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INFORMATION

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Monday, June 24, 1968
1:45 a.m.

Prev file

Mr. President:

Herewith Bus Wheeler concludes,
post-March 31:

-- our position in South Vietnam
relatively improved;

-- enemy position in North Vietnam
sharply improved;

-- "I would expect the rapidly
recuperating North Vietnam to make
substantial impacts on us in late summer
and fall."

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rln

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Authority NLA-CBS 21
By ics, NARS, Date 6-26-84

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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Authority NLS-CBS 6

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CM-3423-68
24 June 1968

By irs, NARS, Date 8-28-84

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Military Posture Comparisons in Vietnam (U)

1. On Saturday you asked for my assessment of our present military position as compared with 31 March 1968. The following paragraphs amplify my remarks Saturday.

2. In South Vietnam, the enemy's overall position has deteriorated. Since 31 March the seige of Khe Sanh has been broken; enemy forces have received a sharp setback in the A Shau Valley; his May offensive was unsuccessful; and he currently appears to be attempting to avoid contact with our forces. There has been a marked deterioration in the quality of the enemy's fighting forces. Replacements are being committed to battle with minimum training. Battlefield discipline has also deteriorated; and there is evidence of increased use of young and older men, and even women in enemy combat units. Kill rates and weapon loss rates have been increasingly favorable to friendly forces. There are also indications that the enemy is experiencing increasing morale problems as indicated by sizeable surrenders, in some cases in large groups, higher ranking defectors, and larger numbers of desertions. The enemy has recently been putting pressure on the GVN through urban attacks. These efforts have met with only minimal success. The early June rocket raids on Saigon have been disrupted and the "100 rocket a day" campaign has not materialized. In the central highlands, Khe Sanh, and along the DMZ where there has been a buildup over the past two months for what appeared to be an imminent large-scale offensive, this offensive has not been launched. Instead, there is now an apparent pull-back into the border sanctuaries.

3. The enemy's overall position in North Vietnam has been enhanced since 31 March. His air defense system has improved significantly with the appearance of more and newer model MIG-21s, the doubling of his in-country corps of fighter pilots, the use of new or

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long idle airfields such as Bai Thuong for MIG operations, and the extension of fighter operations south into the panhandle of North Vietnam. Additional SAM and AAA defense systems have been moved into the area south of 20°. As the enemy is given more time to recuperate, reinforce and expand his air defense system, air strikes south of 19° N are increasingly threatened. His war-supporting capabilities have also improved. Roads throughout North Vietnam have been restored, improved, and extended. The port of Haiphong is now handling more cargo than ever before. Waterways, roads and rails converging at the logistics complex of Thanh Hoa near the 20th parallel are handling a two-fold increase in southbound supplies. Power plants and industrial facilities are being restored. The number of troops on the move south has reached unprecedented levels over the past several months with about 80,000 detected in transit since 31 March.

4. On balance we have gained ground to date on the enemy since 31 March. His Winter-Spring Campaign was disrupted, his casualty rates are high and his overall offensive capability appears to be declining. However, the greatly increased war-supporting activities in the north are not yet being fully felt in South Vietnam. I would expect the output of the rapidly recuperating North Vietnam to make substantial impacts on us in late summer and fall.

Earle G. Wheeler

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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