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CG III BMAF in, NARS, Date 3-30-84  
SA IV CORPS

~~SECRET NOFORN~~ 26643 FOR ADM SHARP, INFO GEN WHEELER, LTG ROSSON, LTG WEYAND, LTG CUSHMAN, BG DESOBRY FROM GEN WESTMORELAND  
Subj: COMUSMACV Monthly Assessment (U)

1. (U) This is the first in a series of assessments of the situation here in Vietnam which I propose to send monthly. The assessment for the month of July is broken out into the four CTZ's from North to South to give you what I hope is a better feel for what is happening here.

(I CTZ)

2. (C) My primary objective in the I CTZ during the month of July was to deny entry of NVA units into SVN and to destroy as much of the enemy's force, including artillery, as possible. This was accomplished. We destroyed enemy forces and logistical installations in base areas 116 and 122 and established a fire support base for the interdiction of the A SHAU Valley by 175mm guns. Efforts to establish and improve the strong point obstacle system along the DMZ were continued while conducting search and destroy operations in and south of the

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W. C. Westmoreland  
TYPED NAME AND TITLE  
W. C. WESTMORELAND  
General, USA, COMUSMACV

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AMZ. To fulfill these objectives, ten major ground operations were conducted, four major operations were continued, and five amphibious operations were conducted. In addition, vital base areas were defended and patrols, numerous ambushes, and small unit actions were carried out. All objectives were fulfilled except a sweep of base area 114 and prevention of the enemy 122mm rocket attack on DA NANG Airbase.

3. (C) a. Progress in I CTZ is best indicated by the heavy enemy losses; a confirmed 3,877 enemy killed, 2,062 weapons captured. The number of enemy killed by ARVN was the second highest level of the year; 1,206 by body count. In two major contacts during the period, two enemy battalions, the 800th and 808th, were rendered ineffective. Large caches of enemy supplies were captured as a result of FVMAF and ARVN operations, including one enemy sea-going trawler containing sufficient weapons and munitions to support three VC battalions. Five enemy battalions in lower QUANG TRI/THUA THIEN suffered severe losses in July; and are having recruitment problems and are believed to be considerably under strength. The majority of the PW's have identified themselves as infiltrators from NVN rather than local recruits. Interrogation of PW's and returnees taken south of Route 9 reveal a definite shortage of food and medical supplies. To add to their problems, we captured, evacuated, or destroyed 135 tons of rice last month. From 2 to 14 July, seven Marine battalions in Operation BUFFALO were employed to counter the enemy threat from

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the DMZ. Significant in this engagement was the enemy's use of large quantities of mortar/artillery/rocket fire. (1,393 mortar rounds, 1,455 artillery rounds, and 178 rocket rounds). Cumulative results for this operation included 159 US killed and 885 US wounded. The enemy suffered 1,281 killed.

b. ARVN units conducted 13 large operations and 5,494 small operations. Of the large operations, six were combined and four were heliborne. These operations, in all five provinces, resulted in 759 VC/NVA killed, 270 enemy weapons captured. ARVN losses were 64 killed and 254 wounded. The overall morale and fighting spirit of I Corps units is good. The conflict is being carried to the enemy, especially in the 1st Division Tactical Area (DTA). ARVN units have been able to maintain a favorable kill and weapons captured versus weapons lost ratio; however, ARVN contacts with the enemy are not decisive since total destruction of the enemy units is not achieved. Accordingly, over a period of time the enemy is able to reconstitute and rebuild.

c. On 10 July the remaining closed section of National Route # 1 from MO DUC to II CTZ boundary was opened thus permitting commercial and military vehicles to traverse the entire 387 kilometers from the DMZ to II CTZ boundary. This is the first time this highway has been opened for this distance since 1965. Moderate progress continues on the upgrading of both route # 1 and # 9. During July, 540 feet of new bridging were completed while 1,350 feet were repaired and upgraded. During July, 132 kilo-

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meters of highway were repaired which facilitates the movement of military and civil traffic. In addition to road improvements emphasis is continuing on expanding and improving air transport. At present there are 21 airfields open to C-7A aircraft, 17 to C-123's and 10 to C-130's.

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d. RD and civic action made progress but remained behind schedule. There were 89 new life hamlets and 40 consolidated hamlets undergoing construction in the I CTZ during July. Fourteen ARVN battalions, one RF battalion, twenty-seven RF companies and 182 PF platoons are presently in direct support of the CTZ RD program. VC incidents and attacks on RD remained at the June level but friendly casualties were half the average of the last quarter. In areas where military operations have been conducted, higher morale and increased effectiveness are apparent.

4. (C) The elements of three enemy divisions along the DMZ continued to make incursions south of the DMZ. The enemy maintains an estimated 45 maneuver battalions of NVA, main force and local force VC in I CTZ. During July, the enemy increased his use of mortar, artillery and rockets against friendly forces, firing a total of 6,965 rounds as compared to 4,009 rounds fired during June. Two thirds of the enemy artillery was fired in northeastern QUANG TRI Province. In spite of detailed planning and aggressive patrolling in the previously established rocket belt around the DA NANG airfield complex, the enemy successfully infiltrated and fired the longer range 122mm rocket against the

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airfield, causing a significant loss of personnel, aircraft, and damage to facilities. Enemy efforts, except in the DMZ, have been devoted primarily to unconventional warfare avoiding significant action whenever possible. Along the DMZ/BEN HAI River front, confrontation is characterized by exchanges of artillery fire and sporadic ground fighting which is intense and usually of short duration. The enemy has concentrated his effort in populated areas with emphasis on those actions which, if successful, have a potentially high propaganda value. One such attack involved the partial destruction of a large ARVN convoy; another, the seizure and opening of the HOI AN provincial jail; and a third was the rocket attack on DA NANG. The enemy buildup north of the DMZ

ing the latter part of June and early July caused me to concentrate large forces in this area to counter the threat. Throughout July the NVA continued to maintain pressure all along the northern I CTZ border.

(II CTZ)

5. (C) The objective in II CTZ was to prevent enemy infiltration into the CTZ, destroy the base areas of enemy regular forces, open lines of communication, and expand security of the population. Seventeen of the twenty-three MACV designated enemy base areas were penetrated, resulting in 54 enemy killed, 16 prisoners and 1,500 tons of rice captured or destroyed. Penetration of these areas forced the VC and NVA to keep on the move, to commit a significant portion of their military forces to food

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production, and for the movement of supplies.

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6. (C) a. In the II CTZ steady though not dramatic progress is discernable in virtually every segment of our endeavor. ARVN forces in up to four battalion strength worked in close harmony with the US units involved in Operation GREELEY in the KON-TUM-DAK TO area. Employing a force of four brigades, operations FRANCIS MARION and GREELEY frustrated enemy intentions through constant search and destroy actions. For the month of July the cost of continued conflict remained unfavorable to the enemy; 1,536 killed compared with 272 friendly losses. This assumes even greater significance when one considers that the enemy is encountering increasing difficulty in recruiting within II CTZ. His will to fight appears to be waning gradually as witnessed by the loss of 363 PW's and 107 crew served weapons for the period. In the coastal provinces, resupply by the enemy to his beleaguered formations is tenuous over extended and insecure LOC's. His condition there is worsened by systematic destruction of his bases which has resulted in reduced food and supply stockages. PW's from the 3d and 5th NVA divisions were unanimous in stating that food is scarce, sickness a problem, and morale is low.

b. An increase in confidence and aggressiveness of ARVN units, plus improvement in their effectiveness is noted. During July, ARVN units conducted 30 airmobile operations which lifted 10,163 troops. This is an increase of 3,605 over the then all time high of 6,558 troops involved in airmobile operations during

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the preceding month. For July, GVN forces devoted 575 battalion days to search and destroy operations and 275 to security operations. Whereas the latter decreased approximately 50 percent compared to June, search and destroy operations increased approximately 70 percent.

c. The 9th ROK and Capital ROK Infantry Divisions in PHU YEN Province enjoyed notable success in terms of large personnel and equipment losses inflicted primarily on the NVA 95th Regiment, and on thwarting accomplishment of enemy objectives in PHU YEN Province. During August, ROK forces will expand their coast-land security operations by seeking out elements of the NVA 18th regiment in KHANH HOA Province. The latter unit has manifested no inclination to change its thirteen month old objective of avoiding combat. It has received no reinforcements since arrival in SVN and has a high rate of malaria.

d. During July continued improvement in opening of roads has permitted increased use of land LOC's to support military operations and the civilian economy. At present, 1,615 km (89.8 percent) of the major roads are in a green or amber condition. Route 1 is open from PHAN RANG north into QUANG NGAI Province. Route 19 is open from QUI NHON west to the CAMBODIAN border, with 10 miles west from QUI NHON having been paved in July. Route 14 is open from DAK TO south to the III CTZ boundary. Route 21 is open from BAN ME THUOT east to NINH HOA. Route 20 is open from the III CTZ boundary to DALAT, and Route 11 from DALAT to PHAN

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RANG. In July, a C-130 airfield with steel surface at PHU HIEP was opened, providing 41 C-130 airfields in the CTZ. A new C-123 airfield was opened in VINH TANH. A total of 79 fields are now open to C-7A's, 60 to C-123's and 41 to C-130's in II CTZ.

e. RD is progressing with security improved to some degree. However, VC attacks on RD teams is a continuing threat as evidenced by 26 VC armed attacks during July. ARVN's operational competence is being engendered by increased emphasis on training. During July two ARVN battalions completed RD Support Training (RDST). Thus far, 24 of 30 battalions have received RDST with the six remaining battalions scheduled to complete their RDST by mid-September. In support of RD as of this date are 8 ARVN battalions, 123 RF companies, and 728 PF platoons.

7. (C) The enemy has been without a major victory in the CTZ during the past two years. He seeks to tie down a large force and inflict maximum casualties on RVNAF and FWMAF in the central highlands. His objectives include the destruction of the revolutionary development program, disruption of the September elections, and maintenance of a presence and influence in heavily populated areas. It appears the enemy hopes to draw major friendly forces away from the coastal areas of the II CTZ and redress the losses he has sustained in those areas. This strategy has been unsuccessful to date. In the coastal provinces of KHANH HOA and PHU YEN, the enemy, although continuing a defensive posture sab-

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ged roads, railways, and pipelines on a modest scale and conducted small unit attacks against RF/PF posts and RD cadre. His aim appears to be maintenance of the tactical integrity of his forces, while awaiting favorable opportunities to expand control over the population and resources in the rich lowland districts. In the western highlands the morale and overall condition of enemy units are good. This assessment stems from the fact that his sanctuary base areas in CAMBODIA and LAOS lie close to established supply routes. Food, medical supplies and ammunition are available in adequate quantities. NVA KIA's and PW's in KON TUM AND PLEIKU Provinces have been described by their captors as "well equipped, well fed, and in good physical condition".

(III CTZ)

8. (C) Our <sup>MONSOON</sup> objectives were to disrupt and defeat enemy offensive actions; harass and, if possible, destroy main force elements; maintain continuous pressure on Viet Cong regional and local force units; increase the tempo of the Revolutionary Development Program; neutralize enemy base areas; increase ARVN effectiveness and improve security within the national priority area. During July, those objectives were fulfilled.

9. (C) a. A review of events in the III CTZ supports the observation that it was a month of heartening progress both in terms of our success in attaining planned objectives, and the enemy's failure to attain his planned objectives. A notable example of the latter was seen in a COSVN order which assigned a number of missions for the 5th Battalion, MR IV, to accomplish

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ing July. None of the missions were accomplished. The Viet Cong Spring-Summer Campaign began 29 May and July was expected to be a period of maximum effort with the objectives of disrupting and discrediting the Revolutionary Development Program, overrunning and destroying GVN and allied posts, interdicting allied lines of communication and defeating allied offensive attacks. Their efforts to achieve significant results, including the two rocket attacks which caused relatively light damage, were unsuccessful. Positive progress is indicated in most areas of III CTZ. The cooperation and response accorded US advisors by senior III CTZ commanders is favorable; this together with the increased GVN attention to inadequate leadership has improved unit effectiveness. Returnees under the CHIEU HOI program were triple those of July 1966, indicating increased morale and control problems within Viet Cong ranks. Enemy losses for the month (KIA, PW, HOI CHANH) totalled 2,941. An increasing number of Viet Cong village and hamlet units are under strength. In July combined 199th Brigade and 5th Ranger Group operations in GIA DINH Province greatly restricted Viet Cong activity in areas immediately adjacent to SAIGON. No Viet Cong units larger than squad size moved in the area. The CO, VC 5th Battalion, MR IV requested permission from his superiors to move from NHA BE District because allied activity made it hazardous for Viet Cong units there.

b. ARVN units are continuing to improve in all areas. Improvement in overall combat effectiveness was highlighted by several commendable Vietnamese actions: The ARVN 2d Battalion, 9th

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antry at TAN HUNG; by the ARVN 2d and 3d Battalions, 46th Infantry and the 3d Marine Battalion in Operation CORONADO; by the 613th Regional Force Company at BUONG SA on Route 2; by the 2d and 3d Marine Battalions in Operation PADDINGTON; and by the 3d and 4th Marine Battalions in Operation CORONADO II. Viet Cong base areas 303, Southern 1/3 of 355, Southern 2/3 of 356, Southwestern 2/3 of 357, 358, 365, 369 and 370 were neutralized to the extent that they are no longer enemy sanctuaries and can be entered by allied units in company size strength. Last month, ARVN troop behavior and relationships with the civilian community improved significantly. There were four programs initiated to improve RF/PF, ARVN and RD team effectiveness: Five intelligence centers were established at district level to attack Viet Cong infrastructure; a program for each brigade to train one ARVN battalion every eight weeks was begun with approval of CG, III CTZ; ten US mobile advisory teams were formed to advise RF and PF units; and two experimental RD augmentation teams were placed on site.

c. The principal land routes 1 and 22 (GIA RAY to TAY NINH), 1A, 4, 5, 13 (SAIGON to LOC NINH), 15 and 20 remained open with minor interruptions. Routes 1 and 4 were used frequently at night by military convoys. Jungle clearing of the ONG DONG jungle and Route 20 was 50 percent completed and Viet Cong tax collection on Route 20 in III CTZ was neutralized. Three additional RF/PF posts were constructed on this route. In the area of air transport there are 43 airfields open to C-7A aircraft, 34 to C-123's and 27 to C-130's.

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d. RD activities in III CTZ for the month of July included the completion of six New Life Hamlets bringing the total of completed Hamlets to 17 with 49 more under construction. Throughout III CTZ there are at present 17 ARVN battalions, 75 RF companies and 245 PF platoons supporting RD activities either directly or indirectly.

10. (C) The enemy, particularly the VC, increased their activity in the populated area West of the HO BO Woods, carried out twenty-one assassinations and fifty-one attacks against police or RF/PF posts and launched two attacks by fire using 122mm rockets against US base camps at PHUOC VINH and PHU LOI. They continued interdiction of the route between SONG BE and BU DOP.

(IV CTZ)

11. (C) Major unit operations within the IV CTZ continue to be orientated to ~~destroy~~ the destruction of VC main and provincial units and principal bases. The main battle seems to be concentrating in the key provinces of DINH TUONG, VINH LONG, VINH BINH and PHONG DINH. This has been brought about by ARVN concentration on highway 4, the MANG THIT - NICHOLAI area, and the RD effort in PHONG DINH along the BASE. The ARVN campaign plan and major RD efforts and Viet Cong interests appear to be on a collision course which should lead to more decisive events both military and RD in the future.

12. <sup>(C)</sup>a. The general situation in the IV CTZ remained favorable during July. For the most part, the Viet Cong were dispersed and attempted to avoid contact. There were 130 major unit operations of battalion or larger size during July. There were eight operations conducted in seven base areas. Operations such as CUU LONG 63/8D

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i. The BINH DAI base in KIEN HOA Province have reduced the coastal areas of KIEN HOA and VINH BINH to transient storage points. Defoliation of coastal bases continues to expose previously undetected enemy installations and allows increased interdiction by air and naval gunfire. There were a total of 54,292 small unit operations in July which resulted in 166 contacts. Although the number of small unit operations have continued to increase, their effectiveness remains difficult to judge because many are not observed by US advisory elements. Although the kill ratio was a favorable 4.9 to 1, the total number of Viet Cong killed, 641, is the low monthly total for 1967. The total number of Viet Cong initiated incidents continued to drop with 541 incidents recorded for the month of July compared to 619 in June. Although there has been steady progress, and RD goals are about to be achieved, it can be expected that the Viet Cong will make a major effort to preclude such actions in the future. Another example of progress occurred in CHAU DOC on 10 July. 372 irregular troops, who had previously been sympathetic to the VC cause, turned themselves in to GVN officials under the provision that they be organized into RF forces. This incident points out the increased esteem being gained by GVN forces within the IV CTZ.

b. The performance of ARVN continues to improve. The 7th ARVN Division is just completing an eight day operation in DINH TUONG, one of the longest sustained ARVN operations in the past two years. This division demonstrated a higher degree of flexibility than in the past in reacting to intelligence. The 9th ARVN Division over the past three months has shown a much greater desire to operate

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t. in the past. As a result of the 9th ARVN Division's activity the RD effort has been able to make progress. The 21st ARVN Division has shaken the lethargy resulting from its initial participation in the RD program, has reorganized, and is now in a position to produce results. ARVN senior commanders seem to be more confident and optimistic than in the past. This is evident in their official estimates and in their desire to operate more often.

c. The status of major highways in the IV CTZ remained constant during July. The security status of the MANG THIT River was upgraded from red to amber due to GVN efforts to secure the area and open the MANG THIT River - NICOLAI Canal complex to commercial traffic. Other major waterways of the ME KONG Delta remained unchanged during July. Air transport is supported by 31 airfields open to C-119 aircraft, 20 to C-123's and 13 to C-130's.

d. RD activities in IV CTZ are supported directly or indirectly by 15 ARVN battalions, 52 RF companies and 87 PF platoons. The VC have placed emphasis on disrupting the GVN RD and pacification program since it denies them freedom of movement and population control. Although there has been no significant change in the progress of RD during July the reaction of the VC in IV CTZ against the program is evidence of its effect on VC control in the area.

(C)  
13. In KIEN HOA Province, the Viet Cong remained strong and this province is a source of manpower and supplies. The 516th Provincial Mobile Battalion remains strong and virtually unharmed. Until operations such as CORONADO V are conducted in KIEN HOA, this province will continue to serve as a Viet Cong source of strength.

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estimate is that the position of the Viet Cong in the IV CTZ continues to deteriorate. All signs indicate that the combat strength of the VC combat elements continues to decrease, recruiting has been increasingly difficult, and that the major VC elements have had to disperse and avoid contact.

## (SUMMARY)

14. (S) a. The enemy appears to be continuing his strategy of (1) posing threats with main forces in an effort to draw friendly military strength from the critical populated areas, (2) seeking to cause increased attrition rates on friendly military forces while avoiding major contact, (3) enticing friendly forces into a posture where he can achieve a major tactical victory to enhance his political posture, and (4) attacking the GVN pacification program with particular emphasis on the RD Cadre teams in order to destroy the GVN influence in the countryside. The credibility of the threat in the DMZ and Central Highlands continues to require sizeable containment forces. Through the use of economy of force measures and superior mobility we have been able to provide security in the critical population centers at an acceptable level. The maintenance of constant pressure on the enemy in these populated areas, especially the coastal lowlands, has caused growing weakness in the enemy military structure and his coercive power declines popular resistance to his

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creasing demands for support is rising. However, in the contested areas the population as a whole continues to adopt a wait and see attitude, providing willing support to neither side. The enemy reaction to friendly success in thwarting his strategy has been an increased use of attacks by fire. The enemy employment of 140mm and 122mm rockets continues to provide the greatest threat to critical installations; however, increased emphasis on offensively oriented security operations and on locating rocket units and their supply routes is expected to reduce the risk.

b. The GVN pacification program for 1967 is now gaining momentum, its implementation having been quite slow until after Tet. In July, despite increased VC emphasis on disrupting the work of the RD Cadre teams, several important gains were made. Several of the RD teams had completed their work in first semester hamlets and had begun movement to their second semester areas. Four additional ARVN battalions had been assigned to direct support of RD and all of them had a rating of satisfactory in RD training. MACV action program to give increased thrust to pacification support was completed and disseminated to the field. An organization was formed to integrate and manage a combined US and GVN attack on the VC infrastructure.

c. In summary, our past month's operations reflect continuous and steady progress toward accomplishment of our overall objectives in SVN. GP-4.

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