

65

Tuesday, September 19, 1967
9:50 a.m.

MR. PRESIDENT:

Pres file

We are starting a file on VC manpower problems. The Situation Room team will work on it in quiet times. It will be systematic, by provinces. We shall check it against all statistical evidence, including the new village and hamlet rating scheme being installed.

But we shall send you items like this from time to time as well as more general evaluations when we assemble enough to make sense.

The manpower problem in the South is one of the four elements in the equation which will determine when the war ends. The other three are:

- the burden of bombing in the North;
- the political situation in Saigon;
- Hanoi's judgment of the political situation in the U. S.

W. W. R.

MEMORANDUM

654

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, September 18, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Viet Cong Manpower Difficulties as Reflected in Intelligence Reports and Captured Documents

The following are some excerpts from intelligence documents which indicate Viet Cong problems in recruitment throughout the country during the month of August. These reports come from captured documents, prisoners, Chieu Hoi and US and South Vietnamese intelligence sources. They are arranged by corps and province.

THIRD CORPS

Nau Nghia Province

Major problems confronting the Viet Cong in Hau Nghia Province in August were food and manpower shortages. The Viet Cong used methods ranging from public appeal to coercion in an effort to gain from the populace the economic support and recruits needed for Viet Cong military units.

Long An Province

The Viet Cong infrastructure was directed to concentrate on the problems of recruitment and low morale. Recruitment difficulties to be overcome included the general exodus of youth out of the Viet Cong-controlled rural areas into the cities, youth's fear of difficulties and danger, and the Viet Cong failure to follow up with help for those families whose sons leave home to join the Viet Cong.

To counter movement from Viet Cong-controlled to Government of Vietnam-controlled areas, the Viet Cong were to redistribute land confiscated from families who had moved out of Viet Cong-controlled into Government of Vietnam-controlled areas and to have people in Viet Cong-controlled areas encourage relatives serving the Government of Vietnam to return to the Viet Cong.

FOURTH CORPS

Recruiting continues to be a grave Viet Cong problem. There are difficulties in getting and retaining recruits, especially at lower levels. In An Gaing Province

the Viet Cong have concluded that defections are induced by the cadre's family. To counteract this, the Viet Cong An Giang Province Committee (Government of Vietnam An Giang and Chau Doc Provinces and Ha Tien District of Kien Giang Province) has ordered the District Committees to limit contact between cadres and their families. In Dinh Tuong Province, the Viet Cong are endeavoring to recruit young females to take jobs held by men in the rear services section so as to release more men for combat duty.

The Viet Cong are unable to stop the movement of people from Viet Cong-controlled areas to the Government of Vietnam-controlled territory. Those remaining under Viet Cong control are weary of the fighting and threats of air and artillery strikes.

Ba Xuyen Province

As was the case in July, recruiting continued to be the Viet Cong's number one problem. A recent Hoi Chanh/rallier from Guerrilla Company C-71 stated that his unit was understrength. Increased reaction both in air and on the ground by US and ARVN elements in Ba Xuyen is a strong contributing factor to the overall Viet Cong recruiting problem.

Kien Hoa Province

Captured letter stated that a meeting was held on August 8, 1967 (at Son Phu Village, Truc Giang District) attended by 28 Viet Cong cadres (subordinate to the Giong Trom District Committee). The following problems were discussed at the meeting:

1. The majority of the Viet Cong soldiers in Giong Trom District are tired of the length of the war.
2. They are afraid of air strikes, artillery and M113 armored personnel carriers.
3. Leadership cadres do not want to work harder to indoctrinate guerrillas.
4. Many Viet Cong soldiers robbed or oppressed the people.
5. Many Viet Cong soldiers were undisciplined, used weapons to kill each other or have caused dissension among various units.
6. Many Viet Cong cadres were not dedicated politically.

7. Many Viet Cong soldiers were tired of warfare and did not think they would defeat the Government of Vietnam or the Allies.

Desertions and defections were also on the increase.

Phong Dinh Province

The greatest problem which the Viet Cong currently encounter, which will manifest itself through September, is their lack of influence on the electorate. Large turnout of registered voters (75 percent) showed the local population's contempt for the Viet Cong. Other problems are the same as reported before, namely, raising recruiting levels and keeping the support of the people. Both of these problems should be aggravated by the election results.

Sadec Province

Viet Cong Committee of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam had issued instructions to Local Forces, i. e., to train replacements on a crash basis to replace losses in local force units and regional Main Forces.

Military Viet Cong POW's and Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) returnees were, on the average, less than 20 years old, and at least half of them claimed to have been recruited since the first of the year. Recruitment of new men is becoming an increasing problem.


Arthur McCafferty