

BACKGROUND - SOUTH VIETNAM O/B

I. As easily understandable, no precise O/B available on Sects.

A. These curious groups customarily overstate their numerical strength in order to gain prestige, collect larger government subsidies.

B. Their mixed armament makes effectiveness estimates misleading--some units might have only hand-grenades and machetes, others the most modern arms.

II. With above reservations, Sect O/B is roughly as follows:

A. Cao Dai, 16,000--located mostly north and northwest of Saigon.

B. Hoa Hao, 19,600--in delta rice-granary area west of Saigon.

C. Binh Xuyen, 4,000--in suburbs of Saigon (also in control of Saigon police force, strength of which unknown).

III. Above figures must be further qualified by

fact that some Sect commanders have taken fence-sitting or pro-government positions.

A. Cao Dai General Trinh Minh The, who commands 4,300 troops, has "formally" rallied to the government. However, his loyalty is questionable.

B. During past month, three Hoa Hao senior officers, altogether commanding "several thousand" troops, have declared allegiance to Diem government.

IV. In balance with Sect forces are following:

A. French troops (ground forces) south of the 17th parallel--94,000.

1. Of these, roughly 50,000 are in the Saigon area.

B. Vietnamese National Army--151,000.

1. Of these Vietnamese troops, 10,000 are available in Saigon area.

In addition, there are 43,000 pro-

vincial police under Diem's authority.