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THE IMPACT OF REDUCTIONS OF U.S. FORCES ON  
INTELLIGENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Problem

1. A subject of considerable concern and discussion within the Agency for the past two years has been the probable impact of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam on the community's intelligence collection and analysis capabilities. Numerous efforts have been made to encourage our military colleagues to focus on this critical problem area early in the game so that orderly and systematic steps would be in train to insure that priority intelligence needs would be met as the inevitable drawdown progressed. The matter has been the subject of extensive debate and soul searching on the intelligence side, both here and in the field by military and civilian components alike, but without satisfactory resolution. While the intelligence components have been debating, the drawdown of theater assets has been proceeding at a merry pace dictated by politically instructed logisticians. Attempts, over time, to determine the exact degree of degradation of intelligence activities have gone for naught since the pace and magnitude of withdrawal has been known only to a few, which on occasion included the operational side of the military house.

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The Need for Intelligence Continues

2. As the U.S. presence in Vietnam has dwindled, the quality and quantity of U.S. intelligence <sup>data</sup> has, perforce, deteriorated. If current asset drawdown schedules are followed, this deterioration will inevitably continue. While assets have been declining, however, there has been no matching reduction in the type and volume of information our top level customers expect the intelligence community to be able to provide. This is eminently clear from the types of questions asked and the papers requested by the White House on a whole host of significant subjects pertaining to the Indochina War. Our top level requestors and consumers are thus heading for a rude shock, if we do not give clear warning that further degradations are coming. The collectors -- not the asset trimmers -- will almost certainly be the ones blamed for any such shock, even though the White House has already been alerted to these problems. White House concern has been reflected in pointed queries on the impact of U.S. withdrawal on intelligence made to our [REDACTED] 25X1  
General Haig and Mr. Odeen during their Vietnam visits in April and again in July. 25X1

Views from Near and Far

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