The Situation in Vietnam
A SECRET VIETNAM STUDY, WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON ORDERED BEFORE HE WAS SWORN IN, WARNED THAT THE MASSIVE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM HAD FAILED TO HAMPER THE ENEMY EFFORT.

AS PRESIDENT-ELECT, HE HAD SOUGHT HARD ANSWERS ABOUT THE WAR HE HAD PROMISED TO END. HIS FOREIGN POLICY CZAR, HENRY KISSINGER, FIRED OFF A SERIES OF QUESTIONS TO THE KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. THE ANSWERS CAUSED HIM TO REMARK AFTERWARDS: "WE FOUND OUT HOW IGNORANT WE WERE."

KISSINGER COMPILED THE ANSWERS IN A SECRET NATIONAL SECURITY STUDY MEMORANDUM, WHICH BECAME KNOWN INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE AS NSDM-1. A BOOTLEG COPY FOUND ITS WAY TO SEN. MIKE GRAVEL (D-ALASKA), WHO HAS BEEN ANALYZING IT FOR MONTHS. SIGNIFICANTLY, HE IS THE SAME SENATOR WHO DARED TO SPREAD THE SECRET PENTAGON PAPERS ON THE SENATE RECORD.

WE HAVE ALSO OBTAINED A COPY OF NSDM-1, WHICH GIVES A DEVASTATING APPRAISAL OF THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF EX-PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON'S BOMBING CAMPAIGN.

FOUR YEARS OF BOMBING, REPORTED THE GENERAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, "DID NOT SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE FLOW OF MEN AND SUPPLIES TO COMMUNIST FORCES IN LAOS AND SOUTH VIETNAM, NOR DID IT SIGNIFICANTLY ERODE NORTH VIETNAM'S MILITARY DEFENSE CAPABILITY OR NGAI'S DETERMINATION TO PERSIST IN THE WAR."

AGREING, THE STATE DEPARTMENT NOTED: "THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT NEW BOMBING WILL ACCOMPLISH WHAT PREVIOUS BOMBINGS FAILED TO DO, UNLESS IT IS CONDUCTED WITH MUCH GREATER INTENSITY AND READINESS TO DEFY CRITICISM OR RISK OF ESCALATION."

ALL THE SECRET ESTIMATES AGREED THAT RUSSIA AND CHINA WERE KEEPING NORTH VIETNAM IN THE WAR....

THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT, TOO, THAT THE BOMBING HAD NOT STOPPED THE FLOW OF OUTSIDE AID TO THE BATTLEGROUNDS.

PRESIDENT NIXON, HOWEVER, HAS LARGELY IGNORED THE LESSONS OF NSDM-1.
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 21, 1969

National Security Study Memorandum 1

TO: The Secretary of State
    The Secretary of Defense
    The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Situation in Vietnam

In an effort to develop an agreed evaluation of the situation in Vietnam as a basis for making policy decisions, the President has directed that each addressee of this memorandum, the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and MACV prepare a separate response to the attached questions. The answers should include a discussion of uncertainties and possible alternative interpretations of existing data.

The President wishes to receive, as well, the Secretary of State's comments on the Ambassador's response, and the comments of the Secretary of Defense on the responses of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and MACV.

All replies should be forwarded to the President by February 10, 1969.

SECRET
March 22, 1969

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Office of the Vice President
Office of the Secretary of State
Office of the Secretary of Defense
Office of the Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness

SUBJECT: Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1, The Situation in Vietnam

Attached as useful background material for the March 26 NSC meeting on Vietnam is a summary of agency responses to NSSM 1, The Situation in Vietnam. This version fully incorporates agency comments on an earlier draft.

cc: The Under Secretary of State
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of Central Intelligence

Attachment

TOP SECRET
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO NSSM 1

THE VIETNAM SITUATION

The responses to the questions posed regarding Vietnam show agreement on some matters as well as very substantial differences of opinion within the U.S. Government on many aspects of the Vietnam situation. While there are some divergencies on the facts, the sharpest differences arise in the interpretation of those facts, the relative weight to be given them, and the implications to be drawn. In addition, there remain certain areas where our information remains inadequate.

There is general agreement, assuming we follow our current strategy, on the following:

-- (1) The GVN and allied position in Vietnam has been strengthened recently in many respects.

-- (2) The RVNAF alone cannot now, or in the foreseeable future, stand up to both the VC and sizable North Vietnamese forces.

-- (3) The GVN has improved its political position in certain respects. It remains weakest, and the VC/NLF strongest, in rural areas. It is not clear whether the GVN and other non-communist groups would be able to survive a peaceful competition with the NLF for political power in South Vietnam.

-- (4) The enemy have suffered some reverses but they have not changed their essential objectives and they have sufficient strength to pursue these objectives. We are not attriting enemy forces faster than they can recruit or infiltrate. Soviet and Chinese supplies have enabled the enemy to carry on despite our operations.

-- (5) The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates. They can still launch major offensives, though not with 1968 Tet effectiveness or impact.

-- (6) The enemy is in Paris for a variety of reasons, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs. He is not there primarily out of weakness, but rather from a realization that a military victory is not attainable as long as U.S. forces remain in SVN, yet a victory in the political area is very possible.
-- (7) Hanoi is attempting to chart a course basically independent of Moscow and Peking.

Within these parameters of agreement there are different overall perspectives. There is some shifting between agencies or shading of their positions depending on the issues, so it would be somewhat misleading to categorize them overall. Agency positions will be clear in the remainder of the paper.

A composite of more hopeful views would look as follows:

-- an overall allied momentum on various fronts is in large part responsible for the enemy's presence at the negotiating table and lower profile on the battlefield.

-- U.S. military operations have been increasingly effective and with less constraints could be even more so.

-- there are more South Vietnamese fighting with better effectiveness.

-- recent gains in pacification represent real advances against the VC and should hold up.

-- the GVN is more stable than at any time since Diem and is making good political progress.

-- one cannot forecast "victory," within current constraints, but our negotiators should know that the tides are favorable.

A composite of more skeptical views would shape up as follows:

-- there have been recent improvements in the allied position but these have produced essentially a stalemate.

-- enemy activities in Paris and Vietnam do not flow primarily from weakness.

-- Allied military efforts -- short of unacceptable risks of widening the war -- cannot now or in the foreseeable future bring the enemy to his knees.
-- great problems confront the larger, better equipped South Vietnamese forces.

-- pacification gains are inflated and fragile.

-- inadequate political progress is being made.

-- while our negotiators are in a stronger position with regard to the military situation, a compromise settlement is the most likely outcome for Vietnam and our focus needs to be increasingly on political actions.

Thus there are U.S. Government disagreements on a number of questions including the following:

-- In explaining reduced enemy military presence and activities, some give greater weight to allied military pressure, others to the enemy's political motives and tactics.

-- The improvements in RVNAF are considered much more significant by some agencies than others.

-- Some observers see no cutback in U.S. forces possible without a proportionate reduction in combat capability, while others see a certain amount of "fat" in current U.S. force levels.

-- Some underline advancements in the pacification program, while others are extremely skeptical both of the evaluation system used to measure progress and of the solidity of recent advances.

-- In looking at the political scene, some accent recent improvements while others highlight the necessities of continued and accelerated political actions by the GVN to overcome remaining obstacles if the GVN is to have a reasonable chance to compete with the VC/NLF/PRP.

-- Some respondents assign much greater effectiveness to past and current bombing in Vietnam and Laos than others.

-- Some believe, and others totally disagree, that a vigorous interdiction campaign against land and sea supply routes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia could choke off enough Soviet and Chinese supplies to make North Vietnam give up the struggle.
In addition to these differences, there are major intelligence community disagreements concerning:

-- the enemy order of battle;

-- the importance of Cambodia (in particular Sihanoukville) as a supply channel for the enemy;

-- the impact of possible Vietnam outcomes on Southeast Asia.

Following is a summary of the major conclusions and disagreements about each of six broad areas with regard to Vietnam: the negotiating environment, enemy capabilities, RVNAF capabilities, pacification, South Vietnamese politics, and U.S. military operations.
I. NEGOTIATING ENVIRONMENT
(Questions 1 - 4)

(Reasons for the enemy presence in Paris. Impact of Vietnam on Southeast Asia. Influence of Moscow and Peking on Hanoi. Possible factions in North Vietnamese leadership.)

There is general U.S. Government agreement that Hanoi is in Paris for a variety of motives, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs, but he is not there primarily out of weakness; that Hanoi is charting a course independent of Moscow, which favors negotiations, and of Peking, which opposes them, despite the DRV reliance on its allies for supplies; and that our knowledge of possible political factions among North Vietnamese leaders is imprecise. There continues disagreement about the impact on Southeast Asia of various outcomes in Vietnam.

Why is the DRV in Paris?

Various possible North Vietnamese motives for negotiating are discussed, and there is agreement that the DRV is in Paris for mixed reasons. No U.S. agency responding to the questions believes that the primary reason the DRV is in Paris is weakness. All consider it unlikely that Hanoi came to Paris either to accept a face-saving formula for defeat or to give the U.S. a face-saving way to withdraw. There is agreement that Hanoi has been subject to heavy military pressure and that a desire to end the losses and costs of war was an element in Hanoi's decision. The consensus is that Hanoi believes that it can persist long enough to obtain a relatively favorable negotiated compromise. The respondents agree that the DRV is in Paris to negotiate withdrawal of U.S. forces, to undermine GVN-USG relations and to provide a better chance for VC victory in the South. State believes that Hanoi's increasing realization that it could not win the conflict by continued military and political pressure also played a major role. Hanoi's ultimate goal of a unified Vietnam under its control has not changed.

Vietnam Impact on Southeast Asia

There continues to be sharp debate between and within agencies about the effect of the outcome in Vietnam on other nations. The most recent NIE on this subject (NIE 50-68) states that a settlement which
would result in the communists taking control of the Government in South Vietnam, not immediately but within a year or two, would be likely to have adverse psychological effects throughout the area and bring Cambodia and Laos into Hanoi's orbit at a fairly early state, but that these developments would not necessarily unhinge the rest of Southeast Asia.

The NIE dissenters believe that an unfavorable settlement would stimulate the communists to become more active elsewhere and that it will be difficult to resist making some accommodation to the pressure then generated. They believe, in contrast to the Estimate, these adjustments would be relatively swift and insensitive to subsequent U.S. policy.

The assessments rest more on judgments and assumptions than on tangible and convincing evidence, and there are major disagreements within the same Departments. Within the Defense Department, OSD and DIA support the conclusions of the NIE, while Army, Navy and Air Force Intelligence dissent. Within State, the Bureau of Intelligence supports the NIE while the East Asian Bureau dissent. CIA supports the NIE conclusions while Embassy Saigon generally sides with the dissenters.

Factors entering into the judgments are estimates of (1) Hanoi's and Peking's behavior after the settlement; (2) U.S. posture and policy in the regions; (3) Asian leaders' estimates of future U.S. policy; (4) the reactions of the area's non-communist leaders to the outcome in Vietnam; (5) vulnerabilities of the various governments to insurgency or subversion; and (6) the strengths of opposition groups within each state.

All reject the view that an unfavorable settlement in Vietnam will inevitably be followed by communist takeovers outside Indo China and there is agreement that much will depend on what the countries do for themselves and the other factors mentioned.

Moscow and Peking Influence

There is general governmental agreement on this question. Peking opposes negotiations while Moscow prefers an early negotiated settlement on terms as favorable as possible to Hanoi. Neither Peking nor Moscow have exerted heavy pressure on Hanoi and for various
reasons they are unlikely to do so, although their military and economic assistance give them important leverage. CIA notes that "in competing for influence Peking and Moscow tend to cancel out each other." For its own reasons, Hanoi's tendency in the last year has been in the Soviet direction. However, the Hanoi leadership is attempting to chart its own independent course, despite its reliance on its allies for supplies.

Hanoi Leadership Factions

There is agreement that knowledge of the existence and significance of possible factions within the Hanoi leadership is imprecise. There are differences of opinion within the leadership on tactics as opposed to ultimate objectives but there are not stable "Moscow" and "Peking" factions. The Hanoi leadership will form different alignments on different issues. The attempts by the agencies to ascertain the position of various North Vietnamese leaders on specific issues shows the imprecision of our information and analysis. For example, different agencies set forth sharply conflicting identifications of the position of individual leaders such as Giap on particular questions.
2. **THE ENEMY**  
(Questions 5 - 10)

(Explanation of recent enemy military activities. Attrition of enemy forces. Enemy order of battle, offensive capabilities, supply channels.)

Analyses of various enemy tactics and capabilities reveal both significant agreements and sharp controversies within the Government. Among the major points of consensus:

-- A combination of military pressures and political tactics explains recent enemy withdrawals and lower levels of activity.

-- Under current rules of engagement, the enemy's manpower pool and infiltration capabilities can outlast allied attrition efforts indefinitely, although the quality of enemy personnel suffers.

-- The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates.

-- The enemy, if he is willing to take the risks, can still launch major offensives, although not at 1968 Tet levels or with dramatic effect.

Major controversies include:

-- CIA, DIA and State assign much higher figures to the enemy Order of Battle than MACV. They also quantify additional categories that are not part of the Order of Battle but are judged to be significant in terms of the enemy's political/security capabilities.

-- MACV/CINCPAC/JCS and Saigon consider Cambodia an important enemy supply channel. A joint CIA-DIA-State team acknowledges the importance of Cambodia as a source of food supplies but feels that the Laotian supply corridor is the primary channel for the movement of military supplies (arms and ammunition).

Recent Enemy Activities

Military pressures and political considerations are viewed as responsible for the withdrawal of some North Vietnamese units into Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries during the summer and fall of 1968.
Military factors included heavy enemy losses, effective allied tactics, material shortages, and bad weather. Political factors centered on enemy efforts to make a political virtue out of a military necessity in a talk-fight strategy to influence the Paris negotiations.

Although the question asked of agencies indicated some doubt, all respondents agreed that the enemy did undertake a third-wave offensive during the week of August 17. At a cost of 5,500 enemy KIA, the enemy tripled the number of his attacks to 100 per week and his attacks during the second half of August were about one half the level of his "second-wave" offensive in May. Prisoners and captured documents reported the goal of achieving a general uprising and overthrow of the GVN. The lack of greater success was attributed to: the enemy's economy-of-forces tactics; his desire to demonstrate initiative but at reduced risk; effective U.S. spoiling actions and increased intelligence; and the continuing deterioration of enemy Post-Tet capabilities in terms of quality of men and officers and lack of training.

In contrast to the implication of a question posed to the agencies, all evaluators except the Department of State and Embassy Saigon state that VC guerrillas and local forces are not relatively dormant and that levels of harassment and terror remain high. The Embassy notes "the current low level of guerrilla and local forces activity," and State agrees there has been a "relative decline." Both agree that among the reasons are the heavy casualty rates, manpower problems and loss of cadres. But according to Embassy evaluators, the main factor is that "the VC are husbanding their resources to give themselves the option of a 'climaxing' offensive." State notes that to support the VC counter-pacification campaign and their "Liberation Committees," "the Communists may feel that a demonstrably strong blow against the pacification program would have wide repercussions, particularly at a time of optimistic Allied claims about pacification successes."

NVN/VC Manpower

It is generally agreed that the NVN/VC manpower pool is sufficiently large to meet the enemy's replenishment needs over an extended period of time within the framework of current rules of engagement. According to the JCS, "The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have access to sufficient manpower to meet their replenishment needs--even at the high 1968 loss rate of some 291,000--for at least the next
several years. ... Present operations are not outrunning the enemy's ability to replenish by recruitment or infiltration." Enemy losses of 291,000 in 1968 were roughly balanced by infiltration and recruitment of 298,000. North Vietnamese manpower assets include 1.8 million physically fit males aged 15-34 of whom 45% are in the regular forces (475,000) and paramilitary (400,000) forces; 120,000 physically fit males reach draft age each year and 200,000 military and labor personnel have been freed by the bombing halt from defensive work. The potential manpower pool in SVN is estimated at half a million men and recruitment, while down, is running at approximately 3,500 per month. Enemy maintenance of the current commitment of 300,000 new men per year requires that the Allies inflict losses of 25,000 KIA per month, or 7,000 more than the current rate. MACV considers current Allied force levels adequate to inflict such casualties if the enemy chooses to engage.

The enemy's employment of economy of forces tactics since the fall of 1968 and intelligence evidence reflect the enemy's concern about his 1968 level of losses, which amounted to nearly 100% yearly attrition of his full-time fighters in the South and, if continued, could lead to nearly total North Vietnamization of main force units in South Vietnam. He is judged unlikely to undertake the heavy losses of a major offensive unless he believes he could thereby achieve a breakthrough in Allied will-power in Vietnam or Paris. Yet, without a VC/NVA offensive on the scale of Tet 1968, the JCS believe "it will be exceedingly difficult in 1969 for allied forces to attrite the enemy at 1968 levels."

Control of NVA/VC Attrition

There is general agreement with the JCS statement, "The enemy, by the type action he adopts, has the predominant share in determining enemy attrition rates." Three fourths of the battles are at the enemy's choice of time, place, type and duration. CIA notes that less than three percent of about 1.7 million Allied small unit operations conducted in the last two years resulted in contact with the enemy and, when ARVN is surveyed, the percentage drops to one tenth of one per cent. There are inaccuracies and variations in service reporting but these figures indicate the general magnitude. With his safe havens in Laos and Cambodia and with carefully chosen tactics, the enemy has been able during the last four years to double his combat forces, double the level
of infiltration and increase the scale and intensity of the main force war even while bearing heavy casualties. MACV/CINCPAC/JCS consider that a resumption of full scale hostilities with a relaxation of rules of engagement would result in depletion of the enemy's manpower and war-making resources, forcing him to recognize the futility of continuing the war or to face the inevitable destruction of his capability to continue the war.

VC/NVA Order of Battle

There is considerable disagreement concerning the estimates of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Order of Battle. Both MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA -- the only two groups making independent estimates -- include the same elements in their estimate of the military threat that is quantified in the Order of Battle. When these two estimates are made comparable in terms of major units included or excluded, the CIA/DIA estimate of the elements making up the enemy's military threat is at least 35,000 and possibly 125,000 greater than the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

There is no great controversy over the size of the Political Infrastructure. The somewhat larger CIA/DIA estimate (see the table) allows for the inclusion of certain supporting staffs excluded from the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

The CIA/DIA estimates of enemy strength include an additional category made up of the Self Defense Forces and Assault Youth, estimated at 90,000 to 140,000 persons. They are not judged to be part of the military threat but are quantified because they are partially armed, perform military support functions, and are a principal target of the Allied pacification and security program. MACV/CINCPAC do not quantify these forces.

The Department of State, noting that the MACV estimate results from adding up so-called "hard" field intelligence figures for main force and local and guerrilla forces, believes CIA's extrapolation is developed more realistically from the totality of evidence. OSD presents both the MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA estimates, pointing out that the differences in overall strength presented by the two are not sufficient to cause a change in overall strategy. CIA feels, however, that the difference could be significant if the true military threat is closer to the higher end of the range estimated by CIA/DIA. CIA also feels that the difference in estimates could have a significant bearing on peace terms and in judgments of the residual military capabilities of VC forces should the NVA forces be withdrawn. On the following page is a table laying out these different estimates.
Comparison of Estimates of Military-Political Strengths in South Vietnam

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<td>Combat forces</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>105,000 to 125,000 &lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>92,000 &lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>45,000 to 55,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>150,000 to 180,000</td>
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<td>Administrative services</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>10,000 to 20,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>45,000 to 55,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>55,000 to 75,000</td>
<td>42,000</td>
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<td>Guerrillas</td>
<td>60,000 to 100,000 &lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>59,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total military threat</td>
<td>265,000 to 355,000</td>
<td>230,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>80,000 to 100,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other irregular organizations</td>
<td>90,000 to 140,000 &lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>N.A. &lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> An estimated 20,000 to 25,000 of the NVA troops are serving in VC units. This estimate excludes an estimated 28,000 NVA troops deployed north of the DMZ.

<sup>b</sup> This is a MACV/CINCPAC estimate of 106,000 NVA troops adjusted to exclude the same elements excluded from the CIA/DIA estimate because they are north of the DMZ.

<sup>c</sup> DIA/CIA believe that the military threat represented by guerrilla forces is not on a parity with that of main and local forces because probably only about one-third of the guerrillas are well-armed, trained, and organized.

<sup>d</sup> Includes self defense, secret self defense, and assault youth forces.

<sup>e</sup> MACV and CINCPAC do not quantify these forces.
Recruiting figures vary for reasons similar to the divergencies on strength. Monthly VC recruitment is estimated by CIA at 8,500 in 1966, 7,500 in 1967, double the 1967 rate during the first quarter of 1968 and dropping sharply after the Tet offensive to approximately 3,500 per month. CIA estimates a smaller drop than MACV. Saigon reports that the last six months reflect a reduced level of recruitment, citing as evidence GVN expansion, reduction in VC standards, VC attempts to improve existing cadre, increased use of NVA fillers in VC units, and GVN mobilization effectiveness.

**NVA/VC Capabilities for a Large-Scale Offensive**

All agree that (as recent events have borne out) the enemy has a capability for a large scale offensive against cities, bases and/or villages in the Accelerated Pacification Program if he wishes to bear the heavy casualties that would result. Allied countermeasures and preemptive capabilities make it highly unlikely that such an attack would have an impact on the scale of the Tet offensive of 1968. Further, the enemy would weigh the effect of such an offensive on the Paris talks and on the risk of touching off a resumption of bombing in North Vietnam.

**NVA/VC Supply Channels**

There is general agreement that the main channels for military supplies reaching enemy forces in the northern areas of South Vietnam (I, and northern II Corps) are the Laos Panhandle and the DMZ. Disagreement exists as to the channel of supplies for III Corps and southern II Corps. MACV points to Cambodia, believing that no large shipments of ordnance are coming into III or IV Corps and southern II Corps via Laos and that Cambodia has during the last two years become a major source of supplies for these regions. MACV has estimated that some 10,000 tons of arms and ammunition have gone through Sihanoukville to the border between October 1967 and September 1968 for the use of the enemy in III, IV, and parts of II Corps. CIA and State disagree strongly with that estimate, and point out the lack of reliable information on the volume of munitions shipments entering Sihanoukville as well as the volume moved across the border. CIA also points out that the volume of Communist supplies flowing through Laos has been more than adequate to cover the external requirements of all Communist forces in South Vietnam. CIA, nevertheless, does not
contest the MACV view that Communist forces in IV Corps also are supplied principally from Cambodia, but points out that a substantial part of the munitions supplies moved into this area do not move through Cambodian-controlled channels.

OSD summarizes without comment the national level CIA/DIA estimates for total enemy external daily supply requirements of 80 tons: 34 tons come from Laos, 14 tons across the DMZ, and 32 tons from Cambodia (of which 29 tons involve mainly food and other non-combatant goods).
3. THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES
(Questions 10A-13)

(Extent and types of RVNAF improvements. Present and future RVNAF capabilities against various threats, with and without U.S. support. Changes required of RVNAF.)

In general, points of disagreement among U.S. agencies on the RVNAF capabilities are more numerous than points of agreement. There is consensus that the RVNAF is getting larger, better equipped and somewhat more effective. All agree that it could not now, or in the foreseeable future, handle both the VC and sizable NVA forces without U.S. combat support. On other major points there are sharp differences. The military community gives much greater weight to RVNAF statistical improvements while OSD highlights remaining obstacles and CIA points out that qualitative factors must also be considered in evaluating the RVNAF. Paradoxically, MACV/CINCPAC/JCS see RVNAF as being less capable against the VC alone than do CIA and State.

RVNAF Capabilities Against the Enemy

The Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF) are being increased in size and re-equipped to improve their ground combat capability. The best measure of this improvement is the RVNAF's expected performance against a given enemy threat. However, there is a paradoxical divergence in agency views on the RVNAF ability to handle the internal VC threat without U.S. assistance. State (both EA and INR) and CIA -- who generally rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness lowest among the respondents, and who accept the highest estimates of overall VC strength -- believe that, "Without any US support,...ARVN would at least be able to hold its own and make some progress against the VC unsupported by the NVA" (i.e. the VC without NVA fillers, though with regroupes and materiel support). CIA caveats this judgment, however, by noting that a critical factor, and one almost impossible to judge, would be the effect on the will of both the ARVN and VC of a pullout of North Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

In contrast is the view of MACV/CINCPAC/JCS, who rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness highest and who accept the lowest estimates of VC armed strength. The military community, nevertheless, believes that without U.S. combat support, in opposing VC main and local forces without any NVA units or fillers, RVNAF "would have to
reduce the number of offensive operations and adopt more of a
defensive posture," resulting in "loss of control by the Government
of Vietnam over substantial rural areas." Thus, MACV/CINCPAC/
JCS believe that RVNAF would not be able to cope with purely indigenous
VC forces without U.S. combat support until the completion of the
modernization program in 1972.

OSD, however, believes RVNAF's capability against VC forces
is closely associated with time. If most U.S. forces withdraw now,
RVNAF's newly gained confidence may collapse; however, RVNAF
capabilities should increase over time provided that a number of major
reforms are made in addition to the current modernization program,
if even this goal is to be met. "Without major reforms within the
RVNAF command and selection system, however, it is unlikely that
the RVNAF, as presently organized and led, will ever constitute an
effective political or military counter to the Viet Cong." OSD also believes
that some reduction of U.S. forces would give impetus to RVNAF to make
the required changes.

All agencies agree that RVNAF could not, either now or even
when fully modernized, handle both the VC and a sizable level of NVA
forces without U.S. combat support in the form of air, helicopters,
artillery, logistics and major ground forces.

RVNAF Improvements

There is consensus that RVNAF forces are now much larger
(826,000) than in December 1967 (743,000) and will be further increased
to 876,000, with the greatest increases in manpower given to the
Popular and Regional Forces needed for local security. The RVNAF
is also better equipped. All regular combat units have M16 rifles and
are beginning to receive increases in their own artillery and helicopter
support. Regional and Popular Forces (393,000 of the total RVNAF
strength in December 1968) have 100,000 M16 rifles and are scheduled
to receive 150,000 more in 1969. MACV has stepped up his training
efforts by forming 353 mobile teams in 1968 to train and advise the
militia.

Moreover, all agencies agree that overall RVNAF capabilities,
number of operations and effectiveness increased during 1968. Data
presents a mixed picture in some areas, but it is clear that the larger
number of enemy killed by RVNAF resulted from better effectiveness
(more kills per 1000 troops, along with higher kill ratios) as well as
increased force size. In spite of these statistical improvements (which
CIA in particular finds unreliable indicators), RVNAF is best thought of as a force which enlarged its contribution in 1968 within a total allied effort which also expanded. The modernization program, just beginning to have a high impact in the field, promises that results will continue to increase so long as RVNAF receives backbone in the form of a U.S. ground combat presence.

**RVNAF Problems**

All agree that RVNAF faces severe motivation, leadership and desertion problems. The differences lie in assessing the magnitude and impact these problems have on the prognosis for RVNAF's future. The continuing motivation problem involves loyalty to the government, getting RVNAF troops to fight and doing the right things to improve relations between soldiers and the Vietnamese people. The officer problem is mixed in politics and little has been done to correct it. Poor leadership and motivation contribute to regular ground combat forces deserting (net) at an annual rate of 34% of their strength (gross rate for 1/3 of the divisions is more than 50%). Total RVNAF desertions (net) are equivalent to losing one ARVN division per month.

Thus, OSD does not believe that current expansion and reequipment programs are sufficient to make RVNAF into an effective fighting force unless major political and military actions, which are not now emphasized, are taken. OSD considers essential action to recognize and reward combat leadership and development of a favorable attitude by the military towards their own people which will result in acceptance and support of the government by its citizens.

JCS, CINCPAC and MACV recognize leadership and motivational problems, and believe that substantial progress has been made in these areas since 1965, and with current remedial programs RVNAF is making reasonable progress toward development as a self-sufficient force able to hold its own against an internal VC threat. CIA feels that RVNAF is making limited progress, despite the fact that many of its weaknesses are uncorrected. OSD and State also see limited progress and note that many RVNAF weaknesses remain uncorrected. (Within State, INR is less hopeful than the East Asian Regional Bureau.)
Two well-defined and divergent views emerged from the agencies on the pacification situation in South Vietnam. One view is held by MACV and Embassy Saigon and endorsed by CINCPAC and JCS. The other view is that of OSD, CIA and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in State. (The East Asian bureau in State lies somewhere in between.) The two views are profoundly different in terms of factual interpretation and policy implications. Both views agree on the obstacles to improvement and complete success. What distinguishes one view from the other is each's assessment of the magnitude of the problem, and the assessment of the degree of improvement likely to take place in the near future.

The Two Views

The first group, consisting of MACV/JCS/Saigon, maintains that "at the present time, the security situation is better than any time during period in question," i.e., 1961-1968. MACV cites a "dramatic change in the security situation," and finds that the GVN controls three-fourths of the population. JCS suggests that the GVN will control 90% of the population in 1969. The second group, OSD/CIA and INR in State, on the other hand, is more cautious and pessimistic; their view is not inconsistent with another Tet-offensive-like shock in the countryside—for example, wiping out the much-touted gains of the 1968 Accelerated Pacification Program, or with more gradual erosion. Representing the second group's view, OSD arrives at the following conclusions:

(1) "The portions of the SVN rural population aligned with the VC and aligned with the GVN are apparently the same today as in 1962: 5,000,000 GVN aligned and nearly 3,000,000 VC aligned."

(2) "At the present, it appears that at least 50% of the total rural population is subject to significant VC presence and influence."

TOP SECRET
CIA agrees, and INR in State goes even further, saying:

"Our best estimate is that the VC have a significant effect on at least two-thirds of the rural population."

The Major Issues

The substance of the argument is evident in the chart on the next page. Using HES data for 1967-1968, the chart shows that the first group's interpretation leaves only 26.7% of SVN's population to be pacified as of November 1968. The second group thinks 41.3% of the population was yet to be pacified. More importantly, the second view shows little pacification progress over the period except for the gains of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) program, and they are skeptical about these gains. State (INR), OSD, and CIA maintain that the October-December APC acquisition of 9.4% of the population for the GVN is a fragile claim because these gains were achieved by spreading our military and administrative resources thinly over contested areas. These agencies, therefore, argue that the APC gains have stood so far only because the VC/NLF have not challenged them, and they believe it is "quite likely" the gains will be contested in the coming months.

If the APC gains and those other gains secured in the wake of the fall NVN withdrawals are removed the substance of the long-term debate emerges clearly. The chart then shows that according to the second view, thus modified, pacification programs have registered no progress over 1967-68. The first view sees significant progress over the 1967-68 period. It is further seen that the second view placed the chart's relatively secure line much lower. For example, in August 1968, the first group says 65.8% of the population was under GVN control; the second group places only 49.9% in the GVN category.

The source of this difference is a derivative of a wider dispute over the value of the HES composite indicator which is really an average of eighteen indicators, indiscriminately mixing security factors with development factors and not assessing appropriate weighting for each indicator. The second group arrives at their estimate by allocating a portion of the first group's GVN controlled population to the contested category. They do this by breaking out the "grey area" population on the basis of military and political activity instead of the composite HES indicator. According to their view, in the fall of 1968
1. Includes "A", "B", and "C" hamlet populations and secure, non-hamlet population.

2. Includes "A" and "B" hamlet populations, secure non-hamlet populations, and only that population in "C" hamlets not subject to "D" or "E" levels of military/political activity on the part of the VC.
at least one-half of South Vietnam's rural population was subject to a significant VC/NLF presence; for the first group, this figure was approximately one-third. The East Asian Bureau in State takes a middle position and believes that the "relatively secure" population figures derived from HES should not be accepted in toto.

By neither view can pacification be said to have progressed greatly in the last three years, at least, prior to the last few months. This conclusion is emphasized in the OSD view if consideration is given to the fact that about the same number of people have been brought under GVN control by population migration as have been by pacification gains. Nor does either view promise anything close to complete success within two to three years. MACV/JCS anticipates snowballing gains in the future, but other agencies note that stalemating of GVN pacification efforts could make the rural population more ready to accommodate with the NLF. The East Asian Bureau of State believes that the moment for pacification gains was not opportune until late 1967 and that we can anticipate further progress in the next two years.

It is noteworthy that the gap in views that does exist is largely one between the policy makers, the analysts, and the intelligence community on the one hand, and the civilian and military operators on the other.

The implications of the disagreement are very divergent. One view sees a high probability of GVN success and generally applauds the GVN's performance. It finds that the GVN has been ineffective at times, but that it has not been negligent, and overall progress has been most satisfactory.

The other view is greatly different. The GVN has yet to succeed in the countryside. The rural population situation has not changed significantly and certainly not at a rate which will free us of noticeable burdens within 2-5 years. We may even be over-extended in the rural areas and open to a damaging VC counterattack.

In CIA's view, progress has been slow but there has been progress. The real test of how solid recent gains in pacification have been will come when the VC initiate serious counter-pacification activity.
Changes Required

As to the changes required to increase favorable change in security and control, all agree that improvement in leadership, both civil and military, and at all levels, is a primary prerequisite. Other changes recommended are improvements in quality and quantity of small-unit operations in support of territorial security and pacification. A shopping list of recommended changes is provided by MACV/JCS, Embassy Saigon, and OSD. INR in State essentially states that "the basic deficiencies of pacification remain and give little reason to expect a significant change in the situation in the countryside in the next two years." Additionally, OSD has provided gradations of changes which depend upon assessments of present progress and with the more radical changes calling for a reorientation of the advisory system and re-focusing of pacification efforts.

Lesser Issues

In 1968, 15,776 members of the Viet Cong political and administrative infrastructure (VCI) were neutralized, 87.1% of whom were easily replaceable functionaries. Anti-VCI operations showed major improvements, but all agree with the MACV statement "these losses have not unduly disrupted the communist political apparatus." A precise estimate of VCI operations is complicated by the fact that current estimates of the size of the VCI differ by 25% or more. Moreover the criteria used to measure neutralizations are different from those used to estimate the infrastructure. Thus any direct comparison of the numbers neutralized and the numbers estimated to be in the VCI are misleading. Analysis of Phoenix and other anti-VCI activities also shows that there are major difficulties with the GVN's method of detainee disposition, and suggests the need for GVN judicial reforms.

All agencies agreed that the Phoenix program was long overdue and potentially very valuable. The respondents agreed that it is too early for a thorough assessment of the Phoenix program, and they predict it is unlikely to cause the NLF major problems in 1969. Embassy Saigon noted that Phoenix bears close watching with respect to the attitudes or rural population, attitudes toward the American sponsors, and a potentially deleterious effect on the possibilities for rural GVN-VC accommodations.
Every agency except MACV/JCS agrees that the available data on war damage to the civilian population is inadequate. CIA concluded the rural hamlets take a tremendous beating both from friendly and enemy forces. The responses received suggest that this is a very serious problem in need of further U.S. Government attention and analysis.

Recent GVN personnel changes were found by all agencies to have brought a significant upgrading in the average quality of GVN officials. Nonetheless, corruption, favoritism, and neglect of the populace's problems were still seen as major GVN shortcomings. There was no conclusive evidence that the 1968 personnel changes affected the GVN's relations with minority groups.
5. **THE POLITICAL SCENE**  
(Questions 21-23)

(Current attitudes toward the GVN. Efforts to strengthen it. Non-communist prospects in Vietnam.)

This section on the political situation can be boiled down to three fundamental questions: (1) How strong is the GVN today? (2) What is being done to strengthen it for the political struggle with the NLF? (3) What are the prospects for continued non-communist government in South Vietnam?

The essence of the replies from U.S. agencies is as follows: (1) The GVN is stronger recently than for many years but still very weak in certain areas and among various elites. (2) Some steps are being taken to strengthen the GVN politically but these are inadequate. (3) It is most difficult to predict the prospects for continued non-communist government, but they are chancy at best.

Within these broad thrusts of the responses there are decided differences of emphasis among the agencies. The implications of these different emphases could very well tip the political balance in South Vietnam over the next several years. Thus, MACV/JCS and Saigon, while acknowledging the problems, accent more the increasing stability of the Thieu regime and the overall political system; the significance of the moves being made by the GVN to bolster its strength; and the possibility of continued non-communist rule in South Vietnam given sufficient U.S. support. OSD on the other hand, while acknowledging certain progress, is decidedly more skeptical and pessimistic. CIA takes a cautiously optimistic view, acknowledging certain progress, but warning of weak spots which still must be overcome. OSD and CIA note recent political improvements and GVN measures but they tend to deflate their relative impact and highlight the remaining obstacles. State's position, while not so consistent or clear-cut, generally steers a middle course, being somewhat skeptical about the overall political situation and the GVN position and seeing prospects as mixed. State both accents recent stability and acknowledges inadequate GVN political actions.
The Present Situation

We have a great quantity of information on Vietnamese politics but the quality is suspect. It varies greatly by elite and level and is usually sounder for broad groups than factions or individuals. OSD remarks that we are dealing with a nascent constitutional system in which the elective process has yet to take hold and elections are viewed as a manipulatory process designed to confirm present leaders with their power positions.

Non-communist elements rally in times of common danger from the communist threat, but otherwise generally engage in a perpetual struggle for power. Most elites may be willing to participate in the GVN but their motives are often mixed. State observes that there generally is a greater commitment to the GVN and anti-communist struggle today and that active non-communist opposition has decreased. In their view toward the military struggle, Northerners are most insistent on military victory, but the central and Southern Vietnamese indicate ambiguity and war-weariness. Firm support for the GVN, as long as it projects a strong anti-communist image, comes from most military elements, Catholics and portions of the bureaucratic and merchant classes. The major problem for the GVN remains in the rural villages where the VC are strongest. Opposition also comes from certain Buddhist, youth, union and professional elements. Various ethnic and religious minorities, while often anti-communist, are not strongly tied to the GVN. The Army could be a distinct threat to the continence of the GVN if it perceives a weakening of resolve by Thieu toward communists or if U.S. support for civilianization of the GVN or for Thieu is perceived as weakening.

In reading the Vietnamese political scene, one must keep in mind that pragmatism, expediency, war weariness, a desire to remain unaligned and end up on the winning side are all common features. So are family loyalty, corruption, social immobility and clandestine activities.

OSD points out (and a recent Saigon cable corroborates this view) that there has been a noticeable shift recently by many non-communists towards acceptance of the NLF in some capacity as part of an eventual political settlement. How much of this is political opportunism colored by the belief they can control the communists is
unknown, but, in any case most elites would want to minimize
the communist influence in the government. Most elites are now
opposed to a forced coalition government which includes communists
in significant positions of power. However, these elites may be highly
vulnerable to manipulation by the NLF/PRP given its organizational
strength and political skills.

South Vietnamese attitudes toward the U.S. are varied and
ambivalent. Our presence is seen as a necessary evil to forestall a
communist take-over. Our involvement is viewed with a mixture of
gratitude, shame, and suspicion. Essentially, recent events,
especially the Paris talks, have made it apparent to the Vietnamese
that the U.S. commitment is not open-ended and that some withdrawals
are likely during 1969.

**GVN Political Actions**

All agencies agree that there has been substantial progress
in broadening the government; all except OSD and State see significant
movement against corruption; and all agree that political mobilization
is both the most crucial and the weakest area. There is a certain
ambivalence in agency views which maintain that U.S. pressure for
reforms is needed but that we should not get too directly involved.
OSD points out past U.S. failures at directing Vietnamese political
life into desired channels.

Recent encouraging moves toward broadening the government
include various elections, a national assembly with real deliberative
powers, and greater Southern and civilian representation in the
Cabinet. However, many groups are still not included or are under-
represented. And the key problem of engaging the SVN population
through GVN political organization from the top to the grass roots level
has yet to be addressed by the GVN.

Recent dismissal of many unworthy officials and some increased
emphasis on competence for promotion have not dissipated wide-spread
corruption, reliance on personal loyalties and nepotism.

Events of the past year have sharpened the realization of the
need for non-communist unity, but the GVN has made less progress
on political mobilization than elsewhere. Its ability to gain support will depend primarily on the extent to which it can provide security, an alternative to the NLF, and social and economic progress. OSD has provided specific recommendations for U.S. actions to assist the GVN in attaining these ends.

Prospects

Political mobilization of non-communist elites is the most crucial factor, but it rests inter alia on broadening the government and advancement based on merit, and there are many other political steps needed. In general, all these factors will be increasingly important as the U.S. reduces its military effort. Such a reduction might stimulate political progress but it will also entail risks. As noted earlier, there is some ambiguity as well as differences of view about the proper U.S. role in SVN politics. State and Saigon caution against undue U.S. involvement and pressure. State adds that failure to act and U.S. actions elsewhere can also have impact. MACV/JCS place greater emphasis on the use of our leverage in effecting needed reforms. OSD argues for selective and less visible U.S. involvement in assisting the GVN politically while disengaging portions of the larger visible U.S. presence.

CIA notes that RVNAF will for some time remain the only national political force capable of matching the communists from the point of view of strength and organization. It does not appear realistic or prudent to expect that civilian groups alone can stand up to the communists within the next few years or that they should be given the practical burden of this effort at the expense of the military.

No agency clearly forecasts a "victory" over the communists, and all acknowledge the manifold problems facing the GVN as we withdraw. MACV/JCS stress the need for continued U.S. support. OSD and State believe that a compromise settlement is most likely and emphasize GVN self-reliance. The USIB state that progress in SVN has been sufficiently slow and fragile that substantial U.S. disengagement in the next few years could jeopardize all recent gains.
JCS and OSD each list their essential conditions for cessation of hostilities. While they agree on certain elements, the JCS look toward continued U.S. support to assure the sovereignty of the GVN while OSD requires only that the South Vietnamese be free to choose their political future without external influence.
6. U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS
(Questions 24-28)

(Changes in U.S. deployments and tactics. Possibilities for U.S. force reductions. Effectiveness of B-52s, bombing in Laos and North Vietnam.)

The major points of agreement within the U.S. Government on these subjects are:

-- the description of recent U.S. deployments and tactics;

-- the difficulties of assessing the results of B-52 strikes, but their effectiveness against known troop concentrations and in close support operations;

-- the fact that the Soviets and Chinese supply almost all war material to Hanoi and have enabled the North Vietnamese to carry on despite all our operations.

There are fundamental disagreements running throughout this section, including the following:

-- OSD believes, and MACV/JCS deny, that there is a certain amount of "fat" in our current force levels that could be cut back without significant reduction in combat capability.

-- MACV/JCS and, somewhat more cautiously, CIA and State ascribe much higher casualty estimates to our B-52 strikes than does OSD.

-- MACV/JCS assign very much greater effectiveness to our past and current Laos and North Vietnam bombing campaigns than do OSD, State and CIA.

-- MACV/JCS believe that a vigorous bombing and interdiction campaign could choke off enough supplies to Hanoi to make her stop fighting, while OSD and CIA feel that such a campaign could not reduce North Vietnam's capabilities to a level that would prevent it from continuing to support the struggle. CIA also is not convinced that the U.S. could sustain an unlimited interdiction and bombing program over a long period of time without losses reaching unacceptable levels.
U.S. Deployments and Tactics

In early 1968, MACV moved the equivalent of two divisions from II and III Corps to northern I Corps. This deployment was a defensive reaction to the threat of a major NVA siege of Khe Sanh and the coastal lowlands. With the further enemy offensives in February and May, U.S. forces throughout the country (except for I Corps) were pulled back into screening positions around SVN's major cities and used to push the VC forces out. Since then, one of the two U.S. divisions redeployed to I Corps has been returned to III and IV Corps. MACV now gives top priority to the control of Saigon, the approaches to it in III and northern IV Corps, and the heavily populated upper Delta.

Until late 1968, allied (particularly U.S.) efforts were directed largely against enemy main forces through large (1,000 men or more) unit operations. With the recent withdrawal of NVA main force units from SVN, U.S. units have been able to operate in smaller units and with more emphasis on the enemy's infrastructure and support apparatus. U.S. field commanders estimate that nearly half of their operations are in support of pacification. The deployment of U.S. units in SVN's populated areas and the change in tactics has, MACV asserts, helped improve pacification progress.

U.S. Force Reductions

MACV/JCS and OSD agree that there is no way of reducing U.S. force levels in Vietnam without some reduction in combat capability. However, OSD argues that reducing some U.S. logistics headquarters, construction or tactical air personnel may not have any significant effect on U.S. combat capability or effectiveness. For instance, OSD concludes that because of the halt in bombing North Vietnam, the U.S. needs neither as many interdiction aircraft as we now have, nor our full force of three Navy carriers off North Vietnam, although reduction in any of these areas depends upon NVN's observance of the tacit conditions of the U.S. bombing halt. MACV/JCS feel that while some of the above elements would help to minimize loss of combat capability, in general significant reductions in our force levels will cause "at least equal" reductions in our combat capability.

OSD also thinks that U.S. forces could be reduced as the RVNAF improves and expands. By their estimates, the ongoing RVNAF improvement plan might free up to about 15-20 U.S. maneuver battalions and
their support units (some 30-40,000 men) by mid-1969 without a decrease in total allied force capability. This projection assumes that RVNAF combat effectiveness increases along with their combat capability. Additionally, some U.S. forces could be reduced as they turn over equipment to selected RVNAF units. In their responses, MACV/JCS do not consider this question.

B-52 Effectiveness

All agencies acknowledge that sound analysis of the effectiveness of B-52 strikes is difficult. Consistent data bases are lacking. As a result there are sharp differences on casualty estimates. While JCS estimates that about 41,000 enemy were killed in 1968 by the B-52s in all in-country strikes, OSD believes that perhaps as few as 7,100 were killed. The consensus is that some strikes are very effective, some clearly wasted, and a majority with indeterminate outcome.

There is agreement that B-52 strikes are very effective when directed against known enemy troop concentrations or in close support of tactical operations, and have served to disrupt VC/NVA operations. However, OSD and State, unlike MACV/JCS, find that B-52 strikes against suspected enemy infiltration routes, logistics or base camps/areas (50% of 1968's sorties) are probably much less effective than close support strikes. CIA cites a range of casualty estimates and considers it impossible to select one, but believes it is apparent that B-52 strikes have become a significant factor in the attrition of enemy forces.

The Laos and North Vietnam Interdiction Campaign

It is agreed that our bombing campaign both prior to and after November 1968 has reduced the enemy's throughput of supplies. However, State/CIA/OSD consider that this reduction has not materially affected the enemy's capability to supply his forces. MACV/JCS feel the bombing in Laos since 1 November 1968 has succeeded in reducing significantly enemy throughput capacity so that his minimum essential requirements in both Laos and SVN were not met during the period 1 November 1968 to 25 January 1969. State/CIA/OSD think it has failed to prevent the flow of supplies to SVN, though CIA feels it has cost the enemy heavily.

Post-November Campaign

Since early November, MACV has attempted to reduce the logistic capacity of the enemy by blocking the two key roads near the passes from NVN into Laos. MACV finds it has effectively blocked these roads 80%
of the time and therefore caused less traffic to get through. OSD/CIA/State agree that enemy traffic on the roads attacked has been disrupted. However, they point out that the enemy uses less than 15% of the theoretical road capacity, that he is constantly expanding that capacity through new roads and bypasses, and that our air strikes do not eliminate, but only delay, traffic.

Besides blocking the roads, our bombing destroys material in transit on them. (In this connection, State notes the change in emphasis in Laotian bombing from the destruction of materiel, prior to mid-1968, to interdiction of the routes themselves.) JCS/MACV and OSD/CIA agree that we destroy 12% to 14% of the trucks sighted moving through Laos and 20% to 35% of the total flow of supplies in Laos. To MACV/JCS, the material destroyed forces the enemy to provide additional materiel to compensate for losses in order to maintain an acceptable level of support to the VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam. OSD and CIA find that the enemy needs in SVN (10 to 15 trucks of supplies per day from the North) are so small compared with his logistics capacity that the enemy can replace his losses easily by increasing his traffic flows to offset attrition and get through to SVN as much supplies as he wants to despite the bombing:

Pre-November Campaign

Prior to November 1968, we bombed in southern North Vietnam as well as Laos. The MACV/JCS find that this campaign reduced the flow of supplies into Laos greatly and that this flow increased greatly after the bombing halt. The OSD/CIA agree that traffic followed this pattern, but argue that normal seasonal weather changes as well as the bombing affected the traffic pattern.

Alternative Campaign

All agencies agree that Chinese and Soviet aid has provided almost all the war material used by Hanoi. However, there is some disagreement on whether alternative military courses of action could reduce the flow enough to make a difference in South Vietnam. If all imports by sea were denied and land routes through Laos and Cambodia attacked vigorously, the MACV/JCS find that NVN could not obtain enough war supplies to continue. OSD and CIA question the effectiveness of a campaign to block the overland routes from China which alone could provide NVN enough material to carry on the war.
VIETNAM QUESTIONS

Environment of Negotiations

1. Why is the DRV in Paris? What is the evidence?

   (Among the hypotheses:
   a. Out of weakness, to accept a face-saving formula for defeat.
   b. To negotiate the withdrawal of U.S. (and NVA) forces, and/or a compromise political settlement, giving a chance for NLF victory in the South.
   c. To give the U.S. a face-saving way to withdraw.
   d. To undermine the GVN and U.S./GVN relations, and to relieve U.S. military pressure in both North and South Vietnam.
   e. Out of desire to end the losses and costs of war on the best terms attainable.)

2. What is the nature of evidence, and how adequate is it, underlying competing views (as in the most recent NIE on this subject, with its dissenting footnotes) of the impact of various outcomes in Vietnam within Southeast Asia?

3. How soundly-based is the common belief that Hanoi is under active pressure with respect to the Paris negotiations from Moscow (for) and Peking (against)? Is it clear that either Moscow or Peking believe they have, or are willing to use, significant leverage on Hanoi's policies? What is the nature of evidence, other than public or private official statements?

4. How sound is our knowledge of the existence and significance of stable "Moscow" and "Peking" factions within the Hanoi leadership, as distinct, for example, from shifting factions, all of whom recognize the need to balance off both allies? How much do we know, in general, of intraparty disputes and personalities within Hanoi?

NVA/VC

5. What is the evidence supporting various hypotheses, and the overall adequacy of evidence, relating to the following questions:
   a. Why did NVA units leave South Vietnam last summer and fall?
   b. Did the predicted "third-wave offensive" by the NVA/VC actually
take place? If so, why did it not achieve greater success?

c. Why are VC guerrillas and local forces now relatively dormant?

(Among the hypotheses: 1) response to VC/NVA battle losses, forcing withdrawal or passivity; 2) to put diplomatic pressure on U.S. to move to substantive talks in Paris; 3) to prepare for future operations; and/or 4) pressure of U.S. and allied operations.)

6. What rate of NVA/VC attrition would outrun their ability to replenish by infiltration and recruitment, as currently calculated? Do present operations achieve this? If not, what force levels and other conditions would be necessary? Is there any evidence they are concerned about continuing heavy losses?

7. To what relative extent do the U.S., RVNAF and the NVA/VC share in the control and the rate of VC/NVA attrition; i.e., to what extent, in terms of our tactical experience, can heavy losses persistently be imposed on VC/NVA forces, despite their possible intention to limit casualties by avoiding contact?

(Among the hypotheses:

a. Contact is predominantly at VC tactical initiative, and we cannot reverse this; VC need suffer high casualties only so long as they are willing to accept them, in seeking contact; or

b. Current VC/NVA loss rates can be maintained by present forces -- as increased X% by Y additional forces -- whatever the DRV/VC choose to do, short of further major withdrawal.)

8. What controversies persist on the estimate of VC Order of Battle; in particular, on the various categories of guerrilla forces and infrastructure? On VC recruiting, and manpower pool? What is the evidence for different estimates, and what is the overall adequacy of evidence?

9. What are NVA/VC capabilities for launching a large-scale offensive, with "dramatic" results (even if taking high casualties and without holding objectives long), in the next six months? (e.g., an offensive against one or more cities, or against most newly "pacified" hamlets.) How adequate is the evidence?

10. What are the main channels for military supplies for the NVA/VC forces in SVN, (e.g., Cambodia and/or the Laotion panhandle)? What portion of these supplies come in through Sihanoukville?
RVNAF

10. What differences of opinion exist concerning extent of RVNAF improvement, and what is evidence underlying different views? (e.g., compare recent CIA memo with MACV views.) For example:

a. Which is the level of effective, mobile, offensive operations? What results are they achieving?

b. What is the actual level of "genuine" small-unit actions and night actions in ARVN, RF and PF: i.e., actions that would typically be classed as such within the U.S. Army, and in particular, offensive ambushes and patrols? How much has this changed?

c. How much has the officer selection and promotion system, and the quality of leadership, actually changed over the years (as distinct from changes in paper "programs")? How many junior officers hold commissions (in particular, battlefield commissions from NCO rank) despite lack of a high school diploma?

d. What known disciplinary action has resulted from ARVN looting of civilians in the past year (for example, the widespread looting that took place last spring)?

e. To what extent have past "anti-desertion" decrees and efforts lessened the rate of desertion; why has the rate recently been increasing to new highs?

f. What success are the RF and PF having in providing local security and reducing VC "control" and influence in rural populations?

11. To what extent could RVNAF -- as it is now -- handle the VC (Main Force, local forces, guerrillas), with or without U.S. combat support to fill RVNAF deficiencies, if all VNA units were withdrawn:

a. If VC still had Northern fillers.

b. If all Northerners (but not regroupees) were withdrawn.

12. To what extent could RVNAF -- as it is now -- also handle a sizeable level of NVA forces:

a. With U.S. air and artillery support.

b. With above and also U.S. ground forces in reserve.

c. Without U.S. direct support, but with increased RVNAF artillery and air capacity?
13. What, in various views, are the required changes -- in RVNAF command, organization, equipment, training and incentives, in political environment, in logistical support, in U.S. modes of influence -- for making RVNAF adequate to the tasks cited in questions 9 and 10 above? How long would this take? What are the practical obstacles to these changes, and what new U.S. moves would be needed to overcome these?

Pacification

14. How much, and where, has the security situation and the balance of influence between the VC and NLF actually changed in the countryside over time, contrasting the present to such benchmarks as end-61, end-63, end-65, end-67? What are the best indicators of such change, or lack of it? What factors have been mainly responsible for such change as has occurred? Why has there not been more?

15. What are the reasons for expecting more change in the countryside in the next two years than in past intervals? What are the reasons for not expecting more? What changes in RVNAF, GVN, U.S., and VC practices and adaptiveness would be needed to increase favorable change in security and control? How likely are such changes, individually and together; what are the obstacles?

16. What proportion of the rural population must be regarded as "subject to significant VC presence and influence"? (How should hamlets rated as "C" in the Hamlet Evaluation System -- the largest category -- be regarded in this respect?) In particular, what proportion in the provinces surrounding Saigon? How much has this changed?

17. What number or verified numbers of the Communist political apparatus (i.e., People's Revolutionary Party members, the hard-core "infrastructure") have been arrested or killed in the past year? How many of these were cadre of higher than village level? What proportion do these represent of total PRP membership, and how much -- and how long -- had the apparatus been disrupted?

18. What are the reasons for believing that current and future efforts at "rooting out" hard-core infrastructure will be -- or will not be -- more successful than past efforts? For example, for believing that collaboration among the numerous Vietnamese intelligence agencies will be markedly more thorough than in the past? What are the side-effects, e.g., on Vietnamese opinion, of anti-infrastructure campaigns such as the current "accelerated effort," along with their lasting effect on hard-core apparatus?

19. How adequate is our information on the overall scale and incidence of damage to civilians by air and artillery, and looting and misbehavior by RVNAF?

20. To what extent do recent changes in command and administration affecting
the country-side represent moves to improve competence, as distinct from replacement of one clique by another? What is the basis of judgment? What is the impact of the recent removal of minority-group province and district officials (Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnard) in their respective areas?

Politics

21. How adequate is our information, and what is it based upon, concerning:

a. Attitudes of Vietnamese elites not now closely aligned with the GVN (e.g., religious leaders, professors, youth leaders, professionals, union leaders, village notables) towards: Participation -- if offered -- in the GVN; the current legitimacy and acceptability of the GVN; likewise (given "peace") for the NLF or various "neutralist" coalitions; towards U.S. intent, as they interpret it (e.g., U.S. plans for ending the war, perceived U.S. alignments with particular individuals and forces within Vietnam, U.S. concern for various Vietnamese interests).

b. Patterns of existent political alignments within GVN/RVNAF and outside it -- reflecting family ties, corruption, officers' class, secret organizations and parties, religious and regional background -- as these bear upon behavior with respect to the war, the NLF, reform and broadening of the GVN, and responses to U.S. influence and intervention.

22. What is the evidence on the prospects -- and on what changes in conditions and U.S. policies would increase or decrease them -- for changes in the GVN toward: (a) broadening of the government to include participation of all significant non-Communist regional and religious groupings (at province and district levels, as well as cabinet); (b) stronger emphasis, in selection and promotion of officers and officials, on competence and performance (as in the Communist Vietnamese system) as distinct from considerations of family, corruption, and social (e.g., educational) background; and (c) political mobilization of non-Communist sympathies and energies in support of the GVN, as evidenced, e.g., by reduced desertion, by willing alignment of religious, provincial and other leaders with the GVN, by wide cooperation with anti-corruption and pro-efficiency drives.

23. How critical, in various views, is each of the changes in question 22 above to prospects of attaining -- at current, reduced or increased levels of U.S. military effort -- either "victory," or a strong non-Communist political role after a compromise settlement of hostilities? What are views of the risks attendant to making these changes, or attempting them; and, to the extent that U.S. influence is required, on U.S. practical ability to move prudently and effectively in this direction? What is the evidence?
U.S. Operations

24. How do military deployment and tactics today differ from those of 6 - 12 months ago? What are reasons for changes, and what has this impact been?

25. In what different ways (including innovations in organization) might U.S. force-levels be reduced to various levels, while minimizing impact on combat capability?

26. What is the evidence on the scale of effect of B-52 attacks in producing VC/NVA casualties? In disrupting VC/NVA operations? How valid are estimates of overall effect?

27. What effect is the Laotian interdiction bombing having:
   a. In reducing the capacity of the enemy logistic system?
   b. In destroying materiel in transit?

28. With regard to the bombing of North Vietnam:
   a. What evidence was there on the significance of the principal strains imposed on the DRV (e.g., in economic disruption, extra manpower demands, transportation blockages, population morale)?
   b. What was the level of logistical through-put through the Southern province of NVN just prior to the November bombing halt? To what extent did this level reflect the results of the U.S. bombing campaign?
   c. To what extent did Chinese and Soviet aid relieve pressure on Hanoi?
   d. What are current views on the proportion of war-essential imports that could come into NVN over the rail or road lines from China, even if all imports by sea were denied and a strong effort even made to interdict ground transport? What is the evidence?
   e. What action has the DRV taken to reduce the vulnerability and importance of Hanoi as a population and economic center (e.g., through population evacuation and economic dispersal)?