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arvn 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, MARCH 29--President Nguyen Van Thieu's recent announcement increasing his armed forces to 805,000 men appears here to be South Vietnam's last military chance and last political resort.

The net increase of 135,000 men during 1968 is the biggest one-year jump in strength strength in the 14-year history of the Vietnamese armed forces, reliable sources report.

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arvn 2 (normass/deepe)

The dramatic move is President Thieu's response to the Communist Tet offensive--and to the prevailing view here that he can no longer expect huge ~~inf~~ ^{forces} influxes of American troops to re-establish a favorable balance of power with the Communists.

Barring a ~~letha~~ an over-powering Communist second offensive, American troop level within South Vietnam is expected to rise no higher than the 550-man mark during the remainder of this year. Present American strength within the country is currently 511,000.

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arvn 3 (normass/deepe)

Reliable sources report President Thieu's move was made after he received the approval of General Earl Wheeler, Chairman of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, during his recent trip here. Prior to Tet, ~~The President~~ President Thieu had announced a 65,000-man increase during all of 1968, and the U. S. government had reportedly agreed to ~~it~~ pay for the cost of training, equipping and sustaining them. Last week, President Thieu announced the ~~65,000~~ these 65,000 would be trained and in the battlefield by mid-year and that an additional 70,000 would also be drafted. During the Wheeler visit, the U. S. government agreed to ~~finance~~ the financing of the ~~increase~~ ^{70,000-man} increase, but the funds have yet to arrive here, reliable sources report.

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arvn 4 (normass/deepe)

Politically, the magnitude of disruption caused by the call-up, on the heels of the destructive Communist offensive in the cities, might be compared to the impact of World War II on the American society, with the even more staggering difference that the Vietnam war is being fought by Vietnamese ^{Soldiers} on their own soil--and occasionally on the ~~door~~ doorsteps of their own homes. Virtually every Vietnamese family, at the end of 1968, will have sent their draft-age son to the battlefield, and many of their daughters, like the ~~women of Amerc~~ American women in World War II, are filling the non-military vacuum as typists, teachers, interpreters, ~~politi~~ policewomen and are few in non-combattant military positions. The change is marked in Vietnam where women traditionally married young, raised a family and stayed at ~~h~~ home.

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arvn 5 (normass/deepe)

At the end of 1968, one out of every 2 ~~roughly~~ 20 Vietnamese is scheduled to be serving in the Vietnamese armed forces alone; this excludes the hundreds of thousands of young Southern-born men and a few women fighting full or part-time with the Viet Cong.

For President Thieu—and for the entire Allied side here—the move brings a criss-cross of advantages and disadvantages.

Internationally, and especially in America, the South Vietnamese government can point to the call-up ^{75 Proof} to ~~prove~~ the Vietnamese are carrying their share of the war and to dispel criticism among President Johnson's political opposition that the Vietnamese are letting the Americans do the fighting for them.

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arvn 6 (normass/deepe)

Internally, within the Communist versus Allied framework, the Vietnamese government has ~~inte~~ entered and ~~s~~ a significant ~~and perhaps its last major~~ race with the Communists for manpower. Since 1964, the depleting ^{SOUTHERN} manpower base has been a problem both for the Communists and for the government side ~~the~~ slack ^{SINCE} ~~now~~ being taken up by American and North Vietnamese ~~interve~~ troop increments to reinforce their respective sides. In the wake of the Communist Tet offensive, reliable sources here report the ~~Commun~~ Communists have succeeded in amassing large numbers of recruits, as they seized control, at least temporarily, of large numbers of villages, and politically displayed they were ~~were~~ ^{HOLD} at least momentarily, the upper hand against the government, and the Allies. In the eight ^{PROVINCES} provinces of the western and southern Mekong Delta, Communist recruitment has been ~~estime~~ estimated by Vietnamese ~~source~~ ^{SOURCE} informed Vietnamese sources to have reached up to 30,000 repeat 30,000 ~~at~~ ^{ENOUGH} by itself to replace their ^{COUNTRY-UNDE} battlefield losses during the Tet offensive. In Kien Hoa province, a heavily populated and economically rice area, Communist recruitment has been ^{FOR REPUTABLE HILLS HILLS} estimated by 10,000 as many of the villages slipped under their control and the government presence ~~she~~ ^{she} shrank and still remains holed up in a half dozen provincial district towns and the provincial capital.

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arvn 7 (nroma (normass/deepe)

In a secret message, the central government has reported ^{L.V.} / ordered Vietnamese battalions sweeping through contested friendly, ~~contested~~ contested or even Viet Cong-controlled areas to seize any young men within the draft age of 18 to 33 years old.

~~throughout~~

While these ^{GOVERNMENTS'} national training centers and (boot camps) are currently overflowing with ~~trainees~~ trainees, these young men can be held as sort of an "apprentice private" ^{to} and receive ~~on-the-job~~ on-the-job military training from the battalion, either in base camp or on operations, until the ~~time~~ they can be shipped off to receive formal training.

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arvn 8 (normass/deepe)

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One of the net results of this will be a quantity increase in the Vietnamese armed forces without much hope of a quality increase in the performance; while the Americans government, after the recent visit of General Creighton Abrams to confer with President Johnson in Washington, has promised the Vietnamese troopers better, more modern equipment, which they their officers have for two years said they badly need, there seems little possibility the Vietnamese army will receive much in the way of political indoctrination and motivation, which they also have needed for years.

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arvn 9 (normass/deepe)

A major, and highly crucial disadvantage, of the troop increase for President Thieu is that the some of the troops are going to come out of the government itself--from the ranks of the civil servants. This seems especially ill-timed, for in the wake of the Communist offensive, the government's a government's administrative apparatus, always sluggish and bureaucratic, has had more and more demands placed upon it--demands for refugee housing, relief and recovery measures in the cities, as well as attempting to regain its balance in the countryside. Simultaneously, the Communists have thrust into the cities, and their continued presence in the outskirts, have made the Thoi Thieu government its special target, as they accelerate their attempts to t destroy it from its rice-roots level upwards.

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arvn 10 (normass/deeps)

Reliable sources report the government's civilian apparatus ~~country-wide~~ country-wide now totals 240,000. This is reportedly double its civilian personnel total of 120,000 in late November, 1963, when President Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown. During the preceding thr ^{1963,} ~~the preceding thr~~ since then, the number of ^{civil} servants, functionaires, and unskilled personnel increased dramatically as the government sought to expand its services to its own people, and sought to fight the Viet Cong on non-military fronts, such as information, psychological warfare, public works, ^{FWD} ~~dramatic increases~~ ^{RECESS} in education and health.

Now, these these same sources report, the number of civilian government employees will again be reduced to the 1963 level totalling only ~~120,000~~ a 120,000. Part of this is for strictly economic reasons, part of this is that draft-age empl government employees will no longer be deferred, no matter how critical their services are demanded in for the government to contest the Communists in the non-military field.

Hence, will the while the Vietnamese army is expanding dramatically, the Vietnamese government, by its own actions, is shrinking, perhaps disasterously. Likewise on the U. S. side here,

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arvn 11 (normass/deepe)

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Likewise, on the U. S. side here, while more American troops are enroute to Vietnam, the American economic aid mission, which supports the Vietnamese government apparatus, is also shrinking, cutting ten per cent of its peron personnel like of other like other missions throughout the world in the wake of ~~Congressional~~ Congressional budget reductions.

(Hank: I'll file another piece over the week-end. Monday, I'll spend the day at the airport for some airforce briefings. I hope next week to file on the escalation of North Vietnam bombing—but this will not be a report on the political reasons for it. If you want that kind of piece about escalation, suggest Pentagon also work on it. Mine will be more of a chronology ~~and~~ military rationale and military results type thing. Other projects ~~req~~ I've in the works for next week include BRIEFINGS REQUESTED BRIEFING ON USAID personnel cuts, some delving into Tet refugee and housing development. Would you want a zepager on Tet refugees refugee refugees, focusing on big housing ~~area~~ temporary housing area for them in Saigon? Friday and Saturday, I'll go to Bien Hoa for major briefings and to take a look at miracle rice and Long An province. /and the big Saigon ~~military~~ military operation. OKAY? (Regards Bev).

--end reuter