

The Manpower Situation in  
North Vietnam

Jan 1968 ER IM 68-4, The Manpower Situation in North Vietnam

24 May 68 TOP SECRET/Eyes Only Helms to the President memo re latest information on deployment from the North

13 Jun 69 [REDACTED] to William Sullivan (State) re Draft Memoranda on Potential GVN Manpower Problems  
STATINTL

Attachment: Preliminary draft, South Vietnam:  
The Growing Manpower Squeeze,  
1 Jun 69

30 Sep 69 Table: OER Estimates of North Vietnamese Manpower Tied-Up Because of the Bombing

4 Dec 70 Excerpt from OLC Journal re meeting with Roland Paul, Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff (gave him OER/DDI figures on military casualties and male population of North Vietnam, 1965-70)

Attachments: [REDACTED] to DDI memo, dated 3 Dec 70,  
STATINTL re Estimate of North Vietnamese Military Deaths in the 17-35 Age Group (Blind Memo re North Vietnam's Manpower Losses attached)

SECRET

EXCERPT FROM JOURNAL  
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

Friday - 4 December 1970

3. (Secret - JGO) Met with Mr. Roland Paul, Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, and gave him the figures provided by OER/DDI concerning the military casualties and male population of North Vietnam age 17 to 35 for the period 1965 to 1970. Mr. Paul was most appreciative and told me that in keeping with the classification he would hold the information at his own desk for background. The information that had prompted his query was received from Mr. Herman Kahn who had given him a casualty figure of one-half the 15 to 23 year age group of the male population. [REDACTED] OER, has been advised.

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STATINTL

|                  |          |                 |
|------------------|----------|-----------------|
| TRANSMITTAL SLIP |          | DATE            |
|                  |          | 8 December 1970 |
| TO: [REDACTED]   |          |                 |
| ROOM NO.         | BUILDING |                 |
| 4 F18            | Hqs.     |                 |
| REMARKS:         |          |                 |
|                  |          |                 |
| FROM:            |          |                 |
| OLC              |          |                 |
| ROOM NO.         | BUILDING | EXTENSION       |
| 7235             | Hqs.     | 6136            |

FORM NO. 241  
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-B  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

NO FOREIGN DISSEM



3 December 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence  
SUBJECT : Estimate of North Vietnamese Military Deaths in the 17-35 Age Group

25X1A

1. The attached draft was prepared in response to a request made to [REDACTED] by Roland Paul, a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

2. The only background I have on the request is that the Committee had been furnished with an estimate of the number of military deaths sustained by North Vietnamese males in the 17-35 age group which the Committee regarded as incredibly high. We do not know who made the estimate or what kind of figures were presented. You will note that our figures also are not modest.

3. These figures are undoubtedly sensitive and may come back to haunt us depending on the use to which the Committee might put them. Therefore, I thought you would wish to be aware of this request before any decision is made to respond to Mr. Paul. You should also know that the estimate of total infiltration, though nominally CODEWORD, was downgraded to SECRET during the preparation of NSSM 99.

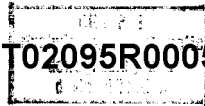


Deputy Director  
Economic Research

25X1A

Attachment:  
Memo re: North Vietnam's  
Manpower Losses

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM



|  |  |           |
|--|--|-----------|
| TRANSMITTAL SLIP   |  | DATE      |
|  |  | 3 Dec 70  |
| TO: DDI #  |  |           |
| ROOM NO.   | BUILDING                                 |           |
|  |  |           |
| REMARKS:   |  |           |
| <p>Pretty potent stuff<br/>for the Foreign Relations<br/>Committee.<br/>Perhaps we could let<br/>[REDACTED] simply quote<br/>Giap as noted in P 2.</p> |  |           |
| FROM: DD/OER   |  | BY-3      |
| ROOM NO.   | BUILDING                                 | EXTENSION |
| 4-F-18   | Hq.                                      | 5001      |
| FORM NO. 241<br>1 FEB 55   | REPLACES FORM 36-8<br>WHICH MAY BE USED. |           |

STATINTL

SECRET  
NO FOREIGN DISSEM

3 December 1970

MEMORANDUM

North Vietnam's Manpower Losses

Losses

1. Estimates of North Vietnamese manpower losses in the war in Indochina since 1965 must be recognized as having a large margin of error. The statistics most frequently used to derive such estimates have many weaknesses. KIA reporting is frequently inflated and does not differentiate between VC and NVA personnel; there is little hard information on how many Communists died, or are permanently disabled, due to wounds and sickness.

2. Despite the limitations in the data there is no doubt, however, that the North Vietnamese have suffered extremely large manpower losses. We estimate that North Vietnamese male fatalities, in the age bracket of 17-35, have totaled 550,000 men in South Vietnam and upwards of 50,000 in Laos and North Vietnam. The estimates are consistent with the only acknowledgment by a high-ranking Hanoi official that North Vietnam had indeed suffered very high casualties. In an interview in April 1969 with Miss Oriana Fallaci, an Italian correspondent, Giap was told: "General, the Americans say you've lost half a million men." Giap answered: "That's quite exact."

Methodologies

3. Estimates of North Vietnamese casualties in South Vietnam, the area for which the data is best can be derived by either of two methodologies. One methodology takes the total reported KIA and makes various assumptions

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about other deaths, and the North Vietnamese share of the total casualties suffered by the Communists. A second methodology starts by using the number of infiltrators the North Vietnamese have sent to South Vietnam (the firmest statistical series on the war), subtracts the number of North Vietnamese still in South Vietnam (or recently moved into Cambodia) based on order of battle estimates, and adjusts this figure to take into account the relatively small volume of exfiltration of North Vietnamese personnel from South Vietnam to North Vietnam. The application of the second methodology, which rests upon the most reliable set of statistics and requires fewer tenuous assumptions, is discussed in detail below. Interestingly, however, the first, or "KIA methodology" using what would appear to be the most reasonable assumptions, gives an estimate of enemy losses that is remarkably close to the estimate given by the "infiltration methodology." The data supporting the estimates of casualties in Laos and North Vietnam are much less firm than for South Vietnam. However, they are still probably of the right order of magnitude.

4. Since 1965 North Vietnam has sent some 800,000 military personnel to South Vietnam. There has been some reverse flow back to North Vietnam of sick and wounded which we would judge to have been on the order of 50,000 men. In addition, a few thousand key personnel have rotated back to North Vietnam for training and specialized tasks. However, these numbers have never been large enough to alter materially our estimates of losses. At present, there are between 100,000-150,000 North Vietnamese personnel in the Communist military forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia. Thus the military manpower losses in these areas could have been as much as 600,000 personnel.\* From a statistical analysis of demographic data obtained from PW interrogation reports we know that about 90% of the NVA personnel in South Vietnam are between the ages of 17-35. Thus, the North Vietnamese

\* Not all these losses have occurred in South Vietnam. Probably as many as 80,000 losses were due to disease and the rigors of the long trek by infiltrators to South Vietnam.

have suffered about 550,000 deaths within this age bracket. No more than a few hundred North Vietnamese casualties were younger than 17. As stated previously, the estimated losses in Laos and North Vietnam (military losses resulting from the bombing) are based on more tenuous data and less stringent methodologies.

Significance of the Losses

5. The estimates of North Vietnamese losses (Killed) can be put in perspective by comparing them to North Vietnam's manpower pool of young males between the ages of 17-35. In 1965 this pool, both the physically fit and unfit, numbered 2.8 million. At that time the number of young males between the ages of 17 and 35 was growing, and the size of the pool allowing for only normal death rates would have reached slightly over 3.0 million by the end of 1970. Thus, allowing for battle deaths, the pool of manpower is now estimated at only 2.4 million, down 600,000 from what it would have been today given a normal growth of the population.



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NO FOREIGN DISSEM

2855-70

3 December 1970

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SUBJECT : Estimate of North Vietnamese Military Deaths in the 17-35 Age Group

25X1A

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25X1A [redacted]

Deputy Director  
Economic Research

Attachment:

Memo re: North Vietnam's  
Manpower Losses

Distribution:

Orig. & 1 - Addressee  
2 - OD/OER  
1 - DD/OER

25X1A

DD/OER: [redacted]:ajs/5001(3 Dec 70)

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM

SECRET  
NO FOREIGN DISSEM

3 December 1970

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Note on OER Estimates of North Vietnamese Manpower  
Tied-Up Because of the Bombing

| <u>Civilians</u>                                       | <u>Thousand Persons</u> |                   |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
|  | <u>Full Time</u>        | <u>Part Time</u>  |
| Repair and Reconstruction of<br>Lines of Communication | 72                      | 100 to 200        |
| Transport Workers                                      | 100 to 120              | 25                |
| Civilian Defense                                       |                         | 150               |
| Sub-Total  | <u>172 to 192</u>       | <u>275 to 375</u> |
| <u>Military</u>  |                         |                   |
| Air Defense  | 83                      | 25 to 30          |
| Coastal Defense  | 20 to 25                |                   |
| Sub-Total  | <u>103 to 108</u>       | <u>25 to 30</u>   |
| GRAND TOTAL  | <u>275 to 300</u>       | <u>300 to 405</u> |

The standard textual formulation of this drain was as follows:

Extra manpower demands induced by the bombing brought about some tightening of over-all manpower availabilities, but never reached proportions, significant enough to limit Hanoi's support of the war. Additional demands for laborers to repair bomb damage, to move goods, and to help in civil defense were estimated to total between 475,000 and 600,000. Of these, less than 200,000 were occupied full time in war-related activities; the remainder were used as conditions warranted. The bombing required an additional 100,000 military personnel within North Vietnam to man the air defenses.

OD/OER  
30 September 1969



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GD/OER  
30 September 1969

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30 September 1969

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13 June 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable William H. Sullivan  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for  
East Asian and Pacific Affairs

SUBJECT : Draft Memoranda on Potential GVN  
Manpower Problems

1. As I indicated in our conversation at the NSC ad hoc subcommittee on Vietnam which you chair, my associates have recently completed preliminary drafts of two memoranda relating to potential manpower problems the GVN is likely to face in the not too distant future. In essence, these memoranda reflect fall-out from work done on the overall problem of "Vietnamization," specifically work initiated in connection with the related triad of National Security Study Memoranda: 19, 36 and 37.

2. One of these memoranda deals in general terms with "the growing manpower squeeze" in South Vietnam. The other approaches a subsidiary aspect of this overall problem by looking at certain patterns that have developed in the course of ARVN expansion from 1965 to the present.

3. I wish to emphasize that these are both preliminary studies subject to considerable further refinement. Comments and critiques on them would be most welcome. In light of the political sensitivity of some of the matters raised therein and to

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obviate the risk of certain paragraphs of these two memoranda being lifted or quoted out of context, I am limiting circulation of these drafts to our colleagues on the NSC ad hoc subcommittee enumerated below.

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[REDACTED]

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

**Attachments**

- cc: Mr. Richard Sneider w/atts
- Mr. John Burke w/atts
- Mr. Dennis Doolin w/atts
- Rear Admiral H. H. Epes, Jr. w/atts
- Major General John F. Freund w/atts
- Mr. Joseph A. Mendenhall w/atts

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- [REDACTED] :mee ✓
- 1 - DD/QER w/atts
- 1 - C/OCI/IC w/atts
- 1 - C/ONE/FE w/atts
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SOUTH VIETNAM: THE GROWING MANPOWER SQUEEZE

1 June 1969

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Directorate of Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
June 1969

South Vietnam: The Growing Manpower Squeeze

Introduction

As the tempo of combat in South Vietnam has increased and Saigon's participation in the conflict has grown, the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) has been compelled to dig deeply into its available manpower resources to meet military manpower requirements. The Communist 1968 Tet offensive spurred the Saigon regime into greater efforts to mobilize the population and to increase the country's commitment to its own defense. The General Mobilization Act of 15 June 1968 called for the mobilization of most males between the ages of 16 and 50, with those in the 18-38 age group liable for service in the regular and territorial forces. Males in the 16-17 and 39-50 age groups are eligible only for part-time service in the newly-created People's Self-Defense Forces, although those 39-43 years of age may be given noncombat assignments in rear service units.

Since 1967, the number of men serving in South Vietnam's regular and territorial forces has increased nearly one-third, and the total number of men in all GVN military forces has risen to more than one million. As a result, the share of the population under arms has climbed to an estimated 4.8 percent (5.9 percent if the paramilitary forces are included),\* the highest in the world. In Taiwan, for example, this ratio is 4.1 percent; in North Vietnam, 2.8 percent; and in the Soviet Union, 1.4 percent.

\* *If only the GVN-controlled population is included, the estimated shares are 5.8 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively.*

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In meeting its military manpower requirements, the GVN has had to shortchange the burgeoning civilian manpower demands (particularly the demand for skilled labor) generated by an accelerated wartime urbanization. An estimated 30-40 percent of the country's population is now located in or near the main population centers. The migration from rural to urban areas, which has been particularly rapid since 1964, stems largely from the intensification of military operations and Viet Cong (VC) terrorism in the countryside and the job opportunities created by the US military buildup. In addition, the expansion of the GVN's military forces has been accompanied by an increased flow of military dependents to the cities. This population influx has also increased the manpower demands for industry, commerce, civil service, construction, and public services, at a rate faster than the supply of available human resources.

As a result of all of these pressures, the country's manpower pool has been strained and Saigon will be hard pressed to fulfill any anticipated expansion of its military forces without seriously impeding its economic growth. Moreover, the manpower shortage has been and will continue to be an important contribution to inflationary pressure.

#### Growth of South Vietnam's Military Forces

South Vietnam's military and paramilitary forces have more than doubled since 1963. At the end of March 1969, the GVN had more than one million men under arms (see Table 1).

The manpower for the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) -- the Regular Forces and the Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF) -- consists of volunteers and draftees, with the former having accounted for 70-80 percent of the total during the past three years. The manpower input for 1966 totaled about 205,000 men, but fell to 164,000 in 1967 (see Table 2). The number soared to nearly 315,000 in 1968 as a result of Saigon's post-Tet

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Table 1

Growth of South Vietnam's Military Forces  
1963 - March 1969 a/

|                                 | In Thousands |              |              |              |              |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                 | 1963         | 1966         | 1967         | 1968         | Mar<br>1969  |
| Regular forces                  | 216.0        | 322.9        | 442.9        | 426.9        | 434.5        |
| Regional forces                 | 85.9         | 149.9        | 151.4        | 219.8        | 232.0        |
| Popular forces                  | 95.5         | 150.1        | 148.8        | 172.5        | 176.0        |
| Total RVNAF forces              | <u>397.4</u> | <u>622.9</u> | <u>643.1</u> | <u>819.2</u> | <u>842.5</u> |
| National Police                 | 19.7         | 58.3         | 73.4         | 78.4         | 77.1         |
| Revolutionary                   |              |              |              |              |              |
| Development Cadre               | 0            | 0            | 37.0         | 45.9         | 47.3         |
| Civilian Irregular              |              |              |              |              |              |
| Defense Groups                  | 18.0         | 34.7         | 38.3         | 42.3         | 44.0         |
| Truong Son Cadre                | 0            | 0            | 6.7          | 7.0          | 7.3          |
| Armed Propaganda                |              |              |              |              |              |
| Teams                           | 0            | 0            | 0            | 3.8          | 4.0          |
| Kit Carson Scouts               | 0            | 0            | 0.3          | 1.5          | 1.9          |
| Total paramilitary<br>forces b/ | <u>128.4</u> | <u>113.0</u> | <u>155.7</u> | <u>178.9</u> | <u>181.6</u> |
| Total RVN forces                | 525.8        | 735.9        | 798.8        | 998.1        | 1,024.1      |

a. Data are for end of period shown.

b. Armed Combat Youth data are included in the total from 1960 through 1966; the organization was disbanded in 1967.

1968 mobilization program. The number of conscripts more than doubled and voluntary enlistments jumped about 85 percent. The latter increase probably reflects in large part the effort of many to avoid the draft in order to join the territorial forces and remain close to their home areas. The strength of RF/PF forces increased by more than 90,000 during 1968. The paramilitary forces, staffed almost entirely with volunteers, increased by an average of about 30,000 men annually during the last three years.

Table 2

South Vietnamese Military Volunteers and Conscripts  
1966 - March 1969

|                 | Manpower Input |            |       | Paramilitary<br>Volunteers |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|-------|----------------------------|
|                 | Volunteers     | Conscripts | Total |                            |
|                 | In Thousands   |            |       |                            |
| 1966            | 159.1          | 46.1       | 205.2 | 28.2                       |
| Monthly average | 13.2           | 3.8        | 17.1  | 2.4                        |
| 1967            | 115.8          | 48.5       | 164.3 | 33.1                       |
| Monthly average | 9.6            | 4.0        | 13.6  | 2.8                        |
| 1968            | 215.3          | 99.1       | 314.4 | 28.8                       |
| Monthly average | 17.9           | 8.2        | 26.2  | 2.4                        |
| 1969            |                |            |       |                            |
| January         | 8.3            | 6.8        | 15.1  | 2.7                        |
| February        | 11.1           | 7.0        | 18.1  | 1.4                        |
| March           | 20.6           | 5.4        | 26.0  | 1.8                        |

Attrition of South Vietnam's Military Forces

While the South Vietnamese forces have received sizable inputs in recent years, their attrition also has been high. This attrition has consisted almost entirely of desertions and combat casualties (see Table 3).<sup>\*</sup> Losses of 152,000 in 1966 and 122,000 in 1967 equaled about 75 percent of total accretions for each of these years. In 1968, losses jumped to 203,000, but were only two-thirds of total accretions because of the sharp rise in personnel inputs.

<sup>\*</sup> There is no information available on other types of attrition, such as retirement. However, the magnitude of other attritive factors is not considered significant.

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Table 3

South Vietnamese Military Losses  
1966 - 1968

|                              | In Thousands    |       |       |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|
|                              | 1966            | 1967  | 1968  |
| Total losses <u>a/</u>       | 152.5           | 122.1 | 203.4 |
| Net desertions               | 116.4 <u>b/</u> | 77.7  | 116.1 |
| Casualties                   | 36.1            | 44.4  | 87.3  |
| Killed in action             | 11.9            | 12.7  | 24.3  |
| Wounded, non-fatal <u>c/</u> | 20.9            | 29.4  | 61.1  |
| Missing/captured             | 3.3             | 2.3   | 1.9   |

a. Paramilitary not included.

b. Gross desertions.

c. There is no information concerning the number of wounded who return to action. However, the GVN only includes those whose wounds are serious enough to require hospital care. Therefore, the number returning is not believed to be large enough to affect significantly the aggregate analysis.

Desertions

The major share of RVNAF losses has been through desertions; during the 1966-68 period, desertions accounted for nearly two-thirds of total attrition. Desertions totaled 116,000 in 1966, dropped to 78,000 the next year, and jumped to 116,000 during 1968.\* In addition, an average of 8,600 men deserted annually from the paramilitary forces during these years.

The average monthly desertion rate of 10.5 per thousand troops in 1967 was substantially less than

\* Figures for 1966 are gross desertions; for 1967 and 1968 they are net desertions (gross desertions less returnees).

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that recorded in 1966. However, the rate for 1968 increased to 12.7 per thousand troops. Although the rate during the first quarter of 1968 continued to reflect the downward trend of 1967 (averaging 7.7 per thousand troops), it jumped sharply after March, reaching a high of 17.3 in October. Averages of about 15 per thousand recorded during the third and fourth quarters of 1968 were the highest since a GVN crackdown on desertions in mid-1966. The rate subsequently began to decline, falling to 8.3 in February 1969. In March, the rate rose to 10.7 and the quarterly rate remained well above the average for the first quarter of 1968.

A particularly significant trend is the comparatively high rate of desertions among the major combat units which are expected to eventually replace US combat forces. Desertions from regular combat units during 1968 were at a rate estimated to equal about one-third of the strengths of these units. Thus, the overall desertion rate for RVNAF is substantially reduced by the lower rate of desertions among RF and PF units. The rate among the regular units in 1969 has continued at a high level. The March rate for ARVN's 10 infantry divisions ranged from 13.5 per thousand to 50.4 per thousand with an overall divisional average of 28.4 per thousand.

#### Casualties

The other element in available attrition data is combat casualties. The country's battle casualties have risen sharply as RVNAF participation in the war has increased. These totaled nearly 87,500 in 1968, about double the casualties sustained in 1967 and more than 140 percent greater than those in 1966. Combat deaths in these years averaged about 30 percent of total casualties. There are no casualty figures available for the paramilitary forces prior to 1968. In 1968, paramilitary units suffered nearly 14,000 casualties, of which about 3,600 were combat deaths.

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South Vietnam's Manpower Pool

Any assessment of Saigon's ability to maintain (and expand) its military forces depends for the most part on estimates of the country's available manpower. Estimating the size of the pool, however, is complicated by a lack of accurate demographic information on South Vietnam. South Vietnam is one of the few countries that has never had a national census, and the most recent area census was a pilot study of Phuoc Tuy Province undertaken in 1959. Currently, the most widely used population figure is an estimated 17.2 million in 1968. An additional obstacle to estimating the GVN manpower pool is the impossibility of determining with any great degree of accuracy the share of the South Vietnamese population under the effective control of Saigon.

The most recent estimate of South Vietnam's population distribution was undertaken by the US Agency for International Development in 1967. According to this study, there were about 3.5 million males in the country between the ages of 15 and 49. Using these figures as a base, we estimate the manpower pool available to the GVN to be about 2.1 million men and those in the 18-38 group at more than 1.3 million (see Table 4). However, more than one million men already were under arms at the end of March 1969, leaving a residual of some 350,000 men available for induction into the military forces.

Since most of the eligible draftable population already have been conscripted, any sizable number of future conscripts must come from those reaching 18 years of age. It has been estimated that 320,000 South Vietnamese reach the age of 18 each year, more than half of them males. Eliminating those ostensibly under VC control and those unfit for service, the estimated annual accretion would be around 100,000. Thus, the estimated total draftable manpower in the 18-38 age group available at the beginning of 1969 was about 450,000.

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Table 4

Estimated South Vietnamese Manpower Pool  
in 15-49 Year Age Group

In Thousands

| Age Group    | Number of Males | Number Less Those Under VC Control <u>a/</u> | Number Less Those Unfit for Service <u>b/</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--|---|
| 15-17        | 540             | 459  | 321   |
| 18-33        | 1,784           | 1,516  | 1,061   |
| 34-38        | 460             | 391  | 274   |
| 39-44        | 429             | 365  | 256   |
| 45-49        | 329             | 280  | 196   |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>3,542</i>    | <i>3,011</i>                                 | <i>2,108</i>                                  |

a. The Hamlet Evaluation Survey (HES) of January 1969 estimated that 10.9 percent of the population was under VC control. Another 9.2 percent were in so-called contested areas. Assuming half of the latter to be under VC control, we thus eliminate about 15 percent.

b. The GVN has reported that about 30 percent of draft age men are found to be unfit for military service.

Impact on the Labor Force

Although the mobilization program has as yet not created any serious general labor shortage, it has cut deeply into the country's limited supply of skilled manpower. The impact has been particularly severe in urban areas where the bulk of the skilled labor is located. About one-third of the 6 million South Vietnamese estimated to be in the civilian labor force are engaged in nonagricultural pursuits, primarily in the cities and towns. Since the GVN has greater control over the urban areas, it seems likely that a disproportionate share of the draftees are coming from these areas.

According to studies undertaken by the US Embassy in Saigon, approximately 90 percent of

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Vietnamese civil servants are considered to be skilled. Perhaps 60 percent of the Vietnamese employees of the US sector of the economy can be classified as skilled and semi-skilled. Civilian government employment was frozen at the 30 April 1968 level, and drafted personnel have not been replaced. The impact of mobilization has been felt most in such highly technical government operations as the Saigon Metropolitan Water Office and Directorate of Civil Aviation and in such private companies as Esso Standard Eastern, which employs a large number of technically trained, draft-eligible young men.

The mid-June mobilization bill provided for limited deferments for police, Revolutionary Development cadre, technical specialists, and teachers, as well as for public health and educational personnel serving in the countryside. In September 1968 the government decided to exempt from the draft all primary school teachers serving at the hamlet level and to allow all secondary and primary school teachers on the government payroll in larger towns to continue teaching after attendance at a nine-week military training course. In the private sector, where as many as one-fifth of all employees are believed to be eligible for the draft, agreement was reached with the Ministry of National Defense (MOND) in October 1968 on deferment criteria affecting employees in more than 1,000 manufacturing and commercial firms. Approximately 40,000 men in the civil service and private sectors have received deferments.

Mobilization at the present rate in combination with the lack of a well-defined deferment policy for skilled civilian personnel will further deplete the number of needed administrators, managers, technicians, and skilled craftsmen who are as necessary for effective civilian operations as they are for the armed forces. There are some 20,000 third-country nationals employed in South Vietnam (primarily skilled workers and technicians from South Korea and the Philippines), but their number is not likely to increase significantly in view of the political sensitivity which surrounds

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their employment. Moreover, with few exceptions, these nationals are employable only in the US sector.

### Outlook

Unless the GVN alters its draft regulations, it is likely to be hard pressed to meet its future military manpower requirements. Not only will the military begin to encounter shortages of skilled personnel, but difficulty in tapping the existing manpower pool also is likely to emerge. Even if attrition of Saigon's military forces during 1969 does not reach last year's level, it is likely to remain high as RVNAF combat participation continues to increase. Military replacement requirements alone are likely to be more than 150,000 men. Combat casualties during the first quarter of 1969 were at an annual rate of about 75,000 men. Desertions also are running at a similar rate, but are likely to rise as the number of 18 year old draftees increases.\*

Even assuming the unlikely event that the entire crop of new 18-year olds is drafted in 1969, Saigon would still have to find upwards of 50,000 men to fill the remaining estimated gap. This, of course, assumes no expansion of forces. Should the US begin to pull out any troops, replacements for them would have to be found.\*\* Saigon has in fact announced that it plans to increase its regular forces by at least 71,000 men during 1969 in the expectation that some US troops will start to withdraw this year.

\* A recent OASD/SA study indicated that the high desertion rate in 1968 was due in large part to the sizable numbers of new men being drafted. It indicated that perhaps 80 percent of the deserters were men with less than 6 months of military service. These men presumably succumb quickly to the pressures of severed family ties, unfamiliar surroundings, and poor morale.

\*\* This assumes an unrealistic 1:1 ratio. OASD/SA has estimated that an ARVN division functions about half as well as a US division, or a 2:1 ratio.



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Thus, in order to fill its military manpower gap, Saigon either would have to draft men over 38 and/or lower the fitness requirements. Drafting men in the 39-44 group would increase the availability pool by more than 250,000 men. Lowering standards so that only 25 percent are rejected would add an additional 100,000 men. In both cases, however, it is likely that the quality of manpower would be lowered.

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THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (ARVN) MANPOWER SQUEEZE

Many aspects of the progress noted in the pacification program during the last year have been encouraging. However, it is unlikely that this trend would continue unchecked if a substantial reduction in U.S. combat strength were made without a comparable rise in Vietnamese armed strength. The analysis of the data available on pacification in South Vietnam indicates that the battalion is still a key element in providing security to hamlets and this situation is unlikely to change as long as the Communist forces retain their battalion-oriented force structure. Any withdrawn U.S. battalions would, therefore, have to be replaced by ARVN battalions if a continuation of the trend in rural security is to be maintained.

While the question of the relative effectiveness of ARVN and U.S. battalions in South Vietnam is still under considerable study and debate, there is no reason to believe that the ARVN battalions are significantly superior to those of the U.S.; most studies, in fact, suggest that the reverse is true. At the very least, therefore, each U.S. battalion removed would have to be replaced by one ARVN battalion; in the case of the larger U.S. Marine Corps battalions perhaps two ARVN battalions would be required as replacements.

The need for an increased number of ARVN battalions is fairly clear, but the ability of South Vietnam to generate these new battalions is open to question. The attached graph depicts the relationship between total ARVN strength and the number of battalions actually put into the field. The increase in ARVN strength from 1965 to 1969 has not resulted in a proportional increase in the number of maneuver battalions. Since 1965, total ARVN strength has increased by 115,000 men, or 42.9 percent. During the same period, however, only 35 additional battalions have been fielded, an increase of 26.3 percent.

The quantity of men required to back up those field elements organized into battalions can readily be described as "overhead" and it is clear that ARVN's overhead is increasing. The reasons for the increase in overhead, however, are not known with any degree of certainty. There is a wide range of possible causes, including defective organization, manpower quality or training difficulties, scarcity of leadership cadre, or an inability to cope with high levels of attrition due to combat and desertion losses. Significantly, there is also the possibility that the increased overhead may not be an operational drawback. It may represent a rearrangement of combat and support forces that contributes

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to the overall effectiveness of the battalions that currently are in the field.

The possibility that the trend in overhead growth may not be totally disadvantageous does not, unfortunately, eliminate the manpower squeeze currently facing ARVN. If the war is to be Vietnamized and there is no radical change in the military organization of the Communist forces or offsetting improvements on ARVN's part, there appears to be no option but to increase the number of ARVN battalions. To the extent that the trend in overhead will be representative of future ARVN development, each new battalion placed into the field will cost an increasing number of men which must be added to total ARVN strength. This type of organizational trend would ultimately place a severe strain on any manpower pool, but if, as has been suggested by other reports, the total manpower pool of South Vietnam is already tight, the prospects for obtaining increased ARVN battalions without jeopardizing other governmental or industrial programs do not seem overwhelmingly bright. Furthermore, if in the long term Vietnamization of the war must include the takeover by ARVN of combat support functions currently supplied by U.S. forces, then realistic expectations should count on as a minimum the ratio between total strength and fielded battalions that currently exists. (With probability being on the side of even more rapid growth in ARVN overhead.)

The implications of the potential squeeze on the ARVN organization are serious, but it should be stressed that these implications are based on a number of analytical assumptions which are subject to change. First, it is possible that the combat support elements left behind in any U.S. withdrawal could free ARVN manpower currently in overhead for full combat duty. Second, it is possible that the Communist forces can be held down by an expansion of Regional and Popular Forces and that the need for additional ARVN battalions will not be felt as strongly as is currently believed. Lastly, it is possible that the growing overhead problem being encountered by ARVN is a function of its rapid growth after the 1968 Tet offensive and with some semblance of stabilization the overhead can be reduced.

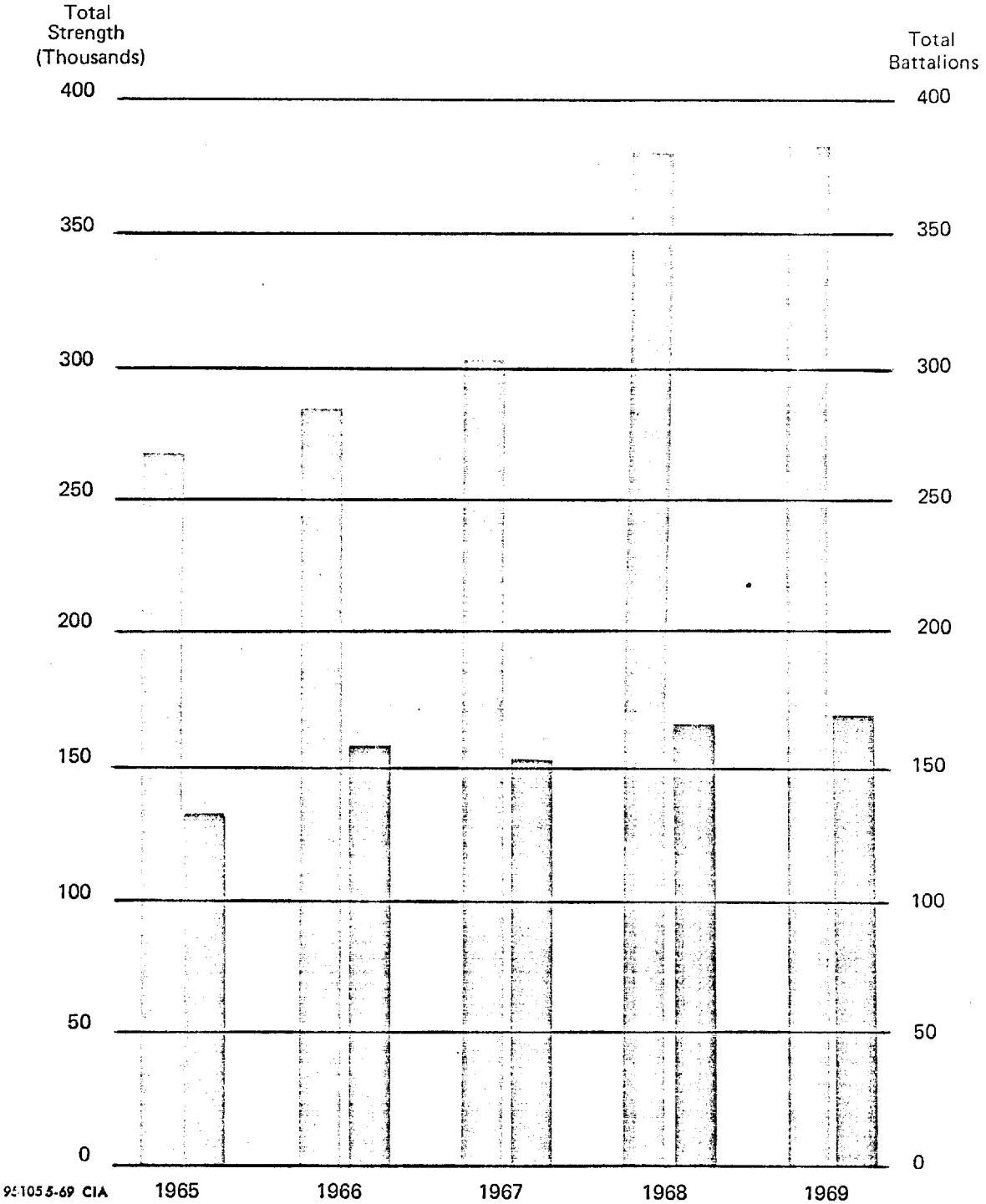
None of these possibilities, however, can be counted on to eventualize, and should be used to dissuade U.S. and Vietnamese analysts from examining the overhead problem itself. There is little quantitative information available on the nature and purpose of ARVN's past growth in overhead, and thus the foregoing analysis is limited to the aggregate statistical situation as it currently exists without any attempt to measure the impact of many significant variables. Nonetheless, it appears probable that a withdrawal of U.S. battalions may place a considerable stress on the present organization of ARVN. Alleviation of this stress will require either a major restructuring of this force or a level of manpower input that might quickly become incompatible with the existing manpower pool.

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RELATIVE GROWTH RATES OF TOTAL STRENGTH AND BATTALIONS  
FOR THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (ARVN): 1965-69

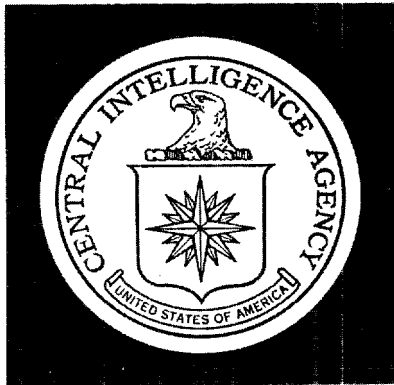
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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*The Manpower Situation in North Vietnam*

**Secret**

Copy No. 10

ER IM 68-4  
January 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
5 January 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Manpower Situation in North Vietnam

Summary

A fresh appraisal of the manpower situation in North Vietnam leads to the general conclusion that reserves are adequate to meet current demands and that Hanoi could support a military mobilization effort higher than present levels.

During the past three years the North Vietnamese population has been subjected to heavy manpower demands to build up and maintain military forces and to implement countermeasures against the bombing of North Vietnam. These drains admittedly have been sufficient to bring about some tightening of overall manpower availabilities.

Local stringencies are reflected in occasional reports from some regions on the drafting of youths as young as 14. An analysis of all available evidence indicates, however, that these reports are discussing atypical situations and are often contradictory. In the more generalized case the Hanoi regime has acknowledged manpower problems and responded by an increasing use of women in the labor force. However, Hanoi's manpower reports continue to describe conditions and problems that were also characteristic of the North Vietnamese labor force before the war-induced manpower requirements were felt.

A comparison of the manpower situation in both North and South Vietnam is revealing.

Note: This memorandum was produced by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and was coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.

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These countries present nearly parallel cases. South Vietnam, however, effectively controls a much smaller population -- 11 million to 12 million -- than North Vietnam, whose population exceeds 18 million. Yet South Vietnam has been able to maintain a full-time military force nearly 1.5 times the size that North Vietnam maintains. The disruption of agricultural production and distribution in South Vietnam is largely due to the huge refugee problem and the interdiction of normal transport routes, both reflecting VC/NVA action rather than the call-up of military manpower by Saigon. If North Vietnam were to call into full-time military service the same share of its population as has South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese full-time military force would be more than double its present size.

Despite the possibility of significant errors in the estimates of manpower resources, North Vietnam's situation does not appear critical. The agricultural labor force of 7 million by itself is such a large component of the total labor force and is so under-utilized that large numbers of workers could be drained off without significant decreases in production. In addition, other sectors of the economy are believed to contain additional slack which could be used to meet mobilization demands.

An examination of the manpower situation in World War II Germany also reinforces the judgment that North Vietnam has adequate manpower reserves.

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### Introduction

1. North Vietnam is a predominantly agricultural country with more than 70 percent of the labor force engaged in farming and related activities. As in virtually all underdeveloped countries, this labor force is grossly underutilized in peacetime. Most of the population has always subsisted on a very low standard of living, calculated to be less than \$100 per capita in terms of total output of goods and services. The population has been inured to hardship, having undergone famine and war over long periods in the life of most adults living today. The country is ruled by a doctrinaire Communist elite, with a revolutionary tradition and a familiarity with suffering. Manpower is relatively mobile, both geographically and with respect to work tasks, since the great bulk of labor is essentially an unskilled force.

2. North Vietnam may now be experiencing some difficulties in filling all its requirements for manpower from the prime age groups. For coastal and antiaircraft defense as well as its home reserves, North Vietnam may have to make increased use of older men and the less physically fit. However, the weight of the evidence does not support a presumption of a numerical manpower shortage. Although the air war ties up large numbers of North Vietnamese in bomb damage repair activities, most of this labor force is so engaged only part time. There are ample reservoirs of labor in agriculture, services, and handicraft industries to supply this low-skill labor force with only a negligible effect on the output of the economy as a whole.

### Demographic Data

3. Estimates of the current population of North Vietnam range from 17 million to 20 million. A population of 17 million has been cited in some North Vietnamese statements, and a current population of 20 million can be derived from official North Vietnamese estimates of the annual growth rate of the population applied to 1960 North Vietnamese census data. In a country as undeveloped as North Vietnam, an accurate enumeration of the total population is impossible even

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for a highly centralized regime. According to the calculations of the United States Bureau of the Census, North Vietnam's population at the beginning of 1968 was about 18.7 million. Of these, approximately 2.8 million are males between the ages of 17 and 35, more than half of whom are believed to be physically fit for military service. During 1968, an estimated 200,000 males will reach the age of 17, the minimum for drafting into the militia, and slightly less than 200,000 will reach the military service age of 18. Of the latter, approximately 120,000 men probably would be physically fit for military service. The US Census Bureau estimates are developed through the use of Western demographic techniques and historic demographic data on North Vietnam and provide the data used in this memorandum, although they are not assumed to be without error.

Labor Force

4. In the 15 to 64 age group, there is a potential working force of 10.4 million, of whom about 4.9 million are male. Excluding the military forces and students, the work force totals about 9.8 million, of whom about 55 percent are female. The following tabulation shows an estimate of the labor force according to major sectors of employment as of 1 January 1968:

| <u>Sector of Employment</u>      | <u>Thousand Persons</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Agriculture                      | 7,000                   |
| Services                         | 800                     |
| Industry (including handicrafts) | 800                     |
| Transport and communications     | 400                     |
| Trade                            | 300                     |
| Construction                     | 250                     |
| Other                            | 250                     |
| Total                            | 9,800                   |

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The estimates of the labor force, by occupation, are based on statements by North Vietnamese officials. Although the number of workers in each of the above categories may be subject to a substantial margin of error, the large number in agriculture and the handicraft industries has been reported with some consistency. Similarly, there is little doubt of the continued employment of a relatively large labor force in the services sector of the economy. These three sectors, in which individual productivity is low, provide a reservoir of manpower that can be tapped with little adverse effect on the total domestic production.

5. Before the bombing began in 1965 the North Vietnamese labor force was largely unskilled, underemployed, and, at least in agriculture, seasonally unemployed. Agriculture employed 70 percent of the civilian labor force and was particularly labor-intensive. Through natural increase, more than 120,000 males and almost the same number of females are added to the agricultural labor force each year. By keeping the agricultural labor force steady at about 7 million since the beginning of 1965, the regime apparently has freed a total of more than 700,000 potential agricultural workers for non-agricultural activities. Henceforth by simply drawing on the natural increase of men in the agricultural labor force and permitting the natural increase of women to replace an equal number of men, the regime would be able to obtain a large additional number of males for military or war-related tasks. In addition, the present size of the agricultural labor force could be reduced substantially without producing a proportionate decline in agricultural output because of the low marginal productivity of each farmer. For many years the regime has had a goal of reducing the number of farm workers per hectare from the present level of three workers per hectare to only one person per hectare.

6. It is possible over the longer term for North Vietnam to compensate for a considerable reduction in agricultural labor by the increased use of agricultural machinery and materials. The amount of fertilizer and equipment used per hectare is well below that of Western countries. The

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increased use of equipment, such as tractors, trucks, irrigation pumps, and harvesting machinery, would undoubtedly decrease the labor requirement per unit of rice produced. So far, however, we have seen no great emphasis by the regime on the importation of such labor-saving machinery. Alternatively, shortfalls in food production could be made up by imports from the USSR and China. Such imports are now taking place.

7. Handicraft industries account for about one-third of the total output of North Vietnamese industry and employ about 600,000 workers. This work force distributed throughout the populated areas of the country has been and continues to be a source of manpower that can be diverted with only slight adverse effects on the economy.

8. In addition to the manpower reservoir in agriculture and handicrafts, there are various smaller pools of manpower in other occupations from which men could be drawn. We have, however, little evidence of diversion of manpower from these sectors. There are estimated to be approximately 120,000 males in trades outside of the state sector, about 180,000 in consumer services and about 40,000 males in teaching. Therefore, about 340,000 males of working age and demonstrably capable of some economic activity are available for military-related work. In addition, at least 40,000 male students above the age of 15 are studying in North Vietnam and about 5,000 are studying abroad. These have not been included in the labor force. The number of students is growing, especially those studying abroad. Excessive diversions from these groups for war-supporting tasks would undoubtedly result in a decline in living standards and, in the case of students, would be counter-productive in the long run, but might be considered justifiable under the circumstances.

9. The bombing of North Vietnam's industrial facilities has freed a small number of factory workers for other activities. Industries that have been paralyzed by direct bomb damage and/or outage of electric power were primarily modern facilities using complex machinery and modern production techniques yielding higher labor productivity. It is estimated that by mid-1967 about 30,000

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workers had been put out of work by the damage to modern industry. Although the workers freed represent only about 4 percent of the industrial labor force, they have a higher degree of technical competence, skills, and industrial discipline than the average member of the labor force. They undoubtedly play a significant role in the maintenance of production by dispersed industries, in the repair of damaged facilities, and as cadre for supervising general bomb damage repair work.

10. Since early 1965, North Vietnam has had the use of some 34,000 Chinese engineering troops to repair bomb damage and to build new lines of communication in the northern areas and some 16,000 Chinese antiaircraft artillery troops to defend the two rail lines to China. These forces were introduced soon after the US bombing began. There has been relatively little change in the total numbers, although regular rotation has been carried out. Their use stems primarily from shortages of construction skills and organizational knowhow among the North Vietnamese rather than gross manpower shortages. If North Vietnam were suffering a general manpower shortage, we would expect that the number of Chinese laborers could be greatly increased.

#### War-Induced Manpower Requirements

11. Major war-induced manpower requirements in North Vietnam are twofold: (a) those to support the buildup of Communist military forces and to replace combat losses in North and South Vietnam; and (b) those required to repair the damage from airstrikes against North Vietnam.

12. North Vietnam's armed forces were built up rapidly from about 230,000 in February 1965 to the present force level of 480,000, or to about 3 percent of the population. This buildup has required the mobilization of less than 20 percent of North Vietnam's draft-age men, and Hanoi has not found it necessary to alter the current military service ages of 18 to 35. The rate of increase during 1967 was well below that of the two previous years. The military buildup alone has required about 120,000 persons annually during 1965 and 1966. During 1966, estimated North Vietnamese combat and infiltration losses ranged from 35,000 to 45,000 men, and during 1967 these losses were much higher. The manpower requirements

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have been met for the most part by the drafting of almost all the 120,000 physically fit males estimated to reach the draft age each year. The regime has also had to mobilize some reservists. During 1967, there has been no evidence of changes in North Vietnam's mobilization program. Unless North Vietnam sees a need for maintaining a much larger military force in the North in 1968, the number of physically fit males reaching the draft age should meet or exceed the number required for military service in South Vietnam at present loss levels.

13. The principal diversions of civilian manpower have been those required to repair and build lines of communication, to disperse industry, and to man the transport system. The services of 475,000 to 600,000, or about 3 percent of the population, have been required to offset the effects of airstrikes on North Vietnam. Of the total in war-related activities, less than 200,000 are occupied full time. The part-time civilian force is used primarily as conditions warrant. At any one time, more than one-half of the part-time workers may be engaged in the repair of lines of communication and about one-third in civil defense. In substantial portions of the country, weather conditions prevent air attacks for several days at a time. During respites from bombing, the part-time force is more actively engaged in repairing bridges, filling in craters, and stockpiling materials. For example, an article published in Hanoi in September 1967 discussed the mass use of nearly 300,000 people in the area south of Vinh for several days and nights on two separate occasions for completing road repair and road construction tasks. It is probable that the concerted activity described in this article was undertaken to capitalize on the absence of air attack during the 1967 Tet or previous bombing pauses.

Evaluation of Reports on Availability of Manpower

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14. Reports that North Vietnamese youths below the age of 18 are being drafted are infrequent and of highly dubious character. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] stated that 14 year olds have been taken into the army, [REDACTED]

25X1X



stated that 30 was the upper age limit for the draft in Lao Cai, while [redacted] stated that males between the ages of 20 and 45 are drafted in Lao Cai and that no one under the age of 20 was conscripted. These inconsistencies cast serious doubts on the reliability of the information [redacted]

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15. The discrepancy in the minimum conscription age might be explained by the fact that youths participate in bomb damage repair work or in air defense activities under military leadership. In addition, it is also possible that youths below the draft age have volunteered and have been accepted for military service. The occasional North Vietnamese soldier captured in South Vietnam who claims to have been drafted at an early age possibly is either understating his age to obtain leniency or had originally been a volunteer. Finally, the recent reports of the very young being drafted are not new. Similar claims had been made in 1965, a period when it is generally agreed there were no serious manpower problems in North Vietnam.

16. Statements by the North Vietnamese regime during the last year which mention a manpower problem in North Vietnam are similar to complaints the regime has been making for many years and do not necessarily indicate a worsening manpower situation. An article in *Hoc Tap* of July 1965 used almost the same terms to describe the manpower situation in North Vietnam, as did an article in *Hoc Tap* of July 1967. Despite the diversion of manpower that had occurred since the bombing, Deputy Premier Le Thanh Nghi in the July 1967 *Hoc Tap* article still referred to the large labor potential of the country, the serious waste of labor, and the present great volume of idle labor. The regime has been complaining for many years

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that the North Vietnamese work force is poorly organized, that manual workers make up too large a percentage of the labor force, and that this condition must be corrected.

17. Similarly, the recent statements from Hanoi that women are participating to a greater extent in the labor force are a continuation of statements that the regime has been making for years. The current degree of participation of females in the labor force results from trends established well before the bombing started. As far back as 1962 the regime boasted that women accounted for 60 percent of the work force in agriculture and for most of the working staff in light industries.

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APPENDIX

The War Supporting Role of Manpower  
in South Vietnam and World War II Germany

This appendix analyzes the manpower situations in South Vietnam and in World War II Germany to assess the extent to which these countries were able to commit their population to war supporting activities. The case of South Vietnam is very similar to that of North Vietnam, yet the government of South Vietnam, with fewer population resources, has sustained a much greater manpower commitment than has North Vietnam. Although World War II Germany cannot be directly compared with North Vietnam, it was chosen to provide some insight into the extent to which a highly industrialized state can commit its population to war supporting activities. The situations in South and North Vietnam are not completely parallel and of course the comparison of the German experience with that of North Vietnam must be a cautious exercise. Nevertheless, the experiences of other countries are of value in helping to assess the manpower drains that an economy can stand during wartime.

Manpower in South Vietnam

1. The estimated population of South Vietnam was about 16 million at the end of 1964 and more than 17 million at the end of 1967. At the end of 1964, only about 7 million people were under the control of the Government of Vietnam (GVN); by the end of 1967, the controlled population totaled 11 million to 12 million. In recent years the population available to South Vietnam to meet its manpower requirements has been equal to from 40 to 70 percent of North Vietnam's manpower resources.

2. Despite this much smaller population base, the government of South Vietnam has been able to maintain a full-time military force nearly 1.5 times that of North Vietnam. GVN military forces, including paramilitary and national police, have grown from about 610,000 at the end of 1964 to about 740,000 at the end of 1967. This force is

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nearly 6 percent of the population controlled by the GVN. North Vietnam's armed forces, on the other hand, are only about 3 percent of its population. There are, of course, differences between North and South Vietnam which make absolute comparisons questionable. However, in major ways there are parallels. For example, the industrial base which supports the war effort in both countries lies outside Vietnamese national borders -- in the United States for South Vietnam and in the USSR and Communist China for North Vietnam. Second, both Vietnams are essentially labor intensive, subsistence agricultural countries that supply most (but not all) of their food needs. Third, both North and South Vietnam have made considerable use of women in their civilian labor forces. Fourth, the war has contributed to a decline in agricultural production in both countries. Finally, foreign military engineering forces are an important bolster to the logistic supply lines within each nation.

3. South Vietnam has more men in uniform than the North, as shown in the following tabulation, but it is difficult to equate full-time military forces in South Vietnam to those in the

Million Persons as of 1 January 1967

|                      | <u>South Vietnam</u> | <u>North Vietnam</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Population           | 10 to 11 <u>a/</u>   | 18.3                 |
| Civilian labor force | 5.6                  | 9.6                  |
| Agriculture          | 4.0                  | 7.0                  |
| Non-agriculture      | 1.6                  | 2.6                  |
| Military forces      | 0.7                  | 0.5                  |

*a. GVN controlled population only, which compares with an estimated total population of 17 million as of 1 January 1967.*

North. For example, North Vietnam has about a 400,000 part-time armed militia in addition to its nearly 500,000 full-time military forces.

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South Vietnam's Popular and Regional Forces resemble militia in organization, training, and mission, but they serve full time.

4. South Vietnam's success in maintaining such relatively large military forces is particularly significant in view of its greater desertion problem, the large number of casualties, and the difficulties of maintaining control over the population. The GVN armed forces have had nearly 60,000 men killed in action in the last seven years and another 140,000 to 250,000 wounded during the same period. In addition, they have experienced a desertion/defection rate of about 100,000 a year. Although some of the latter losses are not permanent, South Vietnam has had to maintain a large flow of new recruits into its armed forces. The military mobilization program has been accomplished by a government that has been much weaker than the Hanoi regime. South Vietnam has not yet drafted men below the age of 20, although it intends to. North Vietnam has fully mobilized its 18 and 19 year olds.

5. Despite the large numbers of manpower mobilized, the refugee problem, and the general insecurity in the country, economic production has not suffered drastically. Rice production in 1967 was down less than 20 percent from the relatively high level achieved in 1964. Employment in agriculture fell from 5.7 million in 1960 to 4 million in 1966. Although the loss of manpower clearly has affected rice production, numerous other problems related to the war also have contributed to the decline in output. For example, rice production would probably recover substantially if security in the countryside improved. If, in addition, the approximately 2 million refugees could be resettled and assigned to productive tasks, the agricultural manpower problem would disappear. Therefore, the existence of a 740,000-man armed force and a rapidly increasing non-agricultural labor force -- which roughly doubled from 772,000 to 1,575,000 during 1960-66 -- do not appear to have had a significant effect on agricultural production.

6. The big growth in South Vietnam's non-agricultural labor force began with the commitment of US combat forces in mid-1965 and the

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continuing need to support the increasing number of troops. Until 1967, demand for unskilled as well as skilled labor outpaced the supply. For example, there was a shortage of Vietnamese construction workers to help build airfields, bases, and storage facilities for US forces, as well as a lack of transport workers. As a result, wage rates in construction and transport rose markedly. The rapid growth of non-farm economic opportunities, along with persistent insecurity in rural areas, stimulated a large migration to urban areas. In addition, non-agricultural labor was diverted to these priority industries. South Vietnamese coastal shippers diverted their boats from hauling rice to moving supplies for US troops. Although the demand for Vietnamese labor, particularly unskilled labor, has leveled off since the end of 1966, US military and civilian agencies and their contractors still directly employ about 130,000 Vietnamese. The demand of US personnel for services and handicrafts has also created numerous new jobs for Vietnamese.

7. Although the GVN has been able to meet a considerable proportion of the demands on its manpower resources, it does have some problems and has received vital support from its allies. The United States provides manpower directly for military logistical support and for medical and other highly skilled services. The United States is also largely responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, and other transport facilities. In addition, the US-financed import program is to some extent a substitute for domestic labor.

#### Manpower in World War II Germany

8. World War II Germany and present-day North Vietnam are two highly disparate economies. Germany was a highly industrialized state with its own munitions and war supporting industries. North Vietnam has an essentially subsistence agriculture economy that is almost completely dependent on external sources for the materials and munitions needed to sustain the war.

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9. The fact that the Germans sustained their massive war effort for the most part from their own resources meant that in almost every respect the German commitment of manpower to war supporting activities far exceeded that observed in North Vietnam today.

10. The German armed forces, for example, reached a peak of 10.2 million during World War II, or about 13 percent of the population. North Vietnam's full-time military forces total 480,000, or less than 3 percent of the population. Germany committed about 6 percent of its population -- 4.5 million persons -- to air defense and repair activities, compared with approximately 500,000 persons, or less than 3 percent of North Vietnam's population. The manpower drain in deaths as a result of enemy action was also proportionately far greater in Germany. An estimated total of at least 3.8 million Germans -- about 5 percent of the population -- were killed by enemy action. The manpower drain in North Vietnam as a result of enemy action through the end of 1967 is estimated to be 0.5 percent of the population, or only one-tenth of that sustained in Germany.

11. Although the German manpower commitment constituted an obviously heavier burden than that noted in North Vietnam, there is little evidence that the availability of manpower was a meaningful restraint on Germany's ability to carry on large-scale military operations -- at least up to the last year of the war. The breakdown of distribution systems, the destruction of power sources and key industrial facilities, and the loss of territories were the key factors underlining the collapse of the German war machine.

12. During World War II, more than 12 million men were taken into the German military service. Despite this mass transfer from the civilian labor force and other war-related manpower drains, Germany never fully mobilized its total manpower resources. Manpower pressures were not critical until the last months of the war, when Allied forces had already assured a total military victory.

13. Manpower pressures in World War II Germany were alleviated by a number of factors, one of the most important being the abundant use of

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foreign labor and prisoners of war. At the end of the war the use of upwards of 8 million foreigners and prisoners of war accounted for about one-fourth of the civilian labor force. They accounted, for example, for 22 percent of the agricultural labor force of about 11 million persons, which was substantially unchanged from its pre-war levels. The rest of this captive labor was used in the non-agricultural labor force, which had declined by only about 10 percent during the course of the war.

14. The failure of Germany to mobilize additional labor to offset military mobilization programs is thus explained in large part by the use of foreign labor. It is also explained by an increase of 23 percent in labor productivity from 1939 to 1944.

15. Significantly, the Germans apparently found it unnecessary to increase the use of women in industry during World War II. At the end of 1939, German women accounted for about 37 percent of the German civilian labor. The number of women employed in the German labor force remained practically unchanged throughout the war, in contrast to the increased reliance placed on them in the United Kingdom and the United States. The German experience is in even sharper contrast to North Vietnamese practice. Hanoi encourages the employment of women in all sorts of economic and war-related activities, and women may account for more than one-half of North Vietnam's labor force. If the German government had found it necessary to increase the use of female labor even to the extent that the United Kingdom did, then it could have added more than 2.5 million persons to the labor force.

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24 May 1968

EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

1. The study on North Vietnamese manpower which you requested Wednesday is going forward and will be finished within the two weeks you gave us.
2. The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you on the latest findings with respect to deployment from the North since concern is being expressed in several quarters that the Intelligence Community may have under-estimated this rate of deployment. What we find as of now is that men on the move through the pipeline from North to South continues in May at the same high level it has attained during the first four months of this year. We have added 17,000 North Vietnamese between 1 May and 23 May to the 83,000 we observed moving in the period between 1 January and the end of April. Put in other words, the number of individuals en route to South Vietnam from within North Vietnam is at the very least adequate to continue the relatively intense military activity in South Vietnam which we have noted in recent weeks. It is noteworthy that if our analysis is accurate, two out of every five soldiers headed into South Vietnam are being directed to the Saigon area.

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3. The methodology which we use to calculate this North Vietnamese deployment rate is complex and subject to error. Nevertheless, we owe you our experts' view on what the allied forces and ARVN will be up against in the weeks to come. That brings me to this statement: We can specifically account for the 100,000 troops mentioned in the preceding paragraph. We think this is too small. The experts believe it to be closer to 150,000. We can already establish that 35,000 have arrived in South Vietnam and believe the number may be even higher. In sum, at a minimum this rate of deployment will enable the enemy to replace his losses and maintain the high rate of activity which we have recently witnessed in South Vietnam, particularly in the Saigon area. If General Westmoreland's operations do not succeed in imposing the same level of attrition we also have witnessed in these previous weeks, then this rate of flow will enable the enemy to mount even larger operations, including a major offensive this summer.

(Signed) Richard Helms

Richard Helms  
Director

*The President #1*  
cc: Secretary of State #2  
Secretary of Defense #3

*DDI #1*

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**Remarks:**

Paul

This is presumably related to the attrition study we discussed this afternoon.

KARL

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