

WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#166	cover memo TS 1p. sanitized move info released	7-13-05	NW 04-95
96C memo	George Carver for Walt Rostow Top Secret sanitized NLS-CBS 2 sanitized 7-28-99 [duplicate of #43, NSF, Country File, Vietnam, "3C", Box 78]	4 p 3/26/68 NLS 95-268	A move info released 7-13-05 NW 04-95

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

RESTRICTION CODES

- A) Closed by Executive Order 12356 governing access to national security information.
- B) Closed by statute or by the agency which originated the document.
- C) Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in the donor's deed of gift.

MARCH 26, 1968 - 1:15 p.m.

95

FOREIGN POLICY ADVIERS LUNCH MEETING

The President	Arthur Dean
The Vice President	Walt Rostow
Secretary Rusk	George Christian
Secretary Clifford	Cyrus Vance
Ambassador Goldberg	Douglas Dillon
Justice Fortas	General Omar Bradley
General Earle Wheeler	Averill Harriman
General Maxwell Taylor	Dean Acheson
General Creighton Abrams	Henry Cabot Lodge

George Ball
General Mathew Ridgway
McGeorge Bundy
~~William B. Murphy~~, Robert
Tom Johnson

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 26, 1968

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with Foreign Policy Advisers in the Mansion at lunch on March 26, 1968.

Those attending the meeting were:

The President	Cyrus Vance
The Vice President	Douglas Dillon
Secretary Rusk	General Omar Bradley
Secretary Clifford	Averill Harriman
Ambassador Goldberg	Dean Acheson
Justice Fortas	Henry Cabot Lodge
General Earle Wheeler	George Ball
General Maxwell Taylor	General Mathew Ridgway
General Creighton W. Abrams	McGeorge Bundy
Arthur Dean	William B. Murphy
Walt Rostow	Tom Johnson
George Christian	

The meeting began at 1:15 p.m. The meeting ended at 3:05 p.m.

SERVICE SET

11-9-82

~~TOP SECRET~~

SC#05497-68

Copy No. 1

96-b

SANITIZED

E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.5

NLJ 04-95

By iss, NARA, Date 1-13-05

WARNING

This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code, Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States.

E.O. 12958
3.3 (b)(1)

GROUP 1
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING
AND DECLASSIFICATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder W Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

3.4(b)(1)

26 March 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

SUBJECT : The Growing Strength of North Vietnamese Army
Forces in South Vietnam

1. In response to the President's request, we have taken a fresh look at our data on North Vietnamese Army (NVA) strength in South Vietnam and the rates of North Vietnamese infiltration over recent months.

2. Force Levels. During the past three or four months there has been a dramatic increase in the movement of regular North Vietnamese Army units into South Vietnam. This Agency now believes that last fall (1 November) there were over 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers fighting in South Vietnam. The number has risen rapidly in the past five months and today may be over 100,000. This increase in NVA strength in South Vietnam has been achieved despite the thousands of casualties suffered by the North Vietnamese in the intensified combat of the past two months.

3. The following tabulation shows what we believe to be the relative strengths of VC and NVA Main and Local forces as of 1 November 1967 and 25 March 1968, without adjustment for casualties:

	<u>1 November 1967</u>	<u>25 March 1968</u>
<u>NVA Forces</u>		
In NVA units	61,000	88,000
In VC units	<u>10,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
Sub-total	71,000	103,000
<u>VC Forces</u>		
	71,000	61,000
Total	<u>142,000</u>	<u>164,000</u>

TOP SECRET

Copy No. 1

3.4(b)(1)

34(b)(1)

4. The above tabulation shows that the relative strength of NVA forces probably increased from 50 percent of total Main and Local force strength on 1 November 1967 to 63 percent as of late March 1968. The relative strength of NVA forces is even greater when these figures are adjusted for the extraordinary casualties of the Tet offensive (30 January-21 February 1968). We have made a very rough and preliminary estimate that the bulk of these casualties were sustained by VC Main and Local forces (including guerrillas upgraded and attached to Local force units). We estimate tentatively that the infiltration of NVA fillers has been more than adequate to maintain NVA force levels at their pre-Tet level of some 100,000 troops. VC Main and Local force strength has probably declined to a level of about 45,000-50,000 troops.

5. Thus, we estimate that today there may be nearly two times as many North Vietnamese regular army soldiers in South Vietnam as there are VC regular (i.e., Main and Local force) soldiers. In the I Corps area, NVA units account for 80 percent of the enemy forces. On a country-wide basis North Vietnam now has nine divisions, consisting of 26 regiments, plus an additional 16 independent regimental equivalents deployed in South Vietnam. This compares to a VC Main and Local force strength of two divisions of three regiments each and an additional 22 regimental equivalents. Perhaps a third of what we carry as the "VC" force is actually composed of North Vietnamese Army personnel.

6. Infiltration. During the past four to five months, we believe Hanoi has moved at least two infantry divisions (the 304th and 320th) plus additional replacement or "filler" personnel into South Vietnam.

7. Official figures indicate that at least 5,600 North Vietnamese soldiers arrived in South Vietnam during November and December 1967. (This figure is almost identical to the total for the same period in 1966.) Most of last November and December's infiltrators were probably replacement personnel for forces already in South Vietnam (both NVA and VC).

8. During November and December 1967 [REDACTED] two entire North Vietnamese divisions (the 304th and the 320th) were moving toward South Vietnam. Components of these two divisions began to arrive in December, but neither are considered to have become operational in the south until January 1968. Each division probably had a strength of at least 8,000 men -- which accounts for most of the troops in MACV's infiltration total for January of 19,400 men. The remainder of this total was probably composed of miscellaneous groups of replacement personnel.

34(b)(1)

34(b)(1)

TOP SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

3.4(b)(1)

9. The picture for the past two months, February and March, is much less clear, but it is one of a marked increase in the usual indicators of infiltration suggesting significant movement. As of 8 February, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We are not sure of the personnel strength of any of these groups, but there is indirect evidence that they each approximate battalion strength -- about 400 men. 3.4(b)(1)

10. In addition, we have had unusually good evidence [REDACTED] in the month of March that battalion size groups are deploying southward through the central section of North Vietnam. 3.4(b)(1)

[REDACTED]

11. We cannot provide firm figures for infiltration in February and March, but the evidence suggests that at least about 4,000 NVA troops entered South Vietnam in February and at least some 8,000 will arrive during the month of March.

12. In sum, we believe that something on the order of 35-40,000 NVA personnel have been infiltrated into South Vietnam since 1 November 1967. Furthermore, [REDACTED] the entire infiltration apparatus is under heavy pressure to accomplish a major deployment in the near future. While we cannot confidently estimate the size of this additional deployment, the available evidence suggests it could be on the order of magnitude of two division equivalents. 3.4(b)(1)

[REDACTED]
George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

[REDACTED]
Copy No. 1

3.4(b)(1)

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~MEETING NOTES~~
~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~MEETING NOTES~~

Meeting began: 1:15 p.m.

Meeting ended: 3:05 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH HIS
FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

96a
~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~

~~Publication Requires~~
~~Permission of Copyright~~
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

March 26, 1968

In the Mansion

(On the table was a document on the growth of North Vietnam Army forces in South Vietnam.)

The President: Thank you for coming. I am sure Secretary Rusk and Secretary Clifford have followed this meeting closely. I want to hear from people who are not regular advisers from time to time.

I asked General Abrams to come here today. General Wheeler has been conferring with General Westmoreland. I want to hear your views and what you think will be helpful to me.

General Wheeler: In late February I visited South Vietnam. At that time the situation was fluid. The South Vietnamese were shook and had a variety of paralysis. Government and military were clustered in urban areas to protect against a second wave of attacks. I told President Thieu that the South Vietnam forces had to go on the offensive. Thieu said South Vietnam could not take another Tet offensive.

General Westmoreland has turned this around. They are now out in offensive activities.

General Westmoreland told me in Manila:

- Do not fear a general defeat with the forces we now have.
- There could be a tactical victory.
- The morale of the South Vietnamese is good.
- ARVN are now on the offensive.

The North Vietnamese army force in South Vietnam is now increased by 50,000 - 60,000 men. The enemy can reinforce with two divisions in 30 days. It could give the enemy greater chance for a tactical victory.

152 General Westmoreland believes that replacement packages are coming down from the North. The enemy has suffered great casualties.

DECLASSIFIED

~~TOP SECRET~~

Authority NLS 83-24
By icw, NARS, Date 11-4-83

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~

~~Publication Requires~~
~~Permission of Copyright~~
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

GOVERNMENT LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~ 1

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 2 -

Khesanh has served a useful purpose. It held two enemy divisions around it and one enemy division in support. The enemy has been badly battered. He has withdrawn one unit to the south and one moved to the east. I do not think the enemy has the intention of attacking Khesanh now.

We face additional hard fighting. He has sanctuaries. I see no reason for all the gloom and doom we see in the United States press. There were setbacks during Tet -- mostly psychological and two military. The most setback was here in the United States, which was one of their objectives.

The President: When General Westmoreland was last here, we did not give him all the troops he asked for. We agreed to make up the difference with a package of additional allied troops. We have sent all but three or four battalions promised.

General Wheeler: Three battalions will arrive by mid April.

The President: General Abrams has been working closely with South Vietnamese.

General Abrams: When I was assigned to Vietnam eleven months ago I was assigned to work with the South Vietnamese troops. I work with them six days a week. In the first few days of February, I visited all the Vietnamese commanders.

Then I went to northern I Corps to coordinate deployments in I Corps. In the last few days before I came back I spent time visiting all four Corps.

First, the Vietnamese armed forces performed well during the Tet offensive. We would have been in a catastrophe had they not fought well. The South Vietnamese were in bad posture when the attacks came. At that time, most South Vietnamese troops had 50% of their units home on Tet leave. There were three commanders who decided not to let their men off.

The Division commanders expected attacks in several areas, and cancelled the leaves of the men. In some cases the division commanders were not ready.

The South Vietnamese have 149 maneuver battalions -- 8 performed unsatisfactorily; 30 performed with distinction; the rest performed satisfactorily.

The First South Vietnamese division cleaned out two thirds of the Citadel. They lost two thirds of their strength. They took the palace.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

CONFIDENTIAL LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 3 -

The Airborne Division took 11% casualties.

The desertion rate in these divisions was slightly higher than in other divisions. The Second Ranger Group performed very poorly. The trouble is with their leadership.

The 44th Regiment was a great disappointment. It is made up of integrated training and operations. We thought it was a good thing, but in Tet they weren't worth a damn. The problem was with the regimental commander.

There are three divisions in III Corps around Saigon that are a problem. They did fight during the Tet. Desertions exceeded casualties in February. They had more training and help in 1967 than any other. We may have helped them too much.

In the Delta, the divisions performed well. They had nasty and difficult fighting.

In February, there were 7,000 volunteers for service in the Vietnamese army versus 1500 in January.

There have been two replacements of division commanders which look helpful. I feel good about the Delta.

I visited all the outfits. They are out moving, even in 3rd Corps. The roads are open. Traffic is moving. Trucks are moving over Route 4. ARVN is out operating, from one end of the country to another.

They have shortened the recruit training period. They will add 135,000 more troops.

Some other commanders have been relieved. Some province chiefs have to go.

I feel good about the way the thing is going. The morale of the ARVN is high. Some have won battles, with the best of the NVA. The ARVN are promoting from the ranks.

We are trying to improve weaponry. Some of this was done before Tet. M-16s have been distributed to two divisions in the Delta. We are going to give them machine guns and mortars.

We need to give regional forces and popular forces better weapons. The regional forces and popular forces stuck and fought too. Desertion rates did not increase in the regional forces and popular forces.

SERVICE SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

COPIED LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 4 -

The President: Will you get 135,000?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: Are they drafting 18 year olds?

General Abrams: Yes. Thieu and Ky are determined to do it.

The President: What percent of the ARVN are poor?

General Abrams: 8 of 149 battalions.

The President: How many U.S. battalions are there now?

General Abrams: 103 now. We will have 106.

The President: What are the capabilities for improvement?

General Abrams: They are better. Westy has worked on this for a long time. They have a fine Officer Candidate School and Staff Colleges.

The President: How do the ARVN compare with the Koreans?

General Abrams: The Koreans had the same problem of building their army and fighting at the same time. I would say the Vietnamese are doing as well if not better than the Koreans.

The President: What about the battles in I Corps against the North Vietnamese Army units?

General Abrams: In I Corps, his main objectives are the two northern provinces. In that, the principle objective is Hue.

He committed 14 - 16 battalions to take Hue and 14 - 16 battalions to take Saigon. Since then, he has moved back in on Hue. I do not believe Hue is in danger.

He has 44% of his main units in I Corps, 22% in II Corps, 24% in III Corps, and 10% in the Delta. Of ours, 49% are in I Corps.

The President: Do you think he will attack in Khesanh?

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

COPY-103 LIBRARY

SECRET

TOP SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 5 -

General Abrams: I would bet he is not. He started out to on the 23rd of the month. We put too much on him.

The President: How?

General Abrams: By bombing.

The President: What do you expect in April?

General Abrams: He will continue his pressure on Saigon. He will try to keep up the pressure. He may try at Hue. I don't believe he has the strength to do that.

The President: What do you see this year?

General Abrams: -- Hard fighting
-- Attrition of enemy forces
-- Improvement in ARVN, RF and PF
-- Enemy is making this year an all-out effort.

The President: Is it a change in his strategy?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: What kind?

General Abrams: He was losing under the old strategy. He was losing control of people.

McGeorge Bundy: What is the relation of Regional Forces and Popular Forces and ARVN to the pacification in the future?

General Abrams: In many places the Popular Forces and the Regional Forces were pulled into towns. This took them away from the influence and protection outside towns. Our biggest problem is in the 4th Corps.

In III Corps, the losses in men in the Regional Forces and Popular Forces have not been great. We only need to move them out of the provinces.

I Corps and II Corps -- it is pretty good.

McGeorge Bundy: Were they not as much affected by Tet?

General Abrams: Not as much affected, no.

~~TOP SECRET~~ MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

SERVICE SET

Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 6 -

Ambassador Goldberg: Can there be another series of Tet - like offensive?

General Abrams: No.

Douglas Dillon: When the buildup of the ARVN is completed, can they carry a larger part of the fighting?

General Abrams: Yes. I would have to quit if I didn't believe that. They can take on more fighting against the Viet Cong. I feel quite certain of that.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

LIBRARY



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SANITIZED

E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.5

NLJ 04-95

By ius, NARA, Date 1-13-05

26 March 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

SUBJECT: The Growing Strength of North Vietnamese Army
Forces in South Vietnam

1. In response to the President's request, we have taken a fresh look at our data on North Vietnamese Army (NVA) strength in South Vietnam and the rates of North Vietnamese infiltration over recent months.

2. Force Levels. During the past three or four months there has been a dramatic increase in the movement of regular North Vietnamese Army units into South Vietnam. This Agency now believes that last fall (1 November) there were over 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers fighting in South Vietnam. The number has risen rapidly in the past five months and today may be over 100,000. This increase in NVA strength in South Vietnam has been achieved despite the thousands of casualties suffered by the North Vietnamese in the intensified combat of the past two months.

3. The following tabulation shows what we believe to be the relative strengths of VC and NVA Main and Local forces as of 1 November 1967 and 25 March 1968, without adjustment for casualties:

	<u>1 November 1967</u>	<u>25 March 1968</u>
<u>NVA Forces</u>		
In NVA units	61,000	88,000
In VC units	<u>10,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
Sub-total	71,000	103,000
<u>VC Forces</u>		
	71,000	61,000
Total	<u>142,000</u>	<u>164,000</u>

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~

~~Publication Requires~~

~~Permission of Copyright~~

~~Holder W. Thomas Johnson~~

SC#05497-68

Copy No. 1

SERVICE SET

4. The above tabulation shows that the relative strength of NVA forces probably increased from 50 percent of total Main and Local force strength on 1 November 1967 to 63 percent as of late March 1968. The relative strength of NVA forces is even greater when these figures are adjusted for the extraordinary casualties of the Tet offensive (30 January-21 February 1968). We have made a very rough and preliminary estimate that the bulk of these casualties were sustained by VC Main and Local forces (including guerrillas upgraded and attached to Local force units). We estimate tentatively that the infiltration of NVA fillers has been more than adequate to maintain NVA force levels at their pre-Tet level of some 100,000 troops. VC Main and Local force strength has probably declined to a level of about 45,000-50,000 troops.

5. Thus, we estimate that today there may be nearly two times as many North Vietnamese regular army soldiers in South Vietnam as there are VC regular (i.e., Main and Local force) soldiers. In the I Corps area, NVA units account for 80 percent of the enemy forces. On a country-wide basis North Vietnam now has nine divisions, consisting of 26 regiments, plus an additional 16 independent regimental equivalents deployed in South Vietnam. This compares to a VC Main and Local force strength of two divisions of three regiments each and an additional 22 regimental equivalents. Perhaps a third of what we carry as the "VC" force is actually composed of North Vietnamese Army personnel.

6. Infiltration. During the past four to five months, we believe Hanoi has moved at least two infantry divisions (the 304th and 320th) plus additional replacement or "filler" personnel into South Vietnam.

7. Official figures indicate that at least 5,600 North Vietnamese soldiers arrived in South Vietnam during November and December 1967. (This figure is almost identical to the total for the same period in 1966.) Most of last November and December's infiltrators were probably replacement personnel for forces already in South Vietnam (both NVA and VC).

8. During November and December 1967 [redacted] two entire North Vietnamese divisions (the 304th and the 320th) were moving toward South Vietnam. Components of these two divisions began to arrive in December, but neither are considered to have become operational in the south until January 1968. Each division probably had a strength of at least 8,000 men -- which accounts for most of the troops in MACV's infiltration total for January of 19,400 men. The remainder of this total was probably composed of miscellaneous groups of replacement personnel.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

SC No. 05497-68

Copy No. 1

9. The picture for the past two months, February and March, is much less clear, but it is one of a marked increase in the usual indicators of infiltration suggesting significant movement. As of 8 February, [redacted]

[redacted] We are not sure of the personnel strength of any of these groups, but there is indirect evidence that they each approximate battalion strength -- about 400 men.

10. In addition, we have had unusually good evidence [redacted] in the month of March that battalion size groups are deploying southward through the central section of North Vietnam. More than 20 such groups have been noted in the period 2-25 March. Some of these groups may by now have progressed far enough south to be reflected among the [redacted]

11. We cannot provide firm figures for infiltration in February and March, but the evidence suggests that at least about 4,000 NVA troops entered South Vietnam in February and at least some 8,000 will arrive during the month of March.

12. In sum, we believe that something on the order of 35-40,000 NVA personnel have been infiltrated into South Vietnam since 1 November 1967. Furthermore, [redacted] the entire infiltration apparatus is under heavy pressure to accomplish a major deployment in the near future. While we cannot confidently estimate the size of this additional deployment, the available evidence suggests it could be on the order of magnitude of two division equivalents.

George A. Carver, Jr.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

SC No. 05497-68
Copy No. 1

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

Friday, May 2, 1969

Mr. President:

Attached are the minutes of the meeting
with the "Wisemen," as requested.


Tom Johnson

DETERMINED TO BE FOR
ADMINISTRATIVE / USE ONLY
NOT APTL SECURITY
INFORMATION, E. O. 12836,
SEC. 1.1(a)

BY DCM ON 2-25-91

~~TOP SECRET~~ attachment

COPIES SET

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 26, 1968

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with Foreign Policy Advisers in the Mansion at lunch on March 26, 1968.

Those attending the meeting were:

The President	Cyrus Vance
The Vice President	Douglas Dillon
Secretary Rusk	General Omar Bradley
Secretary Clifford	Averill Harriman
Ambassador Goldwater	Dean Acheson
Justice Fortas	Henry Cabot Lodge
General Earle Wheeler	George Ball
General Maxwell Taylor	General Mathew Ridgway
General Creighton W. Abrams	McGeorge Bundy
Arthur Dean	William B. Murphy
Walt Rostow	Tom Johnson
George Christian	

The meeting began at 1:15 p.m. The meeting ended at 3:05 p.m.

~~TOP SECRET~~

RECEIVED BY
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/1/81 BY
INFORMATION, L.C. 12033,
SEC. 1.1(e)

BY Dust ON 2-25-91

SERVICE SET

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH HIS
FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

March 23, 1968
In the Mansion

(On the table was a document on the growth of North Vietnam Army forces in South Vietnam.)

The President: Thank you for coming. I am sure Secretary Rusk and Secretary Clifford have followed this meeting closely. I want to hear from people who are not regular advisers from time to time.

I asked General Abrams to come here today. General Wheeler has been conferring with General Westmoreland. I want to hear your views and what you think will be helpful to me.

General Wheeler: In late February I visited South Vietnam. At that time the situation was fluid. The South Vietnamese were shook and had a variety of paralysis. Government and military were clustered in urban areas to protect against a second wave of attacks. I told President Thieu that the South Vietnam forces had to go on the offensive. Thieu said South Vietnam could not take another Tet offensive.

General Westmoreland has turned this around. They are now out in offensive activities.

General Westmoreland told me in Manila:

- Do not fear a general defeat with the forces we now have.
- There could be a tactical victory.
- The morale of the South Vietnamese is good.
- ARVN are now on the offensive.

The North Vietnamese army force in South Vietnam is now increased by 50,000 - 60,000 men. The enemy can reinforce with two divisions in 30 days. It could give the enemy greater chance for a tactical victory.

General Westmoreland believes that replacement packages are coming down from the North. The enemy has suffered great casualties.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 165 83-24
By ju NARA Date 2-25-91
SERVICE SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

Khesanh has served a useful purpose. It held two enemy divisions around it and one enemy division in support. The enemy has been badly battered. He has withdrawn one unit to the south and one moved to the east. I do not think the enemy has the intention of attacking Khesanh now.

We face additional hard fighting. He has sanctuaries. I see no reason for all the gloom and doom we see in the United States press. There were setbacks during Tet -- mostly psychological and two military. The most setback was here in the United States, which was one of their objectives.

The President: When General Westmoreland was last here, we did not give him all the troops he asked for. We agreed to make up the difference with a package of additional allied troops. We have sent all but three or four battalions promised.

General Wheeler: Three battalions will arrive by mid April.

The President: General Abrams has been working closely with South Vietnamese.

General Abrams: When I was assigned to Vietnam eleven months ago I was assigned to work with the South Vietnamese troops. I work with them six days a week. In the first few days of February, I visited all the Vietnamese commanders.

Then I went to northern I Corps to coordinate deployments in I Corps. In the last few days before I came back I spent time visiting all four Corps.

First, the Vietnamese armed forces performed well during the Tet offensive. We would have been in a catastrophe had they not fought well. The South Vietnamese were in bad posture when the attacks came. At that time, most South Vietnamese troops had 50% of their units home on Tet leave. There were three commanders who decided not to let their men off.

The Division commanders expected attacks in several areas, and cancelled the leaves of the men. In some cases the division commanders were not ready.

The South Vietnamese have 149 maneuver battalions -- 8 performed unsatisfactorily; 30 performed with distinction; the rest performed satisfactorily.

The First South Vietnamese division cleaned out two thirds of the Citadel. They lost two thirds of their strength. They took the palace.

The Airborne Division took 11% casualties.

The desertion rate in these divisions was slightly higher than in other divisions. The Second Ranger Group performed very poorly. The trouble is with their leadership.

The 44th Regiment was a great disappointment. It is made up of integrated training and operations. We thought it was a good thing, but in Tet they weren't worth a damn. The problem was with the regimental commander.

There are three divisions in III Corps around Saigon that are a problem. They did fight during the Tet. Desertions exceeded casualties in February. They had more training and help in 1967 than any other. We may have helped them too much.

In the Delta, the divisions performed well. They had nasty and difficult fighting.

In February, there were 7,000 volunteers for service in the Vietnamese army versus 1500 in January.

There have been two replacements of division commanders which look helpful. I feel good about the Delta.

I visited all the outfits. They are out moving, even in 3rd Corps. The roads are open. Traffic is moving. Trucks are moving over Route 4. ARVN is out operating, from one end of the country to another.

They have shortened the recruit training period. They will add 135,000 more troops.

Some other commanders have been relieved. Some province chiefs have to go.

I feel good about the way the thing is going. The morale of the ARVN is high. Some have won battles, with the best of the NVA. The ARVN are promoting from the ranks.

We are trying to improve weaponry. Some of this was done before Tet. M-16s have been distributed to two divisions in the Delta. We are going to give them machine guns and mortars.

We need to give regional forces and popular forces better weapons. The regional forces and popular forces stuck and fought too. Desertion rates did not increase in the regional forces and popular forces.

SERVICE SET

The President: Will you get 135,000?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: Are they drafting 18 year olds?

General Abrams: Yes. Thieu and Ky are determined to do it.

The President: What percent of the ARVN are poor?

General Abrams: 8 of 149 battalions.

The President: How many U.S. battalions are there now?

General Abrams: 103 now. We will have 106.

The President: What are the capabilities for improvement?

General Abrams: They are better. Westy has worked on this for a long time. They have a fine Officer Candidate School and Staff Colleges.

The President: How do the ARVN compare with the Koreans?

General Abrams: The Koreans had the same problem of building their army and fighting at the same time. I would say the Vietnamese are doing as well if not better than the Koreans.

The President: What about the battles in I Corps against the North Vietnamese Army units?

General Abrams: In I Corps, his main objectives are the two northern provinces. In that, the principle objective is Hue.

He committed 14 - 16 battalions to take Hue and 14 - 16 battalions to take Saigon. Since then, he has moved back in on Hue. I do not believe Hue is in danger.

He has 44% of his main units in I Corps, 22% in II Corps, 24% in III Corps, and 10% in the Delta. Of ours, 49% are in I Corps.

The President: Do you think he will attack in Khesanh?

General Abrams: I would bet he is not. He started out to on the 23rd of the month. We put too much on him.

The President: How?

General Abrams: By bombing.

The President: What do you expect in April?

General Abrams: He will continue his pressure on Saigon. He will try to keep up the pressure. He may try at Hue. I don't believe he has the strength to do that.

The President: What do you see this year?

General Abrams: -- Hard fighting
-- Attrition of enemy forces
-- Improvement in ARVN, RF and PF
-- Enemy is making this year an all-out effort.

The President: Is it a change in his strategy?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: What kind?

General Abrams: He was losing under the old strategy. He was losing control of people.

McGeorge Bundy: What is the relation of Regional Forces and Popular Forces and ARVN to the pacification in the future?

General Abrams: In many places the Popular Forces and the Regional Forces were pulled into towns. This took them away from the influence and protection outside towns. Our biggest problem is in the 4th Corps.

In III Corps, the losses in men in the Regional Forces and Popular Forces have not been great. We only need to move them out of the provinces.

I Corps and II Corps -- it is pretty good.

McGeorge Bundy: Were they not as much affected by Tet?

General Abrams: Not as much affected, no.

Ambassador Goldberg: Can there be another series of Tet - like offensive?

General Abrams: No.

Douglas Dillon: When the buildup of the ARVN is completed, can they carry a larger part of the fighting?

General Abrams: Yes. I would have to quit if I didn't believe that. They can take on more fighting against the Viet Cong. I feel quite certain of that.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Pres

Give to
Connie

98

D. Acheson 21

C. Lodge 20

Dean 19



18

Ridgeway 17 ✓

Mc Bundy 16 ✓

Taylor 15 ✓

Johnson 14

Ball 13 ✓

¹²
wheeler

¹¹
Abrams ✓

✓ Fortas

✓ Vice President

March 26
Foreign Policy Luncheon

1 9 Brasley ✓ to

2 A. Harriman ✓ type

3 Murphy ✓

4 Clark Clifford ✓

5 D. Dillon ✓

6 C. Vance ✓

7 W. Rostow

8 Q. Christian

9 Goldberg ✓

10 Rusk ✓

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLS 83-24

By ju NARA, Date 2-25-91

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

[17]

(CIA doc on table on
in SUN.)

Growth of NVA forces

P- Thank you for coming. I am sure Sec. Rusk & Clifford
have followed this meeting closely.
I want to hear from people
who are not regular advisors
from time to time.

I asked Gen'l Abrams to come
here today. Gen'l Wheeler
has been conferring w/ General
Westmoreland

I want to hear your views
and what you think will
be helpful to me.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

50103E SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
- Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

General Wheeler:

In late Feb I visited South Vietnam. At that time the situation was fluid.

South Vietnamese were shook and had a variety of paralysis. Government and military were clustered in urban areas to protect against 2nd wave of attacks.

I told Thieu that the SVN had to go on the offensive. Thieu said SVN could not take another Tet offensive.

Genl Westmoreland has turned this around. They are now out in offensive activities

Westmoreland to let me in Manila;

- do not fear general defeat with forces we now have
- There could be a tactical victory
- Morale of SVN good
- ARVN are now on offensive

NVA force in SVN now increased by 50-60,000 men

Enemy can reinforce with 2 Divisions in 30 days

Could give enemy greater chance for tactical victory.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

Westmoreland believes replacement packages are coming down from North.

Enemy has suffered great casualties.

Khesant has served a useful purpose. It held 2 enemy divisions around it and 1 enemy division in support.

Enemy has been badly battered. He has withdrawn one unit to the south + moved to the east.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

I do not think enemy has
intention of attacking Korea
now.

We face additional food
fighting. He has sanctuaries.
I see no reason for all
the gloom & doom we
see in U.S. press

There were setbacks during
Tet - most psychological
and few military

Most setback was here
in U.S., which was one of
their objectives.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

President: When Westmoreland was last here, we did not give him all the troops he asked for. We agreed to make up the difference with a package of additional allied troops.

We have sent all but 3 or 4 battalions.

W: 3 ^(battalions) will arrive by mid April

P: General Abrams has been working closely with South Vietnamese.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

COPIES SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

Abrams: When I was assigned to Vietnam 11 months ago I was assigned to working with South Vietnamese troops. I work with them 6 days a week. In first few days of February, I visited all Vietnamese commands.

Then I went to northern I Corps to coordinate deployments in I Corps. In last few days before I came back I spent time visiting all 4 Corps.

First, Vietnamese armed forces performed well during Tet offensive. We would have been in catastrophe had they not fought well.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

South Vietnamese were in
bad posture when attacks
came. At that time,
most SVN troops had
50% of units home on Tet
leave.

There were 3 commanders
who decided not to let men
off.

Division commanders expected
attacks in several areas, and
cancelled leaves of men.
~~Not recommended~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE 87

In some cases, division commanders
were not ready.

(The SUN)

They have 149 maneuvers
battalions - 8 performed
unsatisfactorily; 30
performed with distinction;
rest performed satisfactorily.

1st SUN Div. cleaned out 2/3rd
of Citadel. lost 2/3 of their
strength. Took Palace

Airborne Division took 11%
Casualties

Direction rate in these divisions
was slightly higher in
other divisions

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

Roads are open. Traffic is moving. Trucks are moving over Route 4. Arvon is out operating from 1 end of country to another.

They have shortened recruit training period. They will add 135,000 new troops.

Some other commanders have been relieved. Some province chiefs have to go.

I feel good about way thing is going.
Most of NVA is high.
Some have won battles with best of the NVA.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

20250808

117

2nd Ranger Group performed
very poorly. Trouble is with
leadership

44th Regiment was great
disappointment. Integrated
training + operations. We
thought it was good thing.
In Tet they weren't worth
a damn. Problem was
regimental commander.

3 Divisions in III Corps
around Saigon are problem.
They did fight during Tet
Disruptions exceeded
casualties in February.

They have more training
& help in 67 than any
other. We may have helped them some

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

BYIDE SET

1107

In Delta, divisions performed well. They had nasty + difficult fighting.

In Feb, there were 7,000 volunteers for service in Vietnamese army vs. 1500 in January.

There have been 2 replacements of division commanders which look helpful.

I feel good about Delta.

I visited all outfits. They are out growing, even in 3rd Corps.

MEETING NOTES COPY

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

ARVN are promoting from
the ranks.

We are trying to improve
weapons. One of this
was done before Tet.

M-16s have been distributed
to 2 divisions in the
Delta going to give them
machine guns and mortars.

Need to give RF+PF
better weapons. RF+PF
stuck + fought too.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SEVEN SET

1147

Disertion rates did not increase
in RF + PF. ~~MM~~

P- Will you get 135,000

A- ^{DIAMS} Yes

P- Are they drafting 18-y-olds

A- ^{DIAMS} Yes -

Thieu + Ky are determined
to do it

P- What % of ARVN
are poor

A- 8 of 149

P- How many US bns there now

A- 103 now. Will have 106.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SECRET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

F152

P What are capabilities
for improvement

A- They are better.
Westy has worked
on this for a long
time.

They have fine OCS
And Staff College.

P- How do Aron
compare w/ Koreans?

A - Koreans had some
problem of bulking
army & fighting with
it some time. I would
say the Vietnamese are
doing as well if not better

MEETING NOTES

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

END OF SET

than Koreans.

Pres - What about battle
in I Corps against
NVA units.

A. In I Corps, his
main objectives
are 2 northern
provinces.

In that, principle
objective is Hue.

He committed 14-16
battalions to take
Hue and 14-16
battalions to take
Saigon.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires—
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SECRET SET

[17]

Since then, he has moved
back in on Hue.

I do not believe Hue is
in danger.

He has 44% of
main units in I Corps
22% in II
24% in III
10% in Delta

ours 39% in I Corps

P- Do you think he will
attack in Khesar?

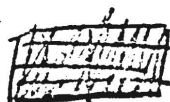
A- I would bet he is
not. He started
out to on 23rd of
month. We put too much
on him?

P- How

A - Bomb

P- What you expect in
April

A - He will continue his
pressure on Saigon.



He will try to keep
up pressure.

May try at Hue.

Don't believe he
has strength
to do that

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

197

P- What do you see this year

A -

- Hand feeling
- Attrition of enemy force
- Improvement in Rion, RFA PE
- Enemy is making this year an all-out effort

P. Is it a change in his strategy

A - Yes

P- What kind

A - He was losing under old strategy. He was losing control of people

Mac Bundy: What is relation
of RF & PF & Gov to
pacification in
future?

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

A: In many places
PF & RF were
pulled into towns
This took them
away from
the influence &
protection outside
towns. ~~That~~
~~is true on III & VII~~
~~Cops.~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SECRET

[21]

Our biggest problem is
in 4th Corps.

In III Corps, the losses
in men in RF + PF
have not been great.
We only need to
move them out of
proximity.

I Corps + II Corps
it is pretty good.

Mac Bundy: Were they not
as much affected
by Tit

A- Not as much
affected, no.

Goldberg: Can there be another series of Tet-like offensive?

A: No

Dillon: When buildup is over completed, can they carry a larger part of the fighting?

A-Yes

|| I would have to quit if I didn't believe that.

They can take on more fighting against VC

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

I feel quite certain of that.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

[24]