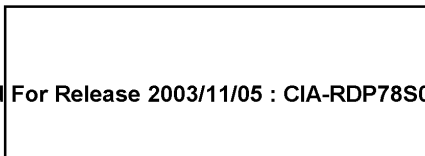


63-6

A REASSESSMENT OF THE MANPOWER RESOURCES
OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS

27 October 1966



GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

South VietnamA. Communist Losses1. Total

The cost of the war to the Communists in South Vietnam in terms of human lives is rapidly increasing. It is estimated that the enemy lost 80,000 - 90,000 men in 1965* and that his estimated losses will be 128,000 - 137,000 in 1966 and 130,000 - 150,000 in 1967 (see Table /). Previous estimates of losses were 105,000 - 120,000 in 1966 and 65,000 - 75,000 for the first six months of 1967. In 1966 about 45 percent of the total losses were accounted for by those killed in action, about 30 percent by those seriously wounded, and about 25 percent by those captured and deserting.

2. Killed in Action

Battle deaths among Communist forces have increased from an average of about 2,900 per month in 1965 to about 4,800 per month in 1966, and they may increase to 5,400 per month in 1967**. In 1965 about 35,000 enemy troops were killed in action. Projections of killed in action figures for the first 8 months of 1966 indicate that about 57,000 Communists will probably be killed by the end of 1966.

3. Wounded in Action

In 1965 about 19,000 - 30,000 Communist troops were seriously wounded

* Killed in action, seriously wounded, captured, and deserters.

** Although obviously subject to wide margins of error, killed in action figures have been taken as reported.

in action.* These figures will probably increase to about 30,000 - 49,000 during 1966. Previous estimates indicated that 24,000 - 39,000 enemy troops would be seriously wounded in 1966. On a monthly basis, the number of troops seriously wounded and, for all practical purposes, lost indefinitely increased from 1,600 - 2,500 per month in 1965 to 2,500 - 4,000 in 1966. During 1967 a total of 36,000 - 56,000 may be seriously wounded.

4. Captured

Numbers of Communist troops captured range from a total of 6,300 in 1965 to about 8,000 in 1966, an increase of only 27 percent. A further increase to 9,000 captured may take place in 1967, however. Previous estimates indicated that under the current scale of operations approximately 7,000 enemy troops would be captured in 1966.

5. "Chieu Hoi" Returnees and Deserters

Under the GVN "Chieu Hoi" program about 9,500 enemy soldiers defected during 1965. It was previously estimated that about 13,000 of the enemy would defect during 1966, but current estimates indicate that only 11,500 will actually do so. Unrecorded desertions are probably at least equal to the number of defectors under the "Chieu Hoi" program, although it is possible that they are considerably higher.

6. Allocation of Communist Military Losses

The increasing rates of attrition, caused primarily by the intervention

* Wounded in action estimates are based on historical experience in World War II, the experience of allied troops in Vietnam, and POW interrogation reports.

of US/TN troops, have forced the North Vietnamese to shoulder the increasing costs of the war. It is estimated that the North Vietnamese troops sustained only 10 percent of the total losses in 1965, but that they will sustain 25 and 40 percent of the total in 1966 and 1967, respectively. North Vietnamese losses will amount to an estimated 29,000 - 35,000 in 1966 and probably will be in the 50,000 - 60,000 range during 1967 (see Table 2). * Previous estimates indicated that about 25,000 - 30,000 North Vietnamese troops would be put out of action in South Vietnam in 1966 and that an additional 25,000 - 30,000 would be lost in the first half of 1967. North Vietnamese losses have resulted primarily from direct battlefield deaths and serious wounds with very few North Vietnamese troops deserting or defecting to allied units. About 70 percent of the VC losses are caused by battlefield attrition, the remainder by desertions and defections. Total VC losses in 1966 will probably amount to a maximum of 90,000 - 100,000, with perhaps 80,000 - 90,000 being lost in 1967. The increased role of the North Vietnamese troops in the South Vietnamese war is reflected in the relative shift in casualties from local to North Vietnamese forces.

* Enemy deaths on the battlefield have been allocated to NVA/VC units on the assumption that they were sustained in proportion to their respective troop strengths in the various corps areas as of the end of the first 8 months of 1966. Irregular and combat support troops were assumed to engage in combat operations only half as often as NVA and VC regular forces.