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MEMORANDUM

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

December 29, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

*HK*

SUBJECT: VC/NVA Personnel Strength in the Kompong Cham Area

*Maybe amount is from intel one failed to find*

An ARVN officer on the MR III staff, which is commanding the current ARVN operation near Kompong Cham, recently told [redacted] that the major VC/NVA units in the area are increasingly short of men. The MR III staff estimates that the VC/NVA regiments in the area average about 700 fighting men plus some support and specialist elements. VC/NVA company strengths averaged about 65 men in September, but now average just over 50. Replacements are on the way from North Vietnam and should reach these units in January, but they will not be effectively integrated by the time the ARVN launches its dry season offensive.

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On the other hand, munitions and supplies appear to be available to the VC/NVA units in the Kompong Cham area. In a captured document dated December 14, the commander of the 272nd VC Regiment requested 1,000 rounds of 82-mm. mortar ammunition. From the wording of the document, the MR III staff judges that the commander expected this large requisition to be filled without difficulty.

Comment. Our intelligence on the strengths of Communist units in Cambodia is thin, and we can not confirm the manpower information in this report from other sources. Nevertheless, it is quite credible. During the past several months, the number of fresh North Vietnamese replacements available to COSVN has been relatively low, but the VC/NVA regiments in eastern Cambodia have been operating fairly

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steadily. As this report points out, COSVN will begin receiving a larger number of replacements in January and it seems clear that many of them will be needed to replace losses already sustained in Cambodia. The seemingly ready availability of ammunition is something of a puzzler, but it is conceivable that the reduced level of operations which preceded the current step-up permitted the enemy to build up some ammunition reserves.

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