

More Troop Requests

Another important factor in Secretary McNamara's "disenchantment" during the summer of 1966, the Pentagon account declares, was General Westmoreland's continual requests for more troops.

In June Mr. McNamara approved a new deployment schedule specifically designed to meet General Westmoreland's requests. The new schedule, labeled Program 3, called for putting 391,000 American soldiers — 79 battalions — into South Vietnam by the end of 1966 and 431,000 by June, 1967.

Because articles had begun to appear in the press that the Joint Chiefs were dissatisfied with the pace of the build-up in ground forces, the study relates, President Johnson and Mr. McNamara resorted to a bureaucratic "ploy" to insure that their new schedule met the Joint Chiefs' requests.

On June 28 the President wrote a formal directive to the Secretary of Defense:

"As you know, we have been moving our men to Vietnam on a schedule determined by General Westmoreland's requirements.

"As I have stated orally several times this year, I should like this schedule to be accelerated as much as possible so that General Westmoreland can feel assured that he has all the men he needs as soon as possible.

"Would you meet with the Joint Chiefs and give me at your earliest convenience an indication of what acceleration is possible for the balance of this year."

Secretary McNamara then passed

this directive to the Joint Chiefs, who replied in a memorandum on July 7 that the new schedule did meet General Westmoreland's requirements. In turn, Mr. McNamara replied formally to the President that he was "happy to report" that the new deployments were satisfactory.

Thus, the study says, the President and Mr. McNamara gained a record that could be easily pulled out to show any critic that in fact they were meeting the military's requests.

But while President Johnson and Secretary McNamara were approving this schedule, General Westmoreland had already initiated a new request — for 111,588 men — which was passed through channels to the Joint Chiefs on June 18. The figure General Westmoreland said he would now need for 1967 was 542,588 troops.

On Aug. 5 the Joint Chiefs passed the new request to Secretary McNamara, expressing their view that the proposed increases were important and necessary.

Mr. McNamara replied the same day:

"As you know, it is our policy to provide the troops, weapons and supplies requested by General Westmoreland at the times he desires them, to the greatest possible degree.

"Nevertheless I desire and expect a detailed line-by-line analysis of these requirements to determine that each is truly essential to the carrying out of

our war plan. We must send to Vietnam what is needed, but only what is needed." [See text, McNamara memo, Aug. 5, 1966.]

When the Joint Chiefs completed their detailed study of the new requests in the fall, the study relates, Mr. McNamara was no longer ready to approve troop increases automatically. And in October, for the first time, he would turn General Westmoreland down.

The major reason General Westmore-

land gave for needing more troops, the account discloses, is that during the summer of 1966 North Vietnamese infiltration again appeared to be increasing.

Throughout the summer and early fall, the narrative says, General Westmoreland sent a steady stream of cables to Admiral Sharp and General Wheeler warning about the enemy build-up. [See text, Westmoreland cable, Aug. 10, 1966.]