

20,000 More Men

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Set for Viet Duty

**Total Force
Boosted to
235,000**

**Could Send Another
70,000 by July 1,
McNamara Says**

3/3/66
By John Maffre

Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara has authorized 20,000 more servicemen for Vietnam duty to raise the U.S. troop level there to 235,000—and an additional 70,000 could be sent by July 1 if needed.

This emerged during and after an emotionally charged press conference held yesterday by McNamara, who was clearly angry at press reports that the United States was militarily overextended because of its commitment to Southeast Asia.

It was his first on-the-record Pentagon press session this year. It was also the biggest Pentagon answer to press reporting since last June, when the Administration was riled by Saigon reports that questioned the effectiveness of the

first B-52 bomber raids.

Reply to 'Hawks' Seen

McNamara's press conference could also be read as a counterattack against such "hawks" as Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), who have raised the issue of adequate stateside backing of the U.S. forces in Vietnam.

The Secretary also said the forces in Southeast Asia could be boosted to more than 350,000 without calling up the reserves. This was the peak U.S. ground and air force deployed during the Korean War, when the reserves were called up and strict economic controls were imposed here.

Speaking in a much harder tone than is customary with him, McNamara said that neither "friend nor foe should miscalculate our ability to meet our treaty commitments."

"The only responsibility I have is combat readiness—and we have that," he snapped at one point.

He did not identify the stories that upset him, but his seven-page statement before the conference and a printed rebuttal of 22 "charges" touched on many points raised in a recent critique by Hanson
See McNAMARA, A15, Col. 1

Humphrey faces Fulbright Committee and emerges unscathed.

Page A15.

Highest U.S. toll for week reported in Vietnam.

Page A13.

Courageous home guard forces battle Vietcong in Mekong Delta. Page A12.

20,000 More Men Ready for Viet Duty

Baldwin in the New York Times.

However, he quoted Charles Burck in the current Fortune magazine as saying "probably no comparable war has ever been mounted as swiftly and efficiently."

Most of the facts cited by McNamara had been revealed earlier in transcripts of his testimony before Senate committees, in his annual statement on military posture last week, and in stories attributable only to "U.S. officials" in recent weeks.

But yesterday McNamara revealed that in addition to the 20,000 men he has authorized to meet requests by Gen. William C. Westmoreland, another 21 battalions of Army and Marine infantrymen could be sent by July 1. Officials said later this would amount to about 70,000 additional men.

Strength Revealed

McNamara noted, however, that he thought it unlikely that the extra 21 battalions would be needed. His statement yesterday was also the first official disclosure that American troops in Vietnam now total 215,000, up 10,000 from the latest previous figure.

Since last summer the Administration has taken moves to increase U.S. armed strength by about 452,000 to a total of 3,093,000 by mid-1967. It will then have a total of 22 1/3 active divisions, including four in the Marine Corps.

McNamara observed that "we are a peculiar people" in that little pride was apparent-

ly shown in American military accomplishments.

"Instead, we seem to take a masochistic pleasure in flailing ourselves with imaginary weaknesses," he said.

Without calling up the reserves, McNamara said, the United States had been able to meet Westmoreland's requests, keep troops operating at a high ratio in Vietnam, and retain the capability of doing "far more."

Sharp Reply to Reporter

McNamara was at his sharpest when a reporter with a German accent asked him whether Vietnam requirements were reducing the strategic mobility of the United States for other commitments.

"Where are you from?" McNamara shot back.

"From Germany," the newsman replied.

"You should know that," McNamara answered. "The 7th Army has been, and is and will be the most combat-ready in the world, and the first people in the world who should know this are the Germans."

The U.S. 7th Army in Germany — including two armored and three mechanized infantry divisions — has recently been reduced by several hundred men to meet Vietnam requirements, particularly in the aviation battalions.

Details on Forces

The 215,000 U.S. servicemen in Vietnam include 43 maneuverable battalions, some 700 tactical aircraft and 20 artillery battalions, McNamara said yesterday.

"Even though we have deployed a military force of ap-

proximately 300,000 men to Southeast Asia," he said, "we are fully capable of meeting our commitments elsewhere in the world.

"We have a total active duty strength approaching three million men," he said. "U.S. forces now in Southeast Asia represent only about 10 per cent of that strength."

Although McNamara did not spell it out, the 300,000-man breakdown in Southeast Asia is roughly: 215,000 in Vietnam; 60,000 to 70,000 serving with the 7th Fleet units in the area; about 13,000 in Thailand (which has imposed a ceiling of 15,000 on U.S. servicemen there); and a few thousand in Guam, from which B-52 bomber strikes are launched against South Vietnam points in Vietcong hands.