

9 August 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. William E. Colby  
Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : Request for Assistance

1. As you know, last week Joseph B. Treaster had a story on Communist executions in Binh Dinh province which, surprisingly, was played prominently on the front page of the 4 August New York Times. (The makeup editor for that edition has probably been fired.) This was followed up with a feature entry, also by Treaster, in the News of the Week in Review section of the Sunday Times on 6 August.

2. As you also know, those opposed to the war -- including the Times editorial board -- get very testy at hard news on Communist behavior of this stripe and are very quick to counter with claims that we do things equally bad and generally worse. That same Sunday (6 August) Times had a lead editorial entitled "Bloodbath in Binh Dinh..." (copy attached). As you can see, the counter balance cited is the "infamous 'Phoenix' program." The Times editorial writer ends his paragraph on Phoenix with the following sentence:

"According to testimony before a House sub-committee last year, 9,820 civilian Communists were executed under this program in a fourteen-month period."

3. The 9,820 figure can be extrapolated from Congressman Reid's comments appearing on page 45 of the U.S. Government Printing Office's edition of "Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations - House of Representatives - Ninety-second Congress." (A copy of the page is attached.) The actual figure of 9,820 is not

mentioned but it is clearly the sum of the 8,191 VCI killed in 1970 plus the 1,629 killed in January and February of 1971. These, we understand, were figures provided to Reid in the package sent to him before the hearings began.

4. What the Times editorial writer has done, of course, is substitute "executed" for "killed." Neither you nor anyone else providing data to Congress has ever said that all of the VCI killed as a result of Phoenix activities were shot in the sense of the victims of the Communist operations described by Mr. Treaster. What we would like to run down, however, is some clear statement already in the record explaining the derivation of these "VCI killed" figures which makes the point that these are not victims of execution in the sense of which that word is used in the New York Times editorial. You yourself addressed this point in your answer to question 27 of Congressman Moorhead's supplemental questions (see attached copy of page 234 of the same hearings transcript). In answering question 27, you make a very germane point that some 88% of the Phoenix "kills" are persons killed by military forces. It would be most helpful if you can remember any other places in the public record where this issue is specifically addressed, ideally with language succinct and punchy enough to be quotable in a letter to the New York Times that some senior U.S. Government official could sign in an endeavor to take issue with the 6 August editorial and set the record straight.



George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachments

1- J Mc  
1- Eric Chrono

