

22
INFORMATION

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Pres. file

Wednesday, November 29, 1967
3:50 p. m.

Mr. President:

Attached is a summary of a reassuring
special MACV study of the accuracy of
enemy body count.

Answer: biases are not conservative
and, surprisingly, for the ARVN also.

W. W. Rostow

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Authority NLS-CBS 19

By isa, NARS, Date 6-22-84

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November 29, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: Body Count Verification

The attached document is the latest MACV study on the accuracy of enemy body count. The report is the result of a recent in-depth study of the captured documents coupled with an extensive field survey.

Results of the captured document study were inconclusive, mainly because most enemy sources report losses without further breakdown. A newly-arrived statistician will be put on the project, however, and, hopefully, be able to develop better statistical procedures.

The field survey consisted of sending a number of teams into the various Corps to examine reporting procedures at the various levels and to make spot checks at the battle sight when possible. During the period of the survey, October 10 through 25, a total of 924 actions, ranging from fire teams to battalion-size, were reported which resulted in confirmed killed. Twenty-nine percent, or 268 actions, were surveyed. At no time during the survey was any intentional inflation or error observed. At all levels, every effort was made by the units to report only accurate and verified enemy killed.

Discrepancies were noted, but they tended to have a deflating influence on the figures rather than an inflating influence.

The following conclusions were reached:

A. There is no intentional inflation of the reported enemy body count.

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-2-

B. There are from time to time administrative errors made in the reporting system, but the errors tend to be more delationary than inflationary. However, the reporting system is sound.

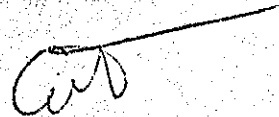
C. The policy of counting bodies found in graves as confirmed enemy killed is nonstandard and could be a source of inflating reported enemy confirmed killed.

D. There is hard evidence that air and artillery strikes result in more enemy killed than is reported.

E. The number of civilians killed and reported as VC killed cannot be determined in that often bodies carry no identification.

F. Any inflation as a result of human error is more than offset by the enemy killed not reported.

G. The Joint Generals Staff and Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces may be receiving a low body count as a result of administrative errors in the reporting chain.


Art McCafferty

cc: Jorden
Ginsburgh

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