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Pres file

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Monday, July 31, 1967 -- 1:55 p.m.

Mr. President:

Attached is a recent Defense staff analysis of the strength of Viet Cong irregulars, including guerrilla forces but not main force Viet Cong units. It is based on population control estimates.

It yields a curve which differs from the official MACV figures. The MACV figures show a levelling-off since the third quarter of 1966, but not this kind of decline.

I think that these new curves make better sense because:

- the Viet Cong have less population under their control;
- the degree of Viet Cong control of population has been weakened;
- and there are widespread and continuing reports of Viet Cong recruitment and manpower difficulties.

We have been making our own estimates of Viet Cong strength, based on casualty statistics and recruitment estimates, rather than on population control. They show a striking correlation with these new independent estimates from Defense. "A" marks the high side and "B" the low side of the June 1967 strengths derived from our in-house estimates.

The point is: some statistical estimates now reinforce the non-statistical reports from all over South Viet Nam that the Viet Cong are not maintaining either the strength or the quality of their guerrilla units.

W. W. Rostow

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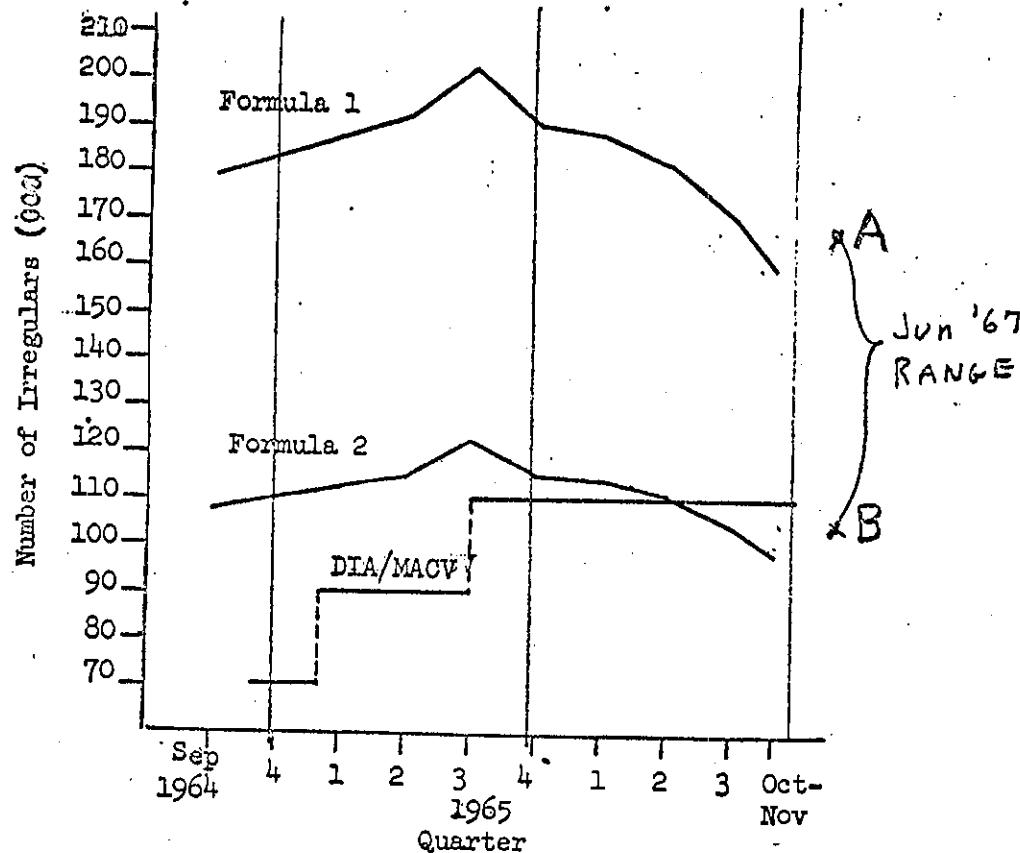
ESTIMATING VC IRREGULAR STRENGTH

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Viet Cong irregular forces are organized into guerrilla, self-defense, and secret self-defense elements subordinate to village and hamlet Viet Cong organizations. Guerrillas are full-time forces organized into squads and platoons which do not always stay in their home village or hamlet. Typical missions for guerrillas are collection of taxes, propaganda, protection of village party committees, and terror and sabotage activities. The self-defense force is a para-military structure responsible for the defense of hamlet and village in areas controlled by the VC. These forces do not leave their home area, and they perform their duties on a part-time basis. Self-defense forces conduct propaganda, construct fortifications, and defend home areas. The secret self-defense force is the clandestine VC organization which performs the same general functions in GVN-controlled villages and hamlets as do the self-defense forces in VC controlled areas. Their operations include intelligence collection as well as sabotage and propaganda.

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The nature of the irregular force structure does not lend itself to the more precise measurements which can be made for conventionally organized military forces based upon identifications, command structure, and unit historical data. Even the captured Viet Cong records that are available for some provinces are obviously "estimates" rather than statistical tabulations of strengths for specifically identified irregular platoons and squads. Lacking precise accounting data, it is necessary to use an estimate to ascertain the overall strength of the VC irregular forces throughout SVN. These estimates consider the type of VC infrastructure, the density of population, scale of enemy military activity, and extent of VC control in the various districts, villages and hamlets comprising each province.

MACV's present estimates of the strength of the VC irregulars are derived from estimates provided by GVN province chiefs. During the past few months MACV, in coordination with GVN and other US agencies, has laid groundwork to obtain a more valid estimate of irregular strength by means of a combined collection program. Preliminary indications point to an increase in the number of irregulars to be carried in the order of battle. This will not, however, indicate that the actual irregular strength has increased, but rather that MACV has refined its knowledge of it. The new strength figures will be retroactively adjusted. The present MACV order of battle carries approximately 113,000 irregulars. DIA reports about 100,000 to 120,000 irregulars in SVN and the mean, 110,000, is frequently used for computations. A tabulation of irregular strength since the first quarter of 1965 (as carried by DIA) is shown in Table 1. The tabulated strengths suggest that either the VC irregular forces have remained almost constant or that the estimates have been revised infrequently.

TABLE 1

VC IRREGULAR STRENGTHS - DIA REPORTS  
(Thousands of Personnel by Quarters)

	1965				1966			
	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>
VC Irregulars	90	90	110	110	110	110	110	110

Source: Table 101, OSD SEA Statistical Summary

This article presents two different sets of irregular strength estimates derived from applying two formulas to population control data. The resulting data may shed some light on possible trends in the VC irregular force strength.

Formula #1

The basis for Formula #1 was reportedly developed by the intelligence staff of the RVN Joint General Staff from VC planning factors (RVN document Ministry of Defense, J-2 High Command, RVNAF #2697/TTL/2/9.) The formula relies primarily on population control as a basis for estimating VC irregular strength.

~~SECRET~~TABLE 2REPORTED VC PLANNING FACTORS FOR  
IRREGULAR FORCE STRENGTHS

	<u>VC Controlled Area</u>	<u>Disputed Area (Undergoing Clearing or Securing)</u>	<u>RVN Controlled Areas (Secured)</u>
Guerrillas	1 platoon (30-40) per 1000 VC population (35/1000 VC controlled)	1 Squad (10-12) per 1000 VC population (11/100 VC controlled)	None
Self- Defense	1 platoon (30-40) per village <sup>a/</sup> (8.75/1000 VC controlled)	1 Squad per village <sup>a/</sup> (2.75/1000 VC controlled)	None
Secret Self-Defense	30 per village <sup>a/b/</sup> (7.5/1000 VC controlled)	15 per village <sup>a/</sup> (3.75/1000 VC controlled)	1-3 three-man crews per village <sup>a/</sup> (1.5/1000 VC controlled)
Total Irregulars per 1000 VC controlled population	51.25	17.5	1.5

a/ Average village population of 4000 is assumed.

b/ Planning factor for Secret Self Defense (SSD) in VC controlled areas appears to be at variance with definition furnished by MACV, which indicates that SSD operates only in GVN areas.

TABLE 3REFINED FACTORS - FORMULA #1

	<u>VC Controlled</u>	<u>Undergoing Clearing</u>	<u>Undergoing Securing</u>	<u>Secured</u>
Irregulars/1000 VC Controlled (times)	51.25	17.5	17.5	1.5
% VC Control (gives)	90%	60%	30%	10%
Irregulars/1000 Total Population	46.1	10.5	5.3	.2

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~~SECRET~~TABLE 4VC IRREGULAR STRENGTH - FROM FORMULA #1  
(000)

		1965								
1964	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	Oct-	
Sep	Qtr	Nov								
VC Irregulars	179.8	183.8	187.9	192.2	203.8	191.0	189.2	182.5	171.9	160.4

Table 2 shows the presumed VC planning factors upon which Formula #1 is based. For the purpose of relating the self-defense and secret self-defense of factors to MACV/GVN population control data, we have assumed an average village population of 4000. This yields the gross planning factors shown in parentheses for the two groups.

To calculate irregular force strength the gross factors in Table 2 are refined in Table 3 for application against the various categories of population control data reported in the monthly MACV Report of Population and Area Control. Application of the refined factors ("irregulars per 1000 total population") developed in Table 3 to the MACV population control data yields the VC irregular strength estimates shown in Table 4 and Graph #1. For example, Table 2 indicates that 17.5 irregulars are planned for each 1000 of VC controlled population located in areas which MACV reports in the undergoing clearing category. For purposes of Formula #1, we have assumed that 60 percent of the population reported in that category is under VC control; thus 60 percent of 17.5 yields a refined factor of 10.5 irregulars per total population undergoing clearing. Similar percentages of VC control have been assumed for the other categories, as shown in Table 3.

Rather than being stable, as suggested by the DIA statistics in Table 1, Formula 1 yields an increasing irregular strength which peaks at 204,000 in the 3rd quarter of 1965 and diminishes to 160,000 late in 1966. It is interesting to note that the estimate of 182,500 irregulars closely corresponds to a statement in a recently captured VC document which implies that VC irregular strength had declined to about 180,000 by mid-1966. The decline of irregular strength shown in Table 4 is primarily a function of the increasing amount of the population which reportedly came under GVN control during the period under consideration.

Any conclusions drawn from Formula #1 results in Table 4 should be tempered by the following considerations. First, the formula is based on supposed VC planning factors, but it is applied to MACV/GVN population control data and the VC probably do not view the population distribution in the same way as MACV. Second, uncontested areas have been ignored in arriving at the number of irregulars; however, the inclusion of these data would probably not change the results significantly.

~~SECRET~~Formula #2.

By abbreviating Formula #1 results are obtained which more closely approximate the DIA and MACV estimates. Formula #2 is developed from the same set of VC planning factors as Formula #1. This version assumes, however, that a platoon has only 30 persons and a squad 10. In addition, it only assumes that there is 1 platoon per 1000 population in VC controlled areas, a squad per 1000 population in disputed areas and 3-man cells in RVN controlled areas. This formula also ignores the uncontested areas and the same "% VC controlled" factors are applied. The Formula #2 factors are given in Table 5. Table 6 and Graph #1 show the results of applying Formula #2 to the MACV population control data. The trends suggested by these results are identical to those of Formula #1, but the magnitude of the numbers is very close to that of current DIA and MACV estimates. When Formula #2 and the MACV estimates are compared for May 1966 (the most recent revision of the MACV estimates) extremely good agreement is seen (112,760 for MACV and 112,045 for Formula 2.)

TABLE 5VC MILITIA STRENGTH - FORMULA #2

VC Controlled	Undergoing Clearing	Undergoing Securing	Secured
Irregulars/1000 VC Controlled (times)	30	10	10
% VC Control (gives)	90%	60%	30%
Irregulars/100 Total Population	27	6	3
			.9

TABLE 6VC IRREGULAR STRENGTH - FROM FORMULA #2

1964 Sep	1965				1966				Oct- Nov	
	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr		
VC Irregulars	107.8	110.3	112.9	115.7	123.0	116.0	115.1	111.2	105.2	98.7