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INFORMATION

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Tuesday, May 7, 1968 -- 6:00 p.m.

Mr. President:

At Tab A is an interesting MACV assessment of the proportion of North Vietnamese strength in the South: in maneuver and combat support units over 75%.

At Tab B is a rather remarkable table that I had Art McCafferty assemble from documents, diaries, and prisoners of war. It shows the decline in unit strength for a number of enemy formations on which we had firm evidence. To my surprise, it turned out we had evidence on 44% of the North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam.

In March they were 52% under strength. If we project this to all North Vietnamese fighting in the South, it implies that they had lost by March about 44,000 men -- this aside from VC main force losses, guerrillas, etc. Losses of this kind would explain why MACV feels that "the majority of groups are needed and seem to be destined for service as replacements."

W. W. Rostow

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By ies, NARS, Date 6-25-84

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May 6, 1968

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TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM MACV

SUBJECT: MACV J-2 Assessment of Current Infiltration

Current infiltration will accelerate a long term trend in which the balance of enemy forces in South Vietnam are shifting from Viet Cong to North Vietnamese Army. In May of 1965, the North Vietnamese Army contributed 4 percent of enemy in-country strength -- now they are 33 percent; and in maneuver and combat support units alone comprise over 75 percent.

North Vietnamese Army personnel predominate in many units otherwise identified as Viet Cong. For example, Viet Cong rallier Colonel Dan stated the Viet Cong 9th Division was 80 percent North Vietnamese, which closely matches our own estimate of NVA/VC ratio for that unit.

While the expansion of the number of North Vietnamese Army fighting troops in South Vietnam is manifest, it does not seem to represent a major expansion of the force structure. While there are undoubtedly a few units engaged in the current infiltration, the majority of groups are needed and seem to be destined for service as replacements. The only recent North Vietnamese Army elements to appear are the 209th (320th) Regiment in the B-3 Front, the 27th Independent Regiment in I Corps, and a few Battalions.

We believe that what might appear as an expansion of North Vietnamese Army forces in South Vietnam actually reflects the enemy's need to draw more replacements from the north in compensation for decreased ability to recruit in South Vietnam.

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