

a week for the 4-week period ending July 24 this year. Vietcong losses have gone from 322 a week last year to about 680 a week for the 4-week period ending July 24. Most important, the ratio of South Vietnamese to Vietcong strength has seriously declined in the last 6 or 7 months from about 5 to 1 to about 3 or $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 1; the ratio of combat battalions is substantially less. This is far too low a ratio for a guerrilla war even though the greater mobility and firepower provided to the South Vietnamese forces by the United States help to offset that disadvantage. The South Vietnamese forces have to defend hundreds of cities, towns, and hamlets while the Vietcong are free to choose the time and place of their attack. As a result, the South Vietnamese forces are stretched thin in defensive positions, leaving only a small central reserve for offensive action against the Vietcong, while the latter are left free to concentrate their forces and throw them against selected targets. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Vietcong retains most of the initiative.

Even so, we may not as yet have seen the full weight of the Communist attack. Presently, the situation is particularly acute in the northern part of the country where the Communists have mobilized large military forces which pose a threat to the entire region and its major cities and towns. Our air attacks may have helped to keep these forces off balance but the threat remains and it is very real.

Clearly, the time has come when the people of South Vietnam need more help from us and other nations if they are to retain their freedom and independence. We have already responded to that need with some 75,000 U.S. military personnel, including some combat units. This number will be raised to 125,000 almost immediately with the deployment of the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces. But, more help will be needed in the months ahead and additional U.S. combat forces will be required to back up the hard pressed Army of South Vietnam. Two other nations have provided combat forces—Australia and New Zealand. We hope that by the end of this year others will join them.

ROLE OF U.S. COMBAT FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

As I noted earlier, the central reserve of the South Vietnamese Army has been seriously depleted in recent months. The principal role of U.S. ground combat forces will be to supplement this reserve in support of the front line forces of the South Vietnamese Army. The indigenous paramilitary forces will deal with the pacification of areas cleared of organized Vietcong and North Vietnamese units, a role more appropriated for them than for our forces.

The Government of South Vietnam's strategy, with which we concur, is to achieve the initiative, to expand gradually its area of control by breaking up major concentrations of enemy forces, using to the maximum our preponderance of air power, both land and sea based. The number of "fixed-wing" attack sorties by U.S. aircraft in South Vietnam will increase manyfold by the end of the year. Armed helicopter sorties will also increase dramatically over the same period, and extensive use will be made of heavy artillery, both land based and sea based. At the same time our air and naval forces will continue to interdict the Vietcong supply lines from North Vietnam, both land and sea.