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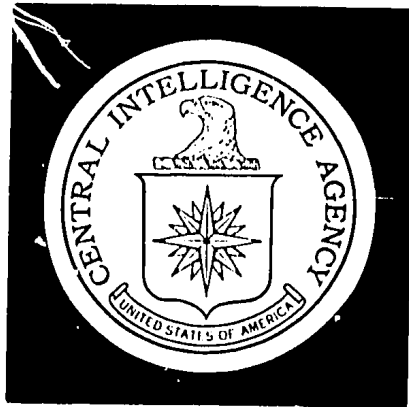
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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

## *North Vietnam's Manpower Position*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
June 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

NORTH VIETNAM'S MANPOWER POSITION

Introduction

1. During 1965-70, about 1 million men were inducted into the North Vietnamese armed forces, and more than half that number are estimated to have been killed in action. The purpose of this memorandum is to assess the impact of this manpower drain on (a) North Vietnam's civilian reserve of physically fit men and Hanoi's capability to sustain continued drawdowns of its manpower reserves over the next few years; (b) the civilian labor force and output of the economy; and (c) population growth over the next two decades.

2. The principal sources drawn upon for this memorandum are: (a) demographic data and projections supplied by the US Bureau of the Census; (b) data on the infiltration of North Vietnamese soldiers into Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam; (c) enemy order of battle and casualty estimates for North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; and

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*Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.*

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Discussion

Military Requirements 1965-70

3. An estimated 1.1 million North Vietnamese men were inducted into military service during 1965-70, as shown in the following tabulation:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Thousand Men</u>
1965	155
1966	260
1967	185
1968	215
1969	80
1970	200 (pre- liminary)
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,095</i>

The size of the army was doubled in the period 1965-66 in response to the massive increase in the US presence in South Vietnam and the bombing campaign in North Vietnam. Continued heavy recruitment in 1967 and 1968 was in preparation for, and to offset casualties resulting from, the major Communist offensives during 1968. In 1969 the rate of induction dropped sharply as the Communists shifted to a protracted war strategy. In 1970 the induction rate is believed to have risen again following the ouster of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and the widening of the war to the whole of Indochina.

4. Losses during 1965-70 totaled an estimated 600,000 men. Included in this total are those killed or mortally wounded on or en route to the battlefield plus the few who have rallied to the South Vietnamese authorities. POWs have been excluded, as most of these presumably will return to North Vietnam when circumstances permit. The approximate distribution, by year, of estimated losses is as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Thousand Men</u>
1965	25
1966	50
1967	75
1968	200
1969	150
1970	100
<i>Total</i>	<i>600</i>

#### Impact on Manpower Reserves, 1965-70

5. As a result of the induction of an estimated 1.1 million men into military service during 1965-70, North Vietnam's civilian manpower reserve <sup>1/</sup> declined by an estimated one-third from 2.0 million at the end of 1964 to 1.3 million at the end of 1970 (see Table 1). It otherwise would have risen by one-fifth to 2.4 million. Although substantial inroads have been made on North Vietnam's reserve, the cushion of untapped manpower is still sizable and could support additional large drawdowns. As shown in the tabulation below, North Vietnam's armed forces at 0.6 million are equal to only one-fifth the total number of males aged 18-39 in the population. This is less than the comparable figure for South Vietnam at present and for selected other countries during World War II and the Korean War.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Million Men</u>		<u>Percent in the Armed Forces</u>
		<u>Males 18-39</u>	<u>Armed Forces</u>	
United States	Jul 45	24.7	12.1	49
United Kingdom	Jun 45	8.3	4.7	57
Germany	Jun 44	10.3	9.6	93
South Korea	Dec 53	3.1	0.7	23
North Korea	Dec 53	1.1	0.3	27
South Vietnam	Dec 70	2.4	1.1	46
North Vietnam	Dec 70	2.9	0.6	21

1. *Defined as including physically fit males in the age group 15-39. If the more restrictive age group 17-35 is considered, the decline of the manpower reserve during 1965-70 was 800,000, from 1.6 million to 0.8 million.*

6. The age distribution of the reserve has changed markedly since the end of 1964 as a product of demographic factors and the manner in which the various age groups were tapped for recruits. As shown in Table 2, a majority of the draftees in every year were taken from the 17-25 age group, although it was evidently found necessary to draw recruits from other age groups to a greater extent during 1966-68. In 1969, when draft calls were reduced, the distribution more closely resembled the 1960-64 pattern, although the percent inducted from the 31-39 age group probably was higher. The end result of this draft policy, as shown in Table 3, was heavy depletion of the 17-25 and 26-30 age groups. The number of men in both age groups declined by about one-half. The size of the 31-39 age group remained stable as callups were about equal to the increase that would have taken place under normal circumstances. The number of youths in the 15-16 age group increased by one-fourth, however, as the higher birth rates of the 1950s more than offset levies for military service.

7. The distribution of men in the pool, by occupation, has not undergone the radical change that the age distribution has. As shown in Table 4, for the 1965-68 period, 61% of the POWs questioned on their former occupation reported they had been farmers, and farmers seem to have been tapped for military service roughly in proportion to their share in the population. Data from the North Vietnamese press indicate that farmers accounted for about 60% of the male labor force in January 1965. However, the two percentages are not directly comparable, because the POW sample includes students, while the labor force, by definition, excludes students. If students are excluded from the POW sample, farmers accounted for 67% of the total during 1965-68.

8. The teaching profession also seems to have borne its share of the burden of military service. North Vietnamese statistics reveal that by the 1968-69 school year, 23,000 or about 30% of the estimated 80,000 physically fit teachers at the general school level (up to the equivalent of the US 12th grade) were in military service. Nevertheless, the total number of general school teachers increased during the period because of a heavy influx of females into the profession and a small increase in the number of male teachers, excluding those in the armed forces. None of the POWs reported they had been instructors at institutions of higher education, and it is believed this segment of the teaching profession largely escaped the draft through 1970. There is evidence from the North Vietnamese press, however, that by late 1970 some of the instructors at colleges and normal schools had received notification that they might be called up.

9. The male student body has also been hard hit by the draft. Reports from POWs and from the North Vietnamese press indicate that substantial conscription of students at the high school level and above has taken place since 1967. [REDACTED]

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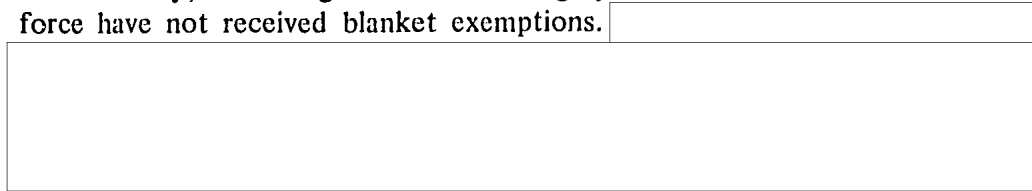
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There is no evidence that students studying abroad have been recalled for military service, but press articles tell of students who were selected for overseas study but "chose" to enlist and of another who "volunteered" for military service when he returned from study abroad. 2/

10. Of the 27% of the POWs who reported occupations other than farmer, student, or teacher, most had been unskilled or semi-skilled workers for the period 1965-68. However, there were some who reported they had held technical, professional, or supervisory positions in various sectors of the economy, indicating that the more highly skilled members of the labor force have not received blanket exemptions.

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Future Impact on Manpower Reserves

11. Since 1964, North Vietnam has had to reduce its reserve of physically fit civilian manpower by some 700,000 men. This drawdown reflects the high human costs that Hanoi has paid to carry on the war in Indochina. But despite these costs, North Vietnam still has a sizable reserve of physically fit manpower, amounting to an estimated 1.3 million men at the end of 1970. This reserve, in gross terms, is adequate to provide a continued flow of manpower to the war theaters in Indochina. 3/ If Hanoi's manpower requisitions were at the level observed in 1969 -- 80,000 men -- the existing manpower reserves would for all practical purposes remain intact indefinitely. Even in the event that Hanoi were to carry out an expanded mobilization program similar to that observed in 1970 -- possibly 200,000 men -- the manpower reserves could easily support such a program for several years.

*2. The draft has not as yet had a discernible impact on the total number of persons sent overseas for study.*

*3. This may overstate Hanoi's actual capabilities because there probably is a hard core of physically fit males of draft age who would not be subject to induction except in an all-out emergency such as an invasion of North Vietnam. (For further discussion, see the Appendix.)*



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Impact on Labor Force and Output

12. As shown in Table 5, the civilian labor force is estimated to have grown from 9.4 million in January 1965 to 9.9 million in January 1971. Had there been no war, the labor force would have grown to an estimated 10.6 million. The shortfall of some 700,000 in the size of the labor force was less than the number of men called to the colors because of an abnormal increase in the number of females in the labor force. The burden of the loss fell entirely on the agricultural labor force, which is estimated to have been smaller by 0.7 million in 1970 than it would have been under normal circumstances. The wholesale callup of able-bodied men no doubt had a qualitative as well as a quantitative effect on the labor force. The impact of military manpower needs on the labor force together with the fact that the economy has not yet recovered fully from the disruptions caused by the bombing campaign explains in part why gross national product (GNP) in 1970 was only \$1.4 billion, some \$0.2 billion below the 1964 total. Had there been no war, GNP could have been up by \$0.5 billion to an estimated \$2.1 billion by 1970, about \$0.2 billion of which would have been due to the normal growth of the labor force and \$0.3 billion due to higher productivity resulting from capital formation and improved technology. Nevertheless, with economic support from Communist countries, North Vietnam is managing to cover basic needs and has, in the two years since the bombing halt, progressed about halfway toward the pre-war level of output.

Impact on Population Growth and Composition

13. Demographic projections indicate that North Vietnam's population is about 1 million persons less than it would have been in the absence of the Indochina War (see Table 6). About two-thirds of this disparity is due to the direct loss of 600,000 males on the battlefields of Southeast Asia. Most of the remainder is due to the drop in fertility resulting from the widowhood of women married to men killed in action and the temporary separation of spouses because of the presence of men in the military service. As shown in the tabulation below, this disparity will continue to grow as time passes and will reach about 4 million, or more than 10%, by 1990, should the war end during 1971. If the war should last two more years, the disparity might grow by an additional 1 million.

	<u>Million Persons</u>			
	<u>1971</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>
No war	21	23	26	33
War ends in 1971	20	21	23	29
War ends in 1973	20	21	23	28

14. While it is doubtful that the long-term effect of the war upon population growth is a significant factor in Hanoi's military strategy, the regime can not be wholly indifferent to the sociological and psychological impact of the war to date. At present, the number of males aged 20-29 is only about seven-tenths the number of females in this age group. In 1975 the percentage would be down to less than six-tenths if the war were to last through 1973 with a relatively high level of casualties. Beyond 1975 - assuming the war ends in 1973 - the population pyramid will begin to revert to a more normal shape (see the chart).

#### Conclusions

15. An estimated 1.1 million North Vietnamese men were inducted into military service during 1965-70, causing Vietnam's civilian reserve of physically fit men in the 15-39 age group to decline by about one-third since the end of 1964, from 2.0 million to 1.3 million. The decline in the prime age group, 17-25, was much sharper - by about one-half through 1969. However, North Vietnam's reserve thus far has been drawn down to a lesser extent relative to the size of its armed forces than has been the case in South Vietnam and in various other countries during wartime.

16. The drain of manpower into the military has retarded the growth of the labor force and, together with the disruptions caused by the bombing campaign, has had a substantial adverse effect on output. Nevertheless, North Vietnam, with support from its allies, has been able to meet basic needs and, in the two years since the end of the bombing campaign, has reached the halfway point in regaining prewar levels of output.

17. Despite the substantial inroads the war has made on North Vietnam's civilian manpower reserve, Hanoi has the capability, in mathematical terms at least, to conscript men at the 1969 level indefinitely and for several years at a relatively high rate - say 200,000 per year.

18. We are not able to judge specifically what price Hanoi will be willing to pay in manpower terms in the future to continue the war in Indochina. Certainly, North Vietnam's leaders can not be unmindful of the tremendous sociological and psychological burden resting on their people. However, the regime continues to demonstrate a remarkable ability to get young men into the armed forces, to keep its working population plugging away for small material reward, and in general to extract a whole host of sacrifices without giving much in return. We see nothing to suggest that this situation will change in the foreseeable future. The evidence continues to point to North Vietnam's willingness to continue making major inputs of manpower into the military.

### Population Projections for North Vietnam As of Jan 1

■ No War  
□ War Ends, 1973

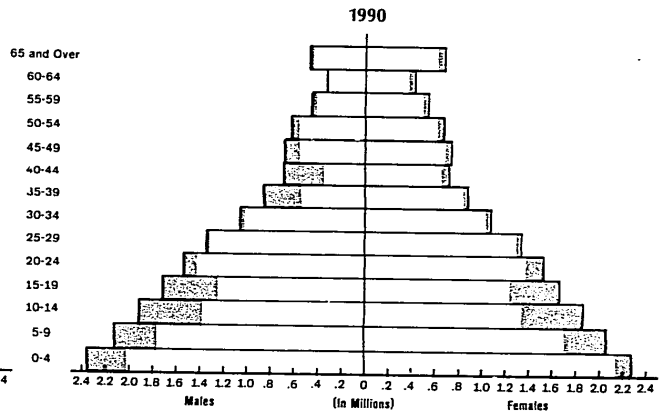
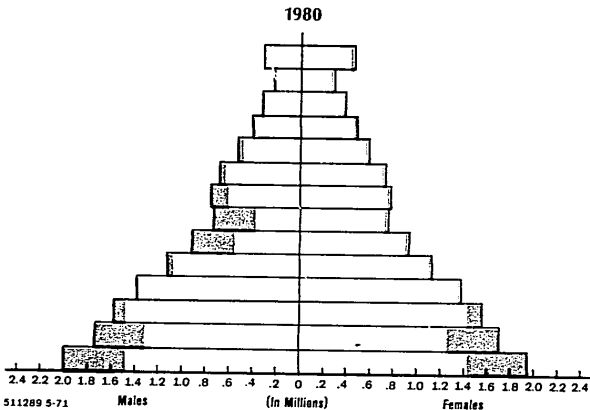
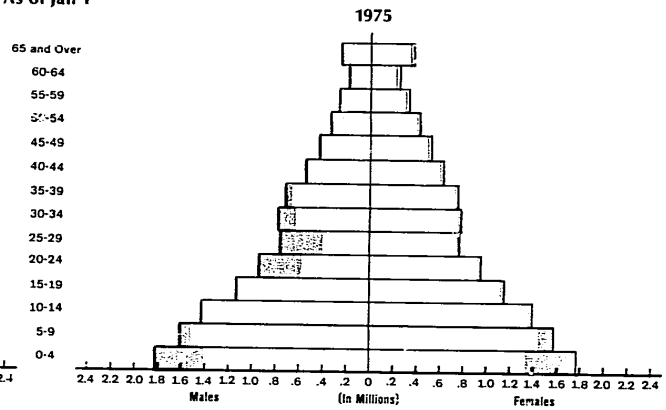
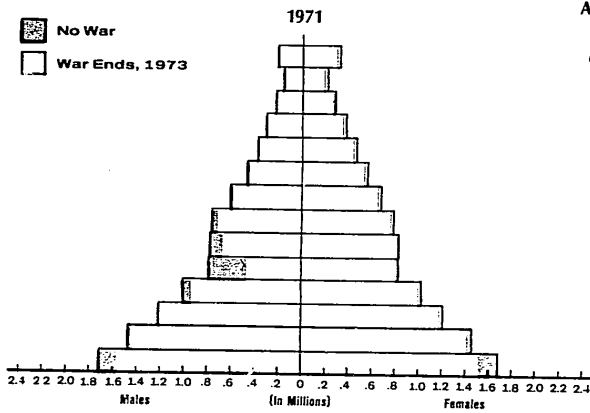


Table 1  
North Vietnam's Civilian Reserve of Manpower

Year	Total (31 December) <sup>a/</sup>	Entering Pool	Leaving Pool			
			Total	Inductees	Reaching Age 40	Others <sup>b/</sup>
1964	2,000					
1965	1,900	126	230	155	51	24
1966	1,700	132	336	260	50	26
1967	1,600	133	269	185	53	31
1968	1,400	144	292	215	54	23
1969	1,400	151	150	80	56	14
1970	1,300	157	270	200 <sup>c/</sup>	58	12

a. Defined as physically fit males, age 15-39, who are not in the armed forces. See Appendix for methodology. Rounded to the nearest 100,000.

b. Including those leaving because of natural death, death from bombing, and decline in physical fitness.

c. Preliminary.

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Table 2  
 Percent Distribution of North Vietnamese Soldiers  
 Captured in South Vietnam, by Age at Induction a/

Age at Induction	Year Inducted					
	1960-64	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
All ages	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
15-16	6	4	10	6 <u>b/</u>	9	2
17-25	81	69	68	76	66	78
26-30	10	17 <u>c/</u>	16	15	13	8
31-35	2	7 <u>c/</u>	5	3	8	8
36-39	1	3	--	<u>d/</u>	3	3

a. For methodology, see the Appendix. Because of rounding, components may not add to the totals shown.  
 b. Includes one draftee who reported his age at induction as 14.  
 c. Includes a substantial number of former servicemen recalled following the mobilization order of April 1965.  
 d. Less than 0.5%.

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Table 3

Trends in North Vietnam's Civilian Reserve of Manpower, by Age Group a/

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Thousand Men

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>
All ages	<u>2,000</u>	<u>1,900</u>	<u>1,700</u>	<u>1,600</u>	<u>1,400</u>	<u>1,400</u>
15-16	220	240	250	260	270	280
17-25	760	660	500	400	310	350
26-30	450	430	370	340	260	220
31-35	350	350	350	360	330	330
36-39	220	220	230	240	230	220

*a. As of 31 December.*

Table 4

Percent Distribution of North Vietnamese Soldiers  
Captured in South Vietnam, by Former Occupation a/

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Former Occupation	Year Inducted					Percent
	1960-64	1965	1966	1967	1968	
All occupations	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Farmer <u>b/</u>	68	65	66	57	61	61
Student	14	4	10	11	9	9
Teacher	1	5	4	3	1	3
Others	17	26	20	29	29	27

*a. Based on a sample of 655 prisoners who reported former occupations. The distribution of the sample, by year of induction, is as follows: 1960-64, 85; 1965, 80; 1966, 92; 1967, 215; and 1968, 173. For 1969, only 18 prisoners to date have reported their former occupation. This is too small a sample to be meaningful for purposes of this analysis.*

*b. Including a few fishermen.*

Table 5  
Civilian Labor Force in North Vietnam a/

	Million Persons			
	January 1965	January 1971		
		<u>Actual</u>	<u>No War</u>	<u>Difference</u>
All sectors	<u>9.4</u>	<u>9.9</u>	<u>10.6</u>	<u>-0.7</u>
Men	4.5	4.0	5.0	-1.0
Women	4.9	5.9	5.6	+0.3
Agriculture	<u>7.0</u>	<u>6.9</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>-0.7</u>
Men	2.8	2.4	3.0	-0.5
Women	4.2	4.5	4.6	-0.1
Other	<u>2.4</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>0</u>
Men	1.7	1.6	2.0	-0.4
Women	0.7	1.4	1.0	+0.4

a. Age 15 to 64.

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Table 6  
Estimated Population of North Vietnam a/

	Thousand Persons		
	1965	1971 <sup>b/</sup>	
		No War	Actual
Total	17,800	20,800	25X1 19,800
0-14	7,400	8,800	8,400
15-44	8,100	9,100	8,500
45 and over	2,300	2,900	2,900
Male	8,600	10,200	9,400
0-14	3,700	4,400	4,200
15-44	3,900	4,500	3,900
45 and over	1,000	1,300	1,300
Female	9,200	10,600	10,400
0-14	3,700	4,400	4,200
15-44	4,200	4,600	4,600
45 and over	1,300	1,600	1,600

a. Projections for the beginning of the year made by the US Bureau of the Census.

b. Data differ from other figures published by the Bureau of the Census because the "No War" estimate assumes a continuation of population trends dating from 1964 and the "Actual" estimate includes additional effects of the war not included in other census projections.

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## APPENDIX

### Methodology

#### Number of Men Inducted into the North Vietnamese Army, 1965-70

The number inducted in each year of the 1965-69 period is the sum of estimates of men inducted and earmarked for deployment to South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and Laos. The estimates for South Vietnam are based on monthly infiltration estimates produced by MACV for 1965-67 and by the Intelligence Coordination Group (ICG) at CINCPAC for 1968 to date as well as on reports obtained from POWs captured in South Vietnam. Induction estimates were made on a monthly basis and then cumulated. The distribution by month of induction of those infiltrated in a particular month was estimated from the sample of POWs who reported they were infiltrated in that month and who reported the date of their induction. For example, if 50% of the POWs who reported they were infiltrated in January 1968 had reported they were inducted in July 1967 and 50% had reported August 1967, then half the total number estimated by the ICG to have infiltrated in January would have been assigned a July 1967 induction date and the other half an August 1967 induction date. Table A-1 presents the cross tabulation of infiltrates by date of induction cumulated on an annual basis.

The estimates of men inducted for deployment to units in North Vietnam were based on DIA estimates of changes in NVA in-country force levels plus allowances for military personnel retired because of health or age, military personnel killed by the US bombing program in 1965-68, and for NVA personnel drafted prior to 1965 who infiltrated to South Vietnam in 1965-69 and presumably were replaced.

The estimates of men inducted for deployment to units in Laos were based on CIA/DIA estimates of changes in force levels and of casualties.

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The age grouping of inductees by year was estimated from the sample of 928 NVA soldiers captured in South Vietnam who reported their age of induction. All were within the 15-39 age group, with the exception of one youth who said he was 14 when inducted.

[REDACTED]

The total number of men estimated to have been inducted in 1965-70 is 1.1 million. This figure is believed to be subject to a range of error of no more than  $\pm 10\%$ . One indication that the estimate is fairly accurate is provided by a statement in the North Vietnamese press that 23,000 male teachers were in military service by the 1968-69 school year. The induction estimates together with data from POWs on occupation of inductees yield an estimate of 26,000 teachers drafted during 1965-68.

Losses, 1965-70

Losses sustained by North Vietnam for the 1965-70 period are defined as the sum of those killed and mortally wounded on Indochinese battlefields, of men lost while in the infiltration system, and of persons who have rallied to the South Vietnamese government. The number of NVA soldiers killed in action (KIA) is based on estimates of combined VC/NVA fatalities provided by MACV. The North Vietnamese share of the combined KIA in each year is assumed to have been equal to the NVA share of the VC/NVA force level during that year. The estimate of the number of men mortally wounded is based on the estimated KIA and a factor developed from analysis of captured documents and POW interrogations.

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[REDACTED] a factor developed from enemy documents and POW interrogations. Data on enemy ralliers are provided by MACV and by the South Vietnamese government.

Number of Men in North Vietnam's Civilian Reserve of Manpower, 1964-70

The estimated number of inductees in each year, by age, was subtracted from the estimated number of physically fit males, aged 15-39, who were not in the armed forces to arrive at year-end estimates of North Vietnam's civilian reserve of manpower, by age.

The basic demographic data are estimates prepared by the US Bureau of the Census, which were in turn based on a North Vietnamese census taken in 1960. The estimates of the total population are believed by Census experts to be subject to a range of error of minus 5% to plus 20% because of the probability of underreporting in the 1960 census and the probability of error in birth and death rates used to project the 1960 data. However, the range of error in the size of the military age group would be, for all practical purposes, 0 to plus 15%, as the size of this group would be unaffected by errors in the birth rate and largely unaffected by errors in the death rate.

The number in each age group estimated to be physically fit was based on South Vietnamese experience and estimated to be 71% for those entering

the pool at age 15 and to range downward to 60% for those leaving the pool at age 40. This estimate is on the conservative side, as a MACV study in 1966 showed that about 70% of South Vietnamese males in the 16-45 age bracket were physically fit. Furthermore, no adjustment has been made in the percentages to allow for the evidence that physical standards had been relaxed somewhat by 1968. Several POWs reported that they had been repeatedly rejected in 1965-67 because of deficiencies such as poor eyesight but had been subsequently drafted. A partially offsetting factor is that some of the youths in the 15-17 age group probably would not be taken, because they are not yet mature enough to meet height and/or weight requirements of the military (roughly 5 feet and 90 pounds), although they are otherwise physically fit. There have been references in the press to such persons.

The number already in military service as of 31 December 1964 is a DIA estimate. The age composition of this group was estimated from reports of POWs inducted in 1960-64.

#### Hard Core Not Available for Military Service

It is estimated that a maximum of 500,000 physically fit males in the 15-39 age group might not be drafted by the regime short of an all-out emergency, such as an invasion of North Vietnam. This total includes 230,000 in technical, professional, or managerial positions (cadre) and 250,000 ethnics. The estimated 230,000 cadre are distributed as follows:

	<u>Thousand Men</u>
Agricultural cooperatives	<u>150</u>
Administrators	20
Administrative committee members	70
Production team leaders	60
Industry	<u>30</u>
Government administration	<u>40</u>
Services	<u>10</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>230</i>

[REDACTED]

These estimates are based on fragmentary statistics published in the North Vietnamese press. It should be noted that women have gradually been replacing male cadre since 1965 so that this estimate tends to be a maximum. On the other hand, it may exclude certain eligible males in semi-skilled or unskilled positions which are judged to be critical. For example, the press recently carried an article about a 19-year old who was not allowed to "volunteer" for military service because his skill as a forger was needed by a factory in Hanoi.

In addition, a substantial number might not be considered useful or desirable because they are members of ethnic minority groups, which account for about 15% of the North Vietnamese population. Language and cultural barriers render many of the men from these groups of limited value to the regular forces, although a significant number of them were recruited into the local militia. To date, less than 2% of the POWs have been identified as ethnics, although there is evidence that conscription of ethnics was speeded up in 1968. Several ethnics reported they were given a minimum of military training and menial jobs. Ethnics may have accounted for slightly more than 20%, or close to 300,000, of the pool by the end of 1970. It is estimated that a maximum of 250,000 of these might be deemed unsuitable for military service, barring an all-out emergency.

In estimating the number who might not be eligible for military service, no allowance has been made for exemptions on grounds of personal hardship or social status. Prior to 1965, it apparently was standard practice to exempt both married men with large families (4 to 5 children or more) and sole surviving sons with aged parents. After the war began, however, these exemptions were abolished or largely ignored. Until 1965, men from certain social groups such as Catholics (5% of the population) and wealthy land-owning families reportedly were not generally drafted on grounds of political unreliability. By 1968 or 1969, however, Catholics were no longer exempt from service nor were the well-to-do youths. Also, no allowance has been made for draft dodgers. There are undoubtedly a few, but available reports indicate that the regime's tight controls over the civilian population prevent draft evasion from being a major problem.

#### Labor Force Data

The estimates of the civilian labor force in North Vietnam were based on demographic data, military inductions during 1965-70 and regime releases of fragmentary employment data. The "no war" estimate of the size and distribution of the labor force by sex and economic sector was based on US Bureau of the Census projections of the size of the 15-64 age group by sex, plus an allowance for some movement of labor out of agriculture -- an observed trend prior to 1965.

Table A-1

Distribution of North Vietnamese Army Infiltrates  
by Year of Induction and by Year of Infiltration a/

Year Inducted	Year Infiltrated						25X1	Total
	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970 <u>b/</u>		
Pre-1965	53	48	28	19	3	--	151	
1965	21	26	22	14	1	--	84	
1966	--	17	43	16	1	--	77	
1967	--	--	59	73	4	--	136	
1968	--	--	--	119	52	4	175	
1969	--	--	--	--	23	36	59	
<i>Total</i>	74	91	152	241	84	40	682	

*a. Based on a sample of 908 prisoners who reported date of induction and date of infiltration.*

*b. January-June 1970 only.*