

## 'Self-Serving Accusations' Over the '68 Tet Offensive

It is regrettable that The Post gave one-sided page one treatment to such outrageous allegations about distorted intelligence reporting as your Sept. 19 story, "False Data Blamed In '68 Tet Surprise." Indeed, The Post's own previous April 24 piece on the same subject showed that there was a good deal more to the story. Moreover, the July issue of Harper's carried a devastating retort to Samuel A. Adams' April article on the same subject, in which his former CIA boss called it "a gross distortion of the facts."

As a senior U.S. official in Saigon at the time, and a former professional intelligence analyst, I find Mr. Adams' accusations disgustingly self-serving. What he has done for the last several years is turn a highly complex dispute over Viet Cong order of battle estimates into an irresponsible vendetta against everyone (including his own CIA colleagues) who dared to question his own highly biased views.

Contrary to the Adams allegations,

the tempest in an intelligence teapot raised by him had little to do with real Viet Cong strength. Instead the debate was chiefly over whether to include two shadowy and marginal categories of VC adherents called village Self Defense and Secret Self Defense in the *military order of battle*. Were they troops, or even guerrillas? Since they were unorganized groups composed largely of old men, women, and youths, few of them even armed, our intelligence people thought not. This is why they removed them from the order of battle. This argument over SD and SSD was fully aired over an 18 month period in 1966-1967. In my professional judgment, it was an honest difference in view over an arcane side issue. No deliberate falsification of data was involved.

Nor did this earlier intelligence debate have any bearing whatsoever on our being surprised by Hanoi's Tet offensive in 1968. We were indeed badly surprised, but not by enemy

strength. It was the brilliant enemy infiltration of the cities. And it was hardly the SD and SSD who did it.

Ambassador Bunker, General Abrams, and I might add myself, only got into the act because of our concern that if the essentially unimportant SD and SSD were nevertheless added to the military order of battle, the real meaning of this would never be grasped by press and public but would invariably be misconceived as a straight increase in VC armed strength. If anything has ever proved our fears well founded, it is that precisely this is what has just happened eight years later.

So let me call a spade a spade. If there has been any distortion, deceit, and falsification, it results in a self-serving attempt to ignore the motives of all of us who tried our dumb to see one man's light.

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