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By R.1. NARA Date 2-28-08

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

9 JUL 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Reporting

I have reviewed the critique of our reporting system by a former district intelligence advisor in Vietnam which you forwarded for my analysis. His criticism has some validity. I too am concerned that our reporting system may not present an accurate assessment of the situation in Vietnam. Accordingly, we have been continuously revising and improving our system in order to obtain the most reliable data base and evaluation system.

Currently, reports of results of various programs in the Republic of Vietnam are using both data and subjective assessment. Two excellent examples of our evaluation process are the reporting systems developed for the anti-VC infrastructure (Phoenix) program, and for the pacification effort as a whole.

For a major program such as Phoenix, we use many criteria besides the reported number of VC infrastructure members eliminated. Subjective factors, such as the degree of GVN initiative, the effectiveness of GVN detention facilities, and the impact of the program on the VC infrastructure's ability to operate, play a major role in our evaluations. Early Phoenix reports of infrastructure neutralizations were inflated, since they counted anyone connected with the Viet Cong. To overcome this, COMUSMACV recently developed more exactive criteria as well as a by-name verification system to count only hard-core VC.

To help evaluate the pacification effort as a whole, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) was installed in January 1967. We have recognized that the HES, while improving our knowledge of the detailed situation in the hamlets, is still too subjective, and in some cases, unreliable. Accordingly, COMUSMACV is revising the HES to collect more objective data capable of verification by independent observers.

Concerning measurement of military success, the body count has been suspect. However the intelligence community has conducted extensive analysis on the validity of this method and they have concluded that over-reporting occurs in some engagements and under-reporting in others, but that on balance, the raw body count appears to be a reasonable estimate of enemy KIA.

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Furthermore, in DoD we monitor all reports to screen out bias. We correlate various reports for cross-check to develop a more reliable product. For example, HES is crossed with the Territory Forces Evaluation System (TFES) which examines Regional and Popular Forces operations. Both are correlated with the VC incident reporting system (TIRS) which measures terrorist activities. Computerized analyses are used to help sort out reliable reports from those which do not meet reasonable standards. This technique was used to show how pacification slowed down in the six months prior to the 1968 Tet offensive, even though the raw data portrayed continuing progress.

A Joint Staff analysis (attached) discusses some of the reporting systems in more detail and points out that various reporting systems were in the embryonic state when the intelligence advisor was in Vietnam.

Thus, various report sources and data bases are used in overall evaluations, such as that accomplished in the Defense response to National Security Study Memorandum 1. In fact, in this response, we emphasized that quantitative reports are not completely reliable and require comparison with other information prior to drawing meaningful conclusions.



Attachment

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