MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

2838

UNCLASSIFIED
TOP SECRET
ATTACHMENT

INFORMATION

August 20, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: BUD McFARLANE

FROM: WILLIAM L. STEARMAN

SUBJECT: U. S. Participation in the "Fishhook" Operation

The 1970 "Fishhook" operation in Cambodia was officially acknowledged as a combined U.S.-RVNAF operation.

President Nixon's April 30, 1970 announcement stated that U. S. and RVNAF units will attack Communist headquarters (COSVN) in Cambodia. Those headquarters were later identified as being the "Fishhook."

A DOD information fact sheet of May 21, 1970 described Allied (U.S.-RVNAF) operations in the "Fishhook" as did the State Department's GIST No. 27 of May 1970 which was prepared for public use.

NSC and JCS reviews completed

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

11 August 1975

MEMO FOR BILL STEARMAN

FROM: BUD McFARLANE

The General still wonders whether we, that is, the White House Press Office, Defense or any public official (as opposed to press speculation) actually acknowledged the "Fishhook" operation as an American operation.

Thanks.

2838

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TOP SECRET
ATTACHMENTS

July 30, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: WILLIAM L. STEARMAN

SUBJECT: Declassification Request

You asked if we ever acknowledged the "Fishhook" operation as an American operation. (See document at Tab A.)

We have checked this thoroughly and have discovered no "Fishhook" operation other than our well publicized 1970 incursion into Cambodia, which was apparently labled by some as the "Fishhook" operation.

With regard to your comment concerning the description of the documents in the Adams article, the nature of the study and the documents on which it was based, of which John Court wrote the precis, are described in the marked paragraphs beginning at the paper clip.

TOP SECRET
ATTACHMENTS

2838

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Have we ever
acknowledged publicly
the Fishhook operation
as an American operation?

The Adams article hardly
describes the documents,
even partially.

MEMORANDUM

2838

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL/TOP SECRET
ATTACHMENT

June 23, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

THROUGH: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis

SUBJECT: Request for Declassification of 1970 Memo on VC Military Proselyting

CIA has asked us to review for purposes of declassification the May 11, 1970 memorandum from Larry Lynn to you, (at Tab A), enclosing memoranda to the President and to DCI Helms, on the subject of VC military proselying and penetration within the GVN and RVNAF. (The memos to the President and Helms were subsequently signed and forwarded without change.)

The memoranda were included in a package of material supplied to CIA for declassification review by Congressman Pete McCloskey. All of the other material came from the files of Sam Adams, a former CIA employee, who had apparently made it available to the Congressman. In a recent Harper's article by Adams (Tab B), he refers to the NSC memo on page 11.

The Lynn package has been reviewed by Dick Smyser, Clint Granger and Richard Ober, all of whom agree that the material is no longer sensitive and that the memos should be declassified.

There is the broader question, of course, as to whether, as a matter of principle, we should ever agree formally to release an internal document containing advice to the President from his staff. In this instance, however, the issue is mooted by the fact that the documents are partially disclosed by the Adams article and may be totally disclosed by McCloskey who has the documents and may publish them, declassified or not.

See next page

On this point Bill Casselman in the Office of White House Counsel has (Tab C)

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ATTACHMENT

advised us that because the documents are already in the hands of the person requesting their declassification and release, there are no enforceable exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act that could be invoked to prevent disclosure without a determination that the content of the documents remains classified. Therefore, if you decide that these documents must be withheld, the decision to do so will have to be based upon the need for the continued classification of their content under the guidelines established by the Executive Order governing classification -- i.e. that continued protection of the information is essential to national security.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you agree to the declassification of the memoranda at Tab A.

Approve_____

Alternatively
That we deny declassification on the grounds that these documents contain information the disclosure of which would adversely affect our national security.

Approve_____

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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TOP SECRET

ACTION

May 11, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Laurence E. Lynn, Jr.

SUBJECT: Viet Cong Military Proselyting

At your request I have prepared a memorandum for the President on Viet Cong military proselyting and penetrations within the GVN and RVNAF.

I believe that the enemy's subversive effort represents a serious allied vulnerability in South Vietnam:

25X1

-- It is an accepted fact that ARVN rarely mounts a major operation without the enemy knowing the full details beforehand. Not so widely recognized but of great importance is the role played by VC military proselyting cadre in degrading ARVN performance. These

TOP SECRET

cadre encourage defections and promote indifferent performance by ARVN soldiers by promising favorable treatment for those who sympathize with the VC cause.

These enemy proselyting activities represent a serious drag on Vietnamization. Unless the GVN develops the capabilities to cope with this effort, GVN and ARVN performance will probably not reach the level required to prosecute the war without a large U.S. involvement.

In the President's memorandum I have briefly described the nature of these VC subversive activities. The memorandum informs the President that you have asked CIA Director Helms for a full report on the enemy's proselyting effort and GVN activities to counter it.

RECOMMENDATION:

I recommend that you:

-- sign the memorandum for the President at Tab A,

-- sign the memorandum for Director Helms at Tab B.

Enclosures

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

[TS-HK 15316]

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Viet Cong Military Proselyting

The Significance of Enemy Proselyting

A key but rarely discussed aspect of the enemy's activities in Vietnam is his military proselyting effort. Enemy proselyting activities are designed to:

-- obtain intelligence,

-- degrade GVN and ARVN performance,

-- prepare for political competition with the GVN in the event of a ceasefire or through GVN elections.

VC military proselyting organizations have an estimated 20,000 members, including about 10,000 regular party members. They account for about 25 percent of the strength of the Viet Cong infrastructure.

In addition to this formal bureaucracy, the Viet Cong proselyters have recruited a large network of about 5,000 subversives within the GVN. Another 15,000 VC agents are in the Vietnamese armed forces, a third of whom are officers or NCO's.

In 1969 intelligence sources noted a major increase in VC proselyting and penetration activities. This shift could be read as the prelude to political struggle, i.e. ceasefire, or merely as another tactic to counter Vietnamization.

In either case it is of the utmost importance that the GVN take measures to cope with this threat.

-- We obtained information from a false rallier that on about April 1, 1970 the VC conducted a two week training course for agents who, in mid-April rallied and infiltrated GVN border units to obtain information on possible ARVN operations in Cambodia. These activities in addition to long-standing penetrations may explain why the enemy had two days warning of ARVN's Parrot Beak operation. The enemy also had advance warning of the U.S./ARVN Fishhook operation.

-- It is an accepted fact that ARVN rarely mounts a major operation without the enemy knowing the full details beforehand. Not so widely recognized is the role played by VC proselyters in degrading ARVN performance by encouraging desertions and sympathetic performance by GVN/ARVN personnel. Thus these enemy activities are a real threat to Vietnamization.

The GVN Response

GVN awareness of the problem of proselyting and penetrations within RVNAF has grown and its effectiveness at dealing with the problem has also increased:

-- The number of low level "VC cadres," including proselytors, detained by the GVN has risen considerably. In the Saigon area, about half of the enemy's agents have been rounded up.

-- The roll up of six high-level VC intelligence networks over the last year represents a substantial increase in GVN effectiveness. There has been no comparable roll ups since the fall of Diem.

However, much remains to be done and the GVN is still faced with several intractable problems that hamper its efforts:

-- The members of RVNAF do not report enemy proselyting or known penetrations to their superiors. ARVN records show only 348

RVNAF personnel as having reported approaches by Communist cadres in an eighteen month period ending in June 1969.

-- The widespread VC penetrations of the GVN's security apparatus make it difficult for it to function effectively. For example, one VC agent served as Assistant Chief of the ARVN's Counter-Intelligence Bureau for six years.

-- The VC are able to "legalize" their agents without great difficulty. If they have proper identification, VC agents can join the RVNAF by either enlisting or being drafted. Suitable GVN identification can be readily obtained by the VC. Even without GVN identification, VC can join RVNAF by defecting through the Chieu Hoi program.

-- The GVN is largely unable to hold VC agents once they are captured. A report by MACV in August 1969 indicated that "from 75-90 percent of all Viet Cong intelligence or security agents captured were released within six months to a year of arrest."

In sum, while the GVN is making some progress in improving the effectiveness of its security forces, there is no reason to believe that they have made significant inroads into the existing networks of VC agents, except in Saigon, or that these networks cannot be increased in size and quality.

Conclusion

Enemy proselyting activities and the absence of a determined GVN effort to counter them represents a serious if not crippling drag on Vietnamization.

I have sent a memorandum to CIA Director Helms asking him to investigate the seriousness of this problem and the sufficiency of present GVN actions to counter it. I have also sought his views on any actions we might take to help improve the GVN's countermeasures. His response is expected by June 1, 1970 at which time I will forward recommendations to you on possible U.S. course of action to improve the situation.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Viet Cong Military Proselyting and Penetration Activities

Through the work of the Central Intelligence Agency, I have become aware of the Viet Cong Military Proselyting and Penetration effort in South Vietnam. I understand the Viet Cong have recently increased their proselyting effort and that this could have an important effect on Vietnamization or on any political settlement.

I have informed the President of the scope and nature of these enemy activities. I would like to inform him further on such matters as:

-- your assessment of the extent and significance, particularly for the Vietnamization program, of these activities,

-- the nature and effectiveness of current GVN measures to cope with this threat,

-- alternative courses of action we might take to improve the GVN's capability to counter enemy proselyting and penetration activities.

Your analysis of the foregoing considerations is necessary for a complete assessment of the situation. Please forward your results to me by June 1, 1970.

Henry A. Kissinger

TOP SECRET

HARPER'S

MAY 1975

Sam Adams

VIETNAM COVER-UP: PLAYING WAR WITH NUMBERS

A CIA conspiracy against its own intelligence

IN LATE 1965, WELL AFTER the United States had committed ground troops to Vietnam, the CIA assigned me to study the Vietcong. Despite the almost 200,000 American troops and the advanced state of warfare in South Vietnam, I was the first intelligence analyst in Washington to be given the full-time job of researching our South Vietnamese enemies. Incredible as it now seems, I remained the only analyst with this assignment until just before the Tet offensive of 1968.

At CIA headquarters in 1965 nobody was studying the enemy systematically, the principal effort being geared to a daily publication called the "Sitrep" (Vietnam Situation Report), which concerned itself with news about the activities of South Vietnamese politicians and the location of Vietcong units. The Sitrep analysts used the latest cables from Saigon, and tended to neglect information that didn't fit their objectives. The Johnson Administration was already wondering how long the Vietcong could stick it out, and since this seemed too complicated a question for the Sitrep to answer, the CIA's research department assigned it to me. I was told to find out the state of enemy morale.

Good news and bad news

I LOOKED UPON THE NEW JOB as something of a promotion. Although I had graduated from Harvard in 1955, I didn't join the Agency until 1963, and I had been fortunate in my first assignment as an analyst of the Congo rebellion. My daily and weekly reports earned the praise of my superiors, and the Vietcong study was given to me by way of reward, encouraging me in my ambition to make a career within the CIA.

Without guidance and not knowing what else to do, I began to tinker with the VC defector statistics, trying to figure out such things as where the defectors came from, what jobs they had, and why they had wanted to quit. In short order I read through the collection of weekly reports, and so I asked for a ticket to Vietnam to see what other evidence was available over there. In mid-January 1966, I arrived in Saigon to take up a desk in the U.S. Embassy. After a couple of weeks, the CIA station chief (everyone called him "Jorgy") heard I was in the building adding and subtracting the number of defectors. He called me into his office. "Those statistics aren't worth a damn," he said. "No numbers in Vietnam are, and, besides, you'll never learn anything sitting around Saigon." He told me I ought to go to the field and start reading captured documents. I followed Jorgy's advice.

The captured documents suggested a phenomenon that seemed incredible to me. Not only were the VC taking extremely heavy casualties, but large numbers of them were deserting. I got together two sets of captured papers concerning desertion. The first set consisted of enemy unit rosters, which would say, for example, that in a certain seventy-seven-man outfit, only sixty men were "present for duty." Of the seventeen absent, two were down with malaria, two were at training school, and thirteen had deserted. The other documents were directives from various

Sam Adams is a fourth cousin, seven times removed, of President John Adams. His great-great-great-great-grandfather, also named John, lost an ear at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Mr. Adams raises cattle in Leesburg, Virginia, and is writing a book about his now-aborted CIA career.

VC headquarters telling subordinates to do something about the growing desertion rate. "Christ Almighty," they all seemed to say. "These AWOLs are getting out of hand. Far too many of our boys are going over the hill."

I soon collected a respectable stack of rosters, some of them from large units, and I began to extrapolate. I set up an equation which went like this: if A, B, and C units (the ones for which I had documents) had so many deserters in such and such a period of time, then the number of deserters per year for the whole VC Army was X. No matter how I arranged the equation, X always turned out to be a very big number. I could never get it below 50,000. Once I even got it up to 100,000.

The significance of this finding in 1966 was immense. At that time our official estimate of the strength of the enemy was 270,000. We were killing, capturing, and wounding VC at a rate of almost 150,000 a year. If to these casualties you added 50,000 to 100,000 deserters—well, it was hard to see how a 270,000-man army could last more than a year or two longer.

I returned in May to tell everyone the good news. No one at CIA headquarters had paid much attention to VC deserters because captured documents were almost entirely neglected. The finding created a big stir. Adm. William F. Raborn, Jr., then director of the CIA, called me in to brief him and his deputies about the Vietcong's AWOL problem. Right after the briefing, I was told that the Agency's chief of research, R. Jack Smith, had called me "*the* outstanding analyst" in the research directorate.

But there were also skeptics, particularly among the CIA's old Vietnam hands, who had long since learned that good news was often illusory. To be on the safe side, the Agency formed what was called a "Vietcong morale team" and sent it to Saigon to see if the news was really true. The team consisted of myself, acting as a "consultant," and four Agency psychiatrists, who presumably understood things like morale.

THE PSYCHIATRISTS had no better idea than I'd had, when I started out, how to plumb the Vietcong mind. One of the psychiatrists said, "We'll never get Ho Chi Minh to lie still on a leather couch, so we better think up something else quick." They decided to ask the CIA men in the provinces what *they* thought about enemy morale. After a month or so of doing this, the psychiatrists went back to Washington convinced that, by and large, Vietcong spirits were in good shape. I went back with suitcases full of captured documents that supported my thesis about the Vietcong desertion rate.

But I was getting uneasy. I trusted the opinion of the CI[illegible] the psychiatrists of the Viet[illegible]g's resilience. The South Vietnamese government was in one of its periodic states of collapse, and somehow it seemed unlikely that the Vietcong would be falling apart at the same time. I began to suspect that something was wrong with my prediction that the VC were headed for imminent trouble. On reexamining the logic that had led me to the prediction, I saw that it was based on three main premises. Premise number one was that the Vietcong were suffering very heavy casualties. Although I'd heard all the stories about exaggerated reporting, I tended not to believe them, because the heavy losses were also reflected in the documents. Premise two was my finding that the enemy army had a high desertion rate. Again, I believed the documents. Premise three was that both the casualties and the deserters came out of an enemy force of 270,000. An old Vietnam hand, George Allen, had already told me that this number was suspect.

In July, I went to my supervisor and told him I thought there might be something radically wrong with our estimate of enemy strength, or, in military jargon, the order of battle. "Maybe the 270,000 number is too low," I said. "Can I take a closer look at it?" He said it was okay with him just so long as I handed in an occasional item for the Sitrep. This seemed fair enough, and so I began to put together a file of captured documents.

The documents in those days were arranged in "bulletins," and by mid-August I had collected more than 600 of them. Each bulletin contained several sheets of paper with summaries in English of the information in the papers taken by American military units. On the afternoon of August 19, 1966, a Friday, Bulletin 689 reached my desk on the CIA's fifth floor. It contained a report put out by the Vietcong headquarters in Binh Dinh province, to the effect that the guerrilla-militia in the province numbered just over 50,000. I looked for our own intelligence figures for Binh Dinh in the order of battle and found the number 4,500.

"My God," I thought, "that's not even a tenth of what the VC say."

In a state of nervous excitement, I began searching through my file of bulletins for other discrepancies. Almost the next document I looked at, the one for Phu Yen province, showed 11,000 guerrilla-militia. In the official order of battle we had listed 1,400, an eighth of the Vietcong estimate. I almost shouted from my desk, "There goes the whole damn order of battle!"

Unable to contain my excitement, I began walking around the office, telling anybody who would listen about the enormity of the oversight and the implications of it for our conduct of the war. That weekend I returned to the of[illegible] both Saturday and Sunday I

secretly through the entire collection of 800 odd bulletins and found further proof of a gross underestimate of [redacted] had been fighting for almost two years. When I arrived in the office on Monday a colleague of mine brought me a document of a year earlier which he thought might interest me. It was from Vietcong headquarters in South Vietnam, and it showed that in early 1965 the VC had about 200,000 guerrilla-militia in the south, and that they were planning to build up to 300,000 by the end of the year. Once again, I checked the official order of battle. It listed a figure of exactly 103,573 guerrilla-militia—in other words, half as many as the Vietcong said they had in early 1965, and a third as many as they planned to have by 1966.*

THAT AFTERNOON, August 22, I wrote a memorandum suggesting that the overall order of battle estimate of 270,000 might be 200,000 men too low. Supporting it with references to numerous bulletins, I sent it up to the seventh floor, and then waited anxiously for the response. I imagined all kinds of sudden and dramatic telephone calls. "Mr. Adams, come brief the director." "The President's got to be told about this, and you'd better be able to defend those numbers." I wasn't sure what would happen, but I was sure it would be significant, because I knew this was the biggest intelligence find of the war—by far. It was important because the planners running the war in those days used statistics as a basis for everything they did, and the most important figure of all was the size of the enemy army—that order of battle number, 270,000. All our other intelligence estimates were tied to the order of battle: how much rice the VC ate, how much ammunition they shot off, and so forth. If the Vietcong Army suddenly doubled in size, our whole statistical system would collapse. We'd be fighting a war twice as big as the one we thought we were fighting. We already had about 350,000 soldiers in Vietnam, and everyone was talking about "force ratios." Some experts maintained that in a guerrilla war our side had to outnumber the enemy by a ratio of 10 to 1; others said 5 to 1; the most optimistic said 3 to 1. But even if we used the 3 to 1 ratio, the addition of 200,000 men to the enemy order of battle meant that somebody had to find an extra 600,000 troops for our side. This would put President Johnson in a very tight fix—either quit the war or send more soldiers. Once he was informed of the actual enemy strength, it seemed inconceivable that he could continue with the existing force levels. I envisioned the President calling the director on the carpet, asking him why this information hadn't been found out before.

*A document was later captured which showed the Vietcong not only reached but exceeded their quota. Dated April 1966, it put the number of guerrilla-militia at 330,000.

Nothing happened. No phone calls. Nobody body. On Wednesday I still thought there must I thought the news might have been so important that people were still trying to decide what to do with it. Instead, on Friday, the memorandum dropped back in my in-box. There was no comment on it at all—no request for amplification, no question about my numbers, nothing, just a routine slip attached showing that the entire CIA hierarchy had read it.

I was aghast. Here I had come up with 200,000 additional enemy troops, and the CIA hadn't even bothered to ask me about it, let alone tell anybody else. I got rather angry and wrote a second memorandum, attaching even more references to other documents. Among these was a report from the Vietcong high command showing that the VC controlled not 3 million people (as in our official estimate) but 6 million (their estimate). I thought that this helped to explain the origins of the extra 200,000 guerrilla-militia, and also that it was an extraordinary piece of news in its own right. A memorandum from my office—the office of Current Intelligence—ordinarily would be read, edited, and distributed within a few days to the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department. It's a routine procedure, but once again I found myself sitting around waiting for a response, getting angrier and angrier. After about a week I went up to the seventh floor to find out what had happened to my memo. I found it in a safe, in a manila folder marked "Indefinite Hold."

I went back down to the fifth floor, and wrote still another memo, referencing even more documents. This time I didn't send it up, as I had the others, through regular channels. Instead, I carried it upstairs with the intention of giving it to somebody who would comment on it. When I reached the office of the Asia-Africa area chief, Waldo Duberstein, he looked at me and said: "It's that Goddamn memo again. Adams, stop being such a prima donna." In the next office, an official said that the order of battle was General Westmoreland's concern, and we had no business intruding. This made me even angrier. "We're all in the same government," I said. "If there's a discrepancy this big, it doesn't matter who points it out. This is no joke. We're in a war with these guys." My remarks were dismissed as rhetorical, bombastic, and irrelevant.

On the ninth of September, eighteen days after I'd written the first memo, the CIA agreed to let a version of it out of the building, but with very strange restrictions. It was to be called a "draft working paper," meaning that it lacked official status; it was issued in only 25 copies, instead of the usual run of over 200; it could go to "working-level types" only—analysts and staff people—but not to anyone in a policy-making position—to no one, for example,

the National Security Council. One copy went to Saigon; of Battle Section, carried by an o... who worked in the Pentagon for the Defense Intelligence Agency.

BY THIS TIME I was so angry and exhausted that I decided to take two weeks off to simmer down. This was useless. I spent the whole vacation thinking about the order of battle. When I returned to the Agency, I found that it came out monthly and was divided into four parts, as follows:

Communist regulars	About 110,000 (it varied by month)
Guerrilla-militia	Exactly 103,573
Service troops	Exactly 18,553
Political cadres	Exactly 39,175
	That is, 271,301, or about 270,000

The only category that ever changed was "Communist regulars" (uniformed soldiers in the Vietcong Army). In the last two years, this figure had more than doubled. The numbers for the other three categories had remained precisely the same, even to the last digit. There was only one conclusion: no one had even looked at them! I decided to do so right away, and to find out where the numbers came from and whom they were describing.

I began by collecting more documents on the guerrilla-militia. These were "the soldiers in black pajamas" the press kept talking about; lightly armed in some areas, armed to the teeth in others, they planted most of the VC's mines and booby traps. This was important, I discovered, because in the Da Nang area, for example, mines and booby traps caused about two-thirds of all the casualties suffered by U.S. Marines.

I also found where the number 103,573 came from. The South Vietnamese had thought it up in 1964; American Intelligence had accepted it without question, and hadn't checked it since. "Can you believe it?" I said to a fellow analyst. "Here we are in the middle of a guerrilla war, and we haven't even bothered to count the number of guerrillas."

The service troops were harder to locate. The order of battle made it clear that these VC soldiers were comparable to specialists in the American Army—ordnance sergeants, quartermasters, medics, engineers, and so forth. But despite repeated phone calls to the Pentagon, to U.S. Army headquarters, and to the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I couldn't find anyone who knew where or when we'd hit upon the number 18,553. Again I began collecting VC documents, and within a week or so had come to the astonishing conclusion that our official estimate for service troops was at least two years

been 18,553, but more like ...

I discovered a whole new category of soldiers known as ... the order of battle at all.

I also drew a blank at the Pentagon regarding political cadres, so I started asking CIA analysts who these cadres might be. One analyst said they belonged to something called the "infrastructure," but he wasn't quite sure what it was. Finally, George Allen, who seemed to know more about the VC than anyone else, said the "infrastructure" included Communist party members and armed police and people like that, and that there was a study around which showed how the 39,175 number had been arrived at. I eventually found a copy on a shelf in the CIA archives. Unopened, it had never been looked at before. The study had been published in Saigon in 1965, and one glance showed it was full of holes. Among other things, it left out all the VC cadres serving in the countryside—where most of them were.

By December 1966 I had concluded that the number of Vietcong in South Vietnam, instead of being 270,000, was more like 600,000, or over twice the official estimate.* The higher number made many things about the Vietnam war fall into place. It explained, for instance, how the Vietcong Army could have so many deserters and casualties and still remain effective.

Nobody listens

MIND YOU, DURING ALL THIS TIME I didn't keep this information secret—just the opposite. I not only told everyone in the Agency who'd listen, I also wrote a continuous sequence of memorandums, none of which provoked the least response. I'd write a memo, document it with footnotes, and send it up to the seventh floor. A week would pass, and then the paper would return to my in-box: no comment, only the same old buck slip showing that everyone upstairs had read it.

By this time I was so angry and so discouraged with the research directorate that I began looking for another job within the CIA, preferably in a section that had some use for real numbers. I still believed that all this indifference to unwelcome information afflicted only part of the bureaucracy, that it was not something characteristic of the entire Agency. Through George Allen I met George Carver, a man on the staff of Richard Helms, the new CIA director, who had the title "special assistant for Vietnamese affairs." Carver told me that I was "on the right track" with the numbers, and he seemed an independent-minded man who could circumvent the bureaucratic timidities of the research directorate. At the time I had great hopes of Carver because, partly as a result of his efforts, word of my memorandums had reached

* This was broken down as follows: Communist ... 100,000; guerrilla-militia, about 300,... ...tes,

ie White House. C[illegible] to a community-wide agreement [illegible] the prog-
orth between Saigon and Washington [illegible] had become fairly common knowledge that omething was very wrong with the enemy trength estimates.

In mid-January 1967, Gen. Earle Wheeler, hairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for n order-of-battle conference to be held in Hono-ulu. The idea was to assemble all the analysts rom the military, the CIA, and the Defense In-elligence Agency in the hope that they might each a consensus on the numbers. I went to Honolulu as part of the CIA delegation. I didn't rust the military and, frankly, I expected them o pull a fast one and lie about the numbers. What happened instead was that the head of Westmoreland's Order of Battle Section, Col. Gains B. Hawkins, got up right at the beginning of the conference and said, "You know, there's a lot more of these little bastards out there than we thought there were." He and his analysts hen raised the estimate of enemy strength in each category of the order of battle; instead of the 103,573 guerrilla-militia, for example, they'd come up with 198,000. Hawkins's remarks were unofficial, but nevertheless, I figured, "the fight's over. They're reading the same documents that I am, and everybody's beginning to use real numbers."

I couldn't have been more wrong.

After a study trip to Vietnam, I returned to Washington in May 1967, to find a new CIA report to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara called something like "Whither Vietnam?" Its section on the Vietcong Army listed all the discredited official figures, adding up to 270,000. Dumbfounded, I rushed into George Carver's office and got permission to correct the numbers. Instead of my own total of 600,000, I used 500,000, which was more in line with what Colonel Hawkins had said in Honolulu. Even so, one of the chief deputies of the research directorate, Drexel Godfrey, called me up to say that the directorate couldn't use 500,000 because "it wasn't official." I said: "That's the silliest thing I've ever heard. We're going to use real numbers for a change." Much to my satisfaction and relief, George Carver supported my figures. For the first time in the history of the Vietnam war a CIA paper challenging the previous estimates went directly to McNamara. Once again I said to myself: "The battle's won; virtue triumphs." Once again, I was wrong.

SOON AFTER, I attended the annual meeting of the Board of National Estimates on Vietnam. Held in a windowless room on the CIA's seventh floor, a room furnished with leather chairs, blackboards, maps, and a large conference table, the meeting comprised the whole of the intelligence community, about forty people representing the CIA, the Defense Intelligence [illegible] the Army

ress of the war. This particular consensus required the better part of six months.

The procedure of these estimates requires the CIA to submit the first draft, and then everyone else argues his group's position. If one of the services violently disagrees, it is allowed to take exception in a footnote to the report. The CIA's first draft used the same 500,000 number that had gone to McNamara in May. None of us expected what followed.

George Fowler from DIA, the same man who'd carried my guerrilla memo to Saigon in September 1966, got up and explained he was speaking for the entire military. "Gentlemen, we cannot agree to this estimate as currently written. What we object to are the numbers. We feel we should continue with the official order of battle." I almost fell off my chair. The official OB figure at that time, June 1967, was still 270,000, with all the old components, including 103,573 guerrilla-militia.

In disbelief I hurried downstairs to tell my boss, George Carver, of the deception. He was reassuring. "Now, Sam," he said, "don't you worry. It's time to bite the bullet. You go on back up there and do the best you can." For the next two-and-a-half months, armed with stacks of documents, I argued with the military over the numbers. By the end of August, they no longer insisted on the official order of battle figures, but would not raise them above 300,000. The CIA numbers remained at about 500,000. The meetings recessed for a few weeks at the end of the month, and I left Washington with my wife, Eleanor, to visit her parents in Alabama. No sooner had we arrived at their house when the phone rang. It was George Carver. "Sam, come back up. We're going to Saigon to thrash out the numbers."

I was a little cynical. "We won't sell out, will we?"

"No, no, we're going to bite the bullet," he said.

Army estimate

WE WENT TO SAIGON in early September to yet another order-of-battle meeting, this one convened in the austere conference room in Westmoreland's headquarters. Among the officers supporting Westmoreland were Gen. Phillip Davidson, head of intelligence (the military calls it G-2); General Sidle, head of press relations ("What the dickens is he doing at an OB conference?" I thought); Colonel Morris, one of Davidson's aides; Col. Danny Graham, head of the G-2 Estimates Staff; and, of course, Col. Gains B. Hawkins, chief of the G-2 Order of Battle Section. There were also numerous lieutenant colonels, majors, and captains, all

The military dominated the [redacted] conference. A major gave a lecture on the VC's low morale. I kept my mouth shut on the subject, even though I knew their documents showed a dwindling VC desertion rate. Another officer gave a talk full of complicated statistics which proved the Vietcong were running out of men. It was based on something called the cross-over memo which had been put together by Colonel Graham's staff. On the second day we got down to business—the numbers.

It was suspicious from the start. Every time I'd argue one category up, the military would drop another category down by the same amount. Then there was the little piece of paper put on everybody's desk saying that the military would agree to count more of one type of VC if we'd agree to eliminate another type of VC. Finally, there was the argument over a subcategory called the district-level service troops.

I stood up to present the CIA's case. I said that I had estimated that there were about seventy-five service soldiers in each of the VC's districts, explaining that I had averaged the numbers in a sample of twenty-eight documents. I briefly reviewed the evidence and asked whether there were any questions.

"I have a question," said General Davidson. "You mean to tell me that you only have twenty-eight documents?"

"Yes sir," I said. "That's all I could find."

"Well, I've been in the intelligence business for many years, and if you're trying to sell me a number on the basis of that small a sample, you might as well pack up and go home." As I resumed my seat, Davidson's aide, Colonel Morris, turned around and said, "Adams, you're full of shit."

A lieutenant colonel then got up to present the military's side of the case. He had counted about twenty service soldiers per district, he said, and then he went on to describe how a district was organized. When he asked for questions, I said, "How many documents are in your sample?"

[redacted] the stomach. Instead of answering the question, he repeated his description of how the VC organized a district.

Then George Carver interrupted him. "Come, come, Colonel," he said. "You're not answering the question. General Davidson has just taken Mr. Adams to task for having only twenty-eight documents in his sample. It's a perfectly legitimate question. How many have you in yours?"

In a very low voice, the lieutenant colonel said, "One." I looked over at General Davidson and Colonel Morris to see whether they'd denounce the lieutenant colonel for having such a small sample. Both of them were looking at the ceiling.

"Colonel," I continued, "may I see your document?" He didn't have it, he said, and, besides, it wasn't a document, it was a POW report.

Well, I asked, could he please try and remember who the twenty service soldiers were? He ticked them off. I kept count. The total was forty.

"Colonel," I said, "you have forty soldiers here, not twenty. How did you get from forty to twenty?"

"We scaled down the evidence," he replied.

"Scaled down the evidence?"

"Yes," he said. "We cut out the hangers-on."

"And how do you determine what a hanger-on is?"

"Civilians, for example."

Now, I knew that civilians sometimes worked alongside VC service troops, but normally the rosters listed them separately. So I waited until the next coffee break to ask Colonel Hawkins how he'd "scale down" the service troops in a [redacted] that I had estimated that there were about seventy-five service soldiers in each of the VC's districts, explaining that I had averaged the numbers in a sample of twenty-eight documents. I briefly reviewed the evidence and asked whether there were any questions.

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document I had [illegible] Long Dat District in the southern half of South Vietnam, and its 111 service troops were broken down by components. We went over each one. Of the twenty in the medical component, Hawkins would count three, of the twelve in the ordnance section, he'd count two, and so forth, until Long Dat's 111 service soldiers were down to just over forty. There was no indication in the document that any of those dropped were civilians.

As we were driving back from the conference that day, an Army officer in the car with us explained what the real trouble was: "You know, our basic problem is that we've been told to keep our numbers under 300,000."

LATER, AFTER RETIRING from the Army, Colonel Hawkins confirmed that this was basically the case. At the start of the conference, he'd been told to stay below a certain number. He could no longer remember what it was, but he recalled that the person who gave it to him was Colonel Morris, the officer who had told me I was "full of shit."

The Saigon conference was in its third day, when we received a cable from Helms that, for all its euphemisms, gave us no choice but to accept the military's numbers. We did so, and the conference concluded that the size of the Vietcong force in South Vietnam was 299,000. We accomplished this by simply marching certain categories of Vietcong out of the order of battle, and by using the military's "scaled-down" numbers.

I left the conference extremely angry. Another member of the CIA contingent, William Hyland (now head of intelligence at the Department of State), tried to explain. "Sam, don't take it so hard. You know what the political climate is. If you think they'd accept the higher numbers, you're living in a dream world." Shortly after the conference ended, another category was frog-marched out of the estimate, which dropped from 299,000 to 248,000.

I returned to Washington, and in October I went once again in front of the Board of National Estimates, by this time reduced to only its CIA members. I told them exactly what had happened at the conference—how the numbers had been scaled down, which types of Vietcong had left the order of battle, and even about the affair of Long Dat District. They were sympathetic.

"Sam, it makes my blood boil to see the military cooking the books," one of the board members said. Another asked, "Sam, have we gone beyond the bounds of reasonable dishonesty?" And I said, "Sir, we went past them last August." Nonetheless, the board sent the estimate forward for the director's signature, with the numbers unchanged. I was told there was [illegible] other choice because Helms had committed the CIA to the military [illegible]

"But that's crazy," I said. "The numbers were faked." I made one last try. My memorandum was nine pages long. The first eight pages told how the numbers had got that way. The ninth page accused the military of lying. If we accepted their numbers, I argued, we would not only be dishonest and cowardly, we would be stupid. I handed the memo to George Carver to give to the director, and sent copies to everyone I could think of in the research branch. Although I was the only CIA analyst working on the subject at the time, nobody replied. Two days later Helms signed the estimate, along with its doctored numbers.

That was that. I went into Carver's office and quit Helms's staff. He looked embarrassed when I told him why I was doing so, but he said there was nothing he could do. I thanked him for all he had done in the earlier part of the year and for his attempt at trying to deal with real rather than imaginary numbers. I thought of leaving the CIA, but I still retained some faith in the Agency, and I knew that I was the only person in the government arguing for higher numbers with accurate evidence. I told Carver that the research directorate had formed a VC branch, in which, I said, I hoped to find somebody who would listen to me.

Facing facts

IN NOVEMBER General Westmoreland returned to Washington and held a press conference. "The enemy is running out of men," he said. He based this on the fabricated numbers, and on Colonel Graham's crossover memo. In early December, the CIA sent McNamara another "Whither Vietnam?" memo. It had the doctored numbers, but this time I was forbidden to change them. It was the same story with Helms's New Year briefing to Congress. Wrong numbers, no changes allowed. When I heard that Colonel Hawkins, whom I still liked and admired, had been reassigned to Fort Holabird in Baltimore, I went to see him to find out what he really thought about the order of battle. "Those were the worst three months in my life," he said, referring to July, August, and September, and he offered to do anything he could to help. When he had been asked to lower the estimates, he said, he had retained as many of the front-line VC troops as possible. For several hours we went over the order of battle. We had few disagreements, but I began to see for the first time that the Communist regulars, the only category I'd never looked at, were also seriously understated—perhaps by as many as 50,000 men. No one was interested, because adding 50,000 troops would have forced a reopening of

the issue of numbers, which everyone thought was settled. On January 29, 1968, I began the laborious job of transferring my files from Carver's office to the newly formed Vietcong branch.

The next day the VC launched the Tet offensive. Carver's office was chaos. There were so many separate attacks that someone was assigned full time to stick red pins in the map of South Vietnam just to keep track of them. Within a week's time it was clear that the scale of the Tet offensive was the biggest surprise to American intelligence since Pearl Harbor. As I read the cables coming in, I experienced both anger and a sort of grim satisfaction. There was just no way they could have pulled it off with only 248,000 men, and the cables were beginning to show which units had taken part. Many had never been in the order of battle at all; others had been taken out or scaled down. I made a collection of these units, which I showed Carver. Two weeks later, the CIA agreed to re-open the order-of-battle controversy.

SUDDENLY I WAS ASKED to revise and extend the memorandums that I had been attempting to submit for the past eighteen months. People began to congratulate me, to slap me on the back and say what a fine intelligence analyst I was. The Agency's chief of research, R. Jack Smith, who had once called me "*the* outstanding analyst" in the CIA but who had ignored all my reporting on the Vietcong, came down from the seventh floor to shake my hand. "We're glad to have you back," he said. "You know more about Vietnam than you did about the Congo." All of this disgusted me, and I accepted the compliments without comment. What was the purpose of intelligence, I thought, if not to warn people, to tell them what to expect? As many as 10,000 American soldiers had been killed in the Tet offensive because the generals had played politics with the numbers, and here I was being congratulated by the people who had agreed to the fiction.

In February the Agency accepted my analysis, and in April another order-of-battle conference was convened at CIA headquarters. Westmoreland's delegation, headed by Colonel Graham (now a lieutenant general and head of the Defense Intelligence Agency) continued to argue for the lower numbers. But from that point forward the White House stopped using the military estimate and relied on the CIA estimate of 600,000 Vietcong.

All along I had wondered whether the White House had had anything to do with fixing the estimates. The military wanted to keep them low in order to display the "light at the end of the tunnel," but it had long since occurred to me that maybe the generals were under pressure from the politicians. Carver had told me a number of times that he had mentioned my OB figures to Walt Rostow of the White House. But even now I don't know whether Rostow ordered the falsification, or whether he was merely reluctant to face unpleasant facts. Accepting the higher numbers forced the same old decision: pack up or send a lot more troops.

On the evening of March 31, the question of the White House role became, in a way, irrelevant. President Johnson made his announcement that he wasn't going to run again. Whoever the next President was, I felt, needed to be told about the sorry state of American intelligence so that he could do something about it. The next morning, April 1, I went to the CIA inspector general's office and said: "Gentlemen, I've come here to file a complaint, and it involves both the research department and the director. I want to make sure that the next administration finds out what's gone on down here." On May 28 I filed formal charges and asked that they be sent to "appropriate members of the White House staff" and to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. I also requested an investigation by the CIA inspector general. Helms responded by telling the inspector general to start an investigation. This took two months. The director then appointed a high-level review board to go over the inspector general's report. The review board was on its way to taking another two months when I went to the general counsel's office and talked to a Mr. Ueberhorst. I said, "Mr. Ueberhorst, I wrote a report for the White House about three months ago complaining about the CIA management, and I've been getting the runaround ever since. What I want is some legal advice. Would I be breaking any laws if I took my memo and carried it over to the White House myself?" A few days later, on September 20, 1968, the executive director of the CIA, the number-three man in the hierarchy, called me to his office: "Mr. Adams, we think well of you, but Mr. Helms says he doesn't want your memo to leave the building." I took notes of the conversation, so my reproduction of it is almost verbatim. "This is not a legal problem but a practical one of your future within the CIA," I was told. "Because if you take that memo to the White House, it will be at your own peril, and even if you get what you want by doing so, your usefulness to the Agency will thereafter be nil." The executive director carried on this conversation for thirty-five minutes. I copied it all out until he said, "Do you have anything to say, Mr. Adams?" "Yes sir," I said, "I think I'll take this right on over to the White House, and please tell the director of my intention." I wrote a memorandum of the conversation, and sent it back up to the executive director's office with a covering letter saying, "I hope I'm quot-

ing yo[illegible]

A short while later he ca[illegible] me back to his office and said, "I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding, because the last thing in the world the director wanted to do was threaten. He has decided that this thing can go forward."

I waited until after the Presidential election. Nixon won, and the next day I called the seventh floor to ask if it was now okay to send on my memo to the White House. On November 8, 1968, Mr. Helms summoned me to his office. The first thing he said to me was "Don't take notes." To the best of my recollection, the conversation then proceeded along the following lines. He asked what was bothering me; did I think my supervisors were treating me unfairly, or weren't they promoting me fast enough? No, I said. My problem was that he caved in on the numbers right before Tet. I enlarged on the theme for about ten minutes. He listened without expression, and when I was done he asked what I would have had him do—take on the whole military? I said, that under the circumstances, that was the only thing he could have done; the military's numbers were faked. He then told me that I didn't know what things were like, that we could have told the White House that there were a million more Vietcong out there, and it wouldn't have made the slightest bit of difference in our policy. I said that we weren't the ones to decide about policy; all we should do was to send up the right numbers and let them worry. He asked me who I wanted to see, and I said that I had requested appropriate members of the White House staff and the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in my memo, but, frankly, I didn't know who the appropriate members were. He asked whether Gen. Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow would be all right. I told him that was not only acceptable, it was generous, and he said he would arrange the appointments for me.

With that I was sent around to see the deputy directors. The chief of research, R. Jack Smith, asked me what the matter was, and I told him the same things I had told Helms. The Vietnam war, he said, was an extraordinarily complex affair, and the size of the enemy army was only—his exact words—"a small but significant byway of the problem." His deputy, Edward Procter, now the CIA's chief of research, remarked, "Mr. Adams, the real problem is you. You ought to look into yourself."

Permission denied

AFTER MAKING THESE ROUNDS, I wrote letters to Rostow and Taylor, telling them who I was and asking that they include a member of Nixon's staff in any talks we had about the CIA's shortcomings. I forwarded the letters, asking his permission to send them on. Permission was denied, and that was the last I ever heard about meeting with Mr. Rostow and General Taylor.

In early December I did manage to see the executive secretary of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, J. Patrick Coyne. He told me that a few days earlier Helms had sent over my memo, that some members of PFIAB had read it, and that they were asking me to enlarge on my views and to make any recommendations I thought were in order. Coyne encouraged me to write a full report, and in the following weeks I put together a thirty-five-page paper explaining why I had brought charges [illegible] after Nixon's inauguration, in January 1969, I sent the paper to Helms's office with a request for permission to send it to the White House. Permission was denied in a letter from the deputy director, Adm. Rufus Taylor, who informed me that the CIA was a team, and that if I didn't want to accept the team's decision, then I should resign.

There I was—with nobody from Nixon's staff having heard of any of this. It was far from clear whether Nixon intended to retain the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. J. Patrick Coyne said he didn't know. He also said he didn't intend to press for the release of the thirty-five-page report. I thought I had been had.

For the first time in my career, I decided to leave official channels. This had never occurred to me before, not even when Helms had authorized the doctored numbers in the month before Tet. I had met a man named John Court, a member of the incoming staff of the National Security Council, and through him I hoped for a measure of redress. I gave him my memorandum and explained its import—including Westmoreland's deceptions before Tet—and asked him to pass it around so that at least the new administration might know what had gone on at the CIA and could take any action it thought necessary. Three weeks later Court told me that the memo had gotten around, all right, but the decision had been made not to do anything about it.

So I gave up. If the White House wasn't interested, there didn't seem to be any other place I could go. I felt I'd done as much as I possibly could do, and that was that.

ONCE AGAIN I THOUGHT about quitting the Agency. But again I decided not to, even though my career was pretty much in ruins. Not only had the deputy director just suggested that I resign, but I was now working under all kinds of new restrictions. I was no longer permitted to go to Vietnam. After the order-of-battle conference in Saigon in September 1967, Westmore-

land's
tion chief that I was persona non grata, and that they didn't want me on any military installations throughout the country. In CIA headquarters I was more or less confined to quarters, since I was no longer asked to attend any meetings at which outsiders were present. I was even told to cut back on the lectures I was giving about the VC to CIA case officers bound for Vietnam.*

I suppose what kept me from quitting this time was that I loved the job. The numbers business was going along fairly well, or so I thought, and I was becoming increasingly fascinated with what struck me as another disturbing question. Why was it that the Vietcong always seemed to know what we were up to, while we could never find out about them except through captured documents? At the time of the Tet offensive, for example, the CIA had only a single agent in the enemy's midst, and he was low-level.

At about this time, Robert Klein joined the VC branch. He had just graduated from college, and I thought him one of the brightest and most delightful people I had ever met. We began batting back and forth the question of why the VC always knew what was going to happen next. Having written a study on the Vietcong secret police in 1967, I already knew that the Communists had a fairly large and sophisticated espionage system. But I had no idea *how* large, and, besides, there were several other enemy organizations in addition to the secret police that had infiltrated the Saigon government. Klein and I began to sort them out. The biggest one, we found, was called the Military Proselytizing Directorate, which concentrated on recruiting agents in the South Vietnamese Army and National Police. By May 1969 we felt things were beginning to fall into place, but we still hadn't answered the fundamental question of how many agents the VC had in the South Vietnamese government. I decided to do the obvious thing, which was to start looking in the captured documents for references to spies. Klein and I each got a big stack of documents, and we began going through them, one by one. Within two weeks we had references to more than 1,000 VC agents. "Jesus Christ!" I said to Klein. "A thousand agents! And before Tet the CIA only had one." Furthermore, it was clear from the documents that the thousand we'd found were only the top of a very big iceberg.

Right away I went off to tell everybody the bad news. I had begun to take a perverse pleasure in my role as the man in opposition at the Agency. The first person I spoke to was the head of the Vietnam branch of the CIA Clandestine Services. I said, "Hey, a guy called Klein and I just turned up references to over 1,000 VC agents, and from the looks of the documents the overall number might run into the tens of thousands." He said, "For God's sake, don't open that Pandora's box. We have enough troubles as it is."

The next place I tried to reach was the Board of National Estimates, which was just convening its annual meeting on the Vietnam draft. Because of the trouble I'd made the year before, and because the meeting included outsiders, I wasn't allowed to attend. By now, Klein and I had come to the very tentative conclusion, based mostly on extrapolations from documents, that the Military Proselytizing Directorate alone had 20,000 agents in the South Vietnamese Army and government. This made it by far the biggest agent network in the history of espionage, and I was curious to know whether this was known in Saigon. I prompted a friend of mine to ask the CIA's Saigon station chief—back in Washington to give another briefing I wasn't allowed to attend—just how many Vietcong agents there were in the South Vietnamese Army. The station chief (a new one; Jorgy had long since moved) was taken aback at the question. He'd never considered it before. He said, "Well, the South Vietnamese Military Security Service has about 300 suspects under consideration. I think that about covers it." If Klein and I were anywhere near right with our estimate of 20,000, that made the station chief's figure too low by at least 6,000 percent.

New discoveries

DECIDING THAT WE DIDN'T yet know enough to make an issue of the matter, Klein and I went back to plugging the documents. The more we read, the wilder the story became. With a great deal of help from the CIA counterintelligence staff, we eventually found that Vietcong agents were running the government's National Police in the northern part of the country, that for many years the VC had controlled the counterintelligence branch of the South Vietnamese Military Security Service (which may explain

Continued

* In mid-1968 I had discovered that Agency officers sent to Vietnam received a total of only one hour's instruction on the organization and methods of operation of the Vietcong. Disturbed that they should be sent up against so formidable a foe with so little training, I had by the end of the year increased the hours from one to twenty-four. I gave most of the lectures myself.

why the station chief's estimate was so low), and that in se[ctors] were in charge of our own Phoenix [pro]gram. Scarcely a day passed without a new discovery. The most dramatic of them concerned a Vietcong agent posing as a South Vietnamese ordnance sergeant in Da Nang. The document said that the agent had been responsible for setting off explosions at the American air base in April 1969, and destroying 40,000 tons of ammunition worth $100 million. The explosions were so big that they attracted a Congressional investigation, but the military managed to pass them off as having been started accidentally by a grass fire.

The problem with all these reports was not that they were hidden, but that they'd never been gathered and analyzed before in a systematic manner. Although CIA men in the field were aware of VC agents, Washington had failed to study the extent of the Vietcong network.

This is exactly what Klein and I attempted in the fall of 1969. By this time we had concluded that the total number of VC agents in the South Vietnamese Army and government was in the neighborhood of 30,000. While we admitted that the agents were a mixed bag—most of them were low-level personnel hedging their bets—we nonetheless arrived at an extremely bleak overall conclusion. That was that the agents were *so numerous, so easy to recruit,* and so hard to catch that their existence "called into question the basic loyalty of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces." This, in turn, brought up questions about the ultimate chances for success of our new policy of turning the war over to the Vietnamese.

In late November Klein and I had just about finished the first draft of our study when we were told that *under no circumstances* was it to leave CIA headquarters, and that, specifically, it shouldn't go to John Court of the White House staff. Meanwhile, however, I had called Court a number of times, telling him that the study existed, and that it suggested that Vietnamization probably wouldn't work. For the next two-and-a-half months, Court called the CIA front office asking for a draft of our memo on events. Each time he was turned down.

Finally, in mid-February 1970, Court came over to the VC branch, and asked if he could have a copy of the agent memorandum. I told him [I] looked at it at a nearby desk [and] closing time Court had disappeared, along with the memo. I phoned him the next morning at the Executive Office Building and asked him if he had it. "Yes, I took it. Is that okay?" he said. It wasn't okay, and shortly after informing my superiors I received a letter of reprimand for releasing the memo to an "outsider." (Court, who worked for the White House, was the "outsider.") All copies of the study within the CIA—several were around being reviewed—were recalled to the Vietcong branch and put in a safe. Klein was removed from working on agents, and told that if he didn't "shape up," he'd be fired.

THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT and perhaps even Helms (I don't know) apparently were appalled by the agent memo's reaching the White House. It was embarrassing for the CIA, since we'd never let anything like that out before. To suddenly say, oh, by the way, our ally, the South Vietnamese government, is crawling with spies, might lead someone to think that maybe the Agency should have noticed them sooner. We'd been in the war, after all, for almost six years.

Court later wrote a précis of the memo and gave it to Kissinger. Kissinger gave it to Nixon. Shortly thereafter, the White House sent a directive to Helms which said, in effect: "Okay, Helms, get that damn agent paper out of the safe drawer." Some months later, the Agency coughed it up, almost intact.

Meanwhile, Klein quit. I tried to talk him out of it, but he decided to go to graduate school. He did so in September 1970, but not before leaving a letter of resignation with the CIA inspector general. Klein's letter told the complete story of the agent study, concluding with his opinion that the White House would never have learned about the Communist spies had it not been for John Court's sticky fingers.

By now my fortunes had sunk to a low ebb. For the first time in seven years, I was given an unfavorable fitness report. I was rated "marginal" at conducting research; I had lost my "balance and objectivity" on the war, and, worst of all, I was the cause of the "discontent leading to the recent resignation" of Klein. For these shortcomings I was being reassigned to a position where I would be "less directly involved in research on the war." This meant I had to leave the Vietcong branch and join a small historical staff, where I was to take up the relatively innocuous job of writing a history of the Cambodian rebels.

Once again, I considered resigning from the CIA, but the job still had me hooked, and ever since the coup that deposed Sihanouk in March 1970 I had been wondering what was going

on in Cambodia. [redacted] coup, the Communist army had begun to disappear from the southern half of South Vietnam for service next door, and I was curious to find out what it was up to. When I reported to the historical staff, I began, as usual, to collect documents. This was my main occupation for almost the next five months. I knew so little about Cambodia that I was fairly indiscriminate, and therefore grabbed just about everything I could find. By late April 1971, I had gathered several thousand reports, and had divided them into broad categories, such as "military" and "political." In early May, I began to go through the "military" reports.

One of the first of these was an interrogation report of a Vietcong staff officer who had surrendered in Cambodia in late 1970. The staff officer said he belonged to a Cambodian Communist regional command with a code name I'd never heard of: C-40. Apparently C-40 had several units attached to it, including regiments, and I'd never heard of any of these, either. And, it seemed, the units were mostly composed of Khmers, of whom C-40 had a total of 18,000. Now that appeared to me to be an awful lot of Khmer soldiers just for one area, so I decided to check it against our Cambodian order of battle. Within a month I made a startling discovery: there was *no* order of battle. All I could find was a little sheet of paper estimating the size of the Khmer Communist Army at 5,000 to 10,000 men. This sheet of paper, with exactly the same numbers, had been kicking around since early 1970.

It was the same story as our Vietcong estimate of 1966, only worse. In Vietnam we had neglected to look at three of the four parts of the Vietcong Army; in Cambodia we hadn't looked at the Khmer Communist Army at all. It later turned out that the 5,000-to-10,000 figure was based on numbers put together by a sergeant in the Royal Cambodian Army in 1969.

From then on, it was easy. Right in the same room with me was every single intelligence report on the Khmer rebels that had ever come in. Straightaway I found what the VC Army had been doing in Cambodia since Sihanouk's fall: it had put together the largest and best advisory structure in the Indochina war. Within two weeks I had discovered thirteen regiments, several dozen battalions, and a great many companies and platoons. Using exactly the same methods that I'd used on the Vietcong estimate before Tet (only now the methods were more refined), I came to the conclusion that the size of the Cambodian Communist Army was not 5,000 to 10,000 but more like 100,000 to 150,000. In other words, the U.S. government's official estimate was between ten and thirty times too low.

My memo was ready in early June, and this time I gave a copy to John [redacted] of the White House the day before I turned it in at the Agency. This proved to have been a wise move, because when I turned it in I was told, "Under no circumstances does this go out of the room." It was the best order-of-battle paper I'd ever done. It had about 120 footnotes, referencing about twice that many intelligence reports, and it was solid as a rock.

A week later, I was taken off the Khmer Communist Army and forbidden to work on numbers anymore. A junior analyst began reworking my memo with instructions to hold the figure below 30,000. The analyst puzzled over this for several months, and at last settled on the same method the military had used in lowering the Vietcong estimate before Tet. He marched two whole categories out of the order of battle and "scaled down" what was left. In November 1971, he wrote up a memo placing the size of the Khmer Communist Army at 15,000 to 30,000 men. The CIA published the memo, and that number became the U.S. government's official estimate.

More distortions

THE PRESENT OFFICIAL ESTIMATE of the Khmer rebels—65,000—derives from the earlier one. It is just as absurd. Until very recently the Royal Cambodian Army was estimated at over 200,000 men. We are therefore asked to believe that the insurgents, who control four-fifths of Cambodia's land and most of its people, are outnumbered by the ratio of 3 to 1. In fact, if we count *all* the rebel soldiers, including those dropped or omitted from the official estimate, the Khmer Rebel Army is probably larger than the government's—perhaps by a considerable margin.

The trouble with this kind of underestimate is not simply a miscalculation of numbers. It also distorts the meaning of the war. In Cambodia, as in the rest of Southeast Asia, the struggle is for allegiance, and the severest test of loyalty has to do with who can persuade the largest number of peasants to pick up a gun. When American intelligence downgrades the strength of the enemy army, it ignores the Communist success at organizing and recruiting people. This is why the Communists call the struggle a "people's war" and why the government found it difficult to understand.

I spent the rest of 1971 and a large part of 1972 trying to get the CIA to raise the Cambodian estimate. It was useless. The Agency was busy with other matters, and I became increasingly discouraged. The Cambodian affair seemed to me to be a repeat of the Vietnam one; the same people made the same mistakes, [redacted] was

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL/
TOP SECRET ATTACHMENT

June 4, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JEANNE DAVIS

FROM: BILL CASSELMAN

SUBJECT: Request for Declassification of 1970 Documents on VC Military Proselyting

You have asked for our comments on the attached proposed memorandum to Dr. Kissinger recommending declassification of the above-cited documents.

We note that the alternative to your recommendation is to deny declassification on the grounds that these documents are "advisory document[s] to the President from his staff." Assuming the request for declassification is being made under Executive Order 11652 (March 8, 1972), as amended, we know of no basis under that Order for denying declassification solely because the documents in question are advisory to the President. In fact, only one of the three documents is even addressed to the President. The other two documents appear to be inter and intra-agency memoranda originated by the staff of the National Security Council.

Since all of the documents are in the hands of the person requesting their declassification--in this case a Member of Congress--we see no enforceable exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) that could be invoked to prevent disclosure. Moreover, any issue of confidentiality has been mooted by the fact that the documents have been partially disclosed to the press and totally disclosed to the Member of Congress.

Therefore, if Dr. Kissinger seeks to withhold these documents, we are of the opinion that he should do so based upon the need for their continued

CONFIDENTIAL/TOP SECRET ATTACHMENT

classification in the interests of national security under Section 4 of E.O. 11652. In addition, regardless of classification, the documents might be protected under the so-called "sources and methods" section of the National Security Act (50 U.S.C. 403(d)(3)). This, of course, would depend upon the extent to which the Director of Central Intelligence believes the documents need to be protected from unauthorized disclosure. (However, there is some question as to whether this section can be enforced against a Member of Congress who would divulge such information on the floor of the House of Representatives under the cloak of legislative immunity).

In short, we disagree with the premise of the alternative recommendation, and advise that if disclosure is sought to be prevented that such action be based upon the need for the continued classification of the documents and, if appropriate, reliance upon the statutory authority of the DCI to protect intelligence sources and methods.

Enclosure

L SECURITY COUNCIL

Date: 5-21-75

TO: Mr. Casselman

For clearance and/or comments
and return to me.AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Jeanne W. Davis
Staff Secretary
(Ext. 3440-1)

Attachment

MEMORANDUM

2838

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL/TOP SECRET
ATTACHMENT

May 8, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

THROUGH: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis

SUBJECT: Request for Declassification of 1970 Memo on VC Military Prosel

CIA has asked us to review for purposes of declassification the May 11, 1970 memorandum from Larry Lynn to you, (at Tab A) enclosing memoranda to the President and to DCI Helms, on the subject of VC military proselyting and penetration within the GVN and RVNAF (The memos to the President and Helms were subsequently signed and forwarded without change.)

The memoranda were included in a package of material supplied to CIA for declassification review by Congressman Pete McCloskey. All of the other material came from the files of Sam Adams, a former CIA employee, who had apparently made it available to the Congressman. In a recent Harper's article by Adams (Tab B), he refers to the NSC memo on page 11.

The Lynn package has been reviewed by Dick Smyser, Clint Granger and Richard Ober, all of whom agree that the material is no longer sensitive and that the memos should be declassified. There is the broader question, of course, as to whether we should ever agree formally, as a matter of principle, to release an internal document containing advice to the President from his staff. This issue is somewhat mooted by the fact that McCloskey already has the document, and may publish it in any event, declassified or not.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you agree to the declassification of the memoranda at Tab A.

Approve_____

ALTERNATIVELY

That we deny declassification on the grounds that this is an advisory document to the President from his staff.

Approve_____

CONFIDENTIAL/TOP SECRET ATTACHMENT

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 10, 1975

Jeanne Davis

Do we have a Buchen opinion on the Executive Privilege issue? I expect it will be in accord with your recommendation but we probably ought to reflect it for the record.

#2838

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

JWD

I see no problem in declassifying these memoranda.

Ken Quinn

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 7, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JEANNE W. DAVIS

FROM: Richard Ober

SUBJECT: CIA Request for Review of 1970 Memorandum on VC Military Proselyting and Penetration

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum of May 5, 1975

Providing CIA has no objection to declassification of the attachments to reference on grounds of intelligence sources or methods, I see no objection to declassifying these documents for release to Congressman McCloskey. I recommend that rather than having the response to this request go from CIA to the Congressman, you respond directly to him on behalf of the NSC.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 6, 1975

JWD:

REF 2838

Dick Smyser's comments are as follows:

There is no substantive problem with declassifying these three documents. We should consider, however, Secretary Kissinger's feelings about releasing internal documents which constitute advice to the President from his staff. Following this line, it would be highly inappropriate to release the Lynn to Kissinger and HAK to Pres memos.

MEMORANDUM

2838

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TOP SECRET
Attachments

May 5, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Smyser
Mr. Stearman
Col. Granger
Mr. Ober

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis

SUBJECT: CIA Request for Review of 1970 Memorandum VC Military Proselyting and Penetration

CIA has asked us to review for declassification the attached three 1970 documents prepared by Larry Lynn, which have been sent to CIA by Congressman McCloskey. You should know that the memoranda to the President and DCI Helms were signed and sent without change.

May I please have your views on declassification of all or portions of the documents by c.o.b. Wednesday, May 7.

Attachments

TOP SECRET
Attachments

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 1, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JEANNE W. DAVIS

FROM: CLINTON E. GRANGER

SUBJECT: Request by Representative McCloskey for Declassification of NSC Documents on VC Military Proselyting

I have reviewed the May 1970 NSC documents on Viet Cong Military Proselyting which Representative McCloskey has requested be declassified. I do not believe the information contained in these documents is currently sensitive and consequently recommend their declassification.

SENDER WILL CHECK CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM

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OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP

TO	NAME AND ADDRESS	DATE	INITIALS
1	Mrs. Jeanne Davis NSC Staff		
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

	ACTION		DIRECT REPLY		PREPARE REPLY
	APPROVAL		DISPATCH		RECOMMENDATION
	COMMENT		FILE		RETURN
	CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION		SIGNATURE

Remarks:

Per our telephone conversation.

FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER

FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.	DATE
[redacted] 7486	1 May 75

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