

OFFICE OF THE DD/I

7 May 1975

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Sam Adams

Attached is the background statement you requested on Sam Adams. I have vetted it with Ed Proctor, [redacted] and Bobby Layton. [redacted] has also seen it for informational purposes. As far as I am concerned the whole statement could be put out unclassified. We need some guidance.

- a. Do you want to use the statement as is, or in an abbreviated form.
- b. Do you want to send it to PFIAB, and to the Oversight Committees.
- c. Do you want to use this to respond to the individual Congressional queries we are receiving

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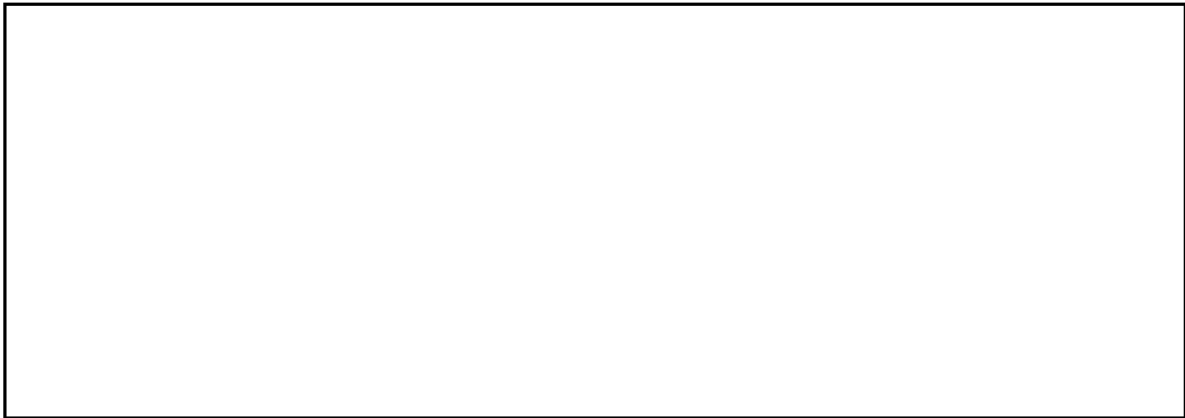
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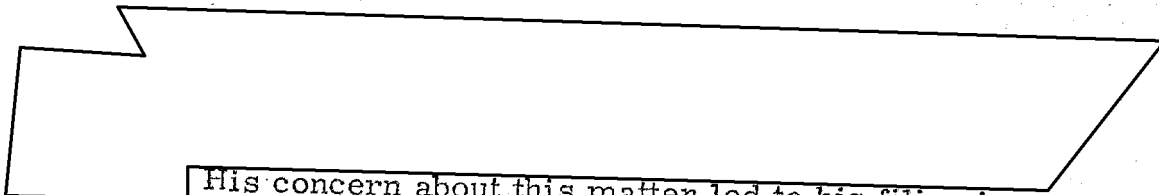
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Background Statement on Samuel A. Adams



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2. As an analyst on Indochina affairs, Mr. Adams undertook in mid-1966 a number of research tasks which were a major factor leading to substantial differences within the Intelligence Community regarding estimates of enemy strength in South Vietnam. These differences became the subject of extended discussion in 1967 during the preparation of a special national intelligence estimate, SNIE 14. 3/67, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam." (The nature of these differences is presented in Annex A).



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His concern about this matter led to his filing in May 1968 of a formal complaint to the Inspector General, questioning the overall conduct of intelligence research on the Vietnam war, and, ultimately, to a charge of deliberate fabrication of intelligence estimates.

The Order of Battle Issue

4. As a result of research conducted by Mr. Adams in 1966, it became clear to observers in Washington that the official MACV, J-2, order of battle numbers understated by a

considerable margin the actual size of the enemy forces in South Vietnam. The fact of this understatement was accepted in the Agency although there were substantial differences of view on the magnitude of the differences and the accuracy and confidence which could be ascribed to either Mr. Adams' estimates or to MACV's numbers.

5. The disparities between Washington and MACV were also broadened because of varying methodologies used to estimate enemy strength and differing views on what categories should be included in such estimates. The lack of agreement between CIA and MACV was reinforced by two factors:

a. The difference between an order of battle and an estimate of enemy forces; and

b. Different concepts of what constituted the enemy threat in South Vietnam.

-- An order of battle is a meticulous accounting of enemy units which are accepted only after they have met very rigid criteria such as the capture of prisoners or a certain number of official documents from the unit headquarters. This methodology ensures that the order of battle figures will always be conservative and tend to lag behind events.

-- An estimate of enemy forces, on the other hand, uses less rigid acceptance criteria and attempts to quantify known gaps in the order of battle by making reasoned judgments about the size of forces, in the absence of hard data. Thus, an estimate will usually produce much higher figures than an order of battle.

6. In addition, MACV's view of the enemy threat was to see it strictly in terms of combat forces, their support forces and armed guerrillas. CIA has always accepted this MACV view as a reasonable definition of the combat threat. In terms of coping effectively with the situation in South Vietnam, however, CIA thought that the total insurgency threat should be considered. This would include, in addition to the forces counted in the order of battle, other organized groups such as self-defense forces (armed militia) and the political infrastructure.

7. In any event Mr. Adams was provided opportunities for his views to be heard, not only by his peers, but by most of the senior line officers in the Agency charged with the production of intelligence on the Vietnam war. In addition to the normal day-to-day exchanges of views, Mr. Adams was able to present his views during a number of major attempts to resolve Community differences on the strength of enemy forces. These included:

a. His attendance, in February 1967, at a conference in Honolulu on the order of battle question.

b. His participation in the Community drafting of SNIE 14. 3/67. During the preparation of this estimate, Mr. Adams was provided extensive opportunities to expound his views on enemy strengths, including full briefings of the Board of National Estimates.

c. His participation as a member of the Agency team that attended an order of battle conference in Saigon in September 1967 in an attempt to reach agreed numbers for SNIE 14. 3/67.

d. His participation in the drafting of a number of papers that were the basis of a CIA-sponsored conference on enemy order of battle held in Washington in April 1968.

8. Despite these opportunities Mr. Adams failed to obtain full and unswerving acceptance of his estimates of the size of enemy forces. It was generally believed, by both his peers and his superiors, that considerably more research and analysis needed to be made before a conclusive and decisive challenge could be made to the MACV point of view. Even so, the main thrust of his views was generally accepted and was presented in a number of official Agency publications or statements.

9. In sum, CIA's official position throughout the period was that the official MACV order of battle for enemy forces in South Vietnam needed to be revised upward substantially. The extent of this upward revision could not be stated precisely at that time and certainly could not be stated with the confidence and certainty that Mr. Adams asserted. A number of Agency publications alerted the most senior levels of the Government to the differences regarding the enemy threat and presented Agency estimates which were significantly higher than those of MACV. These included:

a. A June 1966 memorandum stating CIA acknowledgment of the general accuracy of MACV's order of battle figures but suggesting that the use of less conservative acceptance criteria might increase the figures by one-third.

b. One of the so-called "McNamara reports," issued in August 1966, which pointed out that work underway suggested that our holdings on the numerical strength of enemy irregular forces ". . . may require drastic upward revision." These special assessments of the war in Vietnam were prepared at the request of the Secretary of Defense and were also disseminated to such senior officials as the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Walt Rostow, Assistant to the President.

c. A November 1966 memorandum on Viet Cong recruitment prepared for Robert W. Komer, Special Assistant to the President, in which the Agency noted that reappraisals underway indicated that current estimates of Viet Cong irregular forces may have drastically understated their growth.

d. A December 1966 report on North Vietnamese manpower prepared for the Deputy Secretary of Defense. In this report the Agency discussed the variances in estimates of enemy forces depending upon the methodologies used. This report also presented Agency estimates of irregular forces which were in large measure the product of research by Mr. Adams.

e. CIA assessments prepared in May 1967 expressed the Agency's strong reservations about the accuracy of official order of battle figures and clearly warned that the US and its Allies were facing ". . . a total organized opposition far larger than accepted official figures have indicated."

f. A memorandum prepared in June 1967 for Ambassador Leonhart which used a total enemy strength estimate, including political cadre, which again reflected the product of Mr. Adams' research.

g. A CIA assessment prepared in December 1967 which, while using the numbers agreed at the order of battle conference held in Saigon in September 1967, expressed our concerns that the numbers were too low and did not include other sizeable components in the Communist force structure.

h. A joint CIA/Joint Staff/DIA memorandum of February 1968 which used the high CIA estimates for an analysis of enemy manpower infiltration. This memorandum was transmitted to the Secretary of Defense by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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10. As pointed out above, the CIA's assessments of enemy strength, which were higher than those of others, reflected much of Mr. Adams' work. The frequency with which these judgments were presented to the most senior levels of Government demonstrate quite conclusively that the Agency did not suppress intelligence which challenged military estimates as Mr. Adams charges.

The 1968 Complaint to the Inspector General

11. On 27 May 1968 Mr. Adams filed a formal complaint with the Inspector General in which he called into question the overall conduct of intelligence research on the Vietnam war. He cited four basic complaints: a misuse of research manpower; misdirection of research effort; a want of courage in advancing well-documented findings concerning Viet Cong manpower; and a lethargy in correcting past failures.

12. Mr. Adams' charges received an extremely thorough and extensive investigation on the part of the staff of the Inspector General. Their report, which did not accept the validity of Mr. Adams' charges, was completed and submitted to the Executive Director on 1 August 1968. Because of the gravity of the charges, and particularly because Mr. Adams' complaint put Mr. Helms' own role in question, Mr. Helms decided to appoint a review board of some of the most senior officials of CIA to look into the charges and to advise him on the course of action that he should take. The chairman of the board was Admiral Rufus Taylor, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; the other two members were John Bross, Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence Programs Evaluation, and Larry Houston, General Counsel.

13. The report of the review board which was submitted on 1 November 1968 reaffirmed the findings of the Inspector General's report.

[REDACTED]

The review board's report also recommended forwarding Mr. Adams' charges and the Inspector General's report to the Chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB).

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14. Admiral Taylor discussed the case with the Chairman of the PFIAB, General Maxwell Taylor, and the Inspector General

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met with General Taylor on 18 November 1968 to discuss the case. On 25 November 1968 Admiral Taylor briefed the members of PFIAB on the case and on 3 December 1968 Mr. Adams met with Mr. Patrick Coyne of PFIAB.

15. At this point, Agency management regarded hearings and investigation into Mr. Adams' complaints as concluded. Mr. Adams was invited, however, by Mr. Helms to submit recommendations for reform within the Agency to correct the alleged mishandling of the Vietnam account. These recommendations were completed and submitted in January 1969.

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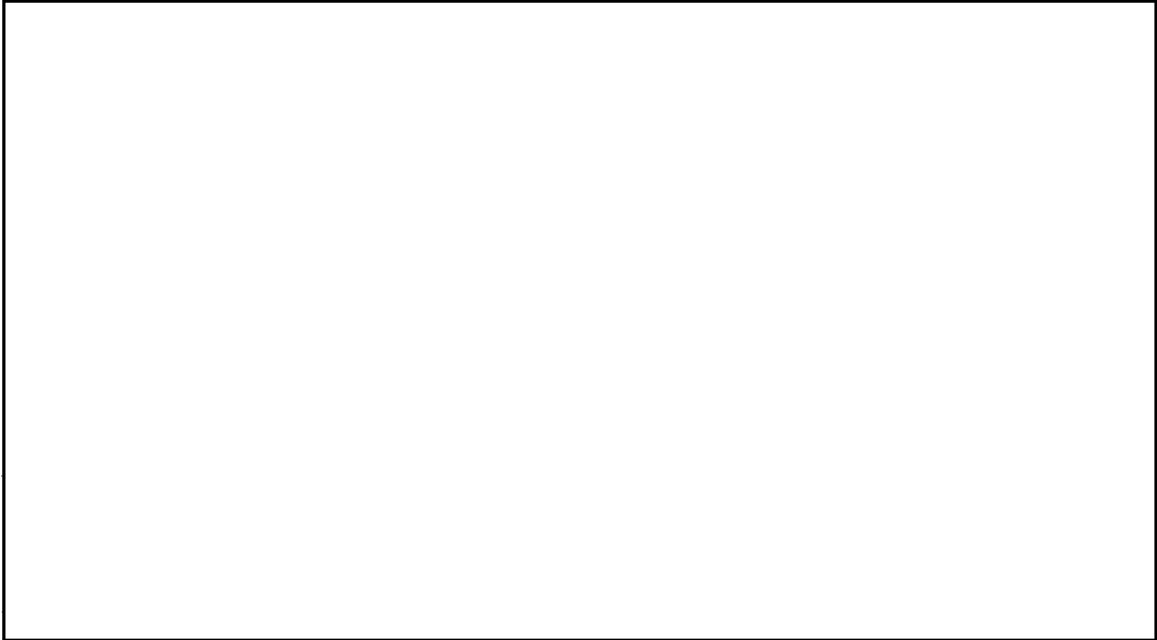
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20. In May, Mr. Adams announced his decision to resign from the Agency, effective as of 1 June 1973.

The 1972 Complaints

21. On 4 December 1972 Mr. Adams called at the Office of the Inspector General to relate his intention to file two new charges concerning the management of intelligence research on the war in Southeast Asia. The first charge involved the alleged fabrication of order of battle statistics by officers of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The second charge involved the alleged fabrication of statistics on enemy logistics and order of battle by the Associate Deputy Director for Intelligence (ADDI), CIA. Mr. Adams was instructed to state his complaints in writing.

22. Mr. Adams' charges against MACV were filed with the Inspector General in a memorandum dated 8 December 1972. This memorandum was forwarded to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, US Army, for whatever action he considered appropriate. Mr. Adams was informed in January 1973 by the Department of the Army that it had no authority to conduct investigations of Joint Headquarters such as MACV. He was also informed that the controversy about which he was complaining had been the subject of previous investigations by appropriate authorities.

23. During the interval between January 1973 and his resignation in June 1973, Mr. Adams failed to put his charges against the ADDI in writing and submit them. At the time of his oral complaint, the Office of the Inspector General was conducting a routine inspection of the Office of Economic Research, the office with responsibility for the matters on which statistics allegedly had been fabricated. In the course of that inspection, representatives of the Inspector General interviewed officers working on these matters. The results of these interviews emphasized the complexity of the subject, in terms of the hard evidence available and the analytical problems involved, rather than pointing to fabrication of statistics. In the absence of information supporting Mr. Adams' oral statement, and because of his failure to formalize his charges in writing, the Inspector General did not pursue the matter further.

The 1967 Saigon Order of Battle Conference

During the spring and summer of 1967 the Intelligence Community was tasked to produce a special national intelligence estimate, SNIE 14. 3/67, Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam. During the preparation of this SNIE, the Intelligence Community was unable to reach agreement on the order of battle figures and estimates of communist forces in South Vietnam. Representatives of both MACV and CINCPAC were invited to the drafting sessions to present their position, but after extended debate it was apparent that agreement could not be reached.

Therefore, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Wheeler, and the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Helms, agreed to convene a conference in Saigon in the hope that a consensus judgment on these numbers and estimates could be reached. The Washington team which was headed by Mr. George Carver, the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, included Sam Adams and two other analysts from the Directorate of Intelligence in CIA and two analysts from the Defense Intelligence Agency.

The attached table presents the quantitative data reflecting the positions of MACV and the Washington drafters of the SNIE regarding the organized groups judged to constitute the enemy threat in South Vietnam. It also shows the final agreement that was reached at the conference. It should be noted that for those categories making up the VC/NVA Military Force (Main and Local force, Administrative Service troops, and Guerrillas), the final agreed figures and those used in the published draft of SNIE 14. 3/67 were within the range of the figures used by the Washington community in its August draft of the SNIE. The agreed figures also reflected an acceptance by MACV of a range significantly higher than the estimate it had submitted at the conference.

The two most contentious categories were Administrative Services (support) troops and the category of the Irregular Forces. In each instance neither party to the conference was able to convince the other of the validity of its case.

Regarding the Administrative Services category, it was agreed that the quantification--35,000 to 40,000--required textual qualification. Thus, the printed SNIE acknowledged explicitly that we lacked confidence in the total size of this category at any given time but that it was "at least 35,000 to 40,000" (exclusive of any such units located outside South Vietnam even though they may have been supporting forces in the DMZ and western highlands). In addition, the estimate pointed out that almost anyone under VC control could be impressed into service to perform the administrative service functions.

The most contentious issue at this conference was whether or not the category of Irregulars should or could be quantified. MACV felt quite strongly that these forces did not constitute part of the military threat and that there was not sufficient knowledge to quantify them. The Washington view was that while these forces did not constitute part of the combat threat they certainly were an integral element of the entire organized enemy effort with which the United States Government was trying to cope and, therefore, should be included in any assessment of enemy capabilities.

The conference decision not to quantify the Irregular Forces in the SNIE reflected a general agreement that our information on these forces was such that we could not estimate their size with any high degree of confidence. In order to make sure, however, that the recipients of the SNIE understood that these forces were a substantial factor in Vietnam, it was agreed that they would be described textually, in terms of the types of people included in the Irregulars category and their functions and responsibilities. Furthermore, the SNIE stated that in early 1966 the aggregate size of the self-defense force could have been on the order of 150,000. Although allowing for some attrition of these forces, the language of the SNIE made it quite clear that they still constituted a substantial element in the communist effort.

*i.e., the "order of battle", narrowly defined*

Finally, the SNIE went to some length to make sure that its readers did not focus solely on the numbers assigned to the communist military force. The SNIE pointed out that organized military force constituted but one component of the total communist organization. It noted, further, that any comprehensive judgment of communist capabilities in South Vietnam must consider the effectiveness of all the elements comprising that organization which, in its total size, would be considerably greater than the numbers ascribed to the military forces alone.

As one observer pointed out, the debate over these numbers produced more heat than light. The fundamental problem was the lack of definitive data which led to disagreements about numbers based on different methodologies and concepts. The results of the conference were certainly not fully acceptable to any party. But the differing views were fully aired and were made widely known to all concerned with developments in Indochina. In addition the need for better data spurred the various components of the Intelligence Community to mount new efforts for collection and the additional research and analysis necessary to narrow the range of uncertainty and improve the Community's confidence in its estimates of communist strength in South Vietnam.

Attachment

The 1967 Saigon Order of Battle Conference

Estimated Strength of Communist Forces in South Vietnam

<u>Category</u>	<u>August Draft SNIE 14.3/67</u>	<u>MACV</u>	<u>Conference Agreement</u>	<u>Final SNIE 14.3/67</u>
<u>VC/NVA Military Force</u>				
Main and Local Forces	121,000	119,000	119,000	118,000
Administrative Services (Support)	40 - 60,000	29,000	35 - 40,000*	35 - 40,000*
Guerrillas	<u>60 - 100,000</u>	<u>65,000</u>	<u>70 - 90,000</u>	<u>70 - 90,000</u>
<u>Sub-Total</u>	221 - 281,000	213,000	224 - 249,000	223 - 248,000
<u>Other Organizations</u>				
Political Cadre	90,000	85,000	75 - 85,000	75 - 85,000
Irregulars (Self-Defense Forces ) (Secret Self-Defense Forces ) (Assault Youth )	120,000	--	No Quantification*	No Quantification*
<b>TOTAL</b>	431,000 - 491,000	298,000	299,000 - 334,000	298,000 - 333,000

\* To be qualified in the text of SNIE 14.3/67