

EXTRACTS OF STATEMENTS BY ROBERT S. McNAMARA ON THE OUTLOOK IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(January 1, 1963 through

1. January 30, 1963 - House Armed Services Committee

"As I have said before on several occasions, victory over the Viet Cong will most likely take many years."

2. February 10, 1963 - AP Interview

Question: What is your assessment of the prospects in South Vietnam a year after this country started its big drive to help the pro-Western government stamp out the Communist guerrillas?

Answer: You may recall that while I have expressed satisfaction on several occasions during the past year with the progress of the operations in South Vietnam, I have on each occasion cautioned against the conclusion that the progress is leading toward a near-term victory. On each occasion I have indicated that a period of years would be required to wipe out the Communist aggression in that country. Progress has been made, however, during this past year. I can cite some of the factors that lead me to make that statement - - -

I cite these as favorable factors indicating that we believe the South Vietnamese government and we have made progress during this past year. But I don't wish to indicate to you that that progress has resulted or will result in the near future in defeat of the Viet Cong. We have blunted the attack, but we haven't defeated it.

3. February 19, 1963 - Senate Armed Services Committee

Senator Stennis: Mr. Secretary, I have noticed a release of a statement by you in relation to Vietnam in which you said in substance it would be a long hard struggle. Could you specify a little more, you are not expecting any victory or any accomplishment there or termination of goals or anything like that for several years, is that right? That is what I inferred from your statement anyway.

Secretary McNamara: I hope for a gradual strengthening of the control of the Government over the activities of that nation, and a gradual weakening of the influence of the Viet Cong. I think this will go on, I hope it will go on, for a substantial period in the future. I can't really put a number on the years involved, but I think it would be maybe 3 or 4 years.

4. February 28, 1963 - Press Conference

Question: Mr. Secretary, you were very optimistic in your foreword to your budget message about the progress of things in South Vietnam. General Wheeler was also optimistic. Are you still optimistic or do you think it may take a little longer?

Secretary McNamara: I don't believe I have ever indicated it would be other than a long, hard struggle extending over a period of years. I have felt that way in the past after each of my meetings with our commanders in South Vietnam and with the Ambassador in South Vietnam. I have so reported after each of the visits I have held with those individuals both in Honolulu and Saigon. I feel exactly the same way today. I am optimistic in the sense that progress is discernible. The drive of the Viet Cong supported by the North Vietnamese against the established government in South Vietnam has been blunted.

There are a number of factors that are favorable, a number of indications that the South Vietnamese are stronger in relation to the Viet Cong than they were a year ago. In that sense there has been progress. For that reason I am optimistic. But I am not predicting the termination of the conflict. It will be a long, hard, dangerous conflict. - - -

I want to repeat again that although there has been a favorable development in the ratio of Viet Cong versus South Vietnamese casualties, a favorable development in the improvement in the ratio of arms captured by the South Vietnamese versus the Viet Cong, a favorable development in the reduction in Viet Cong incidents, nonetheless the Viet Cong have been able to reinforce their forces, they have been able to replace all their losses, and they continue to function as a very dangerous arm of the North Vietnamese and Red Chinese Communist parties.

5. June 13, 1963 - Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Although the conflict [in Vietnam] will continue for some time to come, I believe we are making significant gains, particularly in the carrying through of the vital strategic hamlet program, in the gradual extension of government control, and in the key indices of comparative defection and the growth in spontaneous intelligence reflecting the growing loyalty and confidence of the people of Vietnam in their government. It may be of interest to note that in recent weeks we have talked to representatives of other allied and neutral nations who have been observing the picture closely; they share the judgment that we are making significant progress against the Viet Cong.

Senator Aiken: I noticed that you, - - -, were more optimistic over the situation in Vietnam, and feel that that is coming to a successful conclusion.

McNamara: Senator Aiken, I would not wish to obscure the very serious crisis in that country associated with the conflict between the Buddhist sect and the Government. I think this is a cause for great concern. But excluding that factor, progress against the Viet Cong, which I specifically referred to in my statement, has been very satisfactory indeed.

6. July 19, 1963 - Press Conference

Question: Do the religious problems in Vietnam have an active effect on the military effort?

McNamara: I think the effect of the religious controversy, or what started out, at least, as a religious controversy in Vietnam, has been limited to date on the military effort. The military operations in South Vietnam have been proceeding very satisfactorily and this is true no matter what method you apply to them. If you examine the casualty rates, the rate of incidents, the relative exchange of weapons, those gained versus those lost, the number of prisoners taken, the number of defectors, for example -- any one of these measures that you apply to current military operations compared with those of a year ago, or two years ago, indicate that they have been proceeding very, very satisfactorily indeed. We are quite pleased with the results. But I don't think they can help but be affected if the current controversies, religious and/or political, continue into the future for any extended period of time. - - -

7. September 23, 1963 - Planeside Press Interview, Andrews AFB

Question: Could you summarize the purpose of your visit [to South Vietnam]?

McNamara: Yes. Until very recently the progress of the military effort of the South Vietnamese, assisted by the United States, against the Viet Cong was proceeding very satisfactorily. It is our purpose to determine whether that military effort has been adversely affected by the unrest of the past several weeks. For that purpose President Kennedy, after consultation with Ambassador Lodge, has asked General Taylor and me to visit Saigon and extensively review the military program there.

8. September 25, 1963 - CBS Interview

Question: Might the war [in South Vietnam] be won on the battlefield and lost in Saigon?

McNamara: The current period is a difficult one to appraise. Certainly, instability has been accentuated in the last several weeks by the actions of the government. It is entirely possible that they have alienated important elements of the population, and unless the government and the population can work together in a unified effort to defeat the Viet Cong, they won't be defeated.

9. October 2, 1963 - White House Statement

1. The security of South Vietnam is a major interest of the United States as other free nations. We will adhere to our policy of working with the people and government of South Vietnam to deny this country to communism and to suppress the externally stimulated and supported insurgency of the Viet Cong as promptly as possible. Effective performance in this undertaking is the central objective of our policy in South Vietnam.

2. The military program in South Vietnam has made progress and is sound in principle, though improvements are being energetically sought.

3. Major U.S. assistance in support of this military effort is needed only until the insurgency has been suppressed or until the national security forces of the Government of South Vietnam are capable of suppressing it. Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Vietnam can be withdrawn.

4. The political situation in South Vietnam remains deeply serious. The United States has made clear its continuing opposition to any repressive actions in South Vietnam. While such actions have not yet significantly affected the military effort, they could do so in the future.

10. November 19, 1963 - Planeside Interview, Hickam AFB

Question: We've heard several optimistic reports of General Harkins' of the [SVN] war there and how our American boys are still dying over there, and we noticed today that there was another insurgency action. When can we expect that you are going to start ordering the American boys to start coming home from that war?

McNamara: I expect that the return of certain U.S. personnel will be one of the subjects we will discuss at this meeting. It is our objective to provide the training and logistical assistance which the South Vietnamese Government has requested of us, and upon completion of certain facets of that training, small numbers of the U.S. personnel will be able to return by the end of this year.

Question: Do you consider that the change of regime in Vietnam makes possible a more decisive action now to end the war?

McNamara: I think it is quite clear that the previous regime had lost the support of large segments of the population, and a war of this type -- a war against guerrilla action, a war against subversion -- can only be won with the full support of the people. I think this government is bound to have, and is already receiving, more support than the previous one either had or deserved.

11. November 21, 1963 - Planeside statement, Andrews AFB

The meeting that was held yesterday [in Hawaii] was attended by Secretary Rusk, General Taylor, and myself, and other representatives of this Government. It was a very fruitful worthwhile discussion; we reviewed in great detail both economic and military programs of assistance to South Vietnam. We are very encouraged by the excellent working relationships which have developed between our representatives and the new government in South Vietnam, and we are equally encouraged by the prospects for progress in the war against the Viet Cong.

12. December 21, 1963 - Remarks at the White House

The members of my party and I returned this morning from South Vietnam. We have just completed our report to the President of our observations. We observed the results of the very substantial increase in the Viet Cong activity, an increase that began shortly after the new government was formed, and has extended over a period of several weeks.

During this time, the Viet Cong have attacked, and attacked successfully, a substantial number of the strategic hamlets. They have burned the houses, the fortifications, and in many cases have forced the inhabitants to leave. The rate of that Viet Cong activity, however, has substantially dropped within the past week to ten days.

This rapid expansion of activity, I think, could have been expected. It obviously was intended to take advantage of the period of organization in the new government, a period during which there was a certain amount of confusion -- confusion that you might have expected would result from the replacement of the Province Chiefs and other key administrators in the government.

We reviewed in great detail the plans of the South Vietnamese and the plans of our own military advisors for operations during 1964. We have every reason to believe they will be successful. We are determined that they shall be.

13. January 27, 1964 - House Armed Services Committee

The situation there continues grave. Last September we had hoped we could bring sufficient pressure to bear on the Diem government to persuade it to abandon its oppressive measures against the Vietnamese people and get on with the task of winning the war against the Viet Cong. Although the military situation in the Delta region was still very bad, good progress had been made in the northern areas and especially noteworthy work had been done in the key coastal provinces where Viet Cong strength had once threatened to cut the country in half. In the central area and the highlands, progress had been steady, though slower. The situation was still difficult in the provinces to the west and north of Saigon itself. Throughout the northern two-thirds of the country, the strategic hamlet program had developed very well and freedom of movement in the rural areas had grown steadily. We concluded then that top priority should be given to the Delta region which contains approximately 40 percent of the population. This region has traditionally resisted central authority. It is the center of Viet Cong strength, and the swampy nature of the terrain makes it the most difficult area to pacify.

The first step in that direction had already been taken by September when a third division was moved to the Delta. But we felt that additional measures were needed, particularly the consolidation, rather than the further spread, of strategic hamlets; the elimination of many fixed outposts; better hamlet defenses; and more trained hamlet militia. We also felt that the regular Republic of Vietnam Army units should be reserved for use in mobile actions and for "clear and hold" operations in support of the strategic hamlet program.

With these further measures in view, we felt that a start could be made in reducing the number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam as their training missions were completed. Accordingly, we announced that about 1,000 men were to be withdrawn by the end of 1963 and expressed the hope that the major part of the U.S. military task could be completed by the end of 1965, although we recognized that there might be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. advisory personnel.

In this connection, we must recognize that the U.S. advisory effort cannot assure ultimate success. This is a Vietnamese war, and in the final analysis it must be fought and won by the Vietnamese. To leave our advisers there beyond the time they are truly needed would delay the development of Vietnam's initiative. Therefore it has been our policy to transfer U.S. responsibilities to the Vietnamese wherever this can be done without impairing the total war effort.

Unfortunately, the Diem government did not choose to follow the advice we offered. In November that government was overthrown and replaced by a new government made up of military officers and civilians. The Viet Cong was quick to take advantage of the growing opposition to the Diem government and the period of uncertainty following its overthrow. Viet Cong activities were already increasing in September and continued to increase at an accelerated rate in October and November, particularly in the Delta area. And I must report that they have made considerable progress since the coup.

The new government, however, has considerably more popular support than its predecessor and the Military Revolutionary Committee is beginning to take action to intensify military operations and to improve civil administration. The strategic hamlet program which had been overextended in the Delta area is now being built more solidly. And the new government is now applying "clear and hold" tactics in that area.

We hope that, with our full support, the new government can take hold and eventually suppress the Viet Cong insurrection. The dry season will give us a firmer basis for this judgment. However, the survival of an independent government in South Vietnam is so important to the security of all of Southeast Asia and to the free world that I can conceive of no alternative other than to take all necessary measures within our capability to prevent a Communist victory. We must prove that Communist aggression cannot succeed through subversion, but will fail as surely as it has failed in direct confrontation.

14. January 27, 1964 - Brinkley on NBC

McNamara said the war in South Vietnam has improved very little, if any, since the new government took over, and he thought the U.S. must take all necessary measures to prevent a Communist victory.

15. January 27, 1964 - CBS-TV

Cronkite reported that McNamara's progress report on the war against Communism in Vietnam was far from optimistic. He confirmed reports that the enemy had successfully taken advantage of the change in regimes there.

McNamara [in film clip]: I think we should go back to the period immediately following the coup. As you might have expected, there was a period of instability during the reorganization of the government. The Viet Cong, the Communist insurgents, took advantage of that period of instability, increased the rate of their attacks and greatly increased the pressure they were putting on the South Vietnamese, particularly in the rice-rich Delta area south of Saigon.

That period of increased Viet Cong pressure endured both through November and December. Since that time, however, government forces have been greatly strengthened, and we're seeing a reversal of that situation today. Much remains to be done.

16. January 28, 1964 - Pentagon Press Conference

Question: Could you expand a bit on your statement about the war in Vietnam which you made to the House Committee yesterday?

McNamara: The situation in Vietnam is this: The coup took place on November 2d, and at that time the military junta took control of the political administration of the country, and there was what you might have expected -- a period of turmoil and instability, uncertainty, as the responsibility for the government shifted.

The Viet Cong took advantage of that, as you would have expected they would. They increased the intensity of their attacks, increased the number of their attacks several fold, and particularly in the area south of Saigon, the Delta area, major portions of which had been under the control of the Communists for more than 20 years, way back into the early 1940's.

The Communists moved in, and never at any time since roughly 1940 have major areas of that Delta been under the control of anyone other than the Communists. In any event, the Viet Cong, expanding from those Communist bases, those long-held Communist bases in the Delta, raised the intensity of their attacks, and had many successes during the period of November and December as the new government formed and consolidated its activities.

The government was made up of military leaders primarily, as you know, excluding the Prime Minister To, who was a civilian. But General Don, General Minh, General Dinh -- all of the others that are members of that committee -- in effect held dual roles. They retained their responsibility for direction of military operations while at the same time they assumed this additional responsibility for the administration of the political and economic institutions of that country, a country under severe attack from the Communists.

You can imagine, therefore, that something suffered, and I think that what suffered was the military administration or the administration of military operations, as their attention was forced onto these political and economic problems. They took action, as I remember, toward the latter part of December or early in January, to divide their responsibilities, appointed additional military commanders, sorted out the responsibilities so that greater concentration on military problems was possible, and there has been a very noticeable improvement in the operations as a result.

The Viet Cong attacks have decreased in intensity and number and the government successes have increased. The situation in the Delta remains grave, but I am encouraged by the progress of the last two weeks.

17. February 3, 1964 - Joint Senate Armed Services/Appropriations Committees

Question: Would you make a few comments about the new South Vietnamese government?

McNamara: I can't speak with any real authority on it. I spent considerable time with General Khanh during my visits to Vietnam. He has impressed me as a very intelligent, articulate, courageous, aggressive, determined Army commander. I felt that before he entered the Government last week and I feel it today. But I speak of him in my association with him as an Army commander, not as a Chief of State. I am not prepared to evaluate his qualities in that latter role, although I think that many of the characteristics that I have observed in him as an army commander will stand him in good stead in his role as Chief of State.

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McNamara: Last fall I was not as optimistic perhaps about the course of the war as I was about being able to bring back our personnel in certain numbers by the end of last year and also in increments. I still am hopeful of doing that. We did, of course, bring back a thousand men toward the latter part of last year. I am hopeful we can bring back additional numbers of men. I say this because I personally believe this is a war the Vietnamese must fight. It is a guerrilla war that must be fought by Vietnamese countering the local Viet Cong guerrillas. I don't believe we can take on that combat task for them. I do believe we can carry out training. We can provide advice and logistical assistance. But after all, the training, by the very nature of the work, comes to an end at a certain point. We will have started this expanded training program and carried it out for a period of four years, by the end of next year. - - -

I don't believe we should leave our men there to substitute for Vietnamese men who are qualified to carry out the task. This is really the heart of our proposal. I think it was a sound proposal then and I think so now. I don't in any way wish to minimize the difficulties we face in Vietnam. I think they are great but I do believe we must count on the Vietnamese to carry the burden of the war, particularly in terms of supplying men to carry out the combat tasks.

Question: How about the new leaders in South Vietnam? Do they have any more appeal to the local people than their predecessors?

McNamara: I don't know. I can't really speak to that other than to say that in the Second Corps area, which was General Khanh's corps, I was very impressed by what little a Westerner could observe of the relationship between the commanding general of the corps and the local people. I visited numerous hamlets and villages with him during various trips to South Vietnam in his corps area and everywhere he was very well received by the local people. Whether that condition will carry on in his present role, I can't say.

18. March 5, 1964 - Pentagon Press Conference

Question: How are we doing in South Vietnam?

McNamara: During [the past four months] the country has had three governments, each of the new governments has changed cabinet members, each of the new governments has changed provincial governors, and each of the new governments has made changes in the senior military leadership. The Viet Cong have sought to take advantage of the resulting period of confusion. They have substantially increased their rate of incidents, their terror attacks, their harassments, and their military attacks upon the Vietnamese. That level of attack is higher today than it was six months ago, it is lower today than it was at some times within the past few weeks, and it is lower today than it was in November and December. What the future holds, I can't say.

19. March 6, 1964 - Planeside at Hickam AFB

Question: You were quoted yesterday as saying that the situation now in Vietnam was grave. Is that a correct summing up of your views?

McNamara: Yes, I think so.

20. March 17, 1964 - White House Release

Secretary McNamara and General Taylor today reported fully to President Johnson and the members of the National Security Council [on the situation in South Vietnam].

Comparing the situation to last October, when McNamara and General Taylor last reported fully on it, there have unquestionably been setbacks. The Viet Cong have taken maximum advantage of two changes of government, and of more long-standing difficulties, including a serious weakness and over-extension which had developed in the basically sound hamlet program. The supply of arms and cadres from the north has continued; careful and sophisticated control of Viet Cong operations has been apparent; and evidence that such control is centered in Hanoi is clear and unmistakable.

To meet the situation, General Khanh and his government are acting vigorously and effectively. They have produced a sound central plan for the prosecution of the war, recognizing to a far greater degree than before the crucial role of economic and social, as well as military, action to ensure that areas cleared of the Viet Cong survive and prosper in freedom.

[The details of the plan were outlined.]

Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their overall conclusion that with continued vigorous leadership from General Khanh and his government, and the carrying out of these steps, the situation can be significantly improved in the coming months.

21. March 24, 1964 - House Appropriations Committee

The situation as we found it is as follows: We believe that the military tools and the concepts which the Government of South Vietnam and the United States have employed are generally sound and adequate. We think some improvements are required as I will mention in a moment.

We believe that the U.S. policy in reducing U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam as the Vietnamese become capable of carrying on the logistical training and other programs which we are presently supplying to them is sound and should be continued.

As to the situation itself, I believe it has been unquestionably growing worse since last September. This deterioration can be measured in a variety of ways. - - -

As another indication of the deterioration, I think that there are large groups of the population today that are showing signs of apathy and indifference. You can measure this in terms of desertion rates or in terms of draft dodging or in terms of the obvious morale or lack of morale of the militia forces.

I think in the past 90 days there has been some noticeable weakening of the Government position.

Another factor affecting the present situation that must be recognized is that the political control structure in a country which extends from Saigon down through the provinces and the districts and into the hamlets has, in certain cases, practically disappeared following the November 1 coup and you can measure the deterioration of the political control structure by such factors as the shifts in the number of provincial governors.

Furthermore, almost all of the major military commands have changed hands twice since the first of November. You can imagine, therefore, the disorder and confusion that resulted because of these administrative changes.

Another factor of importance in the present situation is the very strong, continued support of the insurgency movement by the North Vietnamese. You can measure this in various ways. One of the significant factors we have encountered in the last few months is weapons of higher caliber than we had seen previously -- weapons supplied by the North Vietnamese, including 75 millimeter recoilless rifles, manufactured by the Communist Chinese, large stocks of machine guns and ammunition of Chinese manufacture.

We captured in one attack on the 24th of December 5 tons of ammunition, 90 percent of which was of Chinese Communist manufacture. I think the greatest factor of uncertainty in the present situation, at least when we arrived in South Vietnam, was the untested Khanh government. You recall he took control on January 30. We feared that his control might be weak and subject to change at almost any time. Investigation on the scene, including consultation with all of the leading U.S. representatives, military and civilian, convinced us that General Khanh does have the general support.

On the positive side there are many favorable factors. Khanh, himself, I felt, based on previous trips, is one of the most active, most aggressive, most imaginative, ablest of the senior military leaders in South Vietnam. He is only 37 years old. He has had little political experience, but despite those handicaps, he brings an active, imaginative, energetic personality to the position of head of state. He has already instituted a number of reforms. He has laid out a national mobilization plan. He is taking his story to the people. He recognizes that the defeat of the Viet Cong in the long run depends on political and economic action, at least as much as it does on military action.

We discussed with him and agreed upon a program of increased effort by the Vietnamese, and increased support by the United States.

This program would include, for example, increasing the strength of the regular and paramilitary forces. It would include reorganizing certain of the paramilitary forces. It would include changing the composition of some of the forces in order to improve the pay of those who are actually bearing the brunt of the casualties today. It would include substantially improving the Vietnamese Air Force. It would include additional forms and quantities of equipment for both their army and their air and naval forces. It would particularly include action to increase the productivity of their rice farms, by adding fertilizer in quantities above those previously programmed.

22. March 26, 1964 - Speech at NSIA Dinner

When President Diem appealed to President Kennedy at the end of 1961, the South Vietnamese were quite plainly losing their fight against the Communists, and we promptly agreed to increase our assistance.

Fourteen months later, in early 1963, President Kennedy was able to report to the nation that "the spearpoint of aggression has been blunted in South Vietnam." It was evident that the Government had seized the initiative in most areas from the insurgents. But this progress was interrupted in 1963 by the political crises arising from troubles between the Government and the Buddhists, students, and other non-Communist oppositionists. President Diem lost the confidence and loyalty of his people; there were accusations of maladministration and injustice. There were two changes of government within three months. The fabric of government was torn. The political control structure extending from Saigon down into the hamlets virtually disappeared. Of the 41 incumbent province chiefs on November 1 of last year, 35 were replaced. Nine provinces had three chiefs in three months; one province had four. Scores of lesser officials were replaced. Almost all major military commands changed hands twice. The confidence of the peasants was inevitably shaken by the disruption in leadership and the loss of physical security. Army and paramilitary desertion rates increased, and the morale of the hamlet militia -- the "Minutemen" --

fell. In many areas, power vacuums developed causing confusion among the people and a rising rate of rural disorders.

The Viet Cong fully exploited the resultant organizational turmoil and regained the initiative in the struggle. For example, in the second week following the November coup, Viet Cong incidents more than triples from 316, peaking at 1,021 per week, while government casualties rose from 367 to 928. Many over-extended hamlets have been overrun or severely damaged. The January change in government produced a similar reaction.

In short, the situation in South Vietnam has unquestionably worsened, at least since last fall.

The picture is admittedly not an easy one to evaluate and, given the kind of terrain and the kind of war, information is not always available or reliable. The areas under Communist control vary from daytime to nighttime, from one week to another, according to seasonal and weather factors. And, of course, in various areas the degree and importance of control differ. Although we estimate that in South Vietnam's 14 million population, there are only 20 to 25 thousand "hard core" Viet Cong guerrillas, they have been able to recruit from among the South Vietnamese an irregular force of from 60 to 80 thousand -- mainly by coercion and "band-wagon" effect, but also by promising material and political rewards. The loyalties of the hard core have been cemented by years of fighting, first against the Japanese, then against the French, and, since 1954, against the fledgling government of South Vietnam. The young men joining them have been attracted by the excitement of guerrilla life and then held by bonds of loyalty to their new comrades-in-arms, in a nation where loyalty is only beginning to extend beyond the family or the clan. These loyalties are reinforced both by systematic indoctrination and by the example of what happens to informers and deserters.

Clearly, the disciplined leadership, direction and support from North Vietnam is a critical factor in the strength of the Viet Cong movement. But the large indigenous support that the Viet Cong receives means that solutions must be as political and economic as military. Indeed, there can be no such thing as a purely "military" solution to the war in South Vietnam.

The people of South Vietnam prefer independence and freedom. But they will not exercise their choice for freedom and commit themselves to it in the face of the high personal risk of Communist retaliation -- a kidnapped son, a burned home, a ravaged crop -- unless they can have confidence in the ultimate outcome. Much therefore depends on the new government under General Khanh, for which we have high hopes.

Today the government of General Khanh is vigorously rebuilding the machinery of administration and reshaping plans to carry the war to the Viet Cong. He is an able and energetic leader. He has demonstrated his grasp of the basic elements -- political, economic and psychological, as well as military -- required to defeat the Viet Cong. He is planning a program of economic and social advances for the welfare of his people. - - -

Conclusion: The road ahead in Vietnam is going to be long, difficult and frustrating. It will take work, courage, imagination and -- perhaps more than anything else -- patience to bear the burden of what President Kennedy called a "long twilight struggle." In Vietnam, it has not been finished in the first hundred days of President Johnson's administration, and it may not be finished in the first 1000 days; but in cooperation with General Khanh's government, we have made a beginning.

23. April 24, 1964 - Pentagon Press Conference

Question: How is the fight in Vietnam going?

McNamara: I think you have to examine two activities in Vietnam at the present time. One is the establishment of a strong political institution and the other is the military campaign. I said before and I want to repeat again that I believe the most important single action that can be taken in Vietnam today is the establishment of a stable political institution. Without that, no military campaign can be conducted effectively. When I first met General Khanh a year or two ago, long before he was head of the government, I was very favorably impressed by him. He is a strong, aggressive, active, intelligent individual. He is providing strong direction for that government. But the government has gone through a very traumatic period since the first of November and it is far from the strong government that he wishes to establish. It is much stronger today than it was a month ago. It is stronger today than it was approximately two months ago on January 30 when he took over. In the period between November 2 and January 30, the government has been run by a committee. I don't believe a committee can possibly run a government effectively when that government is under the pressure of Communist attack as Vietnam is today.

So, in the sense that the political institutions are becoming more effective or becoming more unstable, progress is being made. Now during this period, of course, there have been numerous changes in the administration of the provinces. I think I told you before that some 35 or more of the 41 or so province chiefs have been changed at least once in the last 90 or 120 days. In nine or ten of those provinces there have been three changes. It is as though you had three governments in a state in our country in 90 days. In one of the provinces there have been four changes. All of the senior military leaders have been changed at least twice in the last 90 to 120 days. And there have been corresponding changes at lower levels of both political and military administration.

As you can well imagine, this has created disorder -- there has been a vacuum. Into that vacuum the Viet Cong have penetrated. Their rate of activity has increased dramatically as has their fatality rate. If I remember the figures, they lost about 650 men killed or taken prisoner during the past week. This is, I think, the highest total than at any other time in the last two or three years. The government forces have been under considerable pressure as a result of the increased level of Viet Cong attacks. They have also responded with amazing speed and effectiveness. Their fatalities, however, and their casualties, have been high, again, the highest in the last two to three years.

I think we should expect a period here when the Viet Cong will continue to try to take advantage of the disorder and the vacuum that results from the series of very rapid changes of political and military personnel in the last 90 to 120 days.

I think it will be several months before we see any substantial progress. I think I said when I came back in March that it would be four to six months before any dramatic progress was visible.

24. May 6, 1964 - Advertising Council

Question: Please comment on the situation in Vietnam.

McNamara: The problem is a very difficult problem. We've had three governments in a period of 5 or 6 months. You may recall that President Diem's government was overthrown on November 2d, and the committee form of government that General Minh introduced at that time was replaced by General Khanh's government on January 30th. Each of these governmental changes has brought about what you might expect, a period of turmoil in the administrative agencies. There are about 40-odd

provinces in South Vietnam. In a sense, these correspond to our States. Of the 41 province chiefs, 41 incumbent province chiefs on the 1st of November, 35 have been replaced; in 9 of the provinces, there have been three changes in provincial chiefs since November 1st, and in one of them there have been four.

Similarly all of the major military commanders have been replaced at least once, and many of them two or three times. And these personnel changes have filtered down into the districts and the villages and the hamlets as well. So that there's been a period of disorder, a period of administrative chaos that has followed these governmental changes. And the Viet Cong, the Communist Viet Cong, have taken advantage of this, as you might have expected they would. They raised the level of their tax and increased the intensity of their tax. Of course, their casualties, their fatality rates have risen very substantially. The Communist fatality rates have risen very substantially as a result of this increased level of attack. But so have the casualty and fatality rates of the government forces.

It is a very serious situation there. The first requirement for progress is a stable government. We believe that General Khanh is making progress toward that objective. He's 37 years old; he's had very little formal education, none other than in military fields -- he attended our Command and General Staff School, for example, at Leavenworth, Kansas -- but he's had no formal education in economic theory, political theory; he's had no real experience in political-economic administration, and you can imagine the burden placed on that man when he suddenly catapulted into the position of head of state of a country which is facing the most intense pressure from the Communist bloc, particularly North Vietnam, which is infiltrated with Communist agents who are receiving material and support from outside the borders of that country, a country which has not had a tradition of self-rule, a country which lacks the educated class necessary for efficient administration of both the political structure and political institutions and economic institutions. It's a tremendous burden to place on one man.

Fortunately, he's an active, aggressive, intelligent, decisive individual. Without question, he's the ablest general -- in my opinion -- among the Vietnamese forces. He's acting with considerable skill and he's doing much to strengthen the political base which, as I say, is absolutely essential if we're to achieve economic and military progress.

I think we'll begin to see signs of that progress in the months ahead. It's going to be slow, however; the war's going to be long; it can't be won quickly -- no guerrilla war ever has been won quickly; this one must be won by the Vietnamese themselves. If they're to win it they just have to have a stable political structure within which to operate. We can provide advice; we can provide logistical support; we can provide training assistance, but we cannot fight the war itself.

25. May 14, 1964 - Planeside interview at Andrews AFB

Question: What is the outlook for the war in South Vietnam?

McNamara: As you know, the Vietnamese are fighting an anti-guerrilla war and a ti-guerrilla campaign against the Communist insurgents. It's going to be a long war. It will be a hard war. The path to victory will be long and it will take courage and imagination for both the Vietnamese and for our forces who are assisting them to assure success, but I firmly believe that the persistent execution of the political-military plans which the government of Vietnam has developed to carry out that war with our assistance will lead to success.

26. May 14, 1964 - Remarks to White House Press

There is no question in the minds of General Taylor and me but what the Communists have stepped up their rate of attack in recent weeks in South Vietnam primarily against the rural population and primarily in the form of tactics designed to harass the rural population, to instill terror in them, to erode away their confidence in the ability of their government to provide for their physical security.

These attacks have taken the forms of kidnappings, ambushes, murders, terror of every form. They have been directed particularly against the leaders of the provincial governments, the district governments, the villages. They have kidnapped district chiefs, for example, and literally cut off their heads. They have ambushed the officials of the districts and the provinces. One of these ambushes took place while we were there.

The rate of kidnappings, murders, ambushes has increased very substantially in recent weeks. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that the Government of Vietnam increase its activity to counter these attacks and that we consider ways and means through increased economic assistance, increased military support to assist the Government of Vietnam in that activity.

We have agreed with them that their regular military forces and their paramilitary forces must be increased in size very substantially and very soon. We have agreed that the number of aircraft in the Vietnamese Air Force must be increased.

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Question: What would be your estimate of how many more U.S. training personnel would be needed in Vietnam?

McNamara: I think on balance the number is not likely to increase substantially.

27. May 20, 1964 - Remarks on CBS-TV after appearing before House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Question: Did the Committee members seem reassured?

McNamara: They did indeed, as I think they should be. The behavior of U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam carrying out their role of advisors to Vietnam is outstanding. Everyone of us should be proud of it; every citizen of this country should be proud of it. We should be proud of the Vietnamese. They are fighting for their independence. It is going to be a long, hard war, no question about it. But they are willing to fight and die for their independence. We should be willing to support them to that end. Every senior American I know of, civilian and military, in South Vietnam -- the Ambassador, General Harkins, Commander of the Military Assistance Command, every other man I talked to -- believes that persistent application of our plans will lead to success. I'm certain it will.

28. May 21, 1964 - Speech before National Industrial Conference Board

I was in Vietnam against last week, as you know. I found some progress in the fight there -- progress toward "bottoming out" the difficulties caused by the recent double change in government -- but the journey ahead will still be long, difficult and frustrating.

29. July 15, 1964 - Pentagon Press Conference

Question: Would you give us your appraisal of the situation in South Vietnam, particularly whether new directives have been given to cope with the increasing number of ambushes?

McNamara: I think the point to recognize is not the few dramatic episodes of the last week or two, but rather, the continued high level of Viet Cong incidents, harassment, terror tactics, kidnapping, murder, these Viet Cong-initiated activities are continuing at a high level. As long as they continue at that level, the security of the people is in doubt. As long as the security of the people is in doubt, their allegiance to the government is in doubt. This is the underlying problem in South Vietnam. This is the problem to direct your attention to.

At the same time that I emphasize the continued high level of incidents, I also want to point out two or three very favorable factors and developments in the last few weeks.

We were quite concerned about the high desertion rate or the increasing desertion rate earlier this year. I reported that, I believe, in March and April. Since that time the desertion rate has dropped dramatically, for a variety of reasons; in part, because of the new pay practices. You may remember that this was one of the major recommendations that we made in March. It is one of the reasons why it was necessary to increase our foreign aid, economic and military assistance, to Vietnam, as was done in June. It is having its effect. It is cutting the desertion rate. Not only is the desertion rate dropping, but the recruitment rate has increased substantially, with the result that the total strength of the regular and paramilitary forces in Vietnam is increasing for the first time in many, many months. This is a highly favorable factor. It is due, as I say, in part to the change in the compensation system and in part it reflects, I believe, an improvement in the morale of the people of that country.

Question: On South Vietnam, you mentioned some favorable factors and you mention two: one, the increasing or the reduction in the increasing desertion rate, and the other the recruitment. Was there anything else?

McNamara: I don't think we can expect to give day-to-day accounts of the improvement or retrogression in the situation. But I do call your attention again to this one important point: that the rate of Viet Cong incidents is high. As long as that rate of incidents is high, and by an incident I mean a terror attack, as long as that incident rate is high, it means that the security of the people is low. As long as the security of the people is low in certain areas of the country, their allegiance to the government will be in doubt. It is that which makes the problem for us. It is going to take a long, long time to overcome it.

30. October 22, 1964 - Pentagon Press Conference

Question: Is the situation in South Vietnam better or worse than it was a year ago?

McNamara: I think it is a serious situation today. It was serious a year ago. Today is October 22nd. A year ago it was eight or ten days before the coup that resulted in the removal of President Diem. You will recall that at that time discussions were taking place. General Taylor and I had returned from a trip to Vietnam in September a year ago and at that time we said it was a very serious situation, serious because of political instability. That, of course, is a primary problem today. The Vietnamese are themselves developing a new structure for their government. They are planning a transition from the current government of which Premier Khanh is head, to a new structure sometime within the next week or two.

When they ask for our advice, we are giving it to them in connection with both the structure and the movement toward that new government. This is an extremely important development in their struggle against the Viet Cong.

In addition to the political problems that they face, problems of instability, problems of change of political institutions, the military situation is serious. The Viet Cong remain incapable of meeting the regular forces in any formal engagement. The regular military forces have power sufficient to overcome any Viet Cong elements that have been placed against them. The Viet Cong, therefore, as you might have expected, have concentrated on the terror attacks on the paramilitary forces or in the countryside. These terror attacks have increased in number. They have increased in intensity. They have increased in the number of fatalities and casualties that result therefrom. They are very serious.

Along with the increase in the number and intensity of terror attacks the Viet Cong casualties have risen, as have the casualties of the Government forces. The casualties of the Viet Cong last week for example, were about twice the level of the previous week, and the casualties of both the Government and Viet Cong forces are higher today than they were a year ago.

31. November 10, 1964 - Press Conference, Texas

Question: Would you give us your latest assessment of the chances of winning the war in Vietnam?

McNamara: I think that it's important to recognize what our objectives are in Vietnam. Our objectives are not to align Vietnam to the West as an ally of the West; our objectives are not to utilize the soil of Vietnam as a military base of the West; our objectives are to insure the continued independence of that nation and to insure that it remains free from Communist domination. That has been our objective, that is our objective. I believe we will achieve it. I think some progress has been made recently.

During the past year, we've had a series of problems out there, largely political in character, as you are well aware. In 12-1/2 months we've had four governments and in a society that is under as intense pressure as that society is -- political, economic, military pressure -- you can imagine the instability in all of those fields brought about by the series of changes in government.

At last we have a civilian government, a government that gives some indication of being able to develop a consensus among the power groups in the nation and move the nation ahead to a more effective response to the Viet Cong guerrillas that are attacking and harassing the people.

So I think that today, as compared to a month or two ago, we can look ahead with greater confidence. And I don't want to overstate the case, because during the past 12 months, the Communist guerrillas, recognizing that they did not have the power to confront in open conflict the established military forces of that country, have greatly accelerated and expanded the terror attacks upon the political infrastructure of that country. And when I say the political infrastructure, I mean their attacks upon the political authorities in every echelon, starting at the lowest level, the hamlet, and proceeding up through the village, the district, the province and even the national government in Saigon. These attacks, these terror attacks, have been very successful. I've forgotten the exact figures, but I think these are rough approximations that in the past 12 months the Viet Cong have killed about 500 government officials at all echelons of government and kidnapped an additional 500. To put that in perspective, you have to recognize the total population of South Vietnam is on the order of 12 or 14 million and a portion of that is already under the Viet Cong control. So if you take the remaining portion and maybe multiply by 15 to make it comparable to this country and then think of 15,000 government

officials in this country being murdered or kidnapped in a period of 12 months, it will give you some idea of the very intense pressure that that society is under. And the fact that those people have been willing to continue to fight, to absorb fatalities at the very high rate at which they are absorbing them, and still to retain sufficient capability as a fighting unit to force the Viet Cong into covert as opposed to overt operations, I think it's a tremendous accomplishment and I think sometimes we become weary ourselves, psychologically weary, and spiritually weary, when we look at what we've done.

I've been associated with this four years; the nation's been associated with it for ten. We're going to be associated with it for many years in the future, I'm sure, before we eventually achieve this objective that I mentioned. But I personally believe we can achieve it.

32. February 24, 1965 - Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees

The present situation in South Vietnam is grave but by no means hopeless. On the purely military side there remain a familiar series of problems -- the increasing Viet Cong capabilities, and the losses of combat experienced South Vietnamese small unit leaders and soldiers. However, the past year has also brought some encouraging developments. The regular South Vietnamese forces have been considerably strengthened by the continuing flow of new equipment and by the additional training and operational experience. In open battle, the Vietnamese forces have shown encouraging progress in operational planning, in reaction time, and in inter-Service coordination. The combat performance of regular troops continues to inspire confidence and towards year's end we noted improvements in recruiting and in active duty strength. The approximately 23,500 U.S. military personnel now in South Vietnam continue to carry out their complex advisory and support missions, in headquarters and in the field, with the skill, dedication and bravery we have come to expect of our armed forces.

Question: I believe it was yesterday you reported in public some extraordinary activity on the part of the Viet Cong to cut South Vietnam in half. Can you give us the latest report on this situation?

McNamara: Well, there has been a very disturbing movement of the Viet Cong in the center of Vietnam. In the Kontum area roads have been cut between the coast and the highlands. The railroad has been cut between Nha Trang and Da Nang. Certain of the roads going north of Kontum have been cut, and the Viet Cong have in the Quang Ngai Province and in the province just south of Quang Ngai greatly increased their control of the territory and the population, all this in recent weeks. Exactly what this means and how far it will go we don't know, but it is a disturbing set of actions.

33. March 2, 1965 - House Appropriations Committee

Question: As a South Vietnamese war which we have supported, we seem to have been on the overall losing ground consistently, I believe. Would you agree?

McNamara: No, I do not believe consistently. If you go back over a period of time, the South Vietnamese with our assistance have strengthened their position in the latter part of 1961, 1962 and much of 1963. The situation has deteriorated, I think, over the past year. Today I would characterize it as grave, but it is certainly not hopeless.

* * *

Question: If we continue our military and economic support of the Government of South Vietnam at the present rate and scope and the Viet Cong continue their present level of effort, in your judgment how many more years will pass before a conclusion is reached?

McNamara: I really can't say. I think the period of time required to counter effectively a substantial guerrilla effort of the kind that currently exists in South Vietnam is great, and whether it is 1 year, 2 years, or more, I really can't say, but a long period of time is required to reintroduce effectively peace and stability into a nation that has been torn apart as has been South Vietnam.

* * *

Question: Would it be fair to say that we will be sitting here next year talking about this inconclusive, difficult, costly problem of about the same complexity in South Vietnam that we have today? Is that a reasonable position for me to take?

McNamara: It is difficult for me to forecast the course of events in Southeast Asia, but I want to repeat what I said a moment ago: An effective opposition to a guerrilla campaign requires an extended period of time for the results to be clear. I don't believe that we can be effective in South Vietnam in a short period of time. We expanded our efforts at the end of 1961. We have been there now 3-plus years on an expanded basis. We have been there pursuing these objectives -- the same objectives we have today -- for 10 or 11 years, and I think that it will be more before we achieve them.

The form of our action in the future, whether it be political, economic, or military, is difficult for me to predict.

* * *

Question: We find ourselves in a situation where two-thirds of the country is overrun by Communists. They have almost cut it in half. The Government is a shell. Do you feel that anything is being done now which can be expected to reverse this situation?

McNamara: First let me say that while the control of the countryside and the population by the Viet Cong is substantial, I do not believe it extends to the degree of controlling two-thirds of the countryside. When I say that, I do not wish to minimize in any way the seriousness of the control of the Viet Cong over both people and territory. As to whether anything is being done to reverse the situation, the South Vietnamese continue to fight. That is the most important single action that is required. There is a will to resist. If that were lacking, I think the situation would be hopeless. As long as the will to resist continues, the situation is not hopeless.

* * *

Question: Is it true . . . that even those we think are loyal are not loyal to our side to the point of reporting on their fellow South Vietnamese?

McNamara: It is true that we are not receiving intelligence reports from portions of the population who are terrorized by the Viet Cong. The fact is that the Viet Cong kidnapped or killed about 1,500 hamlet and other government officials in the past 12 months. Multiplying that by 20 to make it comparable to this country, it is just as though 30,000 mayors and council members and other township, city, and State officials were killed in this country in a year. You can imagine the terror that would be affecting our population in areas where that was taking place. In those areas in Vietnam, the people have been so terrorized that we are not obtaining intelligence information such as we obtain in areas where the terror attacks are not taking place.

34. April 7, 1965 - House Appropriations Committee

Question: Is our stepped-up effort there, our direct intervention and air strikes, motivated to some extent by the feeling that time is of the essence?

McNamara: Our increased effort is motivated by the fact that the North Vietnamese were greatly increasing their infiltration of men and equipment into South Vietnam. We recognized if they continued that they will just overwhelm the nation.

35. April 7, 1965 - Press Statement by McNamara at the White House

The military situation in South Vietnam has become increasingly serious during the past year. During that time the North Vietnamese have steadily increased the number of men and the quantity of material which they have infiltrated into that country overland through Laos and across the border between Laos and South Vietnam, over the sea frontiers of South Vietnam. It is through means such as this that they are continuing to support the Viet Cong in their attempts to subvert the established government of South Vietnam.

36. April 12, 1965 - Interview in U.S. News and World Report

Question: You spoke of the change in tactics of the Viet Cong. Does that suggest that they think they are winning the war?

McNamara: No, but it does suggest that they are there in larger numbers today than previously, and that they are better equipped than previously. All the evidence points to this. The evidence that we have from captured Viet Cong, the evidence we have from documents we have captured, the evidence we have from enemy equipment -- all indicates that the rate of infiltration has increased over the past 12 to 18 months. This increase in infiltration has given them a capability they didn't have before, and that capability has permitted them to operate in larger units and allowed them to increase the level and intensity of their attacks, primarily in terms of greater terror and harassment. However, they still don't have the capability today -- on any wide scale -- to openly confront the regular military units of the South Vietnamese Government.

Question: Why are the Communists so successful?

McNamara: The Viet Cong are following terror and harassing tactics: They move in by night. They apply pressure against individuals, particularly the hamlet leaders, seeking to subvert them. When they succeed in subverting them, they remove the power base and the security of the hamlet and cause it to associate with the Viet Cong. They then move on, leaving behind cells that control that hamlet. Particularly, they are attacking the local officials. In terms of our own population, it's as though the guerrillas were killing several thousand -- perhaps as many as 8,000 -- mayors and city officials a year. You can imagine what that would do to our local governments if it were occurring here. They're kidnapping civilians by the hundreds, attempting to destroy the morale of the population, turn it away from the Government. By these means, the Viet Cong are avoiding the need and the necessity for open attack on the Government units. There's only one way to counter that, and that's by effective counterguerrilla action involving the political, economic and military factors within the local hamlet.

Question: Are there any major areas in which the South Vietnamese have succeeded in clearing out the Communists and keeping them cleared out?

McNamara: Oh, yes. There are many -- particularly in and around Saigon. There's a special program under way there at the present time that has that as its objective, and is making progress.

The difficulty, of course, has been that, in the last 18 months, the series of changes in the Government in Saigon has been translated into changes at all levels of government -- province, district, hamlet -- and translated into changes in the military leadership. It has injected instability into both political and military institutions.

This has made extremely difficult the development of effective counter guerrilla campaigns. Such campaigns are very complex. They involve political, economic and military operations. They require, for success, a strong political and military leadership, and it's difficult to get that leadership when you have the number of changes we've had in Saigon. In one period there were changes in about 35 of 42 provincial governments in a period of three or four months. In one case there were nine changes in the government of one province within a period of a few months.

Question: Over all, which way is the trend going?

McNamara: The situation has been deteriorating for the past year, and it's a very serious and grave situation today, but far from hopeless.

37. April 21, 1965 - Planeside at Andrews AFB upon returning from Honolulu Conference

Our attention was directed to the actions in the South. It's there that the war against the guerrillas is being fought, and it's there we must direct our primary attention. I want to mention again the very high level of infiltration of men and equipment into South Vietnam. It has increased in recent months. It is continuing at a high rate.

38. April 26, 1965 - Pentagon Press Conference

I should like to report to you briefly this morning upon our latest estimates of the strength of the Communist forces in South Vietnam, of the support which they are receiving from North Vietnam and of certain of the actions which we are taking to reduce that level of support.

The clandestine infiltrations of personnel and materiel from North Vietnam into South Vietnam continues to play a vital role in providing the Communist Viet Cong with the leadership, with the technical competence, with the weapons and with the ammunition which they need to carry on their insurgency directed against the established government in South Vietnam.

Recent evidence both from captured prisoners and from captured documents has increased our estimates of the number of infiltrators to a total of 39,000. Reports to date confirm the infiltration of between five and eight thousand men in 1964 alone.

In view of the normal time lag between the actual active infiltration and our confirmation of it, I think it is probable that we are in excess of 10,000 men infiltrated from the north into the south during the past year.

Furthermore, recent captures indicate that approximately 75 percent of these men sent from the north to the south were born in North Vietnam. It is clear that the Communists are determined to keep up this level of support despite the drying up of the supply of former southerners, men born in South Vietnam, ordered north by the Viet Minh at the time of the 1954 Geneva Accords. Many of the recent captives are young draftees called into infiltration units that marched south through Laos in units 500 to 600 strong.

With the changing course, changing nature, particularly the intensification of infiltration both of arms and personnel into South Vietnam, the course of aggression pursued by the government of North Vietnam has grown progressively more flagrant and more unconstrained.

The latest step has been the covert infiltration of a regular combat unit of the North Vietnamese Army into South Vietnam. Evidence accumulated within the last month now confirms the presence in Northwest Kontum Province, that is in the central highland area of South Vietnam, around Pleiku and north of Pleiku, recent evidence which we have received confirms the presence in that Northwest Kontum Province of the Second Battalion of the 325th Division of the Regular North Vietnamese Army. It is important to recognize, I think that the great bulk of the weapons which the Viet Cong are using and with which they are supplied come from external sources.

Since 1960 the Viet Cong have captured approximately 39,000 weapons from troops of the South Vietnamese government.

During that same period of time the Viet Cong lost to those Government troops about 25,000 of their weapons and therefore the Viet Cong had a net gain of about 14,000 weapons during this five-year period. Thus they gained only 10 to 15 percent of their overall weapons requirements. The remainder of the weapons, those for their 38,000 to 46,000 regular troops and for their 100,000 irregulars, have come from external sources.

Moreover, it appears that the Viet Cong main force units, their regular units, are being entirely re-equipped and entirely retrained with the newest Chinese Communist family of weapons. For example, 101 weapons were captured recently, three weeks ago on the days of April 5 and 6, from elements of the Viet Cong regiment in Chuong Thien Province. That regiment was operating far to the south in the Camau Peninsula. The weapons which are captured are believed to be representative of the weapons mix of Viet Cong main force units.

Question: Would you say you have successfully isolated the battle field and if you have, would that preclude the movement of large forces from the north?

McNamara: No, I would not say we have isolated the battle field. I hope I have not given that impression. We have impeded the progress of men and materiel from North Vietnam through Laos and into South Vietnam. We have not stopped it and we surely have not isolated the battlefield.

Question: In what way were the Viet Cong, which are operating in South Vietnam, protected by the air strikes against North Vietnam?

McNamara: In two respects. First, as I say, we have slowed down the movement of men and materiel and this has adversely affected the Viet Cong, although I don't wish to over-emphasize the degree to which it has affected them so far.

Secondly, the air strikes against North Vietnam and also the increased tempo of air strikes by the Vietnamese Air Force and the U.S. Air Force in South Vietnam have significantly and adversely affected the morale of Viet Cong captured within the last four to eight weeks.

39. May 5, 1965 - Remarks on WTOP-TV

The number of terror incidents has dropped slightly, perhaps 10 or 15 percent, but the number of company-size, battalion-size actions which they initiate has dropped 50 to 60 percent. It's hard for us to say why. We know our attacks on the infiltration routes are interfering with the movement of additional men and equipment into South Vietnam from North Vietnam, but the probable explanation for the falloff in the number of large unit actions initiated by the Communists is their desire to regroup, retrain, rest and prepare for larger attacks in the future.

1. May 9, 1965 - Interview in New York Journal American

Question: You have been to Vietnam a number of times, you are in consultation with the commanders -- what is your estimate of the situation there?

McNamara: First let me say I think it is perfectly clear that the situation in Vietnam has deteriorated during the past year or a year and a half, both politically and militarily. Following the assassination of President Diem on November 2, 1963, there was a series of new governments -- 10 or 12 -- and this could not help but be translated into uncertainty and confusion in both the political and military structure. As a matter of fact, we saw evidence of that in both institutions during that time. There were conflicts among the generals, a series of military coups, a substantial number of changes of both political and military leaders in the field.

Question: How did the Communists exploit this?

McNamara: All of this gave the Viet Cong an opportunity which they seized upon. They increased the level of their infiltration and they increased very dramatically the level of their terror and harassing attacks on the population. The latter increased by about 100 percent during that period of time. This caused a deterioration of the morale of the civilians in Vietnam. It reduced the security of the peasants and, therefore, made them less loyal to the government. Many of them accepted VC control of their area and paid taxes to them. The government lost substantial control, therefore, of both its territory and population during that time.

Question: Has there now been a change for the better?

McNamara: I think in the last eight weeks there has been an improvement. I do not wish to place too much emphasis on it because we are a long way from turning the tide and we certainly have a long, hard row ahead of us. But there is clear evidence of improvement in the morale of both the military forces and the civilian population during the past eight weeks. This is a reflection of several factors: the air strikes by the Vietnamese Air Force, the U.S. Air Force and U.S. naval air forces against infiltration routes, the increased use of air against the Viet Cong concentrations in the South -- such as the very large attack, 450 sorties, against Tay Ninh base recently, and the introduction of the four U.S. Marine battalions into South Vietnam. All of these actions, and particularly these actions taken together, have given renewed impetus to the Vietnamese people in their determination to fight on.

Question: Then you, yourself, are more optimistic?

McNamara: Yes, I am, but I don't wish to over-emphasize the progress because it has only been a matter of weeks during which this has occurred. It is far too early to state the degree to which it has affected the North Vietnamese either in terms of their morale or their capability.

Question: Did you have any time schedule in mind for achieving your objective?

McNamara: No. The President has repeatedly said that we don't wish to widen the war but we will provide whatever assistance the South Vietnamese require to effectively counter the guerrilla actions, and we will provide it as long as they request us to do so.

Question: How much territory does the Viet Cong control now?

McNamara: It is hard to say because you have to define what you mean by control -- day control, night control, control of tax collections, etc. -- what exactly is it? I would say they have loose control over perhaps a third of the territory.

Question: There's a report that prior to February 7 the VC were about to make their long-awaited strike to cut South Vietnam in half and that you probably averted that by moving quickly into that area.

McNamara: It is possible. We can't say exactly what they were thinking about. But former President Diem, as you know, always worried about the VC cutting the country in half, striking from the central plateau down to the coast, and then moving both ways north and south. They clearly were building up forces in this area, the full potential of which has not yet been seen.

Question: Did they move units from the south up?

McNamara: There is evidence they moved up some units from the south. But there is clear evidence that they used the infiltration of 1964 to build up in this area, and it is in this area that we discovered one of the regular battalions of the North Vietnamese Army.

Question: Why was that battalion moved in?

McNamara: The Hanoi-directed VC have lost large numbers of men -- 89,000 in the past four or five years. With an estimated 89,000 killed, the Viet Cong must keep a constant flow coming in to replace the casualties. It has meant the recruitment of very substantial numbers of men both within South Vietnam and from North Vietnam. The VC simply ran out of individual recruits. Therefore, Hanoi called upon one of their regular units to go into South Vietnam to bolster the VC.

Question: Would that seem to indicate that others may follow?

McNamara: I don't want to predict it, but I think it is possible.

41. June 16, 1965 - Pentagon Press Conference

I should like to bring you up to date upon our latest estimates of the strength of the Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam, and upon the strength of the U.S. combat forces deployed to that country to assist the Vietnamese government in combating the insurgency.

According to the latest intelligence information available to us, the number of hard core, that is the number of full time Viet Cong Communists, regular combat and combat-support forces in South Vietnam, totals approximately 65,000 men. In addition to that, there are between 80 and 100 thousand part-time or irregular guerrillas. The regular and irregular guerrilla forces therefore total about 165,000. In addition, there are approximately 30,000 Viet Cong serving in political and propaganda activities in South Vietnam. As I have reported previously, between 1960 and the end of 1964, infiltration of combat personnel into South Vietnam totaled approximately 39,000 men, all of these from North Vietnam. It is probable that the actual figure exceeded that number, but 39,000 represents the number of confirmed infiltrates. In 1964 alone, for example, we believe that about 10,000 men were brought from North Vietnam to fight in South Vietnam.

In addition, as you know, there is at least one regular North Vietnamese Army battalion in South Vietnam, the Second Battalion of the 325th North Vietnamese Division. That battalion has been located in the central highland region, in the plateau area around Pleiku and Kontum for some time. We have recent indications that as many as 8 additional North Vietnamese Regular Army battalions are also in that highland area.

Moreover, the Viet Cong forces have recently been re-equipped through the infiltration of new weapons, modern weapons from North Vietnam. The net situation at present is that the ratio of guerrilla to anti-guerrilla forces is unfavorable to the Government of South Vietnam. Unfavorable, taking into account the hit-and-run characteristics of guerrilla war, unfavorable taking into account the fact that the mission of the Viet Cong forces, the guerrilla forces, is to kill and terrorize the people, whereas the mission of the Government forces is to protect the populace.

It is worth noting, I think, that in addition to large scale activities which have been reported in the news recently, the attacks by the Viet Cong forces on the South Vietnamese forces. As always, in addition to that, there has been a deliberate program of terror and harassment, actions to kill, maim, capture hundreds of South Vietnamese citizens every week.

Today's terrorist bombing, for example, of the commercial airport at Saigon is illustrative of these tactics. The South Vietnamese regular and para-military forces facing the Viet Cong; total something in excess of 500,000 men. They are facing, as I mentioned, about 165,000 guerrillas, a ratio of something on the order of four to one.

That is considerably less than is recognized as required to effectively deal with guerrillas. We have made efforts to improve these ratios. About 100,000 men are currently being added to the South Vietnamese forces. As you know, through the assistance of U.S. forces, we increased the mobility and firepower and the close air support of the South Vietnamese making each of their soldiers more effective as a result. But this has not been enough. Therefore, we are seeking to correct the unfavorable manpower balance by the addition of combat forces from other nations -- Australia, United States, and Korea.

The United States has deployed nine battalions of combat troops to South Vietnam. These battalions consist of approximately 13,000 men out of the total of about 53,000 U.S. military personnel now assigned to that country. In addition, six new combat battalions, plus additional logistic and combat support, are now moving to South Vietnam from this country. They will be in place in a few weeks. Their deployments will bring the total number of combat battalions to approximately 15 from the United States.

The total U.S. military strength in South Vietnam will then approximate 70,000 to 75,000, of which number about 20,000 will be ground combat personnel.

Question: Do you have anything further for us on the effectiveness of the U.S. bombing raids?

McNamara: . . . So I think the answer is that the attacks have been effective. They haven't stopped the flow of men and materiel. They have reduced the flow, and they have greatly increased the cost to the North Vietnamese of continuing their efforts to support the insurgency in South Vietnam.

Question: The monsoon offensive of the Viet Cong has made certain initial successes. Could you give us some assessment of the effect on the morale of the South Vietnamese Army and Government and how do you combat it? Can we hold on before our reinforcements get there?

McNamara: We have said previously that the Viet Cong were building up their strength throughout 1964. They had built it to a total, we believe, by the end of the year, greater than they had then deployed in combat, and we therefore expected that during 1965, and we so stated publicly, that they would deploy these additional troops after they had been fully trained and fully equipped. We assumed that the deployment of additional Viet Cong troops would take place during the monsoon season, which began roughly the first of May and which extends very roughly through the end of October, depending upon the latitude and elevation of the terrain. Our forecasts proved remarkably accurate.

They did increase the number of troops assigned to combat. They did increase the number of overt actions. They did increase the intensity and level of both their harassment and their overt actions. In the month of May, we saw, therefore, a substantial increase in terror incidents, a substantial increase in the number of attacks, and a very large increase in the number of casualties, both to Government forces and to Viet Cong forces.

The level of casualties absorbed by both the Viet Cong and the Government forces far exceeds in proportion to the population the level of casualties U.S. forces have ever absorbed in any war in our history.

Under these circumstances, it is remarkable that the morale of the government troops is as good as it is. They're fighting well, they are fighting hard, they are fighting effectively.

We continue to see increases in their recruitment. We are continuing to see some increase in their strength, not as rapidly as we would like to see, because the casualty rates exceed those estimated at the time the plans for expanding the forces were developed. But the fact that they can recruit, the fact that the men will fight under these very heavy strains, I think is indicative of the morale in those troops.

Question: If you say that the ratio between anti-guerrilla forces and guerrilla forces is unfavorable now, what would you say would be a favorable ratio?

McNamara: It is difficult to develop a statistical objective here that relates in any way to the assumed requirement of a ten to one advantage in favor of the anti-guerrilla forces. It is difficult because never before has there been as much mobility, fire power and close air support brought to bear upon the guerrilla units.

Therefore, I don't want to give you a statistical answer. I do want to emphasize, however, that the Viet Cong strength has increased to such a degree that it is necessary to expand the South Vietnamese forces, that even taking account of that expansion, which is a very substantial one, that they presently have underway, it will be necessary to still further add to the mobility, the fire power and the air support which we have been adding to recently, and beyond that it will be necessary to provide combat troops in reserve to take care of the emergency situations where Viet Cong in force are about to overrun the South Vietnamese forces. Under those circumstances, our troops will be available to come to the assistance of the South Vietnamese.

42. July 14, 1965 - Pentagon Press Conference

As the President has indicated, I am leaving for South Vietnam tonight, with General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, accompanying me, as is Ambassador Lodge. One of the main purposes of my trip is to review the force levels planned for South Vietnam, the number of U.S. troops to be assigned there, the equipment required, the expected consumption of munitions and other products.

What the decision will be based upon after this review, I can't say. But I do draw your attention to the fact that the Viet Cong are continuing to increase their forces in South Vietnam; that, as we have reported to you on previous occasions, they currently have in that country forces not yet assigned to combat; that the level of operation and the intensity of operation during the summer has increased as we predicted it would; that we can expect further increases in the Viet Cong operations because of the likely commitment of forces not yet committed to combat.

All of these circumstances affect our force levels. If the forces assigned to Southeast Asia are increased, almost surely this will require additions to the Fiscal '66 Budget.

43. July 20, 1965 - Planeside statement in Saigon

Over all, the situation [in South Vietnam] continues to be serious. As a matter of fact, in many aspects there has been deterioration since I was here last -- 15 months ago.

The size of the Viet Cong forces has increased. The rate of operations and the intensity of their attacks have been expanded. The destruction of the lines of communication, both rail and sea and road are extensive, and they have intensified their campaign of terror against the civilian population, but the picture is not all black by any means.

The Vietnamese people continue to be willing to fight and be willing to die in their own defense. The Viet Cong, as you know, are suffering increasingly heavy losses and United States combat forces are adding substantially to the combat power, the military power of the government.

44. July 21, 1965 - Planeside at Andrews AFB

Question: You said out there that the situation had deteriorated. Can you be a little more specific about the situation at this point?

McNamara: Yes, when I made that remark I was speaking particularly of the deterioration between my last trip a year ago and today. The situation is serious today, I think, in several respects. It has deteriorated over the past 12 months. Viet Cong strength has increased dramatically during that period, primarily as a result of the continuing infiltration of large numbers of soldiers -- now regular army personnel from North Vietnam. That increased strength has allowed the Viet Cong to expand and intensify their attacks on the political structure of South Vietnam and in particular to increase their campaign of terror against the civil population.

But the situation isn't all black by any means. The Viet Cong themselves are suffering very high casualties. The South Vietnamese forces continue to fight and die in defense of their nation and the increases in the combat strength of U.S. forces, both ground and air, have immeasurably added to the combat power of the South Vietnamese Government. As a matter of fact, the most vivid impression I bring back with me, and I think this view is shared by all members of our party, is an impression of the highest possible morale of American personnel and of the technical competence of those personnel and the magnificent state of their equipment and supply-

Question: There is reference to the presence of three North Vietnam Divisions either in Vietnam itself or ready to move in. Is this the reason why we need additional U.S. troops?

McNamara: I have heard no reference to three North Vietnamese Divisions being in or ready to move in South Vietnam. We do know that there are elements of at least one division in South Vietnam today. I don't think we should put too much emphasis on the fact that there are regular troops there today perhaps where a year ago there were not. We need to emphasize and recognize that this attack on the people of Vietnam, an attack on the Government of Vietnam, is directed, supported, controlled by North Vietnam. They have infiltrated tens of thousands of men over the past several years to build up a very heavy force of guerrilla competency inside that country. Recently, it is true, they have been infiltrating regular units there. I think this is a sign of the strain upon their society. They have run out of volunteers, in effect, and they have had to draw upon their regular forces, but the important point to remember is that they have about 165,000 guerrillas in South Vietnam facing no more than 500,000 regular and para-military Government forces, and this is quite an unacceptable ratio of anti-guerrilla to guerrilla strength.

45. August 4, 1965 - Senate Subcommittee on DoD Appropriations

At various times in recent months, I have called attention to the continued buildup of Communist forces in South Vietnam. I pointed out that although these forces had not been committed to combat in any significant degree, they probably would be after the start of the monsoon season. It is now clear that these forces are being committed in increasing numbers and that the Communists have decided to make an all-out attempt to bring down the Government of South Vietnam. The entire economic and social structure is under attack. Bridges, railroads and highways are being destroyed and interdicted. Agricultural products are being barred from the cities. Electric power plants and communication lines are being sabotaged. Whole villages are being burned and their population driven away, increasing the refugee burden on the South Vietnamese Government.

As I mentioned, in addition to the continued infiltration of increasing numbers of individuals and the acceleration of the flow of modern equipment and supplies, organized units of the North Vietnamese Army have been identified in South Vietnam. We now estimate the hard core Viet Cong strength at some 70,000 men, including a recently reported increase in the number of combat battalions. In addition, they have some 90,000 to 100,000 irregulars and some 30,000 in their political cadres, i.e., tax collectors, propagandists, etc. We have also identified at least three battalions of the regular North Vietnamese Army, and there are probably considerably more. At the same time the Government of South Vietnam has found it increasingly difficult to make a commensurate increase in the size of its own forces, which now stand at about 545,000 men, including the regional and local defense forces but excluding the national police.

Combat deaths on both sides have been mounting -- for the South Vietnamese from an average of 143 men a week in 1964 to about 270 a week for the four-week period ending July 24 this year. Viet Cong losses have gone from 322 a week last year to about 680 a week for the four-week period ending July 24. Most important, the ratio of South Vietnamese to Viet Cong strength has seriously declined in the last six or seven months from about five to one to about three or three-and-a-half to one; the ratio of combat battalions is substantially less. This is far too low a ratio for a guerrilla war even though the greater mobility and firepower provided to the South Vietnamese forces by the United States help to offset that disadvantage. The South Vietnamese forces have to defend hundreds of cities, towns and hamlets while the Viet Cong are free to choose the time and place of their attack. As a result, the South Vietnamese forces are stretched thin in defensive positions, leaving only a small central reserve for offensive action against the Viet Cong, while the latter are left free to concentrate their forces and throw them against selected targets. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Viet Cong retains most of the initiative.

Even so, we may not as yet have seen the full weight of the Communist attack. Presently, the situation is particularly acute in the northern part of the country where the Communists have mobilized large military forces which pose a threat to the entire region and its major cities and towns. Our air attacks may have helped to keep these forces off balance but the threat remains and it is very real.

Clearly, the time has come when the people of South Vietnam need more help from us and other nations if they are to retain their freedom and independence. We have already responded to that need with some 75,000 U.S. military personnel, including some combat units. This number will be raised to 125,000 almost immediately with the deployment of the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces. But, more help will be needed in the months ahead and additional U.S. combat forces will be required to back up the hard pressed Army of South Vietnam. Two other nations have provided combat forces -- Australia and New Zealand. We hope that by the end of this year others will join them.

* * *

The Government of South Vietnam's strategy, with which we concur, is to achieve the initiative, to expand gradually its area of control by breaking up major concentrations of enemy forces, using to the maximum our preponderance of air power, both land- and sea-based. The number of "fixed wing" attack sorties by U.S. aircraft in South Vietnam will increase many fold by the end of the year. Armed helicopter sorties will also increase dramatically over the same period, and extensive use will be made of heavy artillery, both land-based and sea-based. At the same time our Air and Naval forces will continue to interdict the Viet Cong supply lines from North Vietnam, both land and sea.

46. August 6, 1965 - Interview with Luigi Romersa in Tempo Illustrated

Question: What is your evaluation of the present Vietnamese situation after the numerous Viet Cong attacks during the monsoon season?

McNamara: At various times in recent months I have called attention to the continued build-up of Communist forces in South Vietnam. I pointed out that although these forces had not been committed to combat in any significant degree, they probably would be after the start of the monsoon season. It is now clear that these forces are being committed in increasing numbers and that the Communists have decided to make an all-out attempt to bring down the Government of South Vietnam. In building up the Viet Cong forces for a decisive challenge, the authorities in North Vietnam have increasingly dropped the disguises with which they previously attempted to conceal the nature of this aggression.

Question: Do you think that the number of American forces is sufficient for any eventuality, or do you consider sending more troops into South Vietnam in the near future?

McNamara: I cannot speculate on future needs or force structures. We have recently announced that an increase of U.S. forces in Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 would take place almost immediately; and that further increases could be expected. I can only say that we intend to stand by our commitment and will take whatever actions we deem necessary in the light of future developments.

Question: In your opinion, what is the number of Viet Cong units operating at present? Has their armament been bettered? Have they changed tactics? If yes, in what way?

McNamara: There are 70,000 what we call "regular" guerrillas, and about 90 - 100,000 "irregulars", for a total guerrilla force of about 170,000, which, because of its size, is attacking in larger and larger concentrations. The number of battalion-size operations is increasing; the duration of them is increasing; the intensity of the attack is increasing. These Viet Cong forces, moreover, have recently been re-equipped through the infiltration of new, modern weapons from North Vietnam and Communist China.

Question: What have been the effects of American bombing in Vietnam so far? How can you explain that, in spite of them, the Viet Cong units are being constantly reinforced and their military potential increased?

McNamara: Our objective is to reduce the capability of the North Vietnamese to infiltrate men and equipment from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, particularly to reduce their ability to infiltrate into Laos and through the roads of Laos into South Vietnam.

Into this area in the southern portion of South Vietnam there are about 23 bridges on the main rail and highway lines. We have destroyed or made impassable 22 of those bridges.

We have attacked the bridges to reduce the flow of men and materiel over the roads and the railroads. We have attacked the ammunition storage depots to reduce the amount of equipment they had to infiltrate. We have attacked the barracks to reduce the flow of men and materiel over the roads and the railroads. We have attacked the ammunition storage depots to reduce the amount of equipment they had to infiltrate. We have also attacked their supply depots.

These attacks have been effective. They haven't stopped the flow of men and materiel, but they have reduced that flow, and they have greatly increased the cost to the North Vietnamese of continuing their efforts to support the insurgency in South Vietnam.

47. August 9, 1965 - CBS Interview with Rusk and McNamara

Question: Secretary McNamara, can you comment on the military aspect of our operations in South Vietnam?

McNamara: Well, first has our policy been successful? I think you have to look at this over a period of years and I would say the answer is yes. For ten years since the nation was born, or reborn, after the Geneva Accord of 1954, it has maintained its independence. It is not dominated by the communists. And for much of that period prior to the recent expansion of the terror reign directed against it by the guerrillas it did increase its strength economically and politically. As you undoubtedly know, between 1954 and 1961 when the terror rage began to increase in number and frequency, the number of teachers in that country increased three-fold. The number of students in schools increased 300 percent, the rice production nearly doubled and, by the way, that happened at a time when the rice production per capita in North Vietnam was declining. The income per capita is 50 percent more than it is in North Vietnam. So I'd say much progress has been made, continues to be made. Last year the communist guerrillas killed or kidnapped about 1500 civic officials.

Now, when you recognize that the population under the control of the government is less than a 20th of that in this country, you should multiply those figures by 20 to get an impression of what that would mean in this country. It would mean that we would have lost last year 30,000 mayors, members of boards of education, city managers. And yet despite that tremendous loss and despite a loss of about 10,000 civilians kidnapped, murdered, assassinated, the people are continuing to fight, continuing to resist. They are absorbing fatalities today at a rate greater than we have ever absorbed in our history, twice that of World War I, twice that of World War II, 10 or 15 times that of the Korean War, showing that they are fighting, they do have a will to resist, they are opposed to communist domination. I think this is the best measure I can give you of the success of the policy.

Question: Would you say, sir, that if they were resisting that their defection rate or their desertion rate should drop appreciably? I understand now there are four to five thousand a month, and that recruitment barely keeps up with it.

McNamara: Recruitment is in excess of desertions, but I don't want to fail to recognize desertions are at a rate higher than we would like to see, higher than the South Vietnamese Government believes satisfactory, and they have acted recently to increase the pay, take care of the families and dependents of men wounded and killed in battle, and I understand the desertion rate is falling.

It has been higher than we would have liked to have seen, however. But the fact that they continue to recruit, the fact that they continue to fight and die for their country in the numbers that they do, I think indicates their will to resist. And also I should mention that the desertions are not to the Viet Cong. The desertions are back to their homes to take care of their rice fields. And also, on that same point, I should emphasize that the defections from the Viet Cong are

rising. And, further, that there has been no desertion of any important personality and no movement to defect of any group -- no religious group, no economic group, no labor group has deserted the government for the Viet Cong, although the opportunities for that have been numerous.

Question: There is an area here that I think affects the confidence in this country in what we are doing, and I think maybe we can dispose of it without trying to pin either of you down on things you have said before; but for instance, as you remember about 18 months ago when we had a conversation, you said to the effect that this is a Vietnamese war, it must be won by the Vietnamese, we cannot win it for them. The kinds of things that administration leaders say have changed radically in the last two years -- is this because you have changed your minds that much or is there a possibility that you have even now a more advanced attitude and you are letting the country in on it little by little?

McNamara: Let me say, first, that the outlook has changed over the past two years because the action of the North Vietnamese has changed during that period of time. They have vastly increased the number of men that they have infiltrated into South Vietnam. They have vastly increased the amount of equipment and materiel which they have infiltrated into that country. And this has temporarily given them an advantage which they particularly have applied in the form of terror and harassment. Today they have, for all practical purposes, a numerical advantage, not absolutely, but relatively in guerrilla war terms. They have about 70,000 regular guerrillas, perhaps 100,000 irregulars, and another 20 or 30 thousand in political cadre to collect taxes or distribute propaganda and so on. So, there are some 200,000 communists acting in guerrilla forces. Opposing them are about 550,000 South Vietnam regular and paramilitary forces, a ratio something on the order of three or three-and-a-half to one and somewhat lesser ratio in the form of combat battalions. Quite an unsatisfactory ratio in terms of guerrilla wars of the past, where in Malaya, in the Philippines, in Greece, a 10 to 1 advantage was required to defeat the guerrillas. This increase in the strength of the North Vietnamese occurred in the last 12 months. It requires that we supplement, not substitute for, but supplement the South Vietnam forces; and since our forces will supplement and not substitute for their forces, it remains a South Vietnamese war. They are bearing the brunt of the fighting; they will continue to bear the brunt of the fighting. We will furnish a mobile reserve to come in to assist them when their forces are inadequate numerically to effectively counteract the Viet Cong concentrations directed against them.

Question: We have had a few months of experience with increased United States forces. How is it going this year?

McNamara: The Viet Cong did expand their force in the last 12 months and, as we stated during the winter of last year and the spring of this, a major part of this expanded force had not been committed to combat at that time. We could only assume they were holding it for some special purpose or some special period. And we assume that they might be holding it to start operations on an expanded basis following the beginning of the monsoon season. This is the season of heavy rains in the highlands. It is a season when our air power is somewhat less effective than during the dry period and we assume that the Viet Cong would believe it was an advantage for them, therefore, to expand operations under those weather conditions. They did so. They expanded operations in number and intensity, beginning in May, and they increased their control of the area. They began to isolate certain particular portions of the village, isolate them in terms of road transportation, road communications with other parts of the country. This made it difficult to move rice from the storage centers out into certain of the rural areas. It made it difficult to move produce from the rural areas into the city.

The number of South Vietnamese killed in action increased. But while that is true, the number of Viet Cong killed in action increased dramatically. It is about 70 percent higher today than it was a year ago. So in recent weeks, recent months, they have had some success. They are paying a terrible price for it. And in the last 30 days, as a matter of fact, there seems to have been some withdrawal on their part. Whether this is for regrouping, recuperation, because some of their battalions were severely mauled, I don't know. It may be a reflection of the fact that larger United States forces are beginning to enter the country.

Question: Now, would you give us a view into the future? There are estimates that it might take another \$10 billion a year to carry this on. The military advisers are supposed to have proposed a level of 750,000 men in Vietnam. If there is a failure of bombing of North Vietnam, as there may be, isn't the next logical step ground action into North Vietnam? I wonder if you would develop these points in the perspective of the months ahead.

McNamara: First, let me say I can't predict the future with accuracy. I do want to mention one thing about the future, however, that I think is very interesting. Within the last three or four weeks, Ho Chi Minh looked into the future, and he said it might take 20 years for them to win. So while they have had some temporary success, it is obvious even to their own leaders that this is not going to lead to an immediate victory on their side.

Let me comment on one or two of the points you made.

First, I don't know of any military adviser to our Government who has proposed a level of 750,000 United States military personnel in South Vietnam.

Secondly, as to the bombing program in the north, I think it is important that we understand what we hope to achieve by that program. In the first place, you recall, it started in part as a reprisal action for the terror bombings that have been carried out by the Viet Cong last year at Bien Hoa Air Field, at Brinks Barracks, and more recently in February, early February this year, at Pleiku. It was necessary to show the North Vietnamese who were directing those activities that this would not go unchallenged, that they would pay a price for the continuation of them. And our bombings started in part to make that clear.

It was also important to begin to raise the price to the North Vietnamese of carrying on this war. It was important to try to restrict -- although certainly it was never considered it would be possible to stop the movement of men and equipment to the south. And I think these objectives have in part been accomplished. We never believed and we don't believe today that bombing the north will drive the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table, or force them to cease their terror tactics and harassment and subversion of the political institutions of the south. There is only one thing that will stop that in my view, and that is to prove to them they can't win in the south. And therefore our strategy is directed to that end. How long it will take, I can't tell.

Question: On this question of decisions, aren't they now making themselves, or aren't the Communists making them for us? Really they are the ones who are deciding what shall be the nature and the stature of the war so to speak, and we are responding to that. We are putting in more men because of what they do. Therefore, basically the decision as to what we do in the future is in their hands, isn't it?

McNamara: Certainly what we do in the future will be influenced by what they do. The price they are paying is increasing. At some point it will reach a level they are unwilling to pay. At that point they will stop, and they will withdraw. How soon that will come I can't tell you. How much force we must apply before they make that decision I can't tell you.

48. August 11, 1965 - Remarks over NBC-TV

Question: Today Secretary of Defense McNamara was talking to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and [afterwards] he was asked if he agreed there were grounds for cautious optimism. Here is what he said.

McNamara: I think it is perfectly clear that the Viet Cong forces have increased very substantially in recent months -- that as we stated publicly, in the winter and spring, they had not yet committed those expanded forces to combat. And they began to do so after the start of the monsoon season, early in May. That they initially achieved success as a result of the expansion of their combat efforts; that that drive was blunted, however, in June, and fell off materially in July.

During this entire period their casualties were very high. They lost about 7500 men, for example, in the three months of May, June, and July. These fatalities were so high as to cause them to withdraw to recoup and regroup and replace their losses. What they'll do in the future, we can't tell. But there is no question but what at the present time we can be cautiously optimistic, while at the same time recognizing that it's going to be a long, hard conflict.

49. September 16, 1965 - News Conference at the Pentagon

Question: Could you give us an assessment of our present position in Vietnam?

McNamara: I remain cautiously optimistic. I think it is useful now to look back over the summer months to review what has happened. I reported to you earlier this year, as well as late last winter, that the dominating factor in the Viet Cong operations at that time was the continual increase in their strength.

Moreover, that that increase in strength had not yet been committed to combat. We estimated that they would so commit their strength at a time favorable to them and we assumed that they would conclude that favorable time would be the monsoon season which started roughly the first of May.

We therefore anticipated an increase in the intensity of their operations and in the level of their operations at that time. As you know, we faced such an increase. The number of large-scale attacks rose substantially in the weeks in May and June. It is very clear, I think, that it was their purpose to dismember the country, it was their objective to cut it in two at the waist, and it was their objective to march the Army. They carried on a number of large-scale engagements in May and June. These were very costly to them. They did extend their control over certain areas of the country. They did achieve advances but these advances were very costly. Their fatalities were high. I think it is interesting to see what has happened in the last eight or ten weeks.

The number of large-scale attacks has fallen off substantially. It is clear that the fatalities they suffered in May and June were so heavy that they were forced to withdraw their forces, to retrain, regroup, re-equip, recuperate. What they will do in the future I don't wish to predict.

But I am very clear in my own mind that the South Vietnamese forces plus the U.S. Forces blunted the Viet Cong monsoon drive, forced it to terminate earlier than planned, prevented it from achieving its objectives of dismembering the country and destroying the South Vietnamese military forces.

Now this was the result not only of the application of U.S. military forces during that period of time, but also of the release from strategic reserve assignments of certain South Vietnamese forces previously held back for good and valid military reasons, forces which were released as U.S. forces moved into the country and were able to take over their strategic reserve role. I told you before that was one of our primary assignments to U.S. forces. I forget the exact figures but I think it is something on this order. The total number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam doubled between March 31 and June 30. This increase in strength was timed, of course, to phase in with the forecasted increase in Viet Cong activity during the monsoon season.

The number of combat battalions increased even more dramatically than did the total strength. I think the U.S. combat battalions in Vietnam rose from two on March 31 to some nine in June. We have there today, depending on exactly what has been landing in the last few hours, something on the order of 25 or 28.

50. 30 September - News Conference at the Pentagon

Question: The pattern of the war in Vietnam seems to be changing in that larger and larger Viet Cong units are meeting more and more Americans in large numbers. Does this mean a change in our or their tactics? Would you give us some assessment of what is happening out there now since we have increased our strength?

McNamara: Compared to May and June, the number of large unit Viet Cong initiated actions has declined, and this we believe is a direct result of the introduction of U.S. combat forces. First, these forces released South Vietnamese forces for combat, South Vietnamese forces that had been held as strategic reserve units, and secondly, they made available for combat U.S. personnel. The result has been that the larger unit VC actions initiated in May and June and selected actions initiated since that time have resulted in very heavy fatalities to the Viet Cong, and it appears that for that reason they have moved away from such large unit attacks, withdrawn these forces for retraining, recuperation, regrouping, re-equipping.

I can't forecast how they will act in the future. Should they re-initiate such attacks at the level of May and June, I have no doubt but what our U.S. combat forces can defeat them and can impose upon them the same heavy level of fatalities as such attacks resulted in in May and June.

This isn't to say there won't be large confrontations between Viet Cong and U.S. or South Vietnamese forces. There will be periodically. But I doubt very much that the pattern of activity which the Viet Cong appeared to be following in May and June will be resumed in the future. If it is, we believe we can defeat it.

51. October 13, 1965 - Remarks to Employees of Sperry Gyroscope

The military situation in Vietnam in recent months has been dominated by the continuing increase in the Viet Cong strength. Both last winter and early this spring, we reported to the public that this strength increase was occurring. We also stated that the increment in power of the Communist guerrillas had not yet been assigned to operation; it has not yet been directed against the government forces. We assumed it would be sometime favorable to the guerrillas, and we thought they might select the beginning of the southwestern monsoon season, which begins in May, for their offensive. This they did. I think it was clear that their objective for the summer period, which runs roughly from early May to late October, was to cut the country in half at its narrow waist and to dismember and destroy the regular military forces of the South Vietnamese government.

This they attempted to do by increasing the number of large-scale military actions and by increasing the intensity of those actions, and they came close to achieving both of those objectives during May and June. Then in that period of time they substantially increased their control of the geography of that country. They inflicted very heavy casualties upon the regular South Vietnamese forces, but they paid a very heavy price for that offensive and they were forced by their own heavy fatalities to withdraw at the end of June into their base areas for recuperation, retraining, re-equipment, resupply. They haven't yet resumed the large-scale attacks that they had planned to carry on throughout this period. I think it is fair to say that their monsoon offensive has been blunted and to all practical purposes defeated. There is no chance that they will accomplish during this monsoon period the two objectives that they had set for themselves.

Now, why did this occur and what does it portend for the future? To understand this, it is necessary to look at the relative strength of the opposing forces. The Communist guerrillas have roughly 75,000 men in what is known as their regular forces and about 125,000 armed men in their irregular forces. Roughly 200,000 armed guerrillas, plus 30,000 men in their political cadre - propagandists, tax collectors, conscriptors of youths, et cetera.

Opposing this force of 200,000 Communist guerrillas is the government's military forces of something on the order of 650,000 men. So there's a relative advantage in favor of the government in the order of 3 or 3-1/2 to 1. I think any of you who have studied the guerrilla wars of the past -- those in Malaya, the Philippines, and Greece -- will recognize that this is quite an unsatisfactory balance of power, and it's inconceivable that the guerrilla campaign of aggression could be thwarted, could be defeated, unless something were done to increase the strength of the government forces.

There are several ways this could be accomplished. We've tried them all.

For one thing, we can increase the effectiveness of each of the individual men in the government forces. This we sought to do by adding to their mobility. For example, in the month of June we had about 500 helicopters in Vietnam for that purpose.

We sought to increase their effectiveness by adding to their firepower. In the month of June, we ran about 10 times as many combat attack sorties with U.S. aircraft than we did in the month of January.

We sought to add to their strength. The U.S. Government and South Vietnamese Government joined together in a program to substantially expand the regular military forces of the Vietnamese. We're adding roughly 10,000 men a month to those forces.

We sought to increase the number of third country combat troops that are active in South Vietnam. The Secretary of State and I were directed by the President to do everything possible to obtain combat forces from our allies. The result is the Australians have about 1,300 or 1,500 combat troops there today. The New Zealanders have artillery personnel. Most importantly, the Koreans are currently moving in a division, and by the end of this month, will have about 18,000 combat troops there.

Even after these actions were taken, after we maximized the effectiveness of the forces of South Vietnam, after we expanded them to the maximum that their manpower would support, after we obtained the maximum degree of help from third countries, it was still clear that the forces opposing the guerrillas were inadequate to defeat them. And it was therefore necessary early this year to make the decision to add substantially to the number of U.S. military personnel there. This was done. And the number of U.S. military personnel on the ground in South Vietnam doubled between March 31 and June 30, and it was this above all else that led to the defeat of the Viet Cong monsoon offensive, because of the additional U.S. military personnel both added to the combat power and also released the strategic reserves of the Vietnamese to be applied to the day-to-day action opposing the Viet Cong.

The number of U.S. military personnel has continued to increase. We have, perhaps, 140,000 men there today, and as the President said on July 28th when he announced the decision to further increase our strength, we expect requests for additional personnel, U.S. combat personnel, will continue to come in from our commanders in the field and we'll meet them as they do.

Now, what lies ahead; particularly, what lies ahead for defense expenditures?

I can't really answer that question. Our strategy is to pursue our limited objectives and I should digress here to emphasize that our objectives in South Vietnam are limited. We're not seeking to overthrow the Communist Chinese regime in Peking; we're not seeking to destroy the Ho Chi Minh Government in Hanoi; we're not seeking to force the South Vietnamese into an alliance with the West; we're

not seeking permanent bases on their soil -- our objective is only to preserve the right of the South Vietnamese to develop political and economic institutions of their own choosing.

It is a limited objective. We're seeking to accomplish that by proving to the Viet Cong that they cannot win their war of aggression in the South, while we're continuing to force them to pay the price of the bombing of their military installations in the North.

How long will it take to do it? I don't know. What will be required? I don't know. Whatever is required, we'll provide. What effect will this have on the Defense budget? As I said, I couldn't predict this. We do have an amendment to the Fiscal Year 1966 Budget in August, requesting the Congress to increase that budget by 1 billion, 700 million dollars. This is to provide an increase in the production capacity of our nation so that if we reach the planned levels of expenditure for ammunition and ordnance -- which are really staggering as we look ahead-- if we reach those levels, we will have the production capacity to replenish our stock and continue to build those stocks as we have during the last 4 years.

52. October 26, 1965 - Planeside Interview at Strike Command

Question: Recent published reports last week are to the effect that the war in Vietnam has tipped decidedly in our favor. Do you agree with that assessment?

McNamara: I think we view the situation in Vietnam with what I call cautious optimism. The Viet Cong had as their objective, I believe, for the monsoon season, which began in early May and extends to early next month, the division of the country and the dismemberment of its military forces. That objective has not been gained. Their offensive has been blunted and I think this is a result of the additional U.S. forces which the President deployed to that country.

Question: One of the generals in the field is quoted as saying that he once thought it was going to be a 10-year war, but now he is optimistic and leaning toward 9-1/2 years.

McNamara: Well, I wouldn't make a prediction as to the duration of the war. I think it is important to recognize that progress has been made during the summer.

53. November 11, 1965 - Press Interview in Austin, Texas

Today, I first reported to the President upon the status of military operations in South Vietnam. I believe it's clear that the Viet Cong planned during their monsoon period, which began approximately the 1st of May and which is just now ending, to split the country of South Vietnam in two at its narrow waist, and to dismember and maul the military forces of that nation.

The South Vietnamese, with our help, have blunted and defeated that Viet Cong offensive, and the Viet Cong have paid a very heavy price indeed for their monsoon activities. Their fatalities to date in this year are approximately one hundred percent higher than those of the comparable period of last year.

Nonetheless, despite these very heavy fatalities, the military strength of the Viet Cong guerrillas continues to increase, and, therefore, we believe it will be necessary to add further to the strength of the U.S. combat forces presently deployed in South Vietnam.

At this time, we have a total of 160,000 men in our military units in that country. The President instructed me to meet the requests from our military commanders for additional personnel as they are received.

Question: Can you sum up how the war is going? What is the picture today?

McNamara: As I indicated, we believe that the South Vietnamese, with our help, have successfully defeated the monsoon offensive of the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong are suffering very heavy fatalities. But despite these heavy fatalities, through infiltration and other actions, they are continuing to increase their forces. They remain a very severe threat and a serious threat, indeed.

54. November 25, 1965 - Planeside Interview at Andrews AFB

Question: A major battle with the Communists for control of South Vietnam's Central Highlands appears to be building up. Will U.S. casualties continue to increase?

McNamara: I don't wish to predict the outlook for U.S. casualties. I do want to emphasize, however, the very favorable outcome of the battle that has been raging in the Central Highlands during the past 10 days. As you know, the Viet Cong suffered fatalities approximating 2,500 during that 10-day period in that single engagement. The U.S. and South Vietnam forces fought magnificently with tremendous effect.

55. November 26, 1965 - Planeside Interview in Paris

Question: What is the reason for your trip to South Vietnam?

McNamara: It's been several months since I was last there. During that period we have nearly tripled the strength of the U.S. combat forces in Vietnam; the events of the summer have, I think, proven the wisdom of that move. The Viet Cong monsoon offensive has been blunted -- defeated, I think, is the proper term to apply to it. Their fatalities have been very high; no doubt they're looking to the future. We should be, too. I'm going there for that purpose.

56. November 28, 1965 - Planeside Interview in Saigon

It has been four months since General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I were last in Vietnam. During the intervening period the strength of the U.S. combat forces here has been almost trebled. The Viet Cong have carried out their monsoon offensive with an obvious effort to divide the country in half, to maul and dismember the forces of South Vietnam. Due to the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese Army, with the assistance of the increased U.S. combat strength, that monsoon offensive of the Viet Cong has been defeated. Our purpose in visiting here is to receive a status report on the situation and an appraisal of the outlook for the future.

Question: Will additional action by the U.S. be required?

McNamara: I think it is clear that the Viet Cong are continuing to increase their strength, continuing to increase the quantity of materiel, combat supplies, infiltrated from North Vietnam through Laos and other routes into South Vietnam, and clearly this action will require counter action by the South Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

Question: Were you surprised by the Viet Cong reaction to the expansion of U.S. forces?

McNamara: I think it was clear that in May and June the Viet Cong paid a very heavy price for the advances that they made at that time. Their fatalities, as you know, rose very sharply. Cumulatively for the year to date there has been an increase of over 100% in Viet Cong fatalities compared to last year. At the end of May and June, they withdrew, regrouped, retrained, re-equipped and resupplied their

forces. And I must say I was surprised by the intensity and scale of their attack of recent weeks, and I am sure they are surprised by the level of fatalities that they paid for those attacks.

57. November 29, 1965 - Planeside Interview upon departure from Saigon

Question: In spite of everything being done, infiltration is increasing at an enormous rate. Will you comment upon this?

McNamara: First, let me say my most vivid impression is that we have stopped losing the war. I think that the increases in the strength of the South Vietnamese forces, which we told you many months ago were planned and underway, and the very substantial increases in the strength of the U.S. forces, the Australian, the New Zealand and Korean forces, taken together have denied the Viet Cong the victory that almost surely they hoped to achieve during the summer monsoon period. But despite the fact that we've had that success, they have continued to increase the strength of their forces here that have more than offset the very heavy losses which they have suffered. The level of infiltration has increased, and I think that this represents a clear decision on the part of Hanoi to both escalate the level of infiltration and raise the level of conflict. And I'm sure that decision must be countered by an increase in the forces opposing the Viet Cong. I'm told by the leaders of the South Vietnamese they have plans to further increase their forces and I am sure these are required.

Question: Does this also mean a change in our militancy and a change in our tactics?

McNamara: The tactics that we follow will, of course, in part be dictated by the action of the Viet Cong. As I mentioned yesterday, considering the fatalities that they have absorbed during the past several months, the dismemberment of many of their key battalions, I was surprised by the frequency of their attacks, the intensity of their attacks in recent weeks. I think attacks of that kind must lead to responses by the South Vietnamese and U.S. and third-country forces of the kind that you saw at Plei Me. And while I am speaking of Plei Me, let me say that today in flying over the area and later in visiting with the forces that participated in the combat -- the elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division -- I was immensely impressed by the effectiveness of that Division. Not only by the valor and courage which we've come to expect of American combat personnel, but by the degree which the concept of increased mobility and increased firepower on which that Division is based, has proven out. I am sure the result will be that we will wish to add another Air Cavalry Division to the forces of the U.S. Army.

Question: Would you comment on the significance of the five-week campaign at Plei Me?

McNamara: I don't think I'm in the best position to do so. I think General Westmoreland, Ambassador Lodge and others here can speak more authoritatively on that than I. I'll simply say that the decision by the Viet Cong to stand and fight, recognizing the level of force we can bring to bear against them, expresses the determination to carry on the conflict that can lead to only one conclusion. It will be a long war.

Question: You say Viet Cong, but these were regular Vietnam troops.

McNamara: Well, when I use the word Viet Cong, I was using it to cover both the indigenous forces cadred by North Vietnamese personnel and, as you point out, the regular units of the North Vietnamese Army, of which there are, I believe, now some nine regiments in South Vietnam, and I think it is clearly their intention to add to those units.

Question: Could you tell us -- could you state the Administration's position on why we have not done something about Haiphong Harbor and why we have not done more about the northeast railway leading from Hanoi to the Chinese frontier?

McNamara: Yes, first let me say that there are two arms to the railroad between Hanoi and China. One is the northwestern arm, the other is the northeastern arm. Both of those rail lines have been bombed, as have been the parallel highway lines, just because these are infiltration routes, or routes supporting infiltration. As we said before, the bombing against North Vietnam is directed against military targets and particularly those targets which are a part of, or associated with, lines of communication along which men and materiel flow into South Vietnam. Primarily for that reason, attacks have not been made to date on Haiphong Harbor. We have a limited objective in South Vietnam. We've said this before and I repeat it again today. Our objective is not to destroy the Communist regime in North Vietnam. Our objective is to destroy the insurgency movement in South Vietnam, destroy the Viet Cong who are seeking to take away the independence of this nation. Our objective, therefore, is to preserve the independence of this nation. It is not even to assure that this nation will be part of Western alliances or that we will have bases here in the future. We don't need such bases, it is not in our plan to seek them. It is our plan, however, to both achieve the independence of this nation, or help it achieve its independence, and help preserve it, whatever that may require. We do not seek to widen the war or extend the area of conflict, and that is why to date we have not bombed Haiphong Harbor.

Question: Will U.S. forces be expanded?

McNamara: President Johnson, on July 28, said that he would send whatever forces were required. He would meet the requests of our military commanders. We have done so, and since the end of June this has resulted in a near trebling of the strength of U.S. combat personnel in South Vietnam and we will continue to follow that policy. We will send whatever forces are required.

58. November 30, 1965 - Planeside Interview at Andrews AFB

Question: Could you give us, tell us the results of your mission to Vietnam?

McNamara: Yes, General Wheeler and I are returning from a short but very intensive, and I think productive, visit to our forces in South Vietnam. The most vivid impression I'm bringing back is that we have stopped losing the war. The very substantial increases in the South Vietnamese military strength and particularly those in the strength of the free world forces -- the U.S. combat strength, the forces provided by Australia, New Zealand, and Korea -- have very clearly denied the Viet Cong the victory that they sought to achieve during the summer monsoon season. There is no question in our minds but what during that period they hoped to divide the country in half, and maul and dismember, and in a real sense, defeat the military forces of South Vietnam. They have been defeated in achieving that objective. They've paid a very heavy price for their attempt to do so. But despite their very heavy losses, and they're running well over 100% higher this year than they were last, they are continuing to infiltrate men and equipment into South Vietnam. As a matter of fact, they have very substantially raised the levels of that infiltration. They have increased the number of their attacks, they have broadened the scope of their attacks, they have increased the level of conflict. And these actions, I think, represent a clear intention on the part of Hanoi to escalate the level of their effort and to raise the level of their conflict.

Question: Senator Russell said last night that we should bomb Haiphong. Do you agree?

McNamara: Our bombing of North Vietnam is designed to attack the lines of communication over which the North Vietnamese are infiltrating men and equipment into South Vietnam. I believe we should continue to emphasize that objective. It's not our objective to destroy the government of North Vietnam; it is our objective to preserve the independence of South Vietnam. And it's consistent with that latter objective to concentrate our bombing on the lines of infiltration. The North Vietnamese today, we believe, have nine regiments of their regular Army in South Vietnam. We believe also they have been infiltrating additional men into that country at the rate of about 1,500 a month during the rainy season and that their level of infiltration will approach 4,500 men per month during the forthcoming dry season. That compares with about 800 a month last year. It's to reduce that level of infiltration and particularly to reduce the infiltration of equipment, supplies to support those forces, that our bombing of North Vietnam is carried on.

Question: Is it reasonable to look forward to 300,000 American troops in Vietnam?

McNamara: I don't want to forecast the number of troops that may be required there, but I can say the road ahead will be long and hard.

59. December 10, 1965 - Press Conference at Johnson City, Texas

Question: You said we have stopped losing the war. Can you tell us where we are at this point?

McNamara: Well, I can tell you two things about it. I think that perhaps some of you already know first that beyond any question of a doubt the Viet Cong objective for the monsoon period, which began roughly the 1st of May and ended the early part of last month, was to win the war. Specifically, it was to divide the country in half at its narrow waist, the plains between Pleiku and Qui Nhon, and it was to impose such heavy fatalities upon the South Vietnamese as to force them to lay down their arms. I think it is fair to say that the very rapid increase in U.S. military strength in South Vietnam, which rose from perhaps 40,000 at the end of May to, as I said, about 180,000 today, was a major factor in enabling the South Vietnamese to defeat that Viet Cong offensive and the Viet Cong paid a very heavy price for their efforts to achieve victory during the summer period. Their losses were heavy. They were forced to retire in July and August, recoup, re-equip, retrain. Their fatalities, for example, are more than twice in 1965 the comparable period of 1964. But despite the defeat that was imposed upon them, they have continued to infiltrate very substantial numbers from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. They have not only replaced their losses, but increased their strength and give every intention of raising the intensity of the conflict.