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APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
02-Apr-2009

7 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Briefing of DOD Assistant Secretary Paul C. Warnke on the CIA Role in the Prisoner-of-War Intelligence Effort

1. The Honorable Paul C. Warnke, Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), was briefed by [redacted] on the activities of CIA and the interagency intelligence Working Group in collecting and analyzing intelligence on U.S. prisoners of war, in the Situation Room on 3 August 1967, 0930-1130. Also present were Mr. Charles Havens, Special Assistant to Mr. Warnke; CIA General Counsel [redacted] who had made the arrangements for the briefing (Mr. Warnke served as DOD General Counsel until 1 August 1967); CIA Legislative Counsel [redacted] and the undersigned.

2. Mr. Warnke had been asked by Defense Secretary McNamara to assume responsibility within the Department for coordination and supervision of all matters relating to U.S. prisoners of war, including intelligence, propaganda, policy, and administrative aspects. [redacted] pointed out that [redacted] responsibility and that of the interagency Working Group are limited to the intelligence field; this intelligence effort, however, may provide support for the policy and other responsibilities of the State and Defense Departments. He then described the intelligence community's posture as of a year ago, when CIA entered the current picture: without exhausting the possibilities, he discovered 44 different Government desks or offices [redacted] with responsibility for some piece of the problem. Since that time, substantial progress has been made toward centralized direction and control of related activities within CIA as well as in the Departments of State and Defense; even more can probably be accomplished now that focal responsibility within DOD has been established at the Assistant Secretary level.

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3. The achievements and problems of the Interagency PW Intelligence Working Group were described in some detail. Mr. Warnke took note of the fact that the military services have been hampered in their participation and support by the unofficial character of the Working Group. He asked Mr. Havens to look into the question of formalizing its status.

4. Mr. Warnke expressed interest in various details of the PW intelligence picture, including the latest PW/MIA figures for NVN, SVN, Laos, Cambodia, and China, and asked why the ratio of Navy PW's to MIA's was so much higher than that of the Air Force. [redacted] explained that the two services use different criteria. This was awkward at first, but is not now a serious problem from the standpoint of the Working Group. [redacted] suggested that it could nevertheless cause confusion at the White House level and elsewhere in Government. Mr. Warnke made a note with the apparent intention of looking into this problem also.

5. Attention was called to the importance of stressing the maximum rather than the minimum figure when publicizing PW statistics, in order to hold the Communists accountable for all MIA's (currently 508 in number) as well as those carried as PW's (207). Mr. Warnke was informed that the military services estimate that about fifty percent of the persons carried as MIA are actually PW's. Thus our estimated total of prisoners is approximately 450.

6. There was some discussion of the advisability of allowing wives of PW's to visit their husbands in North Vietnam. (One of the wives, Mrs. Butler, is presently seeking the State Department's permission to go.) Mr. Warnke, while agreeing that such travel would have advantages from an intelligence standpoint, questioned whether it might not have an adverse effect overall on PW morale. He asked that the [redacted] the Working Group be consulted on this point. [redacted] suggested that the visits made by the next of kin of Downey and Fecteau in prison in China might afford a useful parallel. [redacted] will follow up both points and advise Mr. Havens.)

7. It was noted by [redacted] that the PW intelligence effort engages the full-time services of [redacted] in CIA and the part-time participation [redacted]. [redacted] added the observation that CIA's role is not limited to supporting the rest of the intelligence community in this field: the Agency has a heavy stake of its own. [redacted] and we would be committed on alone.

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8. Mr. Warnke was shown a just-completed miniature scale model of the Ap Lo prison compound, made for [redacted] by the (NPIC) Imagery Analysis Staff, and an accompanying prototype "reverse periscope" for viewing small-scale objects from a ground-level perspective or any special angle like that of an approaching plane or helicopter.

9. The meeting resulted in an informal understanding with respect to following up unfinished business; [redacted] will keep in touch with Mr. Havens (Pentagon 4 E 806; tel. II-54351).

[redacted]

Distribution:

[redacted]
General Counsel
Legislative Counsel

[redacted]

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

[Redacted]

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EXTENSION

NO.

[Redacted]

DATE

8 August 1967

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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FORWARDED

1. Legislative Counsel

[Redacted]

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Handwritten notes:
1. H. Jones
2. J. Smith

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~~SECRET SPOKE~~Infiltration Report

Three regular infiltration groups were initially detected in COMINT during the past week. All three groups have been previously gap filled. Thus, the estimate of the number of infiltrators starting south during July and August remains at 35,000 men, of which 29,000 are destined for the northern half of South Vietnam (28,000 for MR TTH and 1,000 for the B-3 Front), and 6,000 for south Laos. Infiltration for the period September 1971 through June 1972 stands at 131,000.

Personnel Detected Moving Northward in the GDRS System

During the period June through mid-August, more than 9,000 persons have been detected moving northward through south Laos and southern North Vietnam within the North Vietnamese GDRS system. At least 7,000 of these persons were sick and wounded personnel and some 2,000 were prisoners of war from the 1972 NVA offensive in South Vietnam. The total number is comparable to the more than 10,000 sick, wounded and captured personnel noted moving northward during roughly the same period in 1971. Most of the returning personnel in 1971 were believed to have participated in fighting in the Tchepone area of south Laos (i.e. operation Lam Son 719) during spring of that year.

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The approximately 2,000 Allied prisoners detected moving northward through the infiltration corridor in south Laos reportedly came from the NVA B-3 Front area. The initial reference to the planned movement of prisoners was noted in early June but the actual movement was not detected until early July. Some of the prisoners were specifically identified as South Vietnamese Army troops from the 42nd and 47th Regiments of the 22nd Division which had been captured at Dak To and Tanh Canh in April. In addition, the total also included at least two American soldiers. Although the final destination of the 2,000 prisoners was not disclosed, their route of march suggests that they probably would continue on to North Vietnam.

Status of South Vietnamese Infantry Divisions

There are 14 South Vietnamese infantry divisions available for combat operations in South Vietnam. In Military Region 1, there are five divisions: The Marine and Airborne Divisions now fighting in Quang Tri Province, the 1st ARVN Division protecting the Hue area in Thua Thien Province, and the 2nd and 3rd ARVN Divisions which are responsible for the defense of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province and the rest of southern MR 1. The South Vietnamese Military Region Commander for MR 1 has requested that another infantry division be transferred to the

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region to counter the continued build-up NVA forces in the two northern provinces. In MR 2, two ARVN Divisions--the 22nd and 23rd--are defending the highlands and northern coastal areas of the region. There are three ARVN divisions in MR 3--the 5th, 18th, and 25th--currently engaged in protecting the Saigon area and clearing enemy forces along Route 13 between Saigon and An Loc in Binh Long Province. In MR 4, there are currently four divisions: The 7th and 9th ARVN Divisions defending the northern delta, the 21st ARVN Division which is responsible for the southern delta, and a task-organized division--the 44th Special Tactical Zone--committed to preventing the NVA Phuoc Long Front from infiltrating into the western delta from Cambodia.

COMMENT: Inter-military region deployments of South Vietnamese divisions had never been implemented by the South Vietnamese until the current offensive. As the months of September and October approach, it is becoming more evident that the North Vietnamese hope to preclude the possibility of deployment of South Vietnamese infantry divisions from one military region to another--particularly to northern MR 1--in what appears to be the final phase of their 1972 offensive. The current attempt to restrict the maneuverability of the South Vietnamese

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forces is evidenced by the concentration of NVA main force units in vital areas of each region.

DMZ Sapper Bureau Identified In Quang Tri Province

[redacted] major element of the NVA 305th Sapper Command operating in Quang Tri Province. This element, designated the DMZ Sapper Bureau, has been operating in the DMZ area since December 1971. The Bureau has at least four and possibly as many as seven subordinate sapper battalions. During July and August, the battalions have been operating near GVN military installations between the cities of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.

COMMENT: The creation of the DMZ Sapper Bureau and the infiltration since March 1972 of at least four new sapper battalions into Quang Tri Province is the largest concentration of Communist sapper units in MR I during the war. This concentration may reflect a shift in NVA tactics in northern MR I toward the increasing use of sapper attacks in future NVA operations.

711th NVA Division Captures Que Son City, Quang Nam Province

On 19 August 1972, the 711th NVA Division captured the district capital of Que Son City in southern Quang Nam Province of Military Region I. Although initial battlefield reports have been fragmentary, elements of at least two regiments--the

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38th and 270th--were committed to the attack on the city which was supported by 130mm artillery. Apparently the local GVN military commander hastily decided to withdraw after the district capital came under heavy artillery attack. GVN forces have reorganized near Fire Support Base (FSB) Baldy on Route 1 and are preparing to counterattack. The 711th division headquarters has deployed northeast from Que Son City to Route 1 and apparently is preparing follow-up attacks on FSB Baldy.

COMMENT: This NVA strategy correlates with recently captured PW's who have stated the division would conduct a three phase offensive in the province. Phase two was the capture of Que Son City, which was to be followed by a third phase beginning in October to liberate the Quang Nam lowlands. If the ARVN counter-attack fails to recapture Que Son City relatively quickly, the North Vietnamese will have access to the Quang Nam lowlands and be in a position to threaten Da Nang City with 130mm artillery. Moreover, the NVA will be able to initiate offensive operations in the lowlands ahead of schedule and, more importantly, prior to the rainy season.

Possible Renewed Fighting Scheduled for MR-3

According to a VC [redacted] in Binh Duong Province, the 7th NVA Division has the mission of attacking

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government installations in Binh Duong and southeastern Hau Nghia Provinces in early September. The VC have been ordered to transport ammunition to these areas in preparation for their attacks.

COMMENT: This report seems consistent with the reported build-up of Communist forces south of An Loc.

Scheduled Return of the NVA 1st Division to GVN MR 4

Recent evidence indicates that the NVA 1st Division, currently refitting in Kampot and Takeo Provinces of Cambodia, is planning to return to GVN MR 4 in the near future. Reportedly, forward elements of the division reconnoitered the infiltration routes into South Vietnam's Chau Doc Province, in late July and early August. The mission of the division, once it relocates, is to launch attacks in Chau Doc and Kien Giang Provinces. The division reportedly is scheduled to link up with other NVA units probably in the southern delta in carrying out its attacks.

COMMENT: The 1st Division has been refitting in Cambodia since early June and is now considered combat effective. As of 23 August, units of the 1st Division were believed to be still located in Cambodia. Nevertheless, the movement of the 1st Division back into GVN MR 4 is considered a good possibility as the enemy apparently intends to initiate increased offensive activity in the region in the near future.

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