamese urban centers a shambles." *** Beverly Deese of the Christian Science Monitor

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"After the Tet offensive was well underway, National Police Chief Loan expressed surprise that some of the Viet Cong taken in Saigon carried police identification papers.

said roughly the same thing a few weeks before the attack. The fault of
the intelligence community was that it scarcely considered the possibility.

The Lack of Espionage Penetration:

91. The final reason for our frequent inability to foretell enemy
actions is that we have had almost no espionage penetrations in his mil-
itary or political structure.

92. I have had no experience as an espionage case officer. Nor do
I pretend to be familiar with operational difficulties which have arisen
in South Vietnam. Leaving aside, therefore, such basic problems as the
difficulty in contacting enemy personnel, and the efficiency of the Viet
Cong security/counter-intelligence apparatus in frustrating Allied spies,
it seems to me there have been at least three reasons which precluded
the CIA's relatively poor performance in espionage. These are:

A. The late start in operating unilaterally against the Viet
Cong.

B. The tiny number of espionage case officers capable of speaking
Vietnamese, and,

C. The small amount of training on Viet Cong organization and
techniques given to Agency officers going to the field, particularly
to the provinces.

93. I would not assert that a corps of CIA case officers with long
experience in Vietnam, fluent in Vietnamese, and steeped in VC structure
and methods of operation would guarantee success. I would merely argue
that its absence has ensured our almost total failure until very recent
times.

The Late Start

94. Over a year after America's intervention in Vietnam, the CIA
Station in Saigon was making virtually no attempt to operate unilaterally
against the Viet Cong. We relied on our official liaison contacts within
the Vietnamese intelligence services for agent information on the enemy.
In some environments, a liaison arrangement is satisfactory. In Vietnam,
where South Vietnamese intelligence and security organizations are freighted
with Viet Cong agents, it is inadequate -- perhaps dangerous -- as a sole
source of agent information. Aware of its inadequacies, American analysts
have viewed most liaison information with intense suspicion.

95. A Viet Cong Branch designed to spy on the Communist structure
was finally created in the middle of 1966. Thus, the long process usually
necessary to develop deep-penetration agents in an organization as for-
midable as that of the VC began relatively recently. It is only now beginning to show fruit.

The Lack of Vietnamese Speakers

96. The number of CIA case officers in the field capable of speaking Vietnamese has always been tiny. The current number in Vietnam, I believe, is in the neighborhood of three. I doubt whether this figure has ever been greatly exceeded.

97. A number of excuses have been advanced for the phenomenon. They include arguments that:

A. The Agency, which has had to supply unusually large numbers of officers to Vietnam, has not been able to invest the extra personnel in language training.

B. Such a program would be expensive.

C. It might not produce the desired results.

D. Vietnamese interpreters can handle the problem, and,

E. Agency or third-country interpreters -- of whom there are few in Vietnam -- are sufficient for operational needs.

98. Although frequently voiced, the first three arguments can be dismissed out of hand. The fourth, that Vietnamese interpreters are adequate, overlooks considerable evidence that the Communists have concentrated a great deal of espionage talent at their recruitment. The last, that we have a stable of presumably reliable US and third-country interpreters, is the most substantial. It can be met by the usual reasons given as to the desirability of espionage case officers speaking the local language. I need not elaborate on these, but would merely provide what seems to me a good example of the advantages to be derived from fluency in Vietnamese.

99. The consistently best reporting on the Viet Cong is thought by many to be RAND's Minh Tuong (DT) series of interviews of Viet Cong captives and soldiers. The person responsible for the interviews was an American named David Elliot. He spoke fluent Vietnamese but seldom saw the prisoners and defectors. The high quality of his product was due primarily to the excellence of his Vietnamese interviewers, none of whom spoke English. Mr. Elliot was able to find such good interviewers because he was not limited by language to recruiting among English-speaking Vietnamese. All but one of his interviewers were elderly Vietnamese gentlemen, who rarely speak English, but who command the respect of the usually young Viet Cong prisoners and defectors. Mr. Elliot's reports were frequently superb. CIA province officers have yet to duplicate his
performance.

Paucity of Training on the Viet Cong

100. Until recently, case officers going to the field in Vietnam received little training on Viet Cong organization and techniques. Their training was restricted to such subjects as general espionage or interrogation techniques, Vietnamese history, and the organization of Allied programs. The amount of formal instruction on the Viet Cong seldom exceeded two hours. Once in Vietnam, officers going to the VC Branch were able to spend a number of weeks "reading in" on assorted material concerning the Viet Cong. Officers assigned to the provinces usually did not even have this opportunity. Thus the average CIA province officer arriving at his post was not only unable to speak Vietnamese, but was largely unaware of the nature of his target. Frequently, his reporting has reflected it.

101. In August 1968, at the request of the head of the DDP-run South Vietnamese Operations Course (SVNCC), I instituted a two day course on Vietnamese Communist organization and techniques for Agency personnel going to Vietnam. The two-day course has now been given on three occasions and was expanded to three days in January 1969. I have three comments:

A. The course is by far the most detailed instruction given on VC organization by any agency of the US government.

B. It is superficial, hastily put together, and inadequate.

C. The head of SVNCC, who had been trying to start up such instruction for some time, had been unable to find anyone willing to take on the task.

Conclusion

102. The late start and the neglect of basic preparations have meant that the CIA has misspent valuable time and scarce espionage talent in operating against the Viet Cong. For example, one of the first major programs of the VCB was a simple case of mistargetting-through ignorance.

103. The name of the program was TUJOCKEY. Mounted by the VCB in the latter half of 1966 and continuing through 1967, its purpose was to split (among other endeavors) the Party and the National Liberation Front (NLF). A routine familiarization with the relationship of the Party apparatus and the Committees of the NLF, particularly at the higher echelons (at which the program was directed) would have suggested its fatality. The Front is, of course, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Party, with virtually no independence. The time, money, and personnel expended on TUJOCKEY, then the CIA's biggest espionage operation against the VC, would have been better spent elsewhere.
The effort expended on TIGER was not wholly wasted, however. In one sense, it served as a training ground for recent operations. Certain of these appear to be relatively successful. The problem with them is that they are so late.

V The Atmosphere Within the Intelligence Community

105. As suggested in the foregoing paragraphs, a lack of foresight, a neglect of fundamentals, and an absence of clear central direction, have characterized the US intelligence effort in Vietnam. These are primarily technical problems. The most basic question is not technical, but atmospheric. The temper within the intelligence community during much of the war has not been conducive to honest appraisal.

106. The mood has had several distinct characteristics. First, there has been a frequent lack of courage in advancing ideas conceived of as unpleasant. Timidity and vacillation at the top have seeped to the lower ranks, so that many issues of real or potential moment have remained submerged among the underlings. The common reason advanced for such timidity has been "political pressure". Although political considerations cannot be avoided in conducting intelligence, the excuse is weak. Intelligence which lacks honesty lacks utility.

107. Second, the atmosphere has often been charged with a want of candor. Forthrightness has all too frequently given way to indirection, usually at the expense of clear English. Intelligence conferences over enemy numbers, for example, were elaborate bargaining sessions rather than a careful weighing of evidence. Middle men bartered in corridors, while the principles pored over clauses in the contract, designed more for the press than for policymakers. The end products until March 1968, were "agreements" which obscured enormous differences.

108. Third, there has been, until very recently, an avoidance of self-criticism. Although the United States has been losing a major war against a minor power, criticism has been met with delay, evasion, and attempts to explain away past failures. The lack of critical introspection contrasts sharply with the practice of the Viet Cong, whose report writers are required to dwell on weakness.

109. Finally -- in large measure because of conditions already touched on -- jumble and confusion have often reigned. Considered reflection born of exhaustive study has been abandoned frequently for headlong rushes into complicated problems. All too often, the answers preferred by the intelligence community have reflected the manner in which they were sought.
VI Recommendations

110. My recommendations fall into three main categories:

A. A general recommendation for a Board of Inquiry to examine the overall conduct of US intelligence in Vietnam and elsewhere.

B. Short-term recommendations concerning Vietnam.


111. Certain portions of these recommendations have been put forward elsewhere by other people. Where so, my suggestions are made in order to add my voice to others.

Recommendation for a Board of Inquiry

112. I respectfully recommend that the Executive Branch of the Government appoint a Board of Inquiry to investigate thoroughly the conduct of the US intelligence community in Vietnam and elsewhere. The threefold purpose of such an inquiry would be, first, to find out where US intelligence has failed in the last five years, particularly in Vietnam, second, to ascertain where shortcomings still lie, and third, to recommend measures to avoid similar deficiencies in the future.

113. I respectfully suggest that objectivity would best be served if the Board were headed by a person uninvolved in our policy in Vietnam and unconnected with any components of the US intelligence community.

114. I further recommend that the Board consider taking certain broad avenues of inquiry, to include:

A. The direction, organization and management of intelligence research.

B. The targeting and preparation of clandestine operations, including such matters as training and language policy.

C. The overall control and coordination of military and civilian elements of the intelligence community.

Short-term Recommendations Concerning Vietnam

115. How long and how heavy our involvement in Vietnam will be is far from clear. Given the uncertainty, the US intelligence community ought to prepare for the long haul. My recommendations are fundamental and relatively inexpensive. They are advanced below in broad outline. I will supply more detailed recommendations if requested.
116. **Short-term Recommendation One:** US intelligence should embark on a community-wide program to educate Allied officials more thoroughly on Viet Cong organization and techniques. The program should include:

A. The creation of an inter-Agency committee to determine what training on the Viet Cong needs to be given, who is to give it, and who is to get it, both in Vietnam and the United States.

B. The creation of a standard two-week course on Vietnamese Communist civilian and military bureaucracies. The course should be made available as soon as possible to all appropriate Allied intelligence and security officials, including Vietnamese, serving at district level and above in Vietnam, and to American intelligence officials working on Vietnam in the US, including researchers, desk officers, and training officials. If requested, I will supply a suggested course outline.

C. The creation of specialized courses on specific parts of the infrastructure. For example, I would suggest the putting together of a one-week course on Viet Cong intelligence organizations (including the Cuu Nghien Cuu, Military Intelligence, Military Proselyting, and the Security Service) for counter-intelligence officers going to Vietnam.

D. The writing and maintenance of a series of basic handbooks on specific parts of the Viet Cong infrastructure for small libraries (say, 30-40 volumes) on the infrastructure to be maintained at district level and above. For example, a handbook on the enemy security apparatus has already been written, but needs updating. A handbook on the Military Proselyting organization has yet to be published. The programming of such handbooks should be determined centrally. The handbooks should be classified "For Official Use Only," or "Confidential," so that they may be given wide dissemination in Vietnam. Periodic inspections should be arranged to ensure that the libraries are kept up to date.

117. **Short-term Recommendation Two:** CIA Deputy Directorate of Intelligence should create a task force of at least one dozen researchers to conduct in-depth research on the enemy, particularly his Party bureaucracies. Properly coordinated with the field and with the DDP, such research need not duplicate that done by the Station's Research and Analysis Branch, but ought to complement it. Most important, the task force would give Washington a capability it does not now possess: an ability to render coherent and detailed judgments on Party affairs.
118. The task force should have at least three purposes:

A. To monitor and evaluate in detail the PHOENIX program in order to measure its effect on the Viet Cong apparatus. The evaluation should include a continuing analysis of PHOENIX statistics, and, most important, qualitative judgments on the results of PHOENIX operations.

B. To prepare substantive studies for policy-makers on certain basic but largely neglected subjects. These include:

I. A detailed study of the efficiency and impact on the Allied war effort of Viet Cong intelligence and security organizations (to be done in cooperation with the CI Staff of the DDP.)

II. A study of the impact on the Allied war effort of other VC covert action operations. (See Paragraph 67).

III. Continuing studies on the policy and structure of various Viet Cong bureaucracies, particularly including the security service, and the military proselyting apparatus.

C. To perform certain support functions for other CIA and community intelligence components. These could include the production of handbooks on the infrastructure, the preparation of interrogation questionnaires for various types of VC prisoners, the supply of instructors to train US officials going to Vietnam on VC organization, and related tasks which PHOENIX and other organizations might propose.

119. If created, the task force could either be given independent status within the DDI, or assigned to a specific DDI office. In no case should it be swallowed up by existing components, or put to such tasks as producing "current intelligence" on Vietnam, which already has a full division of the Office of Current Intelligence occupied. Provision should be made to allow it adequate space, including a library for storage of primary materials on the Viet Cong: -- for example, captured documents, POW interrogations, and defector reports.

120. Short-term Recommendation Three: The intelligence community should thoroughly reappraise the goals and operation of the PHOENIX program. The reappraisal should include:

A. A meeting, as soon as possible, of appropriate components of the community, to devise a working definition of who belongs to the Communist infrastructure. I would recommend that the definition include a spectrum, which would distinguish infrastructure members by echelon, job description, and importance.
My own prediction in reworking a definition would be to allow for the inclusion in the "infrastructure" of many more Viet Cong than are presently taken into account in MACV and CIA working definitions. My view stems from the belief that many of the tasks performed by low-level personnel in the Communist structure are important, and damaging to the Allies.

B. The creation by PHOENIX of a reporting procedure which would allow for a comparison of its "eliminations" to a measurable base, preferably one such as envisaged in Subparagraph A above.

C. A retroactive inspection of PHOENIX's past reporting, to determine, as far as possible, the damage the program has inflicted. The retroactive look should include a careful appraisal of the quality of personnel eliminated, together with an estimate, if possible, of how many "neutralized" officials have rejoined the Viet Cong, and the extent to which the VC have been able to fill any voids created by PHOENIX.

D. An assessment of the counter-intelligence problems the program presently faces, and a determination of what measures can be taken to meet them.

E. An assessment of what the PHOENIX program can realistically expect to accomplish, within given periods of time.

121. Short-term Recommendation Four: The intelligence community should reassess personnel policies for officials going to Vietnam, with an eye to increasing professionalism and length of service there. Specifically, I would recommend that:

A. The armed forces increase the length of tours of intelligence personnel from one year to at least eighteen months, or more where practicable.

B. The CIA set up a program of incentives to persuade its officers in Vietnam to stay beyond their regular tours. I would suggest that consideration be given to paying appropriate personnel additional funds over and above their regular salary and allowances to persuade them to extend.* The cost would be tiny compared to overall Vietnam expenses.

*I understand that members of the French Surete, who have among the Vietnamese a reputation for greater effectiveness than American intelligence officers, served three-year tours in Vietnam.
C. All components of US intelligence in Vietnam inspect their policies concerning in-country transfers with the purpose of decreasing their frequency.

D. The OIA reassess its policies concerning the learning of the Vietnamese language by its case officers. Although I am aware that several Agency officers destined for field assignment were set to learning Vietnamese in mid-1968 (in reversal of earlier language policies) I question whether their numbers -- which I do not know -- are sufficient.

122. Short-term Recommendation Five: Steps should be taken to ensure greater cooperation between military and civilian research components in Saigon and Washington. The steps might include measures to ensure that military and civilian personnel on the analyst level can freely exchange information and opinions. The purpose of the measures would be to prevent the withholding of evidence or methodologies on which major studies are based, a practice which has happened frequently in the past.

123. Short-term Recommendation Six: An Inter-Agency committee should be formed to review various intelligence research tools and products. Among the programs and situations which need rethinking are:

A. The Hamlet Evaluation System, sound in concept, but so long misused that its statistics, as usually presented, are extremely misleading. *

B. The enemy's "manpower balance" (i.e., his manpower levels, inputs and outputs). US intelligence has done such an inadequate job in earlier years concerning the enemy's numerical strength and his reserves -- both North and South -- that we now lack a firm grasp on his present capabilities.

Long-term Recommendations Transcending Vietnam

124. The underlying premise of my long-term recommendations is that the overall performance of the intelligence community during the Vietnam conflict has been weak. Although some intelligence officials were un-

*Any re-evaluation of HES ought to be accompanied by our attempt to estimate from documents the number of people under VC control, according to VC statistics, which are probably more realistic than ours.
easy in 1964 over the possibility of a large US commitment to Vietnam, their mail was not translated into documented exposition. They relied on "gut feelings", as did people who were more optimistic about our prospects in Vietnam. After our intervention, formal intelligence discussions of many key subjects continued to be heavily laden with unresearched supposition, and clashes between schools of thought sometimes resembled the partially informed and rambling disputes of drunks at a bar.

125. My concern over the conduct of intelligence has therefore arisen from its often slipshod nature. As has been suggested, US intelligence was inadequate in 1964 because its machinery was failing to function in certain important areas. The memorandum has demonstrated that basic questions concerning enemy manpower were hardly considered until after our intervention was a year and a half old. Unilateral espionage operations did not begin in earnest until mid-1966. Research on the enemy’s backbone, the Party apparatus, has started to come into its own only recently.

126. Individual rather than mechanical shortcomings were responsible for some of these failures. In certain cases, individuals failed to turn the machinery on. In others, they neglected to retool the machine to fit the problem. Individual failure, however, is not the subject of this memorandum.

127. My long-term recommendations are largely about mechanics, and are concerned with such matters as organization and personnel policy. They are oriented primarily towards research, an area with which I am relatively familiar. They involve the Deputy Directorate of Plans only in passing.

128. Long-term Recommendation One: The Central Intelligence Agency should restructure its Deputy Directorate of Intelligence (DDI) so that it can devote more of its resources to in-depth research, particularly on political subjects.

129. The principal reason for my recommendation has been the demonstrated inadequacy of the DDI organization during the Vietnam war. One of the reasons the DDI had no one working on enemy manpower until the second half of 1967 was that no office existed to look into such matters. Likewise, the reason its reporting on the Party apparatus has been deficient is that no group of people have been designated to cover the subject systematically at headquarters.*

*Technically, the Research and Analysis Staff (RAS) in Saigon, which works on Party Affairs, is a DDI component. Unfortunately, the RAS product tends to be submerged in the deluge of other reports gushing from Saigon.
130. One must recognize that the DDI's main purveyor of political memoranda, the Office of Current Intelligence (OCI), seldom has time to produce in-depth research, and perforce focuses (sic) its energies on selecting and rewriting field cables concerning immediate crises.* Because of the press of deadlines, its reporting of the political activities of the Viet Cong infrastructure has usually been unsystematic and sometimes ill-informed.

131. In the hopes of improving the machinery, I advance the following alternatives as tentative suggestions for reorganization:

A. The creation of a major new DDI component to handle in-depth political reporting, leaving "current" reporting to OCI.

B. Or, alternately, a restructuring of OCI so that far fewer of its analysts are assigned to writing day-to-day material for the Current Intelligence Bulletin, or publications like the daily Situation in Vietnam. Such recurring, newspaper-style reporting could be left to a relatively small group of people (like those who write the President's Daily Brief), while analysts freed from these time-consuming chores could conduct in-depth studies.

C. Or, alternately, a complete reorganization of the DDI along geographical lines, with the mixing together of the Directorate's three main substantive components: OCI, the Office of Economic Research (OER), and the Office of Strategic Research. Such a reorganization has been proposed before, and rejected, largely for administrative reasons. Although some of these reasons may be valid, I cannot help but be struck by what seems to me the duplication of effort between the two principle DDI divisions working on Vietnam.** Were they combined, the number of analysts freed might be adequate to staff a component to conduct in-depth research on the Viet Cong infrastructure. Furthermore, overall research on the war could be considerable rationalized.

132. Obviously, a battery of arguments can be marshalled to bombard any of the alternate suggestions. To those who would resist a change in the present system, however, I would emphatically reiterate that it doesn't work.

133. Long-term Recommendation Two: The DDI should greatly increase the professionalism of its researchers.

134. The reason for the suggestion is that DDI researchers often

*There are, of course, noteworthy exceptions to the generalization.
**The Indo-China divisions of OER and OCI.
tend to be persons with little background in their specializations. Their principal advantage (all too often unexercised) over members of the press or of the academic community is their access to immensely superior raw material. Despite the advantage, it has been unfortunately true during the war that many members of the press have demonstrated a better understanding of the issues than US intelligence memoranda.*

135. To increase the professionalism and background of DDI researchers, I would suggest:

A. A dramatic increase in the number of DDI personnel serving overseas. For administrative reasons, it would probably be necessary to assign them temporarily to the DDP (with the DCI footing the bill) as reports officers, or as background researchers on operational problems. (See Paragraph 139A) As a corollary and as a money saving device, I would recommend the total abolition of DDI "orientation trips" which are expensive and largely unproductive.

B. An increasing emphasis on language training for DDI researchers. For example, no DDI research analyst speaks or reads Vietnamese. Because of the abstruse translation problems which have arisen concerning Viet Cong terminology, this lack has often been sorely felt.

C. The upgrading of analysts within the DDI. Basically, this would involve paying them higher salaries. It would have a twofold purpose: first, to attract better people, and second, to retain the better researchers in analytical posts. Too often the best analysts either quit or are promoted to largely administrative positions, which often means the loss of their hard-won experience. Some of the extra money spent could probably be saved by removing part of the DDI's large administrative/supervisory structure, much of which appears superfluous.

136. This recommendation presumes a basic change in attitude towards research and towards analytical personnel. In one sense, it favors the specialist over the "generalist," in that it demands of the analyst a far more rigorous performance than is usually asked for under present organizational arrangements.

137. Long-term Recommendation Three: The CTA should take steps to increase cooperation between the DDP and the DDI, bearing in mind the need for maintaining their organizational integrity.

*See, for example, Robert Shaplen's "Letter from Saigon," New Yorker, 11 January 1969, a more perceptive discussion of recent events in Vietnam than is often found in American intelligence publications.
138. The reasons for the recommendation are first, to provide DDI analysts with the benefit of the often intimate knowledge of DDP case-officers of the countries to which they are assigned, and second, to provide the DDP with basic research to aid it in targeting its operations.

139. Among the steps I would suggest for implementing the recommendations are:

A. The creation of additional research groups abroad, similar to the DDI-manned Research and Analysis Staff in Saigon, which has proved to be remarkably useful. Obviously, most CIA stations are too small to warrant separate research components, but some of the larger ones would almost certainly benefit from them.* Were more Research and Analysis Staffs created, they should maintain close contact with country analysts in DDI headquarters. Although their day-to-day research should be for the support of the local station, they should also have the ability to service requirements from Washington.

B. The temporary transfer of some DDP personnel to the DDI for two-year tours, in order to acquaint them with research problems and needs.

C. The ability of the DDP to levy requirements on the DDI at headquarters for certain types of basic research.

D. The setting up of procedures at CIA Stations abroad to ensure that DDI requirements sent electrically are serviced more thoroughly, and with more dispatch. A frequent -- and often valid complaint voiced by DDI analysts at headquarters is that cables dealing with requirements are neglected or answered inadequately.

140. Long-term Recommendation Four: The intelligence community should create an inter-Agency staff to review the history of the Vietnam war in order to develop intelligence contingency plans to avoid or to cope with future struggles of National Liberation (when deemed a threat to US interests.)

141. The principle reason for the recommendation is to help ensure that intelligence community learns and preserves the lessons that Vietnam conflict seems to be teaching us. It is advanced in the expectation that prospective revolutionaries in other parts of the world may come to look on the Viet Cong structure as an operational and organizational model.

*For example, Thailand.
142. The long-term recommendations advanced in this memorandum have deliberately avoided addressing certain issues, which I feel relatively unqualified to discuss. These include problems of intelligence collection, and matters having to do with overall coordination and control of the intelligence community. I would hope that the Board of Inquiry recommended in Paragraphs 112-114 would be able to deal with such subjects.
**Abbreviation Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>Counter Intelligence</td>
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<td>COMINT</td>
<td>Communications Intelligence</td>
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<td>COOVN</td>
<td>Central Office of South Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDII</td>
<td>Deputy Directorate of Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDP</td>
<td>Deputy Directorate of Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of Vietnam</td>
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<td>HES</td>
<td>Hamlet Evaluation System</td>
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<td>HAGV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
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<td>NIE</td>
<td>National Intelligence Estimate</td>
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<td>OGI</td>
<td>Office of Current Intelligence</td>
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<td>OER</td>
<td>Office of Economic Research</td>
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<td>OB</td>
<td>Order of Battle</td>
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<td>RAS</td>
<td>Research and Analysis Staff (once called the Collection Branch)</td>
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Appendix

Definitions

The following are the agreed-upon community definitions of various elements of the enemy force structure. There are four main categories of enemy forces:

A. The Main Force/Local Force/NVA

II. Viet Cong Main Force are "Those military units which are directly subordinate to the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN), a Viet Cong Military Region, or Sub-Region."

III. Viet Cong Local Force are "Those military units which are subordinate to a provincial or district Party committee and normally operate within a specified VC province or district."

B. A North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Unit is "a unit formed, trained and designated by North Vietnam as an NVA unit and composed completely or primarily of North Vietnamese. At times, either VC or NVA units and individual replacements appear in units that are predominately NVA or VC at the command level."

C. Administrative Service Units are "military personnel in identified COSVN, military region, military subregion, province, and district staffs, and rear service technical units of all types directly subordinate to these headquarters."

D. Guerrillas are "full-time forces organized into squads and platoons which do not always stay in their home villages and hamlets. Typical missions for guerrillas are collection of taxes, propaganda, protection of village party committees, and terrorist and sabotage activities."

E. The Viet Cong infrastructure is defined "as the political and administrative organization through which the Viet Cong control or seek to control the South Vietnamese people. It embodies the party (People's Revolutionary Party) control structure, which includes a command and administrative apparatus (COSVN) at the national level, and the leadership and administration of a parallel front organization (National Liberation Front), both of which extend from the national through the hamlet level.

Note: Dropped from the Order of Battle in September 1967 were the Self Defense and Secret Self Defense Militia who, with the Guerrillas, were collectively called the "Irregulars."
The forces removed from the SB, the self-defense and secret self-defense, were defined as follows:

A. "Village Defense Force: A VC paramilitary structure responsible for the defense of hamlets and village areas controlled by the VC. These forces do not leave their home areas, and they perform their duties on a part-time basis. Duties consist of conducting propaganda, constructing fortifications, and defending home areas."

B. "Lone Self-Defense Force: A clandestine organization which performs the same general function in VC-controlled villages and hamlets as do the self-defense forces in VC-controlled areas. Their operations involve intelligence collection as well as sabotage and propaganda activities."
Chart B
Comparison of Population Control Statistics (1964-1966)

- VC Document on the Number of People in VC Areas.
- Estimated VC Population Control Statistics (VC View), for the Number of People in VC Areas.
- Allied Population Control Statistics for the Number of People in VC Areas. (Approx.)
Chart A

Comparison of the MACV OB for Irregulars and Their Strength as Suggested by VC Documents (1962-1967)

- VC Document on Countrywide Strength of Irregulars (Est).
- Strength of Irregulars Suggested by Documents.
- MACV OB for Irregulars.

Irregulars = Guerrillas and Militia

MACV OB drops Militia

US Intervention

First increase since 1963

Number of Irregulars