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Tuesday, August 15, 1967
11:00 a.m.

Profile

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith General Larsen's account of progress made in II Corps (see attached map) during the period when he was the U. S. Corps commander.

Of the four corps areas, progress has been most marked in II Corps; but the performance there indicates what a combination of Vietnamese, U. S., and allied forces can achieve.

I believe that, with your approval, General Larsen will call on you towards the end of the month. He is now on leave.

W. W. R.

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(copy of General Larsen's memo) (11 August 1967)

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT: Informal Statistical Progress Report on II Corps Tactical Zone, Vietnam, from August 1965 to July 1967

1. This memorandum is submitted in response to your suggestion this morning that I list for you statistics which show progress in the II Corps area of Vietnam during the last two years.

2. II Corps area represents 46% of the land mass of Vietnam, with 2.9 million population (20% of the South Vietnam population).

3. In August 1965, nearly half the population of II Corps was under VC domination. In July 1967, 89% of the population was under military control.

4. In August 1965, about 70% of the rice growing area was under VC control. Today, 95% of the rice land is under GVN control. These same statistics apply generally to the salt bearing areas.

5. Two years ago, none of the important highways was used unless a major military effort was launched to open one up for a limited number of days for a specific purpose. Today, 90% (1650 kms) of the important roads are open (40% are in green condition needing no protection for vehicles, and 50% in amber condition needing minimal convoy protection, but receiving almost no enemy opposition). Highway #1 is green for about 350 miles. Only the lower 20% is red, and this strip is in driveable condition, needs only 48 hours notice for opening and can be protected by five regional force companies. It has not been opened because at present there is no requirement for its use and the troops can be better utilized elsewhere.

6. A specific example of road opening success is that of Highway #19, between Qui Nhon and Pleiku, about 100 miles long. In 1965, many persons in authority doubted that a division could be supported in Pleiku because of the long and vulnerable logistics supply route. In the 20 months that this highway has been kept open, we have lost only one US soldier to enemy action. The daily supply tonnage over this road is often 2000 tons. A surface fuel pipeline is now under construction over the entire route.

7. Two years ago, almost none of the railroad was in operation. Today, 53% of the railroad, or 365 kms, are repaired and in use.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.3

DA Memo. Jan. 5, 1988

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8. For the past 18 months, the incident rate in II Corps has been the lowest in Vietnam and currently is running at about 1/4 that of I Corps and 1/2 that of III Corps.

9. In 1966, 46% of all Hoi Chans in Vietnam (Viet Cong returnees) were in II Corps. Currently, it is running about 32% of the total, but II Corps continues to enjoy the greatest number of Hoi Chans in Vietnam.

10. In 1966, II Corps took 38% of all the prisoners of war and, so far, in 1967, it has contributed 42% of all PW's. The national percentage of North Vietnam Army PW's to Viet Cong PW's is 1%. In II Corps, 8.8% of the PW's are North Vietnam Army.

11. There are 64 airfields throughout II Corps. Their location makes it possible to support by air, if necessary, a major combat operation logically anywhere in this large segment of Vietnam.

12. In 1966, nearly half of all the enemy killed in action were accounted for in II Corps. During that year, all of the 11 North Vietnam army regiments in II Corps were attacked and were dealt heavy casualties. In the Highlands area, the North Vietnam army have lost about 7000 killed in action to about 800 Americans killed. No North Vietnam Army division or regiment has launched a successful operation in two years. The reverse has been true. Our forces have, in every instance, been able to catch the enemy main forces off balance and to attack them before they were ready. The North Vietnam Army can no longer adequately resupply their forces in the coastal areas, to include sufficient numbers of personnel replacements. The four North Vietnam Army regiments in the coastal areas are in poor condition, while the seven regiments in the highlands must return to safe haven areas to recoup for weeks, and very often months, between operations.

13. Our latest figures indicate that for every 1500 Viet Cong loss in II Corps, there are only 500 locally recruited replacements, and these are getting dangerously young. The remaining short fall must be made up by individual North Vietnam Army replacements. We do not believe that the North Vietnam Army are meeting their required personnel goals in II Corps. Evidence to support this, of course, is the fact that conditions in II Corps continue to get noticeably better each month.

14. There are two Vietnamese divisions in II Corps, plus one separate regiment. The 23d ARVN Infantry Division has only two regiments. Its zone is the southern half of II Corps and is larger than III Corps and nearly twice as large in area as I Corps. With the exception of occasional US and Korean operations in the area, this undersize division has kept its zone under control

by itself. There have been no crises in this area except around the southern town of Phan Thiet where one US battalion and two Vietnamese battalions are based indefinitely, and, together, in the past ten months have brought about 150,000 under Government of South Vietnam control.

15. The 22d ARVN Infantry Division has worked closely and continuously with the US 1st Air Cavalry Division for the past ten months and has contributed measurably to the outstanding successes in Binh Dinh Province. The recognizable improvement in the ARVN combat effort and leadership are encouraging to the US commanders who work with these units.

16. The South Korean divisions have contributed magnificently toward the pacification efforts in and around populated areas. They are a distinct asset in the war effort and they work closely and well with the US and ARVN commands.

17. The most successful National Priority Revolutionary Development area in Vietnam is in Binh Dinh where two years ago, practically the entire area was under Viet Cong control except for the city of Qui Nhon. This area now includes about 500,000 people.

18. The province which has shown the most improvement in two years is Phu Yen. The Viet Cong controlled 75% of the rice growing land and about 80% of the population in 1965. Now the Province is nearly completely under Government of South Vietnam control. A recent captured North Vietnam Army document admitted that, whereas two years ago they controlled 265,000 people, they now control 20,000.

19. In my judgment, the above statistics can be interpreted only one way -- that they show positive evidence of progress in II Corps. In all the populated areas there are now troops who are there to stay, to further ferret out the enemy, and to protect those liberated areas against the return of Viet Cong control. With the CORDS (Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support) offensive now getting underway, there should soon be even greater progress in Revolutionary Development support and in destroying the Viet Cong infrastructure. Though I cannot speak for the other Corps areas, I can say that today there is an air of refreshing optimism in the II Corps area.

STANLEY R. LARSEN
Lieutenant General, United States Army

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