

# U.S. Count of Viet Cong 'A Monument of Deceit'

Washington

A former CIA intelligence analyst testified yesterday that the 1968 Vietnam Tet attacks caught U.S. forces by surprise because top officials contrived phony enemy strength figures "to fool the American press, the public and the Congress."

The analyst, Samuel A. Adams, said U.S. forces were unprepared for the Communist offensive that took 3895 American lives because officials ordered false figures to indicate the Viet Cong was running out of men.

Testifying before the House Intelligence Committee, Adams released cables from former U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and the deputy U.S. commander in Vietnam at that time, General Creighton Abrams, to support his assertion.

The cables showed both Bunker and Abrams wanted official estimates of the Viet Cong force kept below 300,000 — despite intelligence estimates of 600,000 — to show, in Bunker's words, that U.S. forces were "grinding down the enemy."

Adams said he was a CIA analyst for ten years and its only analyst on Viet Cong strength figures during the two years preceding the Tet offensive. He said he resigned the day of the Tet offensive, calling the Viet Cong strength estimate in his resignation memorandum "a monument of deceit."

But he said U.S. intelligence officials started using the false figures.

"Although our aim was to fool the American press, the public



AP Wirephoto

SAMUEL ADAMS  
Former CIA analyst

## Grid Strike Is Off

The threat that Sunday's opening games of the National Football League season would be canceled because of a players' strike evaporated yesterday.

The five striking teams agreed to go back to work after their union signed a two-week no-strike pledge. The owners, for their part, agreed to come up with a new contract offer on Monday.

(Details in the Sporting Green.)

and the Congress," Adams testified, "we in intelligence succeeded best in fooling ourselves."

Adams contended the falsified intelligence was typical of what he called "very haphazard, slipshod" Vietnam intelligence operations that he asserted elevated officials included Central Intelligence Director William Colby and Defense Intelligence Agency Director Daniel Graham to

Back Page Col. 5

From Page 1

their present jobs.

"These people all made their positions by screwing up intelligence on Vietnam," Adams testified.

Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces caught U.S. defenses by surprise Jan. 30, 1968, attacking not only Saigon and the U.S. embassy there but also 40 of the 44 South Vietnam provincial capitals.

The Abrams cable, dated Aug. 20, 1967, said the press had been given a figure of 299,000 as the Viet Cong strength contrary to the higher intelligence estimates, and he recommended that two categories be dropped from the estimates to maintain that level.

"We have been projecting an image of success over the recent months," Abrams' cable said, and if the higher figures became public "all available caveats and explanations will not prevent the press from drawing an erroneous and gloomy conclusion.

"All those who have an incorrect view of the war," the cable said, "will be reinforced and the task will be more difficult."

The cable was to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at

the time, General Earle Wheeler, Adams said, and General James Westmoreland sent a copy to then-CIA Director Richard Helms.

Twenty days later, Adams testified, intelligence representatives agreed at a conference in Saigon, "with the CIA caving in," to drop the two categories of Viet Cong forces from its estimates.

On November 27, two months before the Tet offensive, Adams said, a team of three CIA analysts predicted the offensive but used the false figures in indicating the strength of the attacks.

The cable from Ambassador Bunker was to Walt Rostow, an advisor to the late President Johnson.

It suggested the press briefing being prepared on the basis of the lower Viet Cong strength figures could lead to stories that the strength was higher than officials thought, not lower, if newsmen were told that two categories had been dropped.

"Given the overriding need to demonstrate progress in grinding down the enemy," Bunker's cable said, "it is essential that we do not drag too many red herrings across the trail."

Bunker's cable suggested instead that dropping the two categories from the estimates be answered only orally if reporters asked about it.

Under committee questioning, Adams was asked how high up the policy was made to mislead the American public and replied that he only knew it went as high as Rostow.

"Rostow was one slot from the top (President Johnson)," Adams replied. "You can infer the top knew, too."

But he said that was only speculation and added later he had been told by a former member of President Johnson's staff that the late president would not have given an order to keep the figures down.

Rather the feeling of the staff, Adams said, was that "Gee, the boss wouldn't like to hear this."

The former analyst said he succeeded in getting another report — that 30,000 Viet Cong had infiltrated U.S. and South Vietnamese operations — to former President Nixon.

"I understand Nixon blew his stack," Adams said, and ordered the CIA to tell him whether the 30,000 figure was true.

"Nixon was a lot more prone in my view within the administration, to take a realistic view and not a public relations view," Adams told newsmen. "That was privately; he might do something different publicly."

Associated Press