The Tet Offensive: Graphs, Maps, and Quotes

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There are two major monsoon seasons in South Vietnam. Generally, it rains heavily from May to September southwest of a line from Tuy Hoa to Di Linh and from November to March north of that line. In the "dry" season, many areas that were swampy in the monsoon turn to dust. Wet and dry seasons vary considerably in both time and intensity from area to area.

Generally, allied units were dispersed in the western reaches of South Vietnam in an effort to meet NVA and VC attacks during the months just preceding the Tet offensive.
Changes in the Makeup of Communist Forces (MACV contemporary estimates)

Guerrillas
Admin Serv
VC in VC combat
Unk in VC combat
NV in VC combat
PAVN combat

Changes in the Makeup of Communist Forces (MACV retrospective estimates)

- VC in VC units
- Unk. in VC units
- NV in VC units
- PAVN units

The diagram shows changes in the makeup of communist forces from January 1967 to June 1968, with estimates for VC in VC units and other units.
Political Infrastructure (MACV retrospective estimate)
Westmoreland-Wheeler Messages

• On February 9, General Wheeler (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) got a message from General Westmoreland (the US commander in Vietnam), in which Westmoreland said that he was having to thin out his defenses in some areas to strengthen critical points, but Westmoreland said this did not “present an unacceptable risk.” He continued: “Needless to say, I would welcome reinforcements at any time they can be made available.” Westmoreland to Wheeler, MAC 1858, 091633Z Feb. 1968.

• On February 12, Wheeler, wanting to be sure he understood correctly, informed Westmoreland that his message was interpreted to mean: “You could use additional U.S. troop units, but you are not expressing a firm demand for them; in sum, you do not fear defeat if you are not reinforced.” (Wheeler to Westmoreland, JCS 01695, 120108Z Feb. 1968.)
Five hours later, Westmoreland sent a message up his chain of command (it went initially to Admiral Sharp, the commander for the whole Pacific area, who passed it on to Wheeler in Washington): "On the assumption that it is our national policy to prohibit the enemy from seizing and permanently occupying the two northern provinces, I intend to hold them at all cost. However, to do so I must reinforce from other areas and accept a major risk, unless I can get reinforcements, which I desperately need. . . . I need reinforcements in terms of combat elements. I therefore urge that there be deployed immediately a Marine regiment package and a brigade package of the 82nd Abn Div and that the remaining elements of those two divisions be prepared to follow at a later time. Time is of the essence." (Westmoreland to Sharp, MAC 01975, 120612Z Feb. 1968)
Americans Killed by Hostile Action - Months