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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

6 March 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[Redacted]

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Mr. William Hamilton, State/INR

SUBJECT : Vietnam: A Net Military Assessment

1. Attached is the draft of "Vietnam: A Net Military Assessment."

2. A clean-up meeting on this draft is scheduled for 0930 hours on Friday, 8 March, in Room 6F19, CIA Headquarters.

3. Please call [Redacted], by COB Thursday, 7 March, with the names of your representatives.

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National Intelligence Officer
for Southeast Asia

Attachment

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6 March 1974

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SUBJECT: VIETNAM: A NET MILITARY ASSESSMENT*

1. This memorandum assesses the relative capabilities of the two sides in South Vietnam by GVN Military Region (MR), as of early March 1974. A detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the North and South Vietnamese manpower, logistic, and firepower positions is at Annex A.

Overview

2. Since the cease-fire in January 1973, both the Communists and the South Vietnamese have upgraded their respective military capabilities. The North Vietnamese have increased their combat forces, improved their firepower position, and made extensive improvements to their logistic

* This memorandum has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State.

system. The South Vietnamese, for their part, have also strengthened their combat forces and have assumed responsibility for most of their logistic operations. As a result of the large inflow of equipment into South Vietnam in the last weeks before 27 January 1973, the South Vietnamese now have more tanks, artillery, and aircraft than ever before.

3. On the manpower side, Communist regular combat forces physically located inside South Vietnam have grown from 157,000 in February 1973 to an estimated 187,000 at the beginning of March 1974. Since the cease-fire, this force has markedly changed its orientation. Hanoi has withdrawn three infantry divisions* call from northern MR 1 and has augmented its air defense forces by 12 regiments. Nevertheless, owing to continuing infiltration and unit deployments, there also are about 10,000 more NVA combat infantry troops in South Vietnam now than in February 1973. The North Vietnamese have also reinforced their controlled areas with a large number of tanks and field artillery, establishing a peak firepower capability in the absence of

* *In terms of combat infantry alone, the North Vietnamese currently have 12 infantry divisions deployed in South Vietnam -- two of which have only one subordinate regiment instead of the normal three -- compared to 15 divisions of three regiments each before the cease-fire. They could, however, move additional divisions across the DMZ and back into northern MR 1 on short notice.*

US air support. They are clearly intent both on establishing a capability to protect those areas of South Vietnam which they now control and on maintaining an option to resume large-scale offensive action at some future time of their own choosing.

4. On the South Vietnamese side, the GVN regular ground combat forces are now some 52,000 men stronger than they were in February 1973, having increased from 320,000 to about 372,000 men, supported by a more proficient air force (VNAF). Higher manning levels within South Vietnam's 13 infantry divisions account for 45,000 of the 52,000-man increase. The remaining growth results from the upgrading of some Popular Forces (PF) and local self-defense forces into the regular combat structure.* The following table compares GVN and Communist regular combat forces by military region and shows that the nationwide force ratio between the opposing armies is unchanged from a year ago -- although it has deteriorated (from the GVN point of view) in MR 2 and MR 3, while improving in MR 4.

* We do not count the upgrading of Regional Forces (RF) battalions here because RF battalions are already included in our estimates of GVN regular combat forces.

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COMPARISON OF GVN AND COMMUNIST
REGULAR COMBAT FORCES BY MILITARY REGION*

| | <u>MR 1</u> | <u>MR 2</u> | <u>MR 3</u> | <u>MR 4</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <u>February 1974</u> | | | | | |
| GVN | 103,000 | 78,000 | 94,000 | 97,000 | 372,000 |
| VC/NVA | 87,000 | 37,000 | 39,000 | 24,000 | 187,000 |
| RATIO | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| <u>February 1973</u> | | | | | |
| GVN | 89,000 | 68,000 | 75,000 | 88,000 | 320,000 |
| VC/NVA | 79,000 | 26,000 | 25,000 | 27,000 | 157,000 |
| RATIO | 1.1 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 2.0 |

* Communist regular combat forces include personnel in combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons. In early March 1974 there are 140,000 Communist infantry troops and 25,000 air defense personnel compared with about 130,000 and 15,000 in February 1973. GVN regular combat forces include assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units and regional force battalions.

5. Barring major redeployments from North Vietnam, the current balance of forces will remain fairly stable throughout the remainder of the dry season. The relationship could be altered quickly, however, if Hanoi decides to deploy some of its strategic reserve divisions in North Vietnam*, in conjunction with those elements of the 968th Infantry Division remaining in Laos, into GVN MR 1 or MR 2. In the southern half of the country, however -- unlike March 1972 -- there is not VC/NVA reserve force in Cambodia available for deployment

* North Vietnam's strategic reserve consists of six divisions, totalling some 40,000-50,000 men.

- 4 -

SECRET

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into MR 3 or MR 4, and the Communists could only shift forces among MRs to alter the balance. The Communists' deployment potential in southern South Vietnam is similar to that of the South Vietnamese on a country-wide basis. The ARVN at present has no strategic reserve since all of its units currently are committed and any shifting of forces to one region can only be accomplished by reducing the force structure in another.

6. While strengthening their combat posture in South Vietnam, the Communists also have achieved significant improvements in their logistic system. Following the cease-fire, Military Region 559 -- North Vietnam's logistic and support structure in southern North Vietnam, southern Laos, northeastern Cambodia, and the western reaches of South Vietnam itself -- was further reorganized to permit a more efficient, speedier transport of supplies in a bomb-free environment. At the same time, the Communists undertook a major road and POL pipeline construction and improvement program in Laos and South Vietnam which will permit year-round deliveries to South Vietnam and greatly enhances access to portions of the coastal region. This ambitious construction program was not carried out at the expense of current shipments to Communist forces in the South, because such shipments have been maintained, for the most part,

- 5 -

Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP79R01099A001100050009-2

at a heavy pace. The improvements to the MR 559 logistic system in the past year, including the dispatch of 26,500 infiltrators to the area, have given the Communists a stronger supply organization and transportation network from North Vietnam to the south than they have ever previously had.

7. The South Vietnamese logistic command also has improved steadily in the post cease-fire period. Moving from almost complete dependence on the US for support of its forces, ARVN now has total responsibility for the in-country distribution and storage of supplies. In general, the performance of the ARVN logistic system at the present fairly low level of hostilities has been good. Current supply stockpiles, particularly of military equipment and replacement parts, are more than adequate for current consumption rates. Should major countrywide fighting resume, however, the South Vietnamese logistic system would be stretched to the limit and would probably be unable to distribute effectively the large amounts of material required to support the GVN's combat forces. Even at the present modest level of combat, there is a problem of getting the proper mix of supplies to GVN forces on a timely basis. Moreover, inter-regional distribution of supplies is hampered by virtual autonomy of each MR commander, and ARVN still remains dependent on US civilian contractors for aircraft maintenance and port management.

- 6 -

Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP79R01099A001100050009-2

7a. As a fighting force, the Communists are generally tough, disciplined, tenacious fighters. The cadre are politically reliable and, for the most part, dedicated to the Communist cause. Until recently, the Communists used tactics that emphasized infantry and sapper attacks, supported by rockets and mortars. Since 1971, however, the Communists have committed themselves to a doctrine which stresses conventional warfare, in which infantry, artillery, and armor are used together.

7b. In the heavy fighting in South Vietnam in 1972, the Communists failed to use these forces effectively. Armor, artillery, infantry, and air defense forces did not coordinate their actions against government positions. Part of the problem was due to the way these various forces were organized -- orders did not come down from a single tactical authority, but the major cause of the problems appears to have been the relative lack of experience in using the various forces in combined actions.

7c. North Vietnamese propaganda indicates the Communists are aware of this shortcoming, and they have taken aggressive action to correct it. Training programs in the North and in the South have been expanded and now concentrate on preparing

troops and cadre to fight a conventional war with mixed forces. In last year's fighting in Quang Duc and Pleiku provinces, the Communists used infantry, armor, artillery and air defense forces effectively, suggesting that they are making progress in this area.

7d. The 1972 Offensive also exposed other deficiencies in the Communist armed forces. Troop discipline was weak, with several Communist units refusing to fight. In addition, Communist leadership was frequently poor. The long war took a heavy toll of cadre and forced the Communists to promote troops up through the ranks to leadership positions. While these cadre possessed combat experience, they generally lacked formal military training; this resulted in cadre not knowing how to react to rapidly changing battlefield situations.

7e. According to North Vietnamese military journals, Hanoi has reorganized its military training programs, making them broader and more comprehensive, in an attempt to cure these shortcomings. If the programs are successful, the Communist armed forces could well develop into a tougher, more effective fighting force.

(DIA section on RVNAF will go here.)

Scenarios for the Remainder of the Dry Season

8. *Non-general offensive scenario.* According to reliable agent reporting, the North Vietnamese do not plan to launch a major offensive in South Vietnam during the remainder of the 1973-1974 dry season. These sources indicate that Communist combat activity will be confined to the defense of their territory against any GVN offensive forays, and limited offensive operations against selected targets. Similarly, GVN tactical plans through the dry season will consist of a similar mix of defense and offense. Under these circumstances, neither side is likely to achieve substantial, permanent territorial gains in the next few months.

9. Under this scenario, the outlook for Military Region 1, where defensive lines have stabilized, is for a continued absence of heavy combat activity. In Military Region 2, combat activity probably will intensify in the central highlands as both sides contest territory along strategic LOCs. Neither side, however, has a decisive edge, since ARVN's numerical superiority in the highlands is partly offset by NVA firepower assets. The tactical situation in Military Region 3, where many units on both sides are deployed near major population centers, probably will generate some high points of activity, but most will be confined to sapper

attacks, attacks-by-fire and LOC interdiction efforts. To the south in Military Region 4, Communist combat activity will be handicapped by sorely understrength units and a relatively weak logistic system.

10. *General Offensive Scenario.* What would be the result if large-scale hostilities broke out again in South Vietnam in the next six months? Both the GVN and the North Vietnamese would find it difficult to launch and sustain a major offensive in the immediate future. Should the Communists, however decide to launch a major offensive, they would have the capability of doing so by the end of April 1974 if they committed new divisions from outside South Vietnam and substantially increased the current rate of infiltration. Since they would be the aggressors and could achieve local manpower or firepower superiority in chosen areas, the unfavorable (to the Communists) nationwide ratio of forces would not necessarily be a critical factor in their decision. (In none of their earlier offensives have the Communists had a favorable nationwide ratio of forces.)

11. Under an offensive scenario, the North Vietnamese would launch a countrywide operations some time after increasing infiltration and redeploying several infantry divisions from the strategic reserve to GVN MR 1. If this scenario developed -- and US support were not provided -- the North Vietnamese forces in northern Military

- 10 -

SECRET

25X1

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Region 1 would regain control of Quang Tri City, and might even capture Hue. In the southern part of the region, the GVN might be forced to give up some territory, possibly including a provincial capital. In Military Region 2, one or both provincial capitals of Pleiku or Kontum could conceivably fall into Communist hands, although the fighting would be fairly even. North and northwest of Saigon, in Military Region 3, the Communists would probably gain additional territory, including several district capitals. GVN forces, on the other hand, probably would not yield any substantial ground in coastal Military Region 2 or in Military Region 4.

12. In sum, if the Communists launched a general offensive, we believe that they would make significant and permanent territorial gains in some areas. There would be some risk that the military and psychological impact of such developments would set in train an unravelling of the GVN's will to persist. In this event, the situation could arise where the GVN would be unable to stay the course without the US providing large-scale logistical assistance and air and naval support.

II. MILITARY REGION ASSESSMENT

Military Region 1

Manpower Capabilities

13. Since the cease-fire there has been a low level of combat activity in MR 1, with both sides engaged in restructuring

- 11 -

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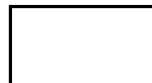
their forces. Consistent with the tactical situation, the Communists recently reduced their ground combat capability by withdrawing a third infantry division; two left earlier in 1973, one just prior to the cease-fire. They now have five infantry divisions -- one operating with only one regiment -- compared to eight divisions just prior to the cease-fire. The North Vietnamese, however have been augmenting their air defenses by deploying additional antiaircraft artillery regiments into the region. As a result of these changes, Communist forces in MR 1 now total 87,000 troops, of which 21,000 are air defense personnel (see the Military Region 1 Map).

14. At the same time, the combat strength of the South Vietnamese regular ground forces has increased significantly. This has resulted from upgrading territorial forces into the regular combat force structure and increasing the manning levels of existing units. Thus, South Vietnamese regular combat forces in MR 1 currently total some 103,000 troops.

15. The largest share of both combat force structures is concentrated in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. The Communists have roughly 66,000 men -- including 33,000 infantry

- 12 -

SECRET



25X1

troops -- or about 75 percent of their total MR 1 regular combat forces located in the two provinces. Two NVA infantry divisions (the 304th and 325th) supported by 20 air defense, one armor, three infantry, and five artillery regiments are deployed north and west of Quang Tri City. One NVA infantry division (the 324th), supported by two artillery, one armor, and two infantry regiments, is deployed west and south of Hue City. Arrayed against the Communists are 64,000 GVN troops -- including 46,000 infantry troops -- which are deployed near Quang Tri and Hue cities. Three GVN divisions -- the Marine, Airborne, and 1st -- supported by a ranger group, an armor brigade, and fifteen regional force battalions form a defense line protecting major GVN lines of communication and population centers.

16. In southern MR 1, South Vietnamese regular combat forces are about double the number of Communist forces. GVN forces number about 39,000 men in two infantry divisions -- the 2nd and 3rd -- three ranger groups, and 35 Regional Force battalions, compared to the Communists' 21,000 men in two infantry divisions -- the 711th and 2nd -- supported by elements of infantry, armor, artillery, sapper, and air defense units. The 711th Division is deployed in Quang Nam/Quang Tin Provinces and is targeted against the coastal lowlands, whereas the 2nd Division's only regiment is operating in Quang Ngai.

17. Qualitatively, most Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces are well rested and are at or near full strength, owing to the extensive lull in combat activity. Both sides could launch multi-regimental attacks against selected targets. The present North Vietnamese infantry force structure, however, although having an enhanced firepower and air defense complement, is not now large enough to seize major population centers in MR 1. ARVN forces are in a maximum defensive posture with their forces committed to the defense of major cities LOCs. Thus, despite their capabilities for larger-scale actions, both sides now appear to be planning to initiate only light combat activity in MR 1 for the remainder of the dry season.

Logistic Capabilities

18. The Communists in MR 1 have continued to improve and expand an already strong logistics base, under the auspices of Military Region 559 -- the North Vietnamese command authority responsible for the movement of men and supplies through southern Laos and northern South Vietnam. Numerous roads feed into the region through the DMZ, some of them now passable year round. Several east-west corridors connect the roadnet with Laos, including Route 9 which also links the extensive logistic facilities established at Khe Sanh, Cam Lo, and Dong Ha. To

- 14 -

SECRET

25X1

supplement the overland system, the Communists have also refurbished a large land-water transshipment facility on the Cua Viet River just outside of Dong Ha. The logistic complex, now in operation for nearly one year, primarily handles cargo transshipped from anchorages in the North Vietnamese Panhandle.

19. The new western corridor in MR 1 will ease the movement of supplies into the southern part of the region. The major exit corridors from Laos -- Routes 922 and 966 -- have been little used since the last dry season. Supplies will be shipped down the corridor directly from Quang Tri Province and either stored along the route, sent on south into northern Kontum Province, or moved eastward along one of the four major arteries leading toward the MR 1 coastal lowlands.

20. These arteries are all either newly constructed or considerably improved over the past year. They include Route 547 and Gorman's Road leading from the abundant storage depots of the A Shau Valley to units of the NVA 324B Division just west of Hue, Route 534 running to the Que Son Valley and the NVA 711th Division, and Communist-designated Route 105 (GVN Route 1404) extending from Kham Duc on the western supply corridor southeastward through Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces. As a result of new Communist construction since October 1973, this

- 15 -

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last route now extends more than 100 miles and is motorable into Binh Dinh Province in coastal MR 2.

21. In addition to the roadnet, the Communists have constructed large truck parks and numerous service and support facilities, including some 1,800 structures in northern MR 1 alone -- capable of holding several hundred thousand tons. They have extended their DMZ POL pipeline southward from Cam Lo to Ba Long and the A Shau Valley, and established extensive POL storage and distribution facilities in these areas. These facilities, together with the pipeline, are supported by an inventory of some 2,000 trucks in South Vietnam's MR 1, which is several times the number available to them in early 1972.

22. Supply activity along the western corridor has generally been light in MR 1 in the past few months, probably as a result of the monsoon rains which sweep the area from September through February. Similarly, seasonally wet weather has restricted transport activity along lateral roads feeding the interior of the region. Despite this relatively low level of new supply deliveries into the region, most of the large amounts of ordnance delivered last spring and summer probably are still on hand, as Communist expenditure rates have been low. Thus, the NVA probably have sufficient stocks on hand to support a sustained offensive for at least one year.

- 16 -

SECRET

25X1

23. On the GVN's side, logistics are not much of a constraint to ARVN forces so long as they maintain control of the urban areas and well-traveled arteries in the coastal lowlands. Movement along parts of this network, however, is likely to be impaired by concentrated Communist interdiction efforts. During an offensive, Route 1 linking Quang Tri City, Hue, and Danang would be a prime target for such efforts. Should the ARVN lose the free use of this route, it would be forced to depend upon resupply by air and sea. If this occurred, ARVN's capability to meet fully its resupply requirements in northern MR 1 would be doubtful because of the GVN's limited air and naval lift capability. As ARVN stockpiles were consumed, a supply shortfall -- particularly of POL and ammunition -- could occur and might reach serious proportions within a month or so, especially if there were a high level of fighting elsewhere in the country.

Offensive Scenario

24. If Hanoi launches a major offensive, the North Vietnamese would probably deploy several infantry divisions from their strategic reserve and infiltrate sufficient personnel to replace losses. Two divisions might be sent to Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces and a third to southern MR 1. These

divisions could move into place near key GVN strongholds with relative ease because North Vietnamese air defense forces would prevent VNAF from interdicting Communist infiltration routes. Moreover, the commitment of North Vietnamese air assets during the offensive probably would temporarily demoralize some GVN combat units and give the Communists the necessary offensive momentum to move deep into GVN controlled territory.*

25. The offensive scenario might unfold as follows: Five NVA infantry divisions supported by air defense, heavy artillery, armor, and air power would attack Hue from the north and west with the mission of destroying the GVN's three best combat units -- Marine, Airborne, and First ARVN Divisions. To the south, two divisions supported by artillery, armor, and some air support would move into the populated lowlands of Quang Tin Province and isolate Danang. Communist troops, including local forces, would attempt to tie down the 2nd ARVN Division near Quang Ngai City.

26. If the above happens, the GVN plans to immediately abandon Quang Tri City and withdraw the Marine, Airborne, and First ARVN Divisions from forward outposts to preplanned defensive sectors around Hue. Successful implementation of

* See Joint DIA-INR-CIA Memorandum, "The Consequences of the Use of North Vietnamese Airpower in South Vietnam's Military Region 1", 4 March 1974, SECRET SPOKE.

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this plan requires the divisions to minimize their combat casualties and for ARVN artillery units and VNAF to provide adequate firepower protection for withdrawal. As attacking North Vietnamese units becomes more exposed to GVN firepower in the lowlands, their advance could be slowed somewhat. However, without US air assets and logistical assistance -- which were available in 1972 -- the GVN would be hard pressed to defend Hue for more than a few weeks. Indeed, the GVN's internal distribution problems coupled with possible shortages of key military supplies such as POL and small arms ammunition could seriously limit ARVN's ability to meet the Communist offensive throughout MR I.

27. In the southern provinces, the 3rd ARVN Division, which is currently defending the coastal lowlands, is likely to withdraw to Danang. In such an event, Tam Ky City would probably fall. The 2nd ARVN Division would defend Quang Ngai City and attempt to send reinforcements to Danang. Unless the Communist forces in Quang Ngai are reinforced, ARVN probably will be able to prevent them from making any significant territorial gains there.

28. On balance, the success or failure of a Communist offensive in MR I would be determined in large part by the

- 19 -

SECRET

NVA's ability to prevent ARVN from resupplying its major combat forces, particularly in Thua Thien Province. This could be a touch and go situation since ARVN is basically dependent on land LOCs for its supplies; its air and naval assets probably could not take up the slack if the major road arteries were interdicted. If this occurred -- and the US did not provide the necessary support to keep ARVN functioning effectively -- the Communists would not only capture Quang Tri City but also Hue and probably one or two provincial capitals in southern MR 1. Under these circumstances, the GVN position in Danang could easily become critical.

Military Region 2

Manpower Capabilities

29. In contrast to MR 1, the tactical situation in MR 2 for some time has been marked by periods of intense combat activity -- mainly as a result of GVN attacks to prevent the Communists from securing areas along strategic Route 14 -- and main force unit deployments have been common occurrences. Last summer, for example, the GVN began multiregional operations into Communist areas of Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. These operations have been only marginally successful and have resulted in heavy casualties for both sides.

- 20 -

SECRET

25X1

30. The Communists, on the other hand, opened another military front in Quang Duc Province and have reinforced the western highlands. From September to December, the North Vietnamese deployed from GVN MR 3 nearly 5,000 men in three regiments -- the 271B and 205th Independent Infantry, and the 174th of the 5th Division -- and sapper and armor elements of the 429th Sapper and 203rd Armor Commands. The 174th Regiment with some 1,000 men, however, returned to MR 3 in late February. The Communists reinforced the Kontum/Pleiku Province area in January by deploying from southern Laos the 232nd NVA AAA Regiment, the 9th NVA Infantry Regiment of the 968th Infantry Division, and infiltrating an armor group to the central highlands. The GVN reacted in September by deploying the 22nd ARVN Division from Binh Dinh to Kontum Province and the 23rd ARVN Division and a ranger group moved to Quang Duc Province in November.

31. With the increased deployment of Communist and GVN forces to MR 2, regular combat strength of both sides has risen since the beginning of the dry season. Communist combat forces have increased from 31,000 to 37,000 in three understrength infantry divisions -- the 320th, 10th, and 3rd -- six independent infantry, one artillery, and three air defense regiments supported by elements of sapper and armor units. South

Vietnamese combat strength now totals 78,000 -- up 8,000 -- in two infantry divisions, the 22nd and 23rd, 7 ranger groups, one armor brigade, and 82 Regional Force battalions.

32. The current disposition of GVN and Communist combat forces focuses on Kontum/Pleiku, Quang Duc, and Binh Dinh Provinces (see Military Region 2 map).

33. Combat force disposition in the Kontum/Pleiku area gives the GVN a numerical edge, 32,000 against 20,000 NVA troops. The 10th NVA Division, an artillery, an independent infantry, and two air defense regiments supported by armor forces are targeting Kontum City which is defended by a regiment of the 22nd ARVN Division and a ranger group. The 320th NVA Division, an air defense, and two independent infantry regiments supported by armor forces oppose three regiments of the 22nd ARVN Division, three ranger groups, and an armor brigade near Pleiku City.

34. In Quang Duc/Darlac Provinces, there are about 13,000 GVN combat troops of the 23rd ARVN Division, a ranger group, and three Regional Force battalions. This compares to the Communists' 4,000 combat troops in two infantry regiments

- 22 -

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supported by armor and sapper elements. Communist forces are deployed near the Cambodian border with the mission of protecting the North Vietnamese road network linking the central highlands with northern Military Region 3. The Communists have forced the GVN to reduce its force structure in the provinces of Kontum and Pleiku, but they have also reduced their own threat to Saigon by withdrawing two regiments from MR 3. The opposing forces in Quang Duc are in a defensive posture, although the GVN is attempting to interdict Communist Route 14 in southern Darlac Province.

35. In Binh Dinh Province, the balance of Communist and GVN combat forces is about even. The 3rd NVA Infantry Division supported by armor, heavy artillery and other infantry forces, numbers about 6,000 men compared to the GVN's 8,000-man force of two ranger groups and 16 Regional Force battalions. The 3rd Division -- with two of its three regiments understrength -- is now only capable of conducting limited attacks against GVN outposts and temporarily interdicting GVN supply lines.

36. The ARVN manpower edge in MR 2 is at least partly offset by the Communist use of their firepower assets in MR 2. The three North Vietnamese air defense regiments, plus armor

and 130mm and 122mm field guns, now deployed in the central highlands constitutes the largest firepower commitment of the war to this area. The presence of North Vietnamese air defense units is forcing some VNAF LOC interdiction missions to fly as high as 20,000 feet, restricting their effectiveness. Moreover, Communist 130mm and 122mm field guns have been effective in slowing the advance of GVN combat units into Communist areas west of Kontum City.

37. On balance, although combat activity in the central highlands probably will intensify, neither side has a decisive military edge in the area. Such activity probably will include Communist efforts to occupy additional territory near Kontum City while defending strategic NVA Route 14 and interdicting ARVN supply lines in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. ARVN will continue to launch forays into NVA held areas, but probably will not have much success.

Logistic Capabilities

38. From a logistic perspective, the Communists are strongest in the highland provinces bordering Laos and Cambodia and in coastal Binh Dinh Province. Recent road construction leading into both areas and through much of the highlands has

considerably improved their access to main forces. Also, COMINT and photography have revealed large supply shipments and heavy vehicle traffic -- the first since last spring -- into Kontum Province. These goods can be moved quickly down the dual lane road extending through western Pleiku and Darlac and into Quang Duc Province.

39. As in MR 1 -- although to a lesser extent -- the Communists in MR 2 have augmented their rear services forces and inventory of transport vehicles along the dual lane supply route, and expanded storage and other facilities in western Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. As the dry season supply effort continues, the Communists will replace stocks expended during the fighting, enhancing their ability to launch and sustain heavy tactical activity in all four highlands provinces in MR 2. In addition, because main force units in the highlands are located close to the new dual lane or other roads, forward supply distribution and tactical troop deployments can be accomplished much more easily and quickly than previously.

40. Communist forces in Binh Dinh Province reportedly have had a substantial part of their supply stockpiles damaged by severe storms which hit the northern coast of South Vietnam last fall. No serious shortages have been reported, however,

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CIA-RDP79R01099A001100050009-2

perhaps because no significant fighting is taking place. In any case, NVA Route 105 through southern MR 1 now provides the Communists' first motorable link between Binh Dinh Province and the primary infiltration corridors from North Vietnam. Should they decide to use Route 105 during the dry season they could build a logistic capability for sustained offensive action by the NVA 3rd Division.

41. Logistics will become a serious problem for ARVN forces in the MR 2 highlands if the Communists sharply escalate the fighting and attempt to capture the province capitals. Although ARVN now has approximately three weeks of stocks -- at peak offensive levels -- in place in the highland provinces, it relies heavily upon only two major arteries to resupply these areas. These arteries -- Route 19 feeding Pleiku City from the coast, and Route 14 linking Kontum and Pleiku Cities, are vulnerable to Communist interdiction. The cutting of these routes would make resupply of the cities entirely dependent on airlifts, which in turn are vulnerable to Communist AAA fire.

Offensive Scenario

42. If Hanoi were to launch a major offensive in MR 2, at least 20,000 infiltrators would be needed to augment understrength

- 26 -

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combat units and to create an initial manpower reserve. Additional infiltration, however, would be required to replace losses as the fighting continued. Furthermore, the North Vietnamese probably would shift the two remaining infantry regiments of the 968th Division now in southern Laos to the western highlands. Once this was accomplished, the Communists would attempt to isolate Kontum and Pleiku Cities by interdicting Routes 14 and 19. The 10th and 968th Divisions supported by armor, heavy artillery, and air defense forces would attack Kontum City, while the 320th Division would attempt to tie down GVN forces near Pleiku City.

43. The GVN's response to a major Communist offensive calls for the deployment of the 23rd ARVN Division now in Quang Duc Province and possibly another ranger group from Binh Dinh Province to Pleiku City. These forces combined with the 22nd ARVN Division and four ranger groups supported by VNAF would have to keep Route 14 and 19 open to ensure resupply -- if Kontum and Pleiku Cities are to be successfully defended. If the North Vietnamese, however, deploy their air defense and heavy artillery weapons near GVN installations and LOCs and successfully interdict Routes 14 and 19, one or both of the province capitals might well fall to the Communists.

- 27 -

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44. On the coast, a strengthened 3rd NVA Division would move rather quickly into the lowlands of northern Binh Dinh Province and capture one or two district capitals as they did in 1972. In the southern coastal provinces, the Communists would be limited to harassing attacks and LOC interdiction activity.

- 28 -

SECRET

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP79R01099A001100050009-2

Military Region 3

Manpower Capabilities

45. Within MR 3 both sides have been resting and rebuilding their combat forces and consolidating their respective geographic positions. Communist regular combat forces are now closer to the populated areas north of Saigon than in 1972, when they initiated their attacks from the border areas of Cambodia. Thus, their proximity poses a greater threat to GVN lines of communications and installations surrounding Saigon. In terms of numbers, however, the Communist threat to this area has been reduced since October 1973 by some 4,000 troops with the deployment of infantry, sappers, artillery, armor to Quang Duc Province in MR 2.

46. Currently there are about 39,000 Communist regular combat forces in MR 3 -- some 14,000 more than at the time of the cease-fire. Major units include an artillery, an antiaircraft, and three infantry divisions plus nine infantry, sapper, and armor regiments (See Military Region 3 map). The infiltration of armor, antiaircraft artillery, and field artillery into the provinces north of Saigon last year provides the Communists with more firepower in the region than ever before. The creation in early 1973 of an air defense division in Binh Long Province, with the continued availability of the SA-7 missile, poses a threat to South Vietnamese air operations in this area of MR 3, although

the overall threat is less than in northern MR 1 and the western highlands.

47. Opposing the Communists in MR 3 are some 94,000 South Vietnamese troops in three infantry divisions, one armor brigade, four ranger groups, and supporting artillery and regional forces units. The government force increased by about 2,000 men in the past year, and now is roughly 2 1/2 times that of the Communists. Moreover, it possesses an enhanced armor and artillery capability. The GVN forces, however, are spread throughout the region in defense of government-held territory. This defensive posture permits the Communists to concentrate their forces for selected thrusts against key targets.

48. Available evidence suggests that the Communists in MR 3 will be content this dry season with some intensified but generally limited military activity. This probably will include ground actions by infantry and sapper units -- targeted against such facilities as POL and ammunition depots -- as well as attacks-by-fire against GVN military facilities and LOCs. Such action is most likely to occur in the northern and eastern parts of the region.

49. The Communists are likely to concentrate their activity in the provinces north and northwest of the capital. In Tay

- 30 -

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Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP79R01099A001100050009-2

Ninh Province, the Communists have the NVA 5th Infantry Division* along with one regiment each of infantry, sapper, and antiaircraft. The ARVN 25th Infantry Division and a regiment of the ARVN 18th Infantry Division are responsible for defending the provinces of Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia and maintaining secure LOCs to Saigon. Moving east, the NVA 7th and 9th Infantry Divisions, supported by a total of seven regiments of antiaircraft, armor, artillery, sapper, and independent infantry, are targeted against Binh Duong and Binh Long Provinces. The ARVN 5th Infantry Division, two regiments of the 18th Division, and two ranger groups are the principal GVN forces in these provinces. Another threat area lies east of Saigon where smaller Communist infantry, artillery, and sapper units have required the positioning of two ranger groups.

Logistics Capabilities

50. The Communists in MR 3 have not expended the large quantities of ordnance amassed by the end of last dry season and remain in a strong supply position, capable of supporting heavy fighting. Although large-scale shipments to this region from Laos and North Vietnam have not yet been detected, the supplies

* *Tenuous evidence indicates that at least one regiment of the 5th Division is redeploying from northwestern Tay Ninh Province to Dinh Tuong Province in northern MR 4, where the division operated from mid-1972 to April 1973.*

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may currently be moving south from Kontum Province along NVA Route 14. Moreover, a new motorable road in extreme southeastern Cambodia has just been completed, connecting the Communists' existing route structure in southern Cambodia with the dual lane corridor in western MR 2. The road, although sufficient for current Communist needs, would be complemented by additional routes prior to any Communist offensive.

51. Inside MR 3 the Communists have considerably improved their resupply system over the past year. Storage, communications, and other logistics facilities have been constructed, and a number of roads have been either built or upgraded. The key roads include one leading from Loc Ninh, two crossing the Tay Ninh-Binh Long Province border, and another extending southward from southern Binh Long Province to Binh Duong Province, only about thirty miles north of Saigon. These roads will allow the Communists to move their armor and artillery effectively, ease troop and resupply movements, and lessen constraints on mobility posed by the wet season, should fighting continue beyond May.

52. Seven COSVN Rear Services Groups (RSGs) operate the transportation corridors in northern MR 3. Most of these RSGs were activated in early 1972, and since the January 1973 cease-fire

- 32 -

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have extended their areas of operation from rear bases in Cambodia deeper into MR 3. They are now much closer to tactical forces in the region, which with an improved transport network, add considerably to the Communists' capability to support further fighting.

53. For the most part, GVN forces in MR 3 enjoy the use of the extensive transportation infrastructure built initially for commercial purposes. Logistics will pose no problem in and around the urban areas the government now firmly controls. However, ARVN's resupply links with outlying towns and outposts in Phuoc Long, Binh Long, and Tay Ninh Provinces are tenuous, and very likely many would prove impossible to defend should the Communists initiate heavy offensive activity.

Offensive Scenario

54. If the Communists should decide to launch a major offensive, they would need to infiltrate some 20,000 personnel in order to increase combat units strengths and establish an initial manpower pool. This could be accomplished in April, if current infiltration levels to COSVN are maintained. So far this dry season, 20,000 infiltrators have already been dispatched to the southern half of South Vietnam; they will arrive in country by the end of March

- 33 -

SECRET

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55. During the initial stages of the offensive the Communists probably would make significant tactical gains because their units are in forward positions close to GVN population centers and installations. The present deployments reduce Communist command and control problems while affording the South Vietnamese less reaction time than in 1972. Communist combat units probably would first exert heavy pressure on one or more of the district capitals in Binh Duong Province and against the province capital of Tay Ninh City. This would initially tie down ARVN troops in those areas and prevent their use as reinforcements against the main offensive thrust south by the NVA 7th and 9th Divisions in Binh Duong Province along the northern approaches to Saigon.

56. Once the Communists penetrate the densely populated GVN-controlled areas of Tay Ninh, Binh Duong and Bien Hoa Provinces, they would meet increasingly strong resistance from ARVN regular and regional forces. The GVN would have to alter its current deployment of forces within the region and redeploy the ARVN 9th Division from MR 4. Although the GVN could prevent the capture of Saigon, it would be forced temporarily to give up additional territory to the Communists north of the capital. The South Vietnamese, however, could be expected to further reinforce the area to the extent required to recapture those populated areas which they consider politically vital.

- 34 -

SECRET

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Military Region 4

Manpower Capabilities

57. The balance of forces in MR 4 weighs heavily in favor of the GVN. For the remainder of the dry season, the Communists' capability for offensive activity there is quite limited. Major Communist combat forces number 24,000 men in one artillery and twelve infantry regiments and numerous local force units. (See the Military Region 4 map).*

Communist units in MR 4 are sorely understrength when compared with 1972 levels, and more than 10,000 replacement personnel are needed to rebuild existing forces. Furthermore, there has been no significant improvement in the Communist firepower position over 1972 levels. Some of the tanks and long-range artillery that deployed to the COSVN area a year ago could move into MR 4, but their effectiveness would be extremely limited by the open terrain and numerous canals which criss-cross the delta.

58. By comparison, the GVN has some 97,000 men in three infantry divisions and one armor brigade, with supporting artillery and a large number of regional force battalions. Moreover, ARVN has continued to perform well in the delta and has not only contained but reduced the Communist threat there.

**This is an agreed DIA-CIA estimate. There are however, some analysts within CIA who believe that the total number of Communist combat forces in MR 4 is considerably less than 24,000.*

- 35 -

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The three division force -- the 7th, 9th and 21st -- committed to the delta is currently in good shape, and neither manpower shortages nor the quality of units appear to pose any significant restraint on ARVN capabilities there. In addition, these forces are supported by an air force that historically has provided effective close air support in this area.

59. In the northern delta, the Communists have concentrated five infantry regiments in Dinh Tuong, Kien Phong, and Kien Tuong Provinces. These forces are opposed by the ARVN 7th Infantry Division and a regiment of the ARVN 9th Infantry Division, supported by regional forces, that have succeeded in preventing the Communists from infiltrating the more populated areas. Another large concentration of Communist combat forces is in Chuong Thien Province, where an artillery, a sapper and five infantry regiments confront the ARVN 21st Infantry Division and a regiment of the ARVN 9th Division.

60. Until recently a third threat area existed in Kien Giang and Chau Doc Provinces along the Cambodian border, where the understrength North Vietnamese 1st Infantry Division operates. Two of the division's regiments have apparently been dissolved and their personnel assigned to reinforce the one remaining regiment of the unit. This has reduced the Communist threat to GVN forces in the area consisting of one regiment of the ARVN 9th Division and regional forces.

61. The Communists, however, still are capable of launching understrength, regimental-size attacks in several areas, notably in Dinh Tuong and Chuong Thien and in the provinces adjacent to the Cambodian border. They could overrun isolated district towns and outposts as well as temporarily interdict GVN lines of communication, but would not achieve any major permanent gains.

Logistics Capabilities

62. Logistically, the Communists also are in a much weaker position in MR 5 than in the northern three regions. Although relatively secure rear base areas have been established across the border in southern Cambodia, few shipments have been detected entering the delta over the past several months. Moreover, the Communists' supply lines into the region are neither motorized nor secure from ARVN interdiction efforts during periods of increased hostilities. Such traditional means of transportation as sampans and porters are still relied upon heavily. Large fishing vessels reportedly have been used to deliver arms and ammunition to Communist-controlled coastal areas over the past year, but only in small quantities.

63. The Communists in MR 4 are strongest logistically near the Cambodian border, Base Area 470 in western Dinh Tuong Province, and the U Minh Forest on the western coast. Sufficient stocks are on hand in these traditional strongholds to support a

continuation of the level of fighting which has prevailed over the past several months and periodic highpoints, but not much more.

64. The ARVN in MR 4 has the advantage of better supply lines, but this factor is not as important in the delta as it might be elsewhere in South Vietnam. Heavy sustained combat, requiring large amounts of supplies for both sides, is less common than in the other MRs. The protracted warfare style in MR 4 mitigates the positive effect ARVN's logistics advantage may have on the overall balance of forces.

Offensive Scenario

65. There appears to be little likelihood of any major offensive activity in MR 4 this dry season. If large-scale military activity is initiated in the other military regions -- Particularly MR 3, -- the Communists would attempt to tie down the three ARVN divisions in MR 4, probably unsuccessfully. The transfer of the ARVN 9th Division from the delta -- as provided for in contingency planning -- would permit the Communists to make some territorial gains in the rural areas. There is little reason to suspect, however, that they would achieve any greater success than they did in the 1972 offensive, when they were unable to capture any major population centers.

- 38 -

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ANNEX A

MANPOWER AND LOGISTIC POSITIONS OF NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM

Manpower Overview

North Vietnam

1. The North Vietnamese Armed Forces (NVNAF) total about 660,000 men of which 285,000 are located out-of-country in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Hanoi's forces have continued to grow despite the heavy losses suffered in the 1972 offensive, increasing by an estimated 55,000 since the cease-fire.

The majority of the increase occurred in the expansion of the combat and rear services structures and the remainder was from rebuilding of the Communist force structure. There also has been qualitative growth in the South through the increased deployment of longer range offensive and defensive weapons as well as better military equipment, leading to a dramatic increase in North Vietnamese firepower.

2. The personnel increase in the NVNAF and the replacement of most of the losses suffered in 1972 were drawn from a population base of more than 20 million,* containing a manpower pool of an estimated 1.3 million physically fit males between the ages of

* *There is some recently available evidence which suggests that the North Vietnamese population may total about 26 million. If so, all of the manpower figures in this paragraph would be higher.*

15-39. Within the aggregate manpower pool there are an estimated 360,000 men in the prime age group of 17-25. Hanoi probably could induct 100,000 per year without any drain on the aggregate reserve, and thus has the ability to further increase its armed forces while maintaining a regular flow of infiltration to South Vietnam.

Induction

3. North Vietnamese induction since the cease-fire has featured two distinct trends. In the first six months following the signing of the agreement induction was particularly light, as the Communists skipped their annual spring recruiting drive. In August, however, the North Vietnamese launched a substantial recruiting effort, traditional for the August-September period. The second intensified recruiting effort of the post cease-fire period started in late January -- following an increase in induction earlier in the month.

4. The induction effort this dry season is probably designed to maintain a sufficient pool of trained manpower to support planned infiltration while strengthening units which have redeployed to North Vietnam. New inductees are probably ready for infiltration in four to five months; thus, those inducted in the current drive would be unlikely to come south before late spring.

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Infiltration

5. Since 1 September 1973, Hanoi has sent about 54,500 troops to the southern war zones, some 24,000 fewer than during the comparable period in the 1972/1973 dry season. Nearly 60 percent of the total, 32,000 troops, have travelled to Communist combat units in South Vietnam, while the remainder -- mostly rear services personnel -- have been sent to southern Laos and contiguous border areas. As shown in the table below, total troop infiltration to major Communist regions in South Vietnam thus far in the 1973/1974 dry season is substantially less than last year, but infiltration to southern Laos and adjacent areas is more than twice as great.

Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 27 February

| | <u>1972-1973</u> | <u>1973-1974</u> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total | 78,500 | 54,500 |
| MR Tri-Thien | 19,500 | 2,000 |
| MR 5 | 9,000 | 3,500 |
| B-3 Front | 14,000 | 6,500 |
| COSVN | 25,000 | 20,000 |
| Southern Laos/MR 559 | 11,000 | 22,500 |

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6. The dispatch of a large number of infiltrators to the Military Region 559 area early in the dry season reflects North Vietnamese emphasis on logistic activities and further refinements to the transport system. Hanoi did not begin significant combat troop infiltration to South Vietnam until mid-December -- more than a month later than usual. This shift in the timing of the departures from North Vietnam may reflect both the sharply reduced travel time for infiltrators enroute to South Vietnam and an apparent lack of urgency in completing the rebuilding of understrength combat units.

7. During the remainder of the regular infiltration cycle, North Vietnam probably will continue to send troops to the B-3 Front and COSVN areas, where units are still understrength. A [redacted] suggested that between 55,000 and 68,000 troops would be sent to these areas. If true, this would be more than sufficient to rebuild understrength units and establish a reserve manpower pool by late spring.

8. Infiltration, however, probably will not be confined to the southern half of South Vietnam. The recent resumption of infiltration to VC MR 5 suggests that Hanoi is beginning to dispatch troops to northern South Vietnam where the dry season is now beginning.

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9. Since the cease-fire, the Communists have sent a substantial number of personnel from the south to North Vietnam. During 1973, some 45,000 exfiltrators were detected moving through the Vinh area in North Vietnam, and thus far in 1974, the rate of northward moving personnel has been increased. Most of this year's exfiltrators have been sick and wounded, although others such as escort cadre who previously accompanied infiltrators south and personnel being sent to North Vietnam for training also have been observed. The large proportion of sick and wounded probably results from the improved road system and the Communists' lowering of the medical criteria necessary for a soldier to return home, allowing a higher number of marginally sick and wounded to return to the north.

South Vietnam

10. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) has a current strength of some one million men and -- like the NVNAF -- its regular combat forces have continued to grow despite battlefield losses. In the last year or so, the South Vietnamese have consolidated their combat structure. The assigned strength of regular combat forces has risen to 372,000, compared to 320,000 in February 1973, resulting primarily from a change in the strength of ARVN/VNMC combat units from 194,000 to 239,000 in the last quarter of 1973. Although now operating without US air and advisor

A-5

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support, RVNAF capability has been enhanced by the addition of large numbers of aircraft, tanks, and artillery pieces.

11. On the population side, the manpower base for South Vietnam -- 19 million -- is roughly comparable to that of North Vietnam. South Vietnam has an estimated manpower pool of about 2 1/2 million in the 18-39 age group and we believe that an additional 175,000-225,000 young men reach age 18 each year. This is more than sufficient to meet the GVN's annual induction needs

Unit Deployments

North Vietnam

12. Since the start of the current dry season, the North Vietnamese have reinforced their combat forces in South Vietnam with some 9,000 troops in eight regiments -- five antiaircraft artillery (AAA), an infantry, an artillery, and a sapper regiment. Only three of the units -- the artillery and two AAA regiments -- deployed directly into South Vietnam from the north; the remainder relocated into the country from southern Laos and Cambodia. The five AAA regiments and the infantry regiment deployed into the western part of South Vietnam as part of a continuing effort to enhance North Vietnamese defensive positions against South Vietnamese air and ground operations along the Communists' logistic corridor. These AAA regiments increased total post cease-fire air defense deployments to 12 AAA regiments, totaling some 10,000 men.

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13. These augmentations, however, were offset by the withdrawal from northern South Vietnam in late 1973 of the 320B Infantry Division and an independent infantry regiment. The return north of some 8,000 troops has continued the trend in northern MR 1 noted since the cease-fire of a reduction in infantry forces. Earlier in 1973 two other infantry divisions -- the 308th and 312th -- redeployed to North Vietnam.

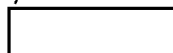
South Vietnam

14. South Vietnamese unit deployments in recent months have been aimed at reinforcing the central highlands of MR 2. During August and September, the 22nd ARVN Division with roughly 13,000 troops deployed from Binh Dinh to Kontum and Pleiku provinces in order to support 23rd ARVN Division operations into Communist territory west of Kontum and Pleiku cities. In November and December, the 23rd ARVN Division with some 10,000 men deployed to Quant Duc Province to counter the growing Communist threat. In addition, a reorganization of the Ranger Command was completed in January and six ranger battalions in Military Region 4 were deployed to the MR 2 coastal lowlands.

Strategic Reserves

15. Within North Vietnam there are a total of 10 infantry and training divisions, the same number that was there prior to the 1972 offensive. Four of these -- the 250th, 330th, 338th,

A-7
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and 350th -- in the past have always been committed to a home defense and training role. The remaining six divisions, with some 40,000 to 50,000 troops, comprise Hanoi's strategic reserves which can readily deploy out of country (See Strategic Reserve Map). During 1972, for example, Hanoi committed seven strategic reserve divisions to South Vietnam, four of which are still there. This sizeable drawdown in its reserves led to the creation of one new infantry division, the 308B in mid-1972, and the regeneration of an old division -- the 341st -- in early 1973.

16. Hanoi also established a major new tactical headquarters in Thanh Hoa Province in 1973. The new headquarters has three identified subordinate infantry divisions -- the 308th, 312th, and 320B, all withdrew from South Vietnam last year -- plus artillery, armor, and engineer elements. The new headquarters consolidates and improves the command and control over some of Hanoi's strategic reserve forces in North Vietnam. It would also facilitate multi-divisional redeployment to South Vietnam if Hanoi decides to resume major military action. A redeployment to northern MR 1 could be accomplished with little advance warning.

17. The South Vietnamese strategic reserves consist of an airborne and marine division, plus three ranger groups,

A-8

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totalling some 35,000 troops. These "reserves", however, are all committed -- the airborne and marines to MR 1 and the rangers to MRs 2 and 3. In an offensive, the South Vietnamese would be forced to redeploy their reserves or other forces* to the critical areas.

NVA and ARVN Command and Control

18. Besides rebuilding their combat forces numerically, the Communists and South Vietnamese each have continued to improve their command and control structures to meet the changing priorities of a cease-fire environment. Above the division level, there are few close similarities between the North and South Vietnamese Armies. In both cases, however, formal lines of control run from a high command directly to the military regions (MR). The South Vietnamese MR commander normally exercises tactical control over all ground forces within his region. The Communist MR commander has the same authority but in some cases there are separate front headquarters within the Communist MR which are directly subordinate to the high command. In this case, the front headquarters supercedes the MR commander's tactical authority over a given area within the MR.

*ARVN contingency plans, for example, call for the redeployment of the 9th Division from MR 4 in the event of a major offensive in MR 3.

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19. At the division level and below, however, North and South Vietnamese command and control organizations are similar. Within a division, they both have support battalions attached to the division headquarters and three infantry regiments with three maneuver battalions each. In addition, according to Table of Organization both have an artillery regiment or equivalent as an organic part of the division. While the South Vietnamese division has an organic armored cavalry squadron, the Communists divisions do not. In the past, North Vietnamese armor has been attached only temporarily to a division for a specific mission.

Logistics Overview - North Vietnam

Military Imports

20. During 1973, the North Vietnamese apparently continued to receive Soviet and Chinese military imports, possibly in substantial quantities. Photography shows that artillery and armor have been shipped into North Vietnam during the past year. For example, photography of 30 September showed about 40 tanks parked between storage sheds at the Vinh Yen Armor Training Center northwest of Hanoi which had not been there in early August as well as the addition of at least 100 pieces of artillery to a storage area southwest of Hanoi. Mid-October photography showed 80 possible light antiaircraft and field artillery pieces less than 10 miles from the Chinese border. Finally, on

A-10

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8 November photography showed 230 light antiaircraft artillery pieces stored on one of the main rail lines between the Chinese border and Hanoi.

21. In addition to the above items, the North Vietnamese have also received some additional SA-3 equipment from the Soviet Union since the cease-fire.¹ With the exception of the SA-3 missile system, however, North Vietnam is not known to have added any major weapons systems to its arsenal in recent years.²

22. The absence of regular photographic coverage -- the primary source in identifying recent military import -- has made it impossible to determine if the such imports have increased or decreased since the onset of the Communist dry season logistics push. But some imports are clearly continuing to be received by Hanoi, and these should be sufficient to replenish, at least partially, the drawdown in stockpiles from supplies sent by North Vietnam to its forces in the South.

Communist Construction Activities

23. The Communist-controlled areas of South Vietnam have changed radically owing to post cease-fire construction activity.

1 Soviet SA-3 equipment was first identified in North Vietnam on 7 January 1973. This equipment was observed in transit in mid-December and some of the equipment may have arrived in North Vietnam during late December 1972.

2 Possible DIA footnote.

A-11

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They are linked to North Vietnam by a greatly improved logistic system. The "liberated" areas are just remote bases hidden under jungle canopy and served by foot and bicycle paths. They have become a series of strongholds united by a net of new motorable roads, and some of them supported by new petroleum pipelines, coastal transshipment points and at least one SAM-defended airfield.

24. In order to consolidate territorial gains, the North Vietnamese moved swiftly after the January cease-fire to upgrade their transport system in southern Laos and "liberated" areas of South Vietnam. A system of interconnecting roads tying the scattered enclaves together to permit rapid development and a buildup of heavy weapon defenses was the most important development. By early summer 1973, the first phase of this access roadnet was completed. Communist vehicles can now move with relative impunity from depots in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to front lines in Military Regions 1, 2, and 3. The keystone of this developing road system is the ongoing construction of two separate parallel north-south truck routes, one leading along the western GVN border (Communist Route 14) and another extending through Southern Laos.*

* Construction methods to build these two roads are much different than those used to build during the bombing period. The alignments are mostly dual lane to permit two way traffic and passing. Segments are straight, grades are less steep, the roadbeds are well drained, and in a number of areas have been graveled or oil covered. Consequently the roads recover quickly from the effects of monsoon rains.

A-12

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25. The two separate north-south road systems, located on either side of the Annamite Mountains bordering Laos and South Vietnam, apparently were built to mitigate the effects of the varying monsoon rainy seasons, and to permit more dependable vehicle access between major Communist base areas and North Vietnam. During the summer monsoon season in Laos, for example, vehicles could shift to the route through western South Vietnam, and then during the fall and early winter months transfer back to the Laos system.

26. The onset of the 1973-1974 dry season caused a seasonal and expected shift in Communist construction activity. An accelerated tempo developed on the new dual lane system in southern Laos, and work slackened on LOCs and facilities in northern and central portions of South Vietnam where wet weather prevailed.

27. Free from US air attack, the North Vietnamese concentrated their construction efforts on building a high speed supply corridor through the Laos Panhandle while abandoning other routes. For example, photography as recent as mid-February shows that with the exception of Route 9, which leads into the Khe Sanh military Complex, all former major roads leading through southern Laos to the South Vietnam border have been abandoned.

28. The North Vietnamese resumed heavy truck traffic in Southern Laos during late November accompanied by a surge of

A-13

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construction activity on the dual-lane road. This road now extends into the western highlands and joins Communist Route 14 in Kontum Province. The Laotian pipeline system has also rapidly extended along the path of the new roadbed; by early 1974, it had reached the tri-border area.

29. There were two major developments associated with the Route 14 system extending along the western GVN border. A new major road in southwestern North Vietnam is to extend about 95 miles from Mu Gia Pass southward through Quang Binh Province to a juncture with Communist Route 14 near the DMZ. Also, Communist road gangs probably have completed a Route 14 bypass road around an ARVN strongpoint at Duc Lap in Duang Duc Province. This bypass leaves the dual-lane system 10 miles north of Duc Lap and extends southwest for some 30 miles through the corner of Mondolkiri Province, Cambodia before joining Cambodian Route 14. Completion of this bypass road closes the last link needed to complete a 500-mile through-truck route from the North Vietnam border through Laos and the GVN western highlands to the COSVN area.

1973-1974 Dry Season Supply Effort

30. The Communists' 1973-1974 dry season supply effort is now in full swing and is similar in scope and intensity to that of previous years. As in the past, it is a major effort which is more than adequate to replace the supplies consumed by Communist

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forces. Since early November, for example, Communist units in the Vinh area have handled about 10,000 tons of all types of ordnance. In addition, Communist supply shipments into Laos from southern North Vietnam this dry season have been supplemented by cargo deliveries along Route 9 in northern South Vietnam, primarily from Dong Ha.

31. Deliveries from these areas into Laos have resulted in heavy traffic along the Communists' dual lane road. Since mid-November, almost daily aerial reconnaissance of the main north-south supply corridor in Laos has shown an average of several hundred trucks moving south. Unlike past years, North Vietnam has been able to ship supplies the length of the Laos Panhandle without having to shuttle supplies because of the threat of aerial interdiction.

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34. Beyond February rear services units probably will continue to move supplies through southern Laos into South Vietnam for delivery to the B-3 Front and COSVN areas via NVA Route 14. In addition, the North Vietnamese can be expected to resume heavy supply shipments into northern South Vietnam on the DMZ routes, once the dry season takes hold in that area. By June, the Communists' resupply efforts will have placed NVA forces in an even stronger supply situation.

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RVNAF Logistics

35. Since the cease-fire, the RVNAF logistics system has made significant progress -- moving from complete dependence upon the US military toward self-reliance in the allocation, transportation, and stockpiling of supplies. A computerized system for handling overall supply requisitioning is now nearing completion and will further improve the receipt and allocation of military equipment. A large number of South Vietnamese technicians have been trained to replace the US military personnel who departed shortly after the cease-fire. VNAF airlift operations, which play an essential role in South Vietnam's supply distribution system, are currently providing sufficient supplies to about 30 ARVN outposts that are inaccessible by land LOCs. The RVNAF still remains dependent upon the approximately 5,000 US contract personnel for aircraft maintenance and the operation of port facilities.

36. Adequate supplies are available to South Vietnam to continue meeting RVNAF's logistic requirements at current consumption rates. Because of US budget constraints over the past year, however, ammunition and other military goods have not been replaced on the one-for-one basis permitted by the cease-fire agreement. As a result, stocks are being drawn

- A17 -

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down from their January 1973 level. Supplies of ground ammunition -- currently at 66 percent of the quantity available at the time of the cease-fire -- are equivalent to 7 1/2 month's supply at current expenditure rates, but only 1 1/2 month's supply at rates expended during the 1972 offensive. Air munitions stocks are more plentiful, equal to 16 month's supply at current expenditure rates and 5 month's supply at 1972 offensive levels. Current gross POL inventory is about 33 days of supply at the consumption rate of 25,000 barrels daily, the amount required to combat an NVA offensive. The POL, however, is provided on a contract basis, which would allow sufficient POL during an offensive, but which must be paid by US funding projected to run out on 1 March.

37. RVNAF supplies of weapons and other military equipment are adequate for its force structure. The RVNAF currently has more and better aircraft, armor, and artillery to combat a North Vietnamese offensive than they did in 1972. Sufficient amounts of equipment, however, would not be hard to replace heavy combat losses unless US stocks were made available. Stocks of in-country repair parts are adequate in most cases for six month's supply at present consumption rates.

38. Although the RVNAF logistics system is capable of coping with the present level of tactical activity, a North

- A18 -

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Vietnamese countrywide offensive would present major problems. It is doubtful that the system could handle the infusion and distribution of large quantities of ammunition and equipment necessary to replace expenditures and combat losses. Supply shortages, particularly in POL and ammunition, would soon occur.

39. RVNAF depends largely on trucks and other vehicles to transport troops and supplies, and its transportation units have performed well in the past year. The country has an extensive roadnet, but many key routes are vulnerable to Communist interdiction.

40. In an offensive, VNAF's air supply capabilities would be deficient. At the current low operational rate of cargo aircraft, VNAF could not carry out an airlift comparable to the 1972 effort without US support. Moreover, only 16 of 32 C-130 aircraft are normally operational at any one time. VNAF, in fact, will be pressed if required to take on many more than the 30 or so areas currently needing continual air resupply.

41. An offensive would also surface shortcomings in the RVNAF sealift capability. The VNN now possesses only six landing ship tanks (LSTs) and other vessels which are inadequate to perform such multiple tasks as relocating major ARVN units

- A19 -

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and evacuating large numbers of refugees along the coastline of northern South Vietnam. Efforts are underway, however, to increase the VNN's inventory of LSTs.

42. Other problems may arise from ARVN's failure to develop an effective system of inter-military regional cooperation in the reallocation of scarce supplies. This failure prevents the rapid transport of critically needed supplies from one MR to another, even when the distance is very short. Finally, it is also uncertain if US civilians now supporting RVNAF in several key areas would remain if heavy fighting developed.

Firepower Balance

43. The South Vietnamese still hold an edge in firepower assets over the Communists on a countrywide basis. However, the withdrawal of US airpower coupled with the North Vietnamese buildup of armor, artillery, and air defense forces, has caused a major shift in the firepower balance toward the Communists.

44. Hanoi's substantial commitment of tanks and artillery in South Vietnam last year raised inventories to the highest level ever. The 130mm field gun gives the Communists the advantage in long-range artillery in Northern MR 1 and in some of the other areas where these weapons are concentrated. Moreover,

- A20 -

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the sizeable buildup of North Vietnamese air defense units, coupled with the general availability of the SA-7 missile, have served to at least partially compensate for the GVN dominance in the air.

45. The Communists and South Vietnamese are estimated to have roughly the same number of tanks -- about 600. The Communists have the edge in MR I and the central highlands. However, poor armor tactics on the part of the NVA, coupled with the effective use by the South Vietnamese of numerous antitank weapons, could offset this advantage as occurred in 1972.

46. The South Vietnamese artillery units, among RVNAF's best combat forces, have a large numerical edge in artillery with more than 1,600 155mm and 105mm artillery howitzers plus 74 175mm field guns. The use of their howitzers gives RVNAF effective close ground support, although during an NVA offensive they could be handicapped by resupply constraints. The North Vietnamese are estimated to have some 350 122mm and 130mm artillery pieces with fewer supply constraints. Because they have fewer howitzers than the GVN, however, the Communists must rely more on mortars and rockets for their ground support.

47. There are several factors which at least partly offsets the RVNAF's numerical artillery advantage. For example, the Communists have more long-range artillery than the GVN; and the 122mm and 130mm field guns are superior to the 175mm with respect to accuracy, rate of fire, and maintenance requirements.

- A20 -

SECRET

In addition, many of the North Vietnamese AAA forces, particularly in northern MR 1, are also trained to use their guns in a ground support role. South Vietnamese combat units are located in fixed positions on key terrain features which would give Communist artillerymen the opportunity to concentrate their long-range field guns on these positions. Such a concentration of firepower might permit the North Vietnamese to initially achieve significant tactical and territorial gains.

48. The South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) is capable of significantly augmenting GVN ground firepower in many areas of the country. Currently, VNAF has attack aircraft with ___ jet and ___ propeller aircraft -- which can be used for tactical support. These planes are capable of flying about two-thirds of the monthly number of close air support sorties flown by the US and South Vietnamese during the 1972 offensive.

49. To counter this advantage in the air, the North Vietnamese have built up within South Vietnam their most formidable air defense structure of the war. This structure currently consists of 26 regiments (25 AAA and one SAM) and 25,000 men. There are 21 regiments in MR 1, at least three in western MR 2, and two in northern MR 3. The AAA weapons

- A21 -

provided to these regiments range up to 100mm in caliber. This force represents a serious threat to VNAF which has been reluctant to operate near concentrated North Vietnamese air defense positions.

50. North Vietnam also has the ability to conduct air operations in MR 1 to achieve air superiority there. Currently, Hanoi has some 200 jet fighters capable of such operations, although only about one-fifth of these could be committed on a sustained basis. These planes could be staged from any of the five airfields currently capable of handling jet aircraft in the North Vietnamese Panhandle.* Aircraft flown from the southernmost airfield at Dong Hoi in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam, however, would greatly reduce the South Vietnamese warning and reaction times and give the North Vietnamese aircraft maximum time over target.

51. In the event Hanoi did commit its aircraft to the South, the North Vietnamese air force would be particularly strong in air-to-air combat. They have experienced pilots, along with high quality radar and air controllers. In terms of providing close air support, however, the North Vietnamese pilots are

* *The airfield at Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam, could be made available as an emergency recovery base, but it is not presently capable of sustaining jet aircraft operations.*

inexperienced, and probably would encounter problems coordinating attack operations with ground units.

52. In contrast, the South Vietnamese pilots are highly qualified in close air support operations but have no air-to-air combat experience. VNAF has had no combat experience in ground control intercept operations and its skill at actual intercept operations is probably marginal. VNAF also would have difficulty in a ground attack role in Northern MR 1, given the proliferation of AAA weapons and SA-2 missiles there. Except for the AC-119 gunship, VNAF aircraft are not equipped with radar homing and warning equipment and have no jamming capability against electronically-controlled AAA guns and SA-2 missiles.

53. VNAF air-to-air capabilities, however, will be improved somewhat this spring. In March, the first shipments of the higher performance F5E jet aircraft will begin to arrive as replacements for the F5A, and the first squadron of F5Es will be activated in May. The F5E is a faster, more maneuverable aircraft than the F5A, with improved electronics equipment and greater range or bomb load capacity. VNAF's main problems, however, will continue to be the lack of trained, combat-experienced pilots, plus the lack of sufficient ground support equipment.

- A23 -

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ANNEX B

STATUS OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE
INFANTRY DIVISIONS

North Vietnamese Infantry Divisions

NVA First Division

1. The division has operated along the Cambodian border in the provinces of Chau Doc and Kien Giang of Military Region (MR) 4 since the 1972 offensive. Its primary mission is to secure infiltration corridors leading into the Delta from Cambodia. In 1973, however, two of its three regiments apparently were disbanded. The remaining regiment continues to operate in Kien Giang Province. The division no longer represents a serious threat to GVN forces as only one regiment is considered combat effective.

NVA Second Division

2. The operating area of the division has been Quang Ngai Province of MR 1 since mid-1972. The division last summer resubordinated a regiment to the 711th Division in Quang Tin Province and another regiment to the 3rd NVA Division in MR 2. The 2nd division is now combat ineffective and has only one regiment which operates south of Quang Ngai City.

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NVA Third Division

3. Binh Dinh Province of MR 2 has been the division's traditional operating area. Because of heavy combat losses during the 1972 offensive, a regiment of the division was disbanded in mid-1973 and replaced by a regiment from the 2nd NVA Division in MR 1. The division is now resting and refitting its three understrength regiments in northwest Binh Dinh Province and is reported to be having serious morale problems.

NVA Fifth Division

4. The division which has historically operated in MR 3 moved to Dinh Tuong Province of MR 4 where it operated from mid-1972 to April 1973 before before returning to Tay Ninh Province in MR 3. Since that time it has been resting and refitting, and at the same time, attempting to secure Communist territory in southern Tay Ninh Province. The division poses a threat to Tay Ninh City and GVN-controlled areas near Routes 1 and 22. There are tenuous indications that some units of the division may be returning to Dinh Tuong Province. The current strength of the division is about 70 percent of peak 1972 levels and it will require additional replacement personnel before it is capable of major offensive activity.

B-2

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NVA Seventh Division

5. The 7th Division has been resting and refitting in Northern MR 3 since the cease-fire and its units are estimated to be about 90 percent of peak 1972 levels. The mission of the division is to protect Communist-controlled territory near Route 13 in Binh Duong Province, and attack targets in GVN areas. Since the cease-fire, heavy artillery weapons and tanks have been dispatched from North Vietnam to the division's operating area providing its units with greater firepower support than in 1972. The division represents a major threat to GVN forces and positions north of the capital. The division should be capable of conducting major sustained offensive activity by April.

NVA Ninth Division

6. The division currently operates in western Binh Duong Province in MR 3, and like the 5th and 7th, has not seen major combat activity for more than a year. It was refitted in 1973 and its combat strength is now near peak offensive levels and represents a major threat to the northern approaches to Saigon. The division's combat capability also has been enhanced by the deployment of additional armor and heavy artillery to its area of operations in 1973.

B-3

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NVA Tenth Division

7. The 10th Division was organized in late 1972 in Kontum Province of MR 2 from formerly independent combat regiments operating under the NVA B-3 Front. The division has successfully countered GVN thrusts into Communist territory north of Kontum City since August and September. It is now only about 60 percent of normal strength levels, and it has been conducting training to upgrade the quality of its personnel.

NVA 304th Division

8. This division has a long history of combat in South Vietnam and is currently deployed in western Quang Tri Province of MR 1. It has not seen combat since November 1972. Its primary mission is to maintain control of Communist-occupied territory north of the Thach Han River to include Khe Sanh airfield and North Vietnamese logistics facilities along Route 9. Combat units of the division have conducted extensive training for the past year and are now probably at full strength. In addition, the problems of poor leadership and morale -- which were common in late 1972 -- have probably been alleviated as a result of the division's extended respite from combat.

B-4

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NVA 320th Division

9. The 320th Division is located in western Pleiku Province of MR 2 and is threatening GVN forces near Pleiku City. In recent months major elements of the division have been defending against GVN operations into western Pleiku Province. The division is combat-effective, but its regiments are understrength. In 1972 the division was not effective in the battle for Kontum City because of poor command and control procedures within combat units and inexperienced cadre at the company level. Since the cease-fire the division has conducted extensive training in its base area near the Laos/Cambodia border and the quality of cadre leadership and unit morale has probably improved.

NVA 324B Division

10. The 324B Division is one of the most combat-experienced divisions in the North Vietnamese Army. The division experienced continuous combat for a period of seven months in 1972 while attacking GVN military positions west of Hue City. Since the cease-fire, the division has been resting and refitting in western Thua Thien Province and is now estimated to be at full strength. Concurrently it has been conducting an extensive reconnaissance of GVN military installations in the coastal lowlands of the

B-5

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province. The division now controls two artillery and five infantry regiments in Thua Thien Province -- the largest combat force of the war west of Hue. Its mission in recent months has been to secure Communist-controlled territory in western Thua Thien Province and open infiltration routes into the coastal lowlands.

NVA 325th Division

11. The 325th Division is located in northeastern Quang Tri Province of MR 1. The division's mission is to provide security for Dong Ha City, the Cua Viet logistics complex, and maintain an active reconnaissance of GVN military activity near Quang Tri City. The division has not experienced combat activity for more than a year and is at full strength. The 325th Division successfully defended the Cua Viet and Thach Han river lines against heavy attacks by the elite airborne and marine divisions in late 1972.

NVA 711th Division

12. The division -- near full strength -- operates in Quang Tin Province of MR 1 with the mission of protecting Communist logistics facilities and infiltration routes southwest of Danang City. In early 1973, units of the division were suffering from personnel shortages, morale, and leadership problems. Consequently,

B-6

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one regiment was deactivated and a regiment of the 2nd NVA Division was resubordinated to the division in mid-1973. The division has been resting, refitting, and conducting extensive training for more than a year, and is now considered combat-effective.

South Vietnamese Infantry Divisions

ARVN First Division

13. The division is primarily responsible for defending GVN-controlled territory west of Hue City. Although the division is considered combat-effective, two of its four infantry regiments have experienced high manpower losses in recent months because of malaria and some combat activity. The current shortage of experienced leadership in the division is being corrected by the implementation of battalion and company level refresher training programs. The 1st Division is one of the best ARVN divisions.

ARVN Second Division

14. The current mission of the division is to maintain security in GVN-controlled areas of Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces and to deny the Communists access to Quang Ngai City. Territorial forces and ranger units have been upgraded to operate with the division's infantry regiments improving the defense of

B-7

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the populated lowlands. Since the cease-fire, the division has eliminated pockets of Communist resistance in the lowlands and some resettlement of the population has taken place. Concurrently, infantry battalions have been rotated for refresher training and the division is considered combat-effective.

ARVN Third Division

15. The division has largely recovered from its April 1972 debacle in Quang Tri Province of MR 1. In the fall of 1972 it successfully recaptured from the Communists extensive territory in the populated lowlands of Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces. The division's current task is to provide security for major population centers near Danang City and to protect principal ARVN installations and supply lines. For more than a year, combat activity has been exceptionally low, contributing to high morale among division personnel and a significant improvement in the strength of combat units.

ARVN Fifth Division

16. The division is only marginally combat-effective. It has sustained heavy combat losses in attempting to reopen Routes 13 and 1A in Binh Duong Province of MR 3 last summer and serious

B-8

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morale problems continue. Currently, the 5th Division commander is attempting to reorganize understrength units and improve the division's combat effectiveness. The division is in a defensive posture and deployed in base camps astride Routes 13 and 1A. In March the division will be withdrawn to Saigon for rest and will be replaced by the ARVN 18th Division.

ARVN Seventh Division

17. The 7th Division is deployed in Dinh Tuong Province of MR 4 with the mission of protecting GVN installations and populated areas along Route 4 between My Tho and Sa Dec cities. In recent months, the division has successfully executed several combat operations near traditional Communist infiltration routes and base areas in Dinh Tuong and Kien Tuong Provinces. The division is well led, highly mobile, and is the most effective combat unit in MR 4. However, the constant combat of recent months has caused a desertion problem in the division.

ARVN Ninth Division

18. The 9th Division is primarily responsible for interdicting Communist infiltration routes from Cambodia through the delta provinces of Chau Doc, Kien Giang, and Chuong Thien. The

B-9

division is now slightly understrength because of desertions and personnel replacement problems. The Joint General Staff has designated the division as part of the General Reserve which will move to MR 3 if the Communists launch an offensive.

ARVN 18th Division

19. The 18th Division has developed into the best MR 3 unit. It has primary responsibility for defending populated areas and GVN lines of communication north of Saigon. In March the division will replace the ARVN 5th Division in Binh Duong Province and have the mission of opening Route 13 to Binh Long Province. Morale is high in the division and its units are known to have a good rapport with the local population. Moreover, the division is overstrength and recently was ordered to discontinue recruiting. There has been an increase in security because of its aggressive combat operations in conjunction with territorial forces. The division possesses good leadership and conducts regular rotational training of all combat units.

ARVN 21st Division

20. The division is deployed in Chuong Thien Province of MR 4 with the mission of protecting populated areas in the southern delta. Although its operating area has been reduced and

B-10

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reinforced by territorial forces, the division continues to be the weakest of the three GVN divisions in MR 4. It has not made significant progress in opening new territory for resettlement or closing Communist supply and infiltration routes. The division continues to be characterized by poor leadership at all levels of command.

ARVN 22nd Division

21. The traditional area of operation for the division is in Binh Dinh Province where it was soundly defeated by the 3rd NVA Division in the opening phase of the 1972 offensive. The division recovered, however, and by the time of the cease-fire it had recaptured most of its lost territory. The division is now deployed in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces where it has primary responsibility for defending the provincial capitals. For the past few months, the division, reinforced by rangers and territorial forces, has been unsuccessful in its operations into Communist base areas in the two provinces. The operations have been costly in terms of manpower losses: two regiments are now considered only marginally combat-effective.

B-11

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ARVN 23rd Division

22. The division is now operating in Quang Duc and Darlac Provinces of MR 2 and has the mission of conducting operations against Communist base areas along the Cambodia/South Vietnam border. The former operating area of the division was Kontum and Pleiku Provinces where it successfully recaptured Trung Nghia in the fall of 1973. Its overall combat performance since the cease-fire, however, has been marginally effective because of continuous combat and a high number of desertions.

ARVN 25th Division

23. The division is currently at full strength and has the mission of defending Tay Ninh City and protecting Routes 22 and 1 to Saigon. The 25th Division is augmented by territorial forces and this combined force proved to be highly effective during the 1972 offensive. The division is now undergoing extensive training to improve the quality of its personnel and to overcome its poor reputation in the field.

Airborne Division

24. The Airborne Division is regarded as one of the GVN's most effective divisions. Although the division has been deployed

B-12

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in MR 1 since April 1972, it continues to be part of the JGS General Reserve. Since the cease-fire Airborne units have assumed a static defensive posture in Thua Thien Province. The division has some morale problems because of economic hardships faced by families of division personnel living in the distant Saigon-Bien Hoa area. This situation has been alleviated somewhat by rotating division personnel to Saigon, thereby providing troops with an opportunity to see their families. Individual and unit refresher training is conducted on a regular basis and unit manning levels are 98 percent manned.

Marine Division

25. The Marine Division has distinguished itself as a highly motivated, well-disciplined, and aggressively-led combat unit. Although still part of the JGS General Reserve, the division represents the GVN's main line of defense in Quang Tri Province of MR 1. Combat units of the division, supported by territorial forces, are defending Quang Tri City and the coastal lowlands of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. Despite its defensive mission, the division has maintained excellent troop morale because of refresher training programs, frequent rotation of units to Saigon, and effective civic action programs within

B-13

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populated areas. Current manning levels have surpassed authorized levels and recruiting has been temporarily suspended.

Ranger Command

26. A two-phase plan for the reorganization of ranger units was completed in January. The Ranger Command now has 15 ranger groups, 12 groups are permanently assigned to operate in MRs 1, 2, and 3 while the 3 remaining groups have been designated part of the JGS General Reserve. They augment GVN forces in the military regions and have the specific mission of operating on the fringes of GVN-controlled areas where they attempt to interdict Communist infiltration routes. The combat performance of many ranger units has been less than satisfactory because of a lack of equipment and poor training. To alleviate these problems, a concerted effort is underway to improve individual and unit training.

B-14

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt