

July 14, 1965

RELEASE OF COMBAT INFORMATION

In recent weeks the war in South Vietnam has been characterized by relatively protracted and large-scale engagements. This intensification of combat action beyond that similar periods in previous years raises serious questions about the methods we have hitherto employed to brief newsmen on the military situation. In the past, in view of the scattered and small-scale nature of most combat actions, it has been the practice to (a) report casualties into three categories (KIA, MIA and MIA) on a daily basis with unit identification, and (b) identify and report the deployment of military units event before their commitment to battle.

In the interest of military security, it is essential that we deny the Viet Cong and the Hanoi regime information that would be of value to them in their prosecution of the war effort. Information on the movements to actions and their losses in those actions gives the enemy a tremendous advantage in making tactical decisions. These decisions may relate to deployment of his forces, when, where and in what strength to launch an offensive or counter-offensive, whether he should establish and ambush or withdraw in the face of superior strength.

Therefore, effective July 15, 1965, it has been agreed between the GVN and U. S. Mission that:

1. There will be no casualty reports and unit identification on a daily basis or related to specific actions except in general terms such as "light, moderate or heavy". Casualty summaries will continue to be reported on a weekly basis, without unit identification, in the weekly briefings in Saigon and the statistical summary released at the Pentagon. Procedures for notifying next of kin will not be changed, nor will the practice of releasing in Washington the name, rank, casualty status, branch of services and emergency addresses of casualties following notification of next of kin.

2. Troop movements or deployments will not repeat not be announced nor confirmed until such time as military evaluation determines such information is clearly in the possession of the Viet Cong.

3. When battles have been joined, units participating therein will not be identified by specific type or number, although the general magnitude of friendly involvement will be announced.

Correspondents are requested to observed these limitations on a voluntary basis. Particular caution should be exercised in regard to information which correspondents may obtain from their own resources on the movement of troops before their commitment to battle, on identification of units in combat and on official casualty figures. It is recognized that correspondents may speculate on casualty figures based on eye witness reports but that they are particularly requested to regard any information received from official sources as privileged until announced by appropriate MACV channels.