The current estimates of the build-up of Communist forces and the highest probable levels of combat through mid-1967 yield an external logistic requirement for Class II and IV and Class V supplies of 55 tons a day. If the disposition of Communist forces remains the same and internal distribution of food is impossible, an additional 45 tons of food could be required daily in the food-deficit areas (See Figure V-5). Then added logistic requirement would not tax the infiltration route through Laos very severely, but it would aid substantially in reducing the excess of road capacity over logistic requirements. But as the Communist build-up continues and the level of combat increases the excess of road capacity in Laos over logistic requirements could be diminished substantially.

The present disposition of Communist forces in South Vietnam is much more favorable for resupply from external sources. Over 85 percent of the NVA forces and 35 percent of the VC forces are in the I and II Corps areas in close proximity to both the Laotian infiltration corridor and the infiltration routes from Cambodia. These forces account for almost three-fourths of the supplies which must be infiltrated from external sources.

VII. Effect of Destruction and Capture of Supplies

The destruction and capture of Communist supplies by US and Allied forces during the past year as compiled from available data for selected categories of supplies are shown below. The data for food, ammunition, and POL basically represent losses incurred in the provinces of Binh Duong, Bien Hoa and Tay Ninh in III Corps area, and Quang Duc, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Pleiku in II Corps areas where US forces engaged in large search and destroy operations. Weapons losses include those inflicted by South Vietnamese troops as well as US and Allied forces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food (tons)</td>
<td>10-12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammunition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small arms and 12.7 mm machine gun (rounds)</td>
<td>180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL (gallons)</td>
<td>7,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>21,284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOUTH VIETNAM
DAILY LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS OF VC/NVA FORCES
AT VARYING LEVELS OF COMBAT
June 1966 and Projected June 1967

(Short Tons)

- External Requirement for Class II and Class IV Supplies and Class V Ammunition
- Potential External Requirement for Class I Food Supplies
- Internal Requirement

Jun 1966
Jun 1967
Jun 1967

(Each enemy battalion engaged in combat 1 day in 30)
(Each enemy battalion engaged in combat 1 day in 15)
The quantity of food known to have been captured or destroyed represents an amount sufficient to feed the current Communist main and local forces in South Vietnam for a period of about three months. This quantity becomes relatively significant when considered as the minimum loss of food to the enemy. Moreover, recent allied operations have not only destroyed enemy food crops and uncovered VC food storage points, but protected rice harvests from enemy acquisition and interdicted the movement of some food to VC distribution points.

Known losses of small arms and heavy machine gun ammunition, however, represent only about three days' supply for the current order of battle of VC/NVA troops at present levels of combat. Although the magnitude of losses sustained in engagements with ARVN forces or as a result of air strikes cannot be determined at the present time, such losses to date have had little discernible effect on the enemy's ability to initiate attacks or on the rate with which he expends his ammunition.

Known losses of POL in South Vietnam represent less than a two week supply for VC/NVA forces. Losses inflicted against POL stocks by ARVN forces and air strikes probably have added to the quantity of such supplies denied the enemy, but due to the small requirement estimated for VC/NVA forces operating in South Vietnam these losses probably have no effect on enemy capabilities.

The known number of weapons captured or destroyed by friendly forces through June 1966 was sufficient to equip some 40 battalions. Losses incurred as a result of air strikes have raised the total weapons loss, but again, if such losses are examined in the context of the number of VC-initiated attacks over recent months, it becomes clear that total weapons losses have not been prohibitive.

The quantities of destroyed and captured Communist supplies undoubtedly have added to the logistic problems faced by VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam but the extent of these adverse effects cannot be estimated since we are almost totally lacking in knowledge of Communist stockpiles in South Vietnam. The data presently available do not include losses inflicted by South Vietnamese forces (with the exception of losses of weapons); supplies lost as a result of B-52 strikes; or supplies destroyed as a result of numerous strikes by U.S. tactical aircraft.
ANNEX VI

THE MORALE OF THE COMMUNIST FORCES
The morale of the Viet Cong has declined gradually as the impact of the US force build-up has been felt. It has not yet, however, deteriorated to the point where the battle performance of Communist units is adversely affected, and certainly not to a degree sufficient to force any major adjustment in basic Communist strategy.

To all appearances, the Viet Cong organization is still basically intact, and its cadres* appear resolute. This is particularly true of the middle and upper echelons. Lower level cadres continue to accomplish everyday tasks, but their quality has declined considerably.

The battlefield capability of the southern Viet Cong--both regulars and irregulars--remains high. The rate of battlefield surrender** has actually gone down. There is evidence, however, of erosion in the ranks which has yet been reflected in the overall combat performance. The best southern troops are apparently being killed or maimed, and the recruits who replace them are often inferior both in quality and in motivation. The lowering enthusiasm of southern Viet Cong troops shows up in increasing defection rates, particularly among regulars, and in a rate of desertion by Viet Cong regulars which is probably at least as high as the rate for the South Vietnamese Army. Documentary evidence suggests that as many as 25% of all Viet Cong regulars deserted last year (compared to an ARVN desertion rate in 1965 of 14.2 per thousand per month, or about 17%).*** In 1965 this included an estimated 1,600 defecting Viet Cong regulars-about three percent of the mean regular strength--and several hundred battlefield surrenders. About 7,000 irregulars also defected last...

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*The word "cadre" in this discussion is defined as one who has the rank of assistant squad leader or above in the Communist Army, or his civilian equivalent.

**In this discussion distinction is made between battlefield surrender, desertion from the Communists, and defec-

tion to Allied control.

***Neither rate takes into account the number of deserters who later returned to military control.
year. There is little hard evidence on the extent of simple desertion or "resignation" from irregular ranks.

Southbound NVA units apparently lose a few deserters in North Vietnam and Laos, and some also in South Vietnam. By mid-1966, there had been about 100 defections and 500 surrenders from NVA units.

The continued resolution of the NVA is in sharp contrast to the decline in morale of the southern Viet Cong Army in part because its cadres are good, but also because NVA soldiers who want to quit believe they have no place to go.

Barring a marked improvement in Viet Cong military fortunes or another round of political instability in Saigon, Southern Viet Cong morale seems likely to continue its downhill course. The deterioration in morale seems likely to accelerate as the quality of low level cadres continues to decline and as the proportion of poorly motivated draftees in army ranks increases. The erosion of morale will probably be reflected by rising rates of defection and desertion. Desertion rates could begin to hurt the Viet Cong seriously in the not too distant future.

The NVA troops in South Vietnam are likely to remain resolute, in large part because they see no alternative to fighting. If the resolution and quality of the southern Viet Cong continue to deteriorate, the NVA units will probably assume an even greater share of the fighting.

A. The Viet Cong View of Morale

The Viet Cong, like Napoleon, consider morale far more important than materiel. According to a Viet Cong document written in 1965, apparently by an official on the COSVN staff, "the Americans fail to realize that neither the size of an expeditionary force nor the quantity of modern weapons can be a decisive factor in any liberation war. They (the Americans) are not aware or not willing to admit the fact that the key factor that leads to victory in any war is the..."
determination of the people to fight and win."* The Communists do not leave the maintenance of morale to chance.

A Viet Cong document which discussed several missions of training italicized only one: that of heightening "the will to fight and morale of our organization." It prescribed "reindoctrination" courses, 60-70 days long for Viet Cong regulars, and 20-30 days long for village guerrillas. Such courses are supplemented by frequent spot lectures, several drafts of which have been captured, and by attempts by the Viet Cong to exclude government propaganda from their territory.**

The Viet Cong constantly assess the state of their own morale. For example, a captured memorandum, dated 14 April 1965, concerning the censoring of personal letters stated "the purpose of censorship is to detect anti-revolutionary thoughts or loss of morale...." A more recent memorandum, dated 27 February 1966, asked subordinate units to report on the "status of political ideology" together with "the number of North Vietnamese, and South Vietnamese (Viet Cong) deserters, stragglers, ralliers and missing."

While determined to preserve their own morale, the Viet Cong are equally resolved to undermine their enemy's. Government officials are assassinated not simply to eliminate specific officeholders, but to sow panic and confusion. Attacks are often launched for psychological effect rather than for purely military reasons. Viet Cong psychological warfare efforts are massive, much larger in proportion to resources available than those of the allies. All PRP Committees, from

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*North Vietnamese Minister of Defense Giap reiterated the theme in the January issue of Hoc Tap, the party's theoretical journal in North Vietnam.

**One Viet Cong document even suggested that people in the "liberated zone" be forbidden from listening to "plays and soap operas" broadcast by government radio.
COSVN down to village levels, have Military Proselyting Sections to induce GVN defections. *

The Viet Cong hierarchy is aware that the morale of its rank and file has been gradually eroding, but it apparently believes that allied—particularly South Vietnamese—morale is deteriorating even more rapidly. Because the Viet Cong view the war primarily as a contest of wills, evidence of crumbling or lowered morale on the part of their adversaries takes on particular significance. Tales of South Vietnamese ineptitude and lack of motivation are frequent and often well-grounded. ARVN desertion rates may give the Viet Cong considerable grounds for hope. ** The recent Buddhist upheavals may have reinforced the Viet Cong's opinion that the fabric of the South Vietnamese government is weak, and that its will to continue over the long run is questionable.

B. Morale of the Cadres

The Viet Cong's greatest strength lies in the organization and in the cadres who keep it going. As long as the cadre structure remains intact and cadres are determined and willing to impose discipline, the rank and file, who may become individually disheartened, are unlikely to give up in large groups.

The level of cadre spirit, although generally high, varies from echelon to echelon. Among the leaders of the party, there is little evidence of a slackening of resolve, and mid-level cadres also appear resolute. Low-level cadres, although they continue to get the jobs done, are often less sanguine than their superiors; however, and there is considerable evidence that many are discouraged. A moderate but increasing number of assistant platoon leaders, squad leaders, assistant

*The proselyters aim at US as well as Vietnamese soldiers. A study of US troops, written late last year by COSVN's Military Proselyting Section, asserted that while US officers were well-indoctrinated, most US enlisted men in South Vietnam "dread a large-scale and protracted war, and favor negotiations." Thus far, no American soldiers have defected.

** ARVN desertion rates per thousand:
  Monthly average, 1964: 8.3
  Monthly average, 1965: 14.2
  Monthly average, 1966: 20.1 (1st quarter)
squad leaders, and hamlet village officials, have appeared at government Chieu Hoi centers,* and many others have deserted or "resigned."**

North Vietnamese formations apparently are not immune from cadre desertions. Captives from an antiaircraft unit established in North Vietnam in April 1965 said that the unit had had "many sudden changes in command" because cadre deserted before arriving in the south. Cadre desertions from North Vietnamese units are probably not numerous, however. Interrogations, RAND studies, captured diaries, and letters indicate that most NVA cadres, despite hardships, are resolute. A recent MACV study on the NVA states that "the quality of its cadre is one of the NVA's strongest assets."

The lowering quality of Southern Viet Cong cadres probably accounts for a large degree for recent increases in cadre desertion. A captured party directive from the Viet Cong province of Can Tho, dated 30 April 1966, complained of the party cadre's "inability to cope with hardship," and ascribed "the drop in quality... [to] recent heavy recruiting, which resulted in members' putting too much stress on quantity..." The directive stated that "at present we have a number of comrades who have not

*A RAND researcher has noted that out of 1,274 ralliers who defected in the last six months of 1965, 164 (13%) claimed to be cadres. Surprisingly, a larger percentage of regulars (26%) than irregulars (9%) said they were cadres. The same researcher said in June 1966 that the overall ratio of cadres to total defectors is rising. Exact figures are unavailable.

**Captured documents indicate that on some occasions cadres have been about as prone to desert as the rank and file. For example, a Viet Cong report dated 3 April 1966, stated that an ARVN operation in the delta had induced "32 cadres and 42 troops" to "resign."
yet been able to eradicate their bourgeois mentality... When the going gets rough, they drag their feet.

The shortage of experienced cadre has become an increasingly common theme in Viet Cong documents. The shortage—particularly in the delta where many have been withdrawn to reinforce units outside the area—has forced the Viet Cong to employ what may turn out to be unpopular expedients. A RAND researcher in Dinh Tuong Province in the delta has reported that in a number of cases, women are now being employed as party officials. Despite the Communist doctrine of the equality of sexes, this is probably deeply resented by Vietnamese men. The same researcher states that in some instances, "outsiders" are being put in charge of local units in Dinh Tuong. Although many reports have been received about "dissension" arising from the use of outsiders, there are no hard indications as yet that the disagreements have reached serious proportions.

C. Morale of the Soldiers

1. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA)

By most objective measures, the fighting spirit of the North Vietnamese soldier is good. As of 1 July 1966, only about 100 NVA soldiers had defected, and allied soldiers had captured only about 500, despite frequent engagements and heavy fighting. No NVA infantry unit as large as a squad, has surrendered en masse. Allied field officers report that with few exceptions, North Vietnamese soldiers fight tenaciously and are well disciplined in battle. On the basis of interviews of 39 North Vietnamese soldiers, the RAND Corporation has concluded that "most NVA soldiers see no option but to go on fighting."

*Other captured documents make reference to the poor quality of new cadre. For example, a 1965 "Top Secret" document from Phu Yen Province complained that the "new cadres used for replenishment of our VC units cause serious security problems due to their low political experience." A later document from the same province contrasted the "old time cadre," who were "experienced but somewhat tired," with the "new cadre" who were "ardent but inexperienced." The document added, however, that "poor cadre are better than none."
Available evidence, however, indicates that many of the rank and file, and some cadres, are in low spirits. The level of an NVA soldier's morale, of course, depends on where he is and what he has experienced. Before starting the trip south, most North Vietnamese are in good spirits. Interrogations of prisoners and ralliers, and captured NVA diaries, of which there are at least 30 examples, indicate that most feel their cause is just, and that their mission is to rid South Vietnam of American "imperialists" and "puppets."

With some exceptions, the NVA soldiers retain their spirit as they march through the southern part of North Vietnam toward the Laotian corridor. After they cross into Laos, however, their mood begins to shift. Steep hills, tight marching schedules, bombing raids, mosquitoes and leeches help induce the change. Diarists frequently become eloquent about their troubles during the march through the corridor, which takes from one to three months. An NVA sergeant wrote in his diary, after three weeks in Laos, that "twelve days had passed with innumerable hardships. Marches and marches. Rains and rains." Another diarist wrote, after a month on the trail, that he was going through "the deepest sorrow and utmost hardship" he had ever experienced. A third diarist, also on the trail for a month, wrote on 25 January 1966 that he was "lying on the ground, suffering from the stings of Laotian flies and bleeding..." A fourth declared that "no word is enough to depict the rigor and hardship we have been experiencing."

Once he reaches South Vietnam, an NVA soldier's morale often rises, particularly if his unit is allowed to recuperate. One infiltrator, on reaching the South, wrote a friend that although "the infiltration trip to South Vietnam was filled with rigors and hardships," he was now "eager to do his duties." Not all of them can rest, however. Many NVA soldiers who fought at Plei Me last November or at A Shau this March were relatively fresh from the trail.

Once in South Vietnam and committed to campaigning, the average NVA soldier lives a life of hardship and danger. Frequently, he is sick. A 23 January 1966 entry in a medical record picked up by the Air Cavalry in Binh Dinh Province noted that in a 519-man NVA battalion, "sick personnel accounted for 45% of the assigned strength." The sick included 133 men who had malaria, 10 suffering from
"debility," and two who contracted beri-beri. More recent
documents indicate that the NVA sick rates continue high.*

Hardships, fighting, and air and artillery harass-
ment sometimes combine to dishearten individual NVA
soldiers, even units. A diary captured in February 1966,
kept by a soldier in an antiaircraft detachment infiltrated
into South Vietnam late last summer, indicated that the
"morale of cadres and soldiers" in his unit "continued to
be unstable." Another diarist wrote on 2 January 1966 that
"I have been 5 months in the battlefield... I began to wilt
under the strain of privations, hardships, and loneliness
in the heart of the jungle... I have seen nothing but...
jungle, stream water, and bombs and bullets. What a bitter
truth! Now I am hoodwinked at the point of no return... I
have a deep distaste for the war and I am really fed up with
the liberation undertaking, which has been heralded as a
'turning point of history' and a 'golden opportunity'
Instead there exists only illusion, a political trick to ap-
pease those who are engaged in the fight." Not all diarists,
of course, react to their hardships the same way. One had
written earlier, "Damn the Americans! They force us to
sleep in forests and eat nothing but rice and salt. I am
determined to fight and serve my people until my last breath."

Although NVA units continue to perform well,
there is considerable evidence that their composition has
been changing, probably for the worse from their point of
view. The ratio of recruits to veterans is rising.** Moreover,
as NVA units suffer heavy casualties, they are taking

* The 324B Division, which infiltrated in May directly through
the DMZ, has had a much lower malaria rate than other NVA
units. A POW said that only about 10% of the division suf-
f ered from malaria. The trip across the DMZ, of course, is
far shorter than that through Laos.

** A document captured late last year indicated that 59% of the
soldiers in one NVA battalion had been conscripted in 1965. NVA
units infiltrated earlier in the year had a much higher proportion
of veterans.
in southerners as replacements. As a general rule, South Vietnamese fillers are less eager than their northern counterparts.*

On balance, however, neither the rising percentage of draftees nor the inclusion in NVA units of poorly motivated southerners seems likely in the near future to affect seriously NVA combat performance. The quality of NVA cadres is still too high, and the base rates of defection, desertion, and surrender are still too low to indicate a sudden or rapid deterioration in the NVA's ability to fight. It seems likely that for the foreseeable future the North Vietnamese soldier will continue to follow the path of least resistance—that of obeying orders of his cadre, and of staying with his unit.

2. Viet Cong Regulars**

Like NVA formations, indigenous Southern Viet Cong regular units have good combat morale. Almost invariably, they fight well, and under skilled leadership. So far, no regular unit has given up en masse. Few Viet Cong officers have surrendered. Whatever the rank and file may feel off the battlefield, they are tightly disciplined in combat.

Yet the morale problems of Viet Cong regular units are more numerous and more concrete than those of NVA battalions. Exact statistics are unavailable, but it is estimated that approximately 1,400 regulars defected to the government last year. (That is, about 3% of the total mean regular strength.) Several hundred additional regulars surrendered last year. The overall yearly desertion rate of regulars, including defectors and those who go home, probably runs around 25%, somewhat higher than ARVN rates. The high desertion rate is a relatively recent development.

* An NVA document captured in Dinh Dinh complained of the "relatively low political awareness of the newly-recruited southerners."

** There are two types of regulars:

1) Main Force units, directly subordinate to COSVN, or to a military region headquarters.

2) Local Force units, directly subordinate to a provincial or district headquarters.
The decline in off-battlefield morale has come about principally for two reasons. The first is the constant harassment and heavy losses inflicted on regular units by the Allies. Captured documents attest to the effect of the pounding. A report captured in Hau Nghia Province, issued in November 1965 by the "Unified Command Committee" (apparently a regional party organization) outlines some of the problems that Viet Cong regulars face:

To cope with our mobility on the battlefield, the enemy increases his air and artillery activities day and night or conducts continuous sweep operations to wear down our armed forces or foil our plan of attack if he foresees our intentions... (Our) movements frequently take place at night. Troops must carry heavy loads and move great distances... (They) must frequently bivouac in the field, lie on the ground, endure bad weather, and are kept awake by enemy aircraft and artillery; therefore, their health is highly affected... (Consequently) the troops' morale and nerves are permanently high strung and many complications arise in case of alarm.*

The second reason for the decline in off-battlefield morale among regulars is the changing composition of the Viet Cong army. In 1964, regular units consisted largely of well-motivated volunteers. Since then, the Viet Cong have had to rely increasingly on unwilling conscripts. A study of Chieu Hoi records shows that recently-recruited conscripts make up a large portion of those who defect. They are also far more prone than volunteers to desert. As the proportion of poorly-motivated draftees among Viet Cong regulars increases, desertion and defection rates should rise.

It would be a mistake, however, to picture the morale of Viet Cong regular forces as completely gloomy. Neither the low-level cadre nor the rank and file are as

*Documents and prisoners captured in other parts of the country attest that such problems are widespread.
staunch as they used to be, but many noncoms and apparently most officers appear as determined as ever. Yet the trend in the quality of regular personnel seems inexorably downward. Eventually, the erosion in quality of regulars, accompanied by an increasingly high desertion rate, may limit the Viet Cong’s ability to carry out their present strategy.

3. Viet Cong Irregulars

Viet Cong irregular forces continue in large part to perform their tasks. In fact, the incidence of terrorism and sabotage—usually carried out by guerrillas—rose substantially in the last quarter of 1965, and except for a seasonal drop around Tet, has stayed at high levels ever since.

A considerable body of evidence suggests, however, that the morale of the irregulars has been dropping over the past year. Last year, about 7,000 defected to the government. Approximately 5,000 more surrendered. In 1964, about 1,500 defected and 3,500 surrendered. The overall frequency of defection and surrender has continued to increase this year. Desertions among guerrillas appear to be increasing, although hamlet militiamen who serve at home, apparently seldom desert.

When Allied activity is intense, irregulars in some areas have surrendered and defected in large numbers. Early this year in Binh Dinh Province, for example, while the six-week-long Operation WHITE WING was in progress, some 650 irregulars gave up and about 250 rallied. According to a US official involved in the Chieu Hoi program, “several 10-15-man groups” were among those who defected in Binh Dinh.

*Viet Cong irregular forces are those subordinate to the village and hamlet. They include:

1) Guerrillas, consisting of full-time squads and platoons, not always based in their village or hamlets.

2) People’s Self-Defense Force (often called the militia), consisting of part-time paramilitary forces assigned to defend hamlets and villages.
The rise in defections among irregulars probably has occurred for the same reasons that an increase took place among the regulars. Allied operations have resulted in an increasing decline in guerrilla morale, and the quality of personnel has declined.* As Viet Cong casualties mount, both trends seem likely to continue.

4. Recruitment Problems

Until the middle of last year, the Viet Cong appeared to be able to fill its ranks with relative ease. Volunteers were still fairly plentiful, and draftees usually went willingly. Somewhere around mid-1965, however, the situation apparently began to sour. As Viet Cong demands for manpower soared, volunteers became scarcer and conscripts joined the Viet Cong more reluctantly. The trend is illustrated by an undated document captured in late November 1965 in Long Khanh Province. The document stated that "the Youth's enlistment... in January, February and March 1965 increased over that in the last six months in 1964... However, the result of enlistment obtained in the first six months of 1965 failed to meet the requirements of the armed forces... The draft movement in May, June and July declined."** Some Viet Cong draftees interviewed by RAND have stated that "they wanted to avoid military service with either side, but that if they had to serve, they preferred to do so with ARVN, where they were paid and their families received death benefits."

The Viet Cong are using several expedients to relieve their manpower demands. They have resorted to kidnapings, are employing large numbers of women as irregulars,***

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* A substantial number of documents indicate that one of the main reasons for the decline has been the Viet Cong policy of sending guerrillas and militiamen who show promise to serve with regular units. The "upgrading" process has been particularly intense in IV Corps, where Viet Cong fortunes are gradually deteriorating.

** Other documents and POW interrogations indicate that the problem is widespread.

*** A Viet Cong directive written in August 1965 stated that one-third of all "guerrillas" should be women.
and are increasing the use of ARVN defectors and POW's to fill regular ranks.*

Such measures probably provide some temporary alleviation of Viet Cong recruitment problems. They do not solve the problems however. In addition, as casualties mount, it is possible that the Communists will eventually be unable by any device to replace their losses from within South Vietnam, thereby placing an even greater demand on North Vietnam for troops.

D. Gauges of Military Morale

1. Defection

Since early 1963, according to the Chieu Hoi office in Saigon, about 20,000 Viet Cong regular and irregular soldiers have rallied to the government. Of these, about 2,900 defected in 1963. The number dropped to 1,900 in 1964. In 1965, largely as a result of the American intervention, Communist military defections increased to about 8,500. In the first half of this year, approximately 6,500 soldiers rallied.

Generally speaking, the low-level, poorly motivated Viet Cong soldier defects at a far higher rate than does the cadre.** Nonetheless, defectors tend to share certain characteristics. They are usually of short service, and they tend to rally near their homes.

* A directive issued by the Central Trung Bo Liberation Army, Unit 2b, dated 26 October 1965, stated that units were required "to select 50% of surrendered RVNAF soldiers to fill vacancies in our units." A number of documents indicate that the Viet Cong are wary of ex-government troops.

** The percentage of regular defectors appears to be rising, however. Monthly percentage of regulars to total military defectors: July 1965 - 15%; August - 13%; September - 18%; October - 17%; December - 19%; January 1966 - 23%; February - 26%; March - 23%; April - 23%. Although there have been 6,500 military defectors in the first half of this year (compared to about 8,500 all last year), regular defectors this year (about 1,450) already outnumber regular defectors last year (about 1,400).
2. Desertion

a. Southern Viet Cong

Desertion is an extremely serious problem for the Viet Cong. Available evidence, direct and indirect, indicates that deserters who do not defect are far more numerous than those who do. A clandestinely obtained document, probably genuine, issued by the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) late last year stated that "...desertion for the specific purpose of defecting to the enemy (is) rare in comparison with desertion from other motives..." COSVN undoubtedly is aware of how many of its soldiers desert, and also knows how many of these defect.

COSVN's assertion about the ratio of deserters to defectors is supported by other documents. A Viet Cong "Top Secret" Directive dated 20 October 1965, captured by the 173rd Airborne Brigade in early January 1966, stated that in one area "desertion is prevailing in various armed and paramilitary forces. According to incomplete statistics, there were 138 deserters from January to August 1965...five defected to the ARVN government." Another Viet Cong document mentioned that "during a one-month period in one unit, 47 men deserted to go home and two defected to the enemy." A check of 20 deserters listed in a Viet Cong roster captured in late December, 1965, against records of arrivals in local Chieu Ho centers indicated that none of the deserters defected.

Although desertion is frequently mentioned in captured Viet Cong documents, only seven so far have included all the ingredients necessary for establishing rates: the size of the unit, the number of deserters who left it, and a time frame. If all seven units are added together, and their respective time frames stretched to a year, their overall projected annual desertion rate would be 32%. However, two of the seven documents imply that the units mentioned had unusually high rates. If these units are excluded from the total, the overall average annual rate of the sample drops to 27%. The seven-unit sample includes two battalions and five companies. The five-unit sample includes two battalions and three companies.

Twenty-seven percent—rounded off, 25%—seems plausible as an overall desertion rate for 1965 from regular Viet Cong units. A reading of most POW and rallier interrogations would suggest that the rate is substantially
higher than 25%, but prisoners and defectors may be inclined to exaggerate. The interrogations appear to indicate that desertion is more common in local force units than in main force units, and likewise more common in main force units recruited locally than in like units serving away from home.

If the mean size of the regular Viet Cong army (excluding NVA soldiers) was 45,000 last year, and 25% is accepted as the regular desertion rate, then some 11,250 Viet Cong regulars deserted last year.* Since approximately 1,400 regulars defected last year, the ratio of deserters who go home to defectors among regular units would appear to be about seven to one. It should be noted that available documentary evidence suggests the ratio is a good deal higher.

In the first six months of 1966, an estimated 1,450 southern Viet Cong regulars defected (See Defection). If the ratio of deserter to defector is 7-1, and if defection/desertion rates continue at current rates during the rest of the year, then there will be a total of 23,200 defectors and deserters during 1966 from southern Viet Cong regular forces. (2,900x7=20,300 defectors + 2,900 deserters = 23,200). Assuming the mean size of the southern regular force will be about 60,000 for 1966, then the Viet Cong regular force desertion rate would be 38%. Many of these, of course, would be retrieved.

Little is known about desertion among Viet Cong irregular units. The rate of desertion, however, varies considerably by type with the highest rate found among the village guerrillas—the highest category of irregulars. Hamlet militia and guerrillas apparently do not desert in large numbers, but, since they never leave home, they may just refuse to fight.** Within each category of irregular

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* What is not known is how many Viet Cong deserters return to the ranks, either voluntarily, or through being caught. US advisers estimate that from 15 to 20% of men listed as deserters by the RVNAF return to their own or some other unit. The rate of return among Viet Cong deserters may be comparable.

** Captured documents indicate that hamlet militiamen in several areas have refused to fight, or, as one report put it, "quit rank to live as civilians."
forces the highest desertion rate is probably among the fresh recruits.*

So far, the southern Viet Cong have been able to live with their desertion problem, probably because their manpower pool has been adequate to fill the gaps. If the pool begins to dry up, or if desertion rates increase, the desertion of southerners could become a crucial problem for the Viet Cong. Among the consequences of a higher desertion rate would be an increased reliance on fillers from North Vietnam.

b. The NVA

So far, NVA desertion rates have been relatively low. Captured documents, including diaries, indicate that NVA units moving south lose a few men to desertion in North Vietnam and more along the corridor.** Once in South Vietnam, the average NVA soldier seldom deserts, probably because he has no place to go. Captured documents indicate there are some exceptions. For example, a notebook containing strength figures of a 400-man North Vietnamese outfit shows that 9 were deserters and that 17 men were "lost." Some of the errant may have been South Vietnamese attached to the unit, however. On balance, desertion is not now a serious problem for the NVA, and seems unlikely to become one in the foreseeable future.

3. Surrender

While desertion and defection have been increasing, the rate of battlefield surrender has gone down. In 1963, according to MACV J-2 statistics, 4,771 Viet Cong surrendered. The number dropped to 4,187 in 1964, and rose

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* A considerable body of evidence points to a high desertion rate among recruits. For example, in one group of 152 recruits being sent from the delta to a training depot in III Corps, 33 deserted enroute. Documents captured at the depot indicate that it had a special "stragglers' and deserters' barracks."

** Where deserters in Laos go is unclear. A diary of an NVA battalion commander suggests that at least some are eaten by tigers.
to 5,982 last year—an increase of 43%. The rise in captives failed to keep pace with the expansion of the Viet Cong, however, whose numbers increased by at least 50% during the year. Furthermore, since 1964, while the number of Viet Cong killed has been growing substantially, the number of captives has increased only slightly.** As one might expect, Viet Cong irregulars are far more prone to surrender than Viet Cong regulars.**

Why Viet Cong surrenders have failed to keep pace with burgeoning defection and desertion rates is difficult to determine. One explanation lies in the Viet Cong’s excellent battlefield discipline. Another may lie in the increasing use of air power by the allies. Many who might otherwise surrender are struck down by bombs before they can reach allied lines.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios of estimated killed to captured:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(or approximately)

4:1 6:1 8:1

** In operation WHITE WING, conducted in Binh Dinh Province early this year, 718 Viet Cong reportedly surrendered. According to II Corps estimates, only about 60 of these were regulars.

VI-17
ANNEX VII

MORALE AMONG THE PEOPLE IN VIET CONG AREAS
ANNEX VII

MORALE AMONG THE PEOPLE IN VIET CONG AREAS

The morale and support of the populace in the areas under Viet Cong control, (the "sea" in which the Communist "fish" must swim) are matters of prime long range importance to the Communists. There is a substantial body of evidence that morale, and therefore, support for the Communists, is dropping in the Viet Cong areas. The flow of refugees has increased dramatically. The desire for safety, of course, is the main motive for this exodus; increasing numbers of people now realize that no Viet Cong region is immune from attack. Among other reasons given by the refugees are high Viet Cong taxes, forced labor, and conscription.

Popular support for the Viet Cong probably will continue to dwindle as insurgent taxes rise and forced labor demands increase. Should the populace begin to think the Viet Cong are definitely losing, movement away from the Communists--if not always towards the government--will probably increase, and the Viet Cong will be faced with an eroding popular base.

Refugees

The principal evidence that the Viet Cong have lost the active support of many people in areas they control is the flow of refugees toward regions dominated by the government. Although there were some refugees during and before 1964, most have fled since the beginning of 1965. The rate of flow appears to have increased particularly since the summer of 1965, coincidental with the build-up of US forces in Vietnam and the large-scale increase in the number of airstrikes. Statistics compiled by the South Vietnamese government* illustrate the upward trend:

* These statistics must, of course, be taken with some reserve. There are omissions, duplications, and delays in reporting by provincial officials. Although required to report to Saigon on a weekly basis, some provinces are said to have a statistical backlog of from one to three months. To add to the confusion, many refugees register more than once, in order to pick up extra benefits.
Moreover, many more flee the Viet Cong than are reflected in government statistics. The government records only those who register. Large numbers of refugees do not, many in order to circumvent local government policies which exclude them from certain areas. The largest number of such unregistered refugees is in Saigon, which has a law on the books forbidding refugees from settling in the city. Estimates of the number of refugees in one of Saigon's nine precincts run as high as 30,000 to 40,000, although the government lists only 1,518 in the entire city.

The principal reason for fleeing given by most refugees is a desire for safety, but a large proportion add that they are weary of Viet Cong taxes, conscription, and demands for forced labor. Whatever the motive, once the refugee has entered a government camp active support for the Communists generally stops. Most refugees cooperate to some extent with the South Vietnamese government.

At present, the Viet Cong do not appear to have a clear, overall policy on what to do about the exodus.* Their course seems to vary by time and place. In some areas, they have merely tried to make the refugees' lot unpleasant. Elsewhere, the Viet Cong have made direct attacks on refugee camps, for instance in Quang Tin Province where 30 refugees were killed and 60 wounded in an attack on a refugee center last January. The refugee flow continues despite such tactics, indicating the inability of the Viet Cong to stop it.

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* It is abundantly clear from captured documents that the Viet Cong do not want refugees to leave Communist-controlled territory. There is no documentary evidence to support a frequently made assertion that the Viet Cong encourage the flow of refugees to overburden the South Vietnamese government's administrative apparatus.
Those Who Stay

For those who remain in Viet Cong territory, life is becoming increasingly unpleasant. As refugees flee, the pressure on those who remain grows more intense. Taxes are higher, demands for labor have increased, and controls are tighter. Although the Viet Cong have been losing favor in many of their areas in the last twelve months, they still maintain firm control in most of them and still are able to carry out their tasks adequately. By and large, the Saigon government has not been able to translate distaste for the Viet Cong into support for itself by the people in contested and VC-controlled areas, although there have been a few dividends for the government in the form of information provided about the Viet Cong.

1. Taxes

The Viet Cong tax burden—collected in money and goods—falls most heavily on the South Vietnamese peasant, and the Viet Cong effort is costly. According to the captured minutes of a COSVN-level conference held on 15 February 1966, the chief of the COSVN Rear Service Department disclosed that supply requirements for 1966 would be "three times higher" than those of 1965. The Viet Cong frequently set goals considerably in excess of what they expect to achieve, but the COSVN supply officer's disclosure still suggests that tax pressures on the inhabitants of Viet Cong areas will be much heavier this year than last.*

* The plight of the taxpayer in Viet Cong areas is illustrated by a document, captured in October in Binh Duong Province, outlining the Viet Cong plans for taxation in the province for the last six months of 1965. The document reviewed earlier tax revenues and estimates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Revenue for 1964</th>
<th>Actual Revenue for 1964</th>
<th>Estimated Revenue for 1965</th>
<th>Actual Revenue for Six Months of 1965</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16,920,000</td>
<td>20,531,612</td>
<td>8,951,084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the estimated revenues of 1964 and 1965 makes it apparent that the Viet Cong almost doubled tax goals in Binh Duong in 1965. Yet a comparison of actual revenues shows that the Viet Cong were having greater difficulties in collecting the 1965 taxes. Documents captured later in the province indicate that many Binh Duong taxpayers did "not enthusiastically contribute to the resistance," and that "generally speaking, residents in the liberated areas lived a destitute and miserable life."
Although complaints about Viet Cong taxes are amply documented, one must be careful to avoid reading too much into them. A "1965 Tax Collection Report," issued by COSVN's Financial and Economic Section, indicated that complaining was by no means universal in Viet Cong territory, and that in some areas taxes were collected without too much trouble. Yet Viet Cong taxes are much higher than those of the South Vietnamese government, as many refugees have pointedly remarked. High taxes probably will not by themselves cause people in Viet Cong areas to shift their allegiances. If combined with other burdens, however, the taxes may induce additional inhabitants of Viet Cong territory to flee, or, ultimately, to curtail their support of the Viet Cong.

2. Labor

The Viet Cong need large numbers of people to grow food, haul supplies, and move earth. The number of volunteers is inadequate. Forced labor has become increasingly prevalent as Viet Cong operations have expanded, and as the labor pool has shrunk—partly because of the draft, and partly because of the flight of refugees. Although the Viet Cong try to persuade laborers to work willingly, the number of volunteers is inadequate and often the Viet Cong must use harsh methods.

A document, dated 20 September 1965, illustrated some of the labor problems the Viet Cong face. The author, apparently a high-ranking provincial labor official, stated that "the people in areas where mobilization is still possible are not fully aware of our policies. Therefore, they do not work enthusiastically, lack a sense of responsibility, and waste manpower as well as equipment. Village and hamlet cadres, instead of persuading, tend to order the people to work. Front line Supply Commands in villages and hamlets do not have sufficient personnel for operations... The mission is burdensome and there are not enough laborers to move rice available from production."

* The shortage of labor is a recurrent theme in Viet Cong documents. Furthermore, recruited laborers frequently desert. One document stated that of 600 short-term civilian laborers needed for evacuating casualties from a battle which had taken place a few days earlier, only 54 were gathered; these all went home after completing their first evacuation trip. The removal of wounded from the battlefield was therefore improvised.
It would be a mistake to exaggerate Viet Cong labor problems, or the extent to which the enemy's forced labor policy alienates the people. Viet Cong performance in most areas still shows their ability to get things done; and the South Vietnamese peasant is used to being put upon. Yet if labor shortages increase--as seems likely--the Viet Cong will probably have to resort to still more draconian methods to make sure that work is accomplished. An increasingly severe labor policy would probably estrange still more Vietnamese peasants.

3. Willingness of the People to Provide Information on the Viet Cong

In the past year, the amount of information volunteered about the Viet Cong has increased greatly. Some of the increase is due to more efficient collection techniques, higher agent pay, and the presence in the field of large numbers of intelligence officers. However, most Allied intelligence officials--military and civilian--state that much of the increase has resulted from a greater willingness on the part of the populace to inform on the Viet Cong.

Some of the voluntary informants became available because they thought the Allies were beginning to win, some because they harbored grudges against the Viet Cong. Some had other reasons. A report, dated 7 March, written by the US G-2 adviser to the ARVN 1st Division, stated, for example, that "it is believed that the local population in the 1st Division area does not feel an identity with Viet Cong Main Force... probably because [Main Force units in the region] are composed primarily of North Vietnamese draftees and some regroupees." The people apparently were more willing to inform on northerners than on the local boys in the militia and guerrillas. The prevalence of such a reaction is not known. If it is generally true throughout Vietnam, the intelligence picture may improve still further as the proportion of North Vietnamese in Main Force units continues to rise.
ANNEX VIII

VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST VIEWS ON THE LIKELY LENGTH OF THE WAR
ANNEX VIII

VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST VIEWS ON THE LIKELY LENGTH OF THE WAR

I. The Anticipated Timing of Victory in 1955 and 1956

During the first two years following the Geneva Conference, the Communists believed that they could attain a position of dominance in South Vietnam mainly through the medium of political, rather than military action. This was clearly indicated in their secret communications. One order, for example, from the top Communist echelon in South Vietnam to the provincial Communist leaders declared in September 1955 that "at present, the only way to unification of our country" is to hold the conference and elections called for under the Geneva Accords.

The Communists apparently believed that their candidates could win the elections and that it would not take long after the voting, which was scheduled under the Agreements for July 1956, to accomplish a Communist takeover. Furthermore, in 1954 South Vietnam's chances of political survival as a viable political entity appeared so slight that the Communists had every reason to anticipate an eventual collapse which would permit them to take over even if the elections were not held. A secret Communist party directive of late 1954 said that the "struggle" to assure that the "French imperialists and their puppets" leave the South was targeted for completion "within two years," and that "despite our impatience, we can accomplish this no sooner." Most of the other Communist assessments of their situation through mid-1955 were also highly optimistic and implied that victory was not far away.

From mid-1955 to mid-1956 the Communists gradually grew more pessimistic about their chances of a takeover under the terms of the Geneva Agreement, as the Diem government repeatedly refused to agree to an election which it realized the Communists would inevitably win. The Communists were never again so optimistic about their chances after their failure during this era. The evidence shows them in succeeding years to have been much more cautious and vague in their references to the time necessary to complete a takeover.

VIII-1
II. Victory Timing in the Period 1956-1959

Captured documents reveal that the failure to hold the elections agreed on at Geneva resulted in deep and widespread disillusionment in Communist ranks in the South. For the next few years, party leaders in the North and the South cast about for a new strategy to accomplish their objectives. Difficulties were increased by the success of Ngo Dinh Diem’s regime in repressing the low-level terrorism which had been mounted by the Communists in the hope of weakening and undercutting the Saigon government’s position before and during the elections. Communist documents speak of great damage inflicted on the underground cadre organization by Diem’s operations.

This combination of difficulties, particularly the Diem government’s military pressure, led many of the southern Communists to believe that only a turn from reliance primarily on political action to reliance primarily on military operations against the government would bring about a “Communist victory in the South. Communist documents indicate that there were various strategies put forth by the cadres in the South for insuring the success of military action. One called for concentration on the construction of a large Communist base in the highlands from which the lowlands and the population centers could be threatened. Those who advocated this policy, according to the documents, suggested that the Communists focus almost all their assets on the highlands and delay the solidification and enlargement of their position in the delta until the highlands effort was completed. Others argued for a concentration of effort in the delta to the exclusion of the highlands.

It can readily be seen that debates over strategy as basic as this would have a strong influence on Communist estimates of the time needed to accomplish their goals, and that such estimates would thus be cast in only the haziest and most indefinite of terms.

Documents indicate that the Communists eventually decided on a country-wide effort which theoretically would put equal emphasis on military and political “struggle.” The documents give much of the credit for the adoption of this strategy to Le Duan, the present first secretary of the Communist Party in Hanoi. Le Duan went to the North in 1956, apparently from the top leadership position in the South. He appears to have convinced the Communist
hierarchy in the North that an all-out military effort should be started in the South. Communist records generally date the decision to mount an all-out struggle in the South as having been made in late 1958 or early 1959.

It was clear by 1959 that the Communists were already organizing for a full-scale military effort in the South. One captured document stated that "instructions from the political department of the party in about May of 1959" reminded the cadres in the South of the "necessity of making full use of the armed forces," and that the cadres then started to "lay out" the "necessary policies." Since "October of 1959," the document asserted, "the armed forces have been fighting powerfully."

III. The Time Frame and Goals in 1959

There are no specific references in any available Communist materials as to what amount of time the Communists believed in 1959 would be necessary to accomplish a takeover of South Vietnam, or even to achieve any significant proportion of their objectives. Language on the anticipation of victory in Communist materials of this period was cast in very general terms. A broadcast by the Communists in late 1959, for example, said that the "day of victory" would "depend mainly on the changing aspects of the struggle." Such statements suggest a desire to avoid raising false hopes among the cadre or to make predictions which might later prove wrong.

Analysis of Communist materials, however, does point rather firmly to a Communist belief in 1959 and 1960 that it would take at least five years of all-out military and political action to bring about Communist domination of the South. It does not appear that they expected at this time to be in power before 1966 at the earliest. This can be inferred from indications as to what the Communists believed they had to accomplish in order to achieve victory. They fully recognized that they were still a negligible factor in the urban areas, and that in the rural areas
their position was still weak.* That the Communists planned to take their time and build carefully was reflected in a basic order on the insurgency sent south from Hanoi in August of 1960. According to this order, the revolutionary movement was recognized as "still weak this year," but "we have the time to prepare any aspect where we are weak."

IV. The Initial Deferral of Victory Anticipations

Until early 1962 the Communists appear to have believed that they were making satisfactory progress in the development of the insurgent movement as originally envisioned.** By the spring of 1962, however, the step-up in American military assistance to the Diem regime and the counterinsurgency programs put into effect by the government had begun

*One example of their appraisal of their situation was apparent in the interrogation of a VC battalion commander captured in 1960. He stated that the Communists were at the time devoting nearly all their efforts to the rural area. He implied that the establishment of a significant urban apparatus to take advantage of the "urban uprising" which the Communists expected would take several more years.

Another 1960 captive, the chairman of a VC district committee in Kien Giang province, indicated that the Communists would be satisfied if they could make significant strides in 1960 in the elimination of government influence in the southwestern part of South Vietnam.

In a 1961 radio message, the Viet Cong leadership offered the opinion that, "depending on how the situation develops" it is "possible" that we will be able in "two or three years" to build up our units so that they "will be able to destroy part of the enemy's forces." Accomplishment of this would necessarily have left them still several years away from an overpowering position throughout the rural sections of the country.

**In at least one instance, Communist cadres were told that the situation was moving as had been forecast by top Communist authorities in 1961.
to cause increasing difficulties for the Communists, and enemy materials indicate that their estimates of the time needed for achieving a victory were stretched out.*

It was at this point, Communist documents suggest, that the insurgents began to put more emphasis on the so-called "urban uprising," a key element in Communist guidelines for success in South Vietnam, but one that did not receive very heavy emphasis in their writings during the first few years of the insurgency. In the Communist view, victory could be anticipated as near at hand when the expansion of the Communist base among the rural populace was combined with a general uprising of the city populace against the government. This has gradually received more stress in Communist instructions to cadre in recent years.**

Communist documents indicated that, by early 1963, the Viet Cong felt they were successfully countering Diem's military push and the American effort. However, they also indicated a Viet Cong expectation that the fighting in South Vietnam still would last longer than the Communists had originally thought. One of the best summaries of Communist views on the war in early 1963 was contained in an article

*One document commenting on the period discloses that "at first we did not realize the harm and danger of the strategic hamlets," and "consequently the question of countering and destroying them was not properly examined." The same document notes that the "increase in direct aggression against us" resulted in "making the revolutionary war last longer and become more difficult." The revolution could no longer "go smoothly ahead," but would be "a long and fierce tug of war."

**An instruction document written in early 1963, for example, says that the Communists expected the "cities in the South, chiefly Saigon and Cholon, to stir up the revolution and cooperate with the rural zones when opportunity was available." According to the document, the revolution would succeed through a "combination of city and rural uprising." The Communists would be "unable to overthrow the enemy through a general offensive" by itself, if mounted mainly from the rural areas.
by the North Vietnamese historian Minh Thuan who had often sized up the progress of the revolution since the era of the war against the French.

Thuan took the position that the insurgency had suffered "many ups and downs and many failures." The initiation of a large US advisory/support effort meant that the rebels "had to face the enemy under new circumstances" and could no longer "expect a rapid and easy victory." Thuan stressed the importance of the appearance of a "general uprising" as an omen that success was around the corner. According to Thuan, the Communists should "keep in mind the appearance of a pre-revolutionary situation" which would come about "only when the broad masses" are ready to "rise up and fight" against the regime. "Decisive victory," he declared, can be achieved "only when this pre-revolutionary situation appears."

Another Communist document of this period indicated that the Communists realized they could do little to hasten the fulfillment of their objectives. In "time to come," it said, help from the "North" and from the rest of the bloc would give the Communist armed forces the "capability to grow relatively fast." But "that is a question of time and we just cannot do it in a hurry. All our efforts up to now are just the first steps." Such statements imply that the Communists probably believed they were still at least five years away from victory.*

V. The Growth of Communist Optimism in 1964 and Early 1965

Enemy materials discussing the war situation grew progressively more optimistic during 1964, as the Communists assessed the political disarray in Saigon and the provinces following Diem's overthrow and the success of their efforts

*They were also, however, still very flexible and opportunistic, perhaps even more so than in 1959. One document, in discussing the future, said it would be necessary "to play seesaw with the enemy for a certain period." If, however, "enemy strength begins to sag significantly in the process, we will fight against the clock to overcome our weaknesses and rapidly develop our power, especially our military power, hoping to win victories of a decisive nature."
count the increases in US aid to the Saigon government’s anti-insurgency programs. A February 1964 article in the North Vietnamese party journal, for example, declared that the fighting, "although protracted, will not last forever," and "final victory" could be achieved "in the near future." There were a number of Communist moves which suggested that they were trying to get in a position to take maximum and rapid advantage of the government disintegration which they expected. One such move was an effort to speedily build up Communist main force strength in the area of the III Corps north of Saigon by levying very heavy manpower quotas on the guerrilla units in the delta.

Communist optimism appeared to reach its height in early 1965. Although they still carefully refrained from fixing a definite timetable, they do appear to have believed at the time that they were possibly within a year or two of victory. This, for example, was the implication of an important article by the chairman of Hanoi’s "Re-unification" committees, Nguyen Van Vinh. Vinh’s views have long appeared to reflect some of the inner thoughts of the top Communist leadership. Writing in the January 1965 issue of the party journal, he argued that the Republic of Vietnam forces had been forced to disperse widely and to use about half of their strength to protect the capital region. The government reserves, according to Vinh, were only about one third as great as the French reserves had been, and thus Saigon would “soon” have to abandon large areas of the countryside to the Viet Cong.

Vinh pointed to the period in 1953 and early 1954 in the war against the French as a similar one, a time in which the Viet Minh inflicted the most “decisive” defeats on the French. Vinh seemed to be implying that a similar development might take place in this war, a development which could mean a Communist military victory in 1965.

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At the June 1964 congress of the National Liberation Front, the Front’s president claimed a “new” period of the insurgency had arrived and the “situation has never been so bright.” In July 1964, North Vietnamese Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap also saw the war as “entering a new phase,” with the Communist forces in “an offensive position.”
or 1966. The insurgents, according to Vinh, were "advancing to the fulfillment" of their mission "in the coming year."

Among the lower-level Viet Cong leaders, it appears that the idea was being promoted at this time that the "general uprising" was near. A defector from a district Communist committee in Kien Hoa Province, for example, claimed that Communist plans called for the "general uprising and complete overthrow of the government in 1966." It does not appear that the initiation of sustained US air attacks against the DRV in February 1965 or the landing of US Marine combat units in northern South Vietnam in March served initially to dampen Communist optimism.

VI. The Communist Reassessment in Mid-1965

By mid-summer 1965, the weight of the direct US combat effort in South Vietnam had thoroughly disabused the Communists of any hopes of an early victory. Both in public and in private, the probability of a protracted conflict again became a major theme in Communist statements. Nguyen Van Vinh, for example, who had spoken so optimistically in January, talked in July only of "eventual" victory. General Giap was also more sober in his assessment of the situation in July 1965 than he had been in July 1964. The entry of the US, Giap said, had created a "serious situation" throughout Vietnam.** Giap spoke only about "ultimate victory" over the US.

**Giap no longer focused his main attention on the prospects for the Viet Cong, as he had in his previous assessments, but now stressed the necessity of defending the DRV against US "aggression." This in itself seemed an implicit admission of the major setback dealt to Communist hopes in Vietnam by the direct US involvement.
In May of 1965, the top leaders of the military affairs committee of the Communist party in the South met to "asses the enemy and friendly situation." A report of that conference has been captured. It indicates that the meeting was dominated by discussions of the growing American involvement in the war. Analysis of the nature of the Communist military and political weaknesses set against those of the allies, as discussed at the session, suggests that the party hierarchy must have believed at the time that the Communist position was such that the war could easily last another three and possibly five more years.

During 1966, Communist materials have continued to reflect an expectation that the war will be indefinitely long and protracted. A January 1966 editorial in the North Vietnamese party paper, for example, claimed that the Communists still had confidence in their "final" victory, but admitted that the "enemy has not budged as yet" and his "intention" to crush the "insurgency" "had not weakened." In March, a DRV diplomat in Laos who had just returned from briefings in Hanoi said that the Communists now realized that the US war potential meant "there would be no quick and easy victory" in South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh reaffirmed this as late as mid-July when he promised that the Vietnamese people would fight until final victory if it took "five, ten, twenty-five years, or even longer."
ANNEX IX

THE COMMUNIST VIEW AND APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED IN FIGHTING THE FRENCH
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THE COMMunist VIEW AND APPLICATION
OF LESSONS LEARNED IN
FIGHTING THE FRENCH

The attitude of the North Vietnamese leadership toward the current military situation in South Vietnam is shaped to a considerable extent both strategically and tactically by their experience in fighting the French. Drawing heavily upon this experience, they have carefully plotted their actions in the current war to duplicate as far as possible their successes against the French and to avoid mistakes committed in the earlier war.

I. The Three Phased War

Their experiences in the Franco-Viet Minh war doubtless convinced the Communists that the predictions on the course of this conflict made in 1947 by the then Party Secretary General Truong Chinh had proved valid, and could probably be applied in the planned takeover of South Vietnam. In essence, Truong Chinh's blueprint for victory called for a protracted struggle through three stages which would enable the small and weak forces of the Viet Minh to defeat the more numerous and better-equipped French forces.

According to Truong Chinh, the first phase of the war would see the French in control of the cities using primarily "conventional" tactics. In this period the French would be on the "offensive." The Viet Minh, on the other hand, were small, poorly armed forces and therefore had to fight a "defensive" type of war. The chief strategy for the Viet Minh during this period, argued Truong Chinh, should be to attack the enemy using guerrilla tactics, i.e., ambushes, sabotage, and small-scale attacks on French units of smaller size than the local Viet Minh unit. The Viet Minh during this period, he said must avoid pitched battles with the enemy and must build its strength.

Truong Chinh took the position that, although the Viet Minh would be strategically on the defensive, tactically they should always be on the offensive. Since the French would be strategically on the offensive, they would over-expect themselves, thus giving the Viet Minh opportunities
for attacking isolated and small units. During this first stage of the "people's war," he said, the Viet Minh must also concentrate on gaining the support of the peasants. Political efforts, Chinh held, were in some respects even more important than military efforts, because without the support of the people there could be no military effort.

At some point, Truong Chinh asserted, the enemy would extend his position as far as he could. At that time, the harassing action of the guerrillas would combine with the enemy's inherent weaknesses to create an equilibrium. During this stage of the war, the enemy would concentrate on consolidating his overextended positions with particular emphasis on his lines of communications and supply. He would continue to launch attacks on the Viet Minh strongholds. In the political sphere, the enemy would concentrate on setting up "puppet" local administrations, infiltrating the Communist zones with spies, and repressing the Viet Minh political movement.

The Viet Minh, during this period, should employ to the maximum the tactic of guerrilla warfare to harass the enemy day and night. This would be designed to force the enemy to disperse his forces, to overextend his area of operations further, and to use up his manpower and resources. The key tactic during this period would be a combination of guerrilla and mobile warfare, with the guerrilla taking the lead at first, followed by later and stronger efforts at mobile warfare. The tactic of positional war was given only a limited role at this stage, since the enemy would still be able to bring superior force to bear on static defensive positions.

During the second phase of the struggle, the Viet Minh forces would swing from a defensive strategy to an offensive one. This stage should see not only military defeat of the enemy but also a collapse of morale on his home front, i.e., in metropolitan France. Economic and morale problems at home would have a decisive effect on France's will to fight. On the battle front, the French would be forced to withdraw from their advanced positions in order to defend their major bases. The Viet Minh would depend primarily on mobile warfare tactics supported by guerrilla activities. Finally, in the third phase near the end, mobile warfare would often be transformed into positional warfare for the decisive battles.
Truong Chinh's analysis proved an amazingly accurate prediction of the actual course of the war with the French. Chinh's assessment of the weaknesses of the French was unerringly and his program for the development of both tactics and strategy for the Viet Minh proved effective. His views permeated the outlook of the Viet Minh leadership and particularly that of General Vo Nguyen Giap. It was largely Giap's responsibility as commander of the Viet Minh army to put into practice Truong Chinh's military concepts. He did just that and led the Viet Minh to final victory at the famous battle of Dien Bien Phu.

The extent to which the Vietnamese Communists still rely on this basic design for victory is evidenced in the writings of their leaders. On several occasions in the last two years Giap, in his articles, has applied Truong Chinh's concepts of military analysis to the situation in the South. In remarkably similar terms, Giap has stressed the need for a prolonged war, emphasized that the US would become overextended in its ability to supply its troops in the field, and predicted that popular dissatisfaction with the war in the United States would undermine the determination of the administration to continue the war. Giap has claimed that the tendency of both French and US strategists to fix short deadlines for accomplishing major goals is proof of their inability to outlast the Communists.

According to Truong Chinh's criteria, the Viet Cong presumably would have reached the point of equilibrium with the ARVN in 1964 or early 1965 and would have gone over to the offensive relying more and more on mobile rather than guerrilla tactics. However, the use of US forces in a combat role has since then probably removed any notion from the Communists' minds that they have managed to move into an advanced part of Truong Chinh's second phase, one in which the opponent is forced to withdraw from his advanced positions to defend his bases. This is evidenced in their discussions of the large and successful US/ARVN offensive raids into Viet Cong base areas this year.

Apparently the Hanoi high command believes that its forces in the South, at least in the northern half of South Vietnam, are in the first part of Truong Chinh's phase two, that is to say, that the US and ARVN are now overextended and are concentrating on keeping open lines of communication to their exposed outer posts. To some
extent, of course, this is true. What is new in the situation, however, is the fact that with its improved intelligence, extreme mobility, heavy firepower, and tremendous air-support capability, the US can also attack Viet Cong strongholds and thus by spoiling actions throw Communist tactical planning and movements off balance.

Moreover, there has now developed a serious challenge to what the Communists regard as one of the keys to their ultimate victory, their own rear base. In the war with France, this safe rear was first in China, then in the highlands of North Vietnam. In the current war, the Communists have made it clear that they regard North Vietnam as the rear area for the war. Since February 1965, however, this base for the movement of men and supplies to the Viet Cong has come under heavy aerial attack by the US. While these air strikes have as yet not prevented North Vietnam from continuing to send men and material to the South, they have made the process much more costly and time consuming.

II. Tactical Military Lessons

The lessons learned in fighting the French are being applied in a myriad of practical steps by the Vietnamese Communists in the current war. The reliance on the tactic of ambush, for example, results in large measure from the successful development of this technique against the French. The Viet Cong have frequently set up ambushes against the South Vietnamese and US forces on almost exactly the same spots where French elements were ambushed nearly twenty years ago.

Another lesson, learned the hard way against the French, is the need to avoid precipitous military action against superior forces. In 1951 and 1952, Vo Nguyen Giap launched several major attacks on French forces only to have his units shattered by superior French firepower. Giap drew back, reformed, re-equipped, and retrained his units, and from then on faithfully followed the advice of Truong Chinh who urged that such actions be undertaken only when the Communists positively enjoyed the superior position. Giap's dedication to this formula led ultimately to Dien Bien Phu, where his forces had the superior position. That the Vietnamese Communist High Command learned its lesson is evident in Communist tactics in the present war. The Viet Cong/PAVN forces rarely venture out on an attack now unless they
are virtually certain that they will have the advantage. The Communists instead, attempt to draw friendly forces into remote areas where terrain, transportation, and weather tend to neutralize the superior firepower and mobility of the allied side.

The success of the North Vietnamese in keeping their transportation routes open is also due in some measure to their experience in the Franco - Viet Minh war. In addition, they appear to have drawn heavily upon Chinese and North Korean experiences in the Korean War. The extensive use of coolie labor for bomb-damage repair is not something uniquely Vietnamese, but the Hanoi leadership has had great experience, due to the war with France, in forming and operating coolie labor units. The mobilization of rudimentary forms of transportation is also a technique learned well in the war against France.

III. Political Lessons

Experiences gained in the political sphere in the war against the French are also being used by the Communists in the present conflict. They continue to put heavy emphasis on the "political struggle" and to express confidence that enemy military superiority cannot in the long run prevail in a "people's war." To the extent that it is more than propaganda, this line partly reflects adherence to Marxist dialectic principles that "contradictions" in the opposing forces (referring here to "contradictions" between the Americans and their "puppets" as well as to conflicts among the South Vietnamese themselves as evidenced by the recent succession of internal coups) will inevitably work in the Communists' favor. The Communists are mindful of the fact that in the earlier war the lack of positive support by the majority of non-Communist Vietnamese for the French was a major factor contributing to the ultimate defeat of France.

On the practical level, the Communists have in their current "struggle" sought to apply their political view of the war through methods which parallel those used earlier by the Viet Minh. In addition to propaganda which seeks to foster South Vietnamese hatred for the Americans as the true "aggressors," the Communists set out to repeat the combined tactics of terror and benevolence used successfully by the Viet Minh. Thus they have revived the terrorist bombings in Saigon and conducted terrorist reprisals.
against supporters of the Saigon government at all levels throughout the countryside, while at the same time they have tried to ingratiate themselves with the general populace by various good works--helping with the harvest, improving sanitation, conducting educational programs, etc. Land reform, a technique used with some success by the Viet Minh through simply granting ownership outside the colonial administration, became a platform of Viet Cong's Liberation Front.

The Hanoi leadership also learned in part from the Franco-Viet Minh war to proceed cautiously on the matter of negotiations, even while not rejecting the idea of talks at an appropriate point. Premier Pham Van Dong was the primary agent for the Vietnamese Communists in the series of negotiations with the French between 1945 and 1954. He stated in 1965 that the Vietnamese Communists had learned from their negotiations with the French that the "imperialists" merely use discussion as a technique to gain a pause in the shooting so that they can prepare for further fighting. Dong went on to state that they do not intend to make the same mistake with the Americans. Instead, they intend to wear the US down to the point of accepting the bulk of their terms for a settlement through the tactic of protracted war.

The Vietnamese Communists do have some reason to feel that the various negotiated agreements reached with the French were used to the disadvantage of the Viet Minh. The French moved against Ho's self-proclaimed Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1946 despite an agreement signed with representatives of his government recognizing its autonomy. The aftermath of the Fountainbleau conference in 1946 at which a cease-fire agreement was reached, showed the French moving to escalate the war. The final proof of Western perfidy, in the eyes of the Vietnamese Communists, was the failure of the Western powers to implement the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina, agreements which the Hanoi leaders felt would assure their peaceful takeover of all Vietnam.

Although chary of actually entering into negotiations with the US from a position of relative weakness, the Vietnamese Communists also realize that the tactic of "talk, fight, talk," was in some respects used effectively by both sides in the Franco - Viet Minh war. Thus they have been
reluctant to close the door completely to possible negotiations with the US; a talk stage in the "struggle" could prove attractive to Hanoi itself at some point to gain a respite from allied military pressure.

This is probably in part why the North Vietnamese have continued to receive a fairly steady flow of visitors from Western and nonaligned countries with various ideas for getting talks started between Hanoi and Washington. North Vietnam probably has at least two aims in accepting these visitors. One aim is to encourage the notion that the Communists are reasonable, although firm, in their attitude toward what it would take to reach a settlement of the war. The second, and probably more important purpose, has been to put increased pressure on the US to cease its bombing of the North. A number of foreign visitors have come away from Hanoi believing that they had received intimations that if the bombings ceased, talks could begin.