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Foe's Strength Evaluated

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 8—American commanders have nearly doubled their estimate of enemy strength in Cambodia and in the sector of South Vietnam north of Saigon. The re-evaluation follows the reported discovery of traces of some previously unknown and unexpectedly intricate Communist organization.

The discoveries, according to official sources, indicated the existence of three communist "recovery regiments" totaling 17,700 men charged with rounding up defectors and wounded soldiers for indoctrination or return to North Vietnam.

The discovery of enemy documents by allied forces sweeping suspected hideouts in the Fishhook region of Cambodia, they said, also provided some details on a little-known organization called the South Vietnamese National Liberation Army, which they described as the military arm of the Communists' central office for South Vietnam, or COSVN.

The discoveries have increased official estimates of enemy strength in the III Corps tactical zone, which includes Saigon, and the Cambodian territory adjacent to it 91,000 men, from 55,000.

The major revision was in the part of Cambodia opposite

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Enemy Strength Evaluated

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the III Corps area. United States commanders now believe 63,000 enemy troops are quartered there.

Before the Americans moved into Cambodia on May 1, the same commanders estimated enemy strength in that region in Cambodia at 25,000. The rise does not necessarily indicate the arrival of more enemy troops; it is described as a more accurate assessment of those there all along.

The 63,000 enemy soldiers estimated to be in Cambodia west of the III Corps area are already more than the total number of enemy troops—40,000—previously estimated by commanders here to be in all of Cambodia.

Known Unit Also Involved

The new assessment, military sources said, arises from the discovery of documents pointing to the existence of the three recovery regiments and the documents detailing the National Liberation Army Organization as well as from upward revisions in the estimated strengths of known units.

The documents are reported to put the strength of COSVN at 7,100 instead of the 2,400 United States commanders have been estimating. The COSVN headquarters is now believed to have withdrawn deeper into Cambodia. Despite periodic reports to the contrary, knowledgeable military sources say that no part of COSVN has been captured.

The National Liberation

Army, whose numbers were unknown, is being credited now with a strength of 8,400.

According to military informants, the organization is under the control of COSVN and is responsible for planning all Vietcong and North Vietnamese military operations in the South.

The revised estimate of 63,000 enemy soldiers in one border region of Cambodia apparently has not yet been accepted by the entire military establishment here, as official command sources were still asserting that the total number of enemy soldiers in all of Cambodia did not exceed 40,000.

There were similar discrepancies on the number of allied troops in Cambodia but the best information available put the number of American soldiers at 15,000 and the number of South Vietnamese at 30,000.

The sources who provided the revised estimates of enemy strength—and who declined to be identified—also said the Communists were trying to turn the Mekong River into a major supply route now that the trail system from North Vietnam and Laos had been cut.