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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

ENERGY AND MINERALS
DIVISION

JANUARY 4, 1980

B-197309



111233

The Honorable Pat Williams
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Williams:

Subject: [Review of Peaking Power Needs in the Pacific Northwest] (EMD-80-46)

This is in response to your letter of September 27, 1979, concerning our recent review of the Libby Reregulating Dam Project. Your letter requested that our work address:

- The benefit-cost analysis used to justify the Libby Reregulating dam.
- The effect reduced river fluctuations would have on power generation.
- The sustained peaking adjustment used for the first time in the West Group utilities' forecast for 1979-99.

The first two of the three matters were covered in our report of November 20, 1979. ^{1/} With respect to the benefit-cost analysis, we reported that the Corps of Engineers had overstated the project's benefits by using out-dated and inappropriate calculation methods. ^{by engineers} The Corps plans to conduct a new benefit-cost study using more appropriate methodology and more precise data.

Regarding the effects of river fluctuations, our report showed that reduced fluctuation limits could impair operating flexibility of the main dam and decrease power benefits at the reregulating dam. We found no evidence of significant benefits to fisheries or other purposes which would justify reduced fluctuation limits.

1/"Montana's Libby Dam Project: More Study Needed Before Adding Generators and a Reregulating Dam," EMD-80-25, Nov. 20, 1979.

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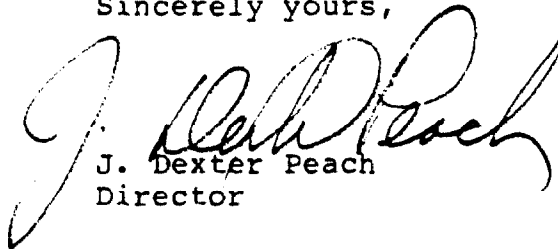
(005201)

Information bearing on peak power planning in the Pacific Northwest, and more specifically on the sustained peaking adjustment, was provided to you and the Montana congressional delegation in our briefing on May 9, 1979. That information--supplemented somewhat with the results of our recent work--is documented in enclosure I. Our analysis of the sustained peaking adjustment indicated that, in concept, it is an improved way of measuring the sustained capability of the Federal hydropower system. It is a new adjustment, however, and may need to be refined.

Our previous review of electrical energy options for the region 1/ and a brief scrutiny of the West Group utilities' 1979-99 forecasts indicated that--regardless of the accuracy of the sustained peaking adjustment--uncertainty exists about how best to meet future peaking needs. Conservative aspects of the West Group forecast and the presence of several alternative ways to balance peak power supply and demand indicate to us that important decisions need not be hurried. Regional power planners should not rush to build additional peaking units, but should take adequate time to scrutinize forecasting practices and to evaluate the costs and benefits of alternative ways to meet peak power needs.

In summary, we trust that our report of November 20 and enclosure I will fully meet the needs expressed in your letter of September 27. We would be pleased to meet with you or your representatives to further explain our views on these matters.

Sincerely yours,



J. Dexter Peach
Director

Enclosures - 2

1/"Region at the Crossroads--The Pacific Northwest Searches for New Sources of Electric Energy," EMD-78-76, Aug. 10, 1978.

PEAK POWER PLANNING IN THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

FORECASTING LOADS AND RESOURCES

DLG 03579 ✓

Each year the Pacific Northwest Utilities Conference Committee (PNUCC) estimates the region's need for additional power resources in two reports, the "West Group Forecast of Power Loads and Resources" and the "Long-Range Projection of Power Loads and Resources for Thermal Planning." The West Group Forecast summarizes regional loads and resources for 11 future years, while the Long-Range Projection covers a 20-year planning period and presents a more detailed analysis of loads and resources for each major utility in the region. (See enc. II.)

Each of these reports matches existing and planned generating facilities against load forecasts. If the reports indicate a future energy or peaking deficit for the region, the individual utility with the largest deficit becomes a likely candidate to sponsor a new generating project. Other utilities with probable deficits are candidates for joint participation in the new project. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) coordinates its plans with regional utility planning, and according to a BPA internal memorandum, "BPA planning will be based upon the PNUCC Long-Range Projection of Power Loads and Resources * * *." AGC 00465

Within the region, other organizations--such as State energy departments--also prepare forecasts of average energy needs. But PNUCC makes the only forecast of the region's peak power needs. The manner in which PNUCC forecasts the region's peaking loads and resources is discussed briefly below.

Peakloads

The projected regional peakloads shown in the PNUCC Forecast and Long-Range Projection represent the estimated maximum average 60-minute load. PNUCC's projection was not developed as a single forecast. It is a compilation of the estimated loads of BPA and 12 public and private utilities. BPA's load, in itself, includes input for (1) about 100 utilities which BPA helps in making forecasts, (2) three utilities which make their own forecasts, and (3) both the firm and interruptible power loads of Bonneville's direct service industrial customers (DSIs).

These individual energy forecasts form the basis for determining peaking needs. According to PNUCC officials, the utilities generally derive their peaking forecasts from their energy forecasts, based on historical relationships between peakloads and average energy loads. The accuracy of PNUCC's peaking forecasts, therefore, is directly related to the accuracy of the individual utilities' energy forecasts.

We did not review the various individual forecasts which are aggregated in the PNUCC projections. However, we do have some concerns about the accuracy of PNUCC's peaking forecast for the region. These concerns are discussed in a later section of this report.

Peaking resources

PNUCC's estimates of the region's peaking resources are developed in two steps. The first step involves calculating the region's gross capability by adding together the rated capacities of all thermal and hydroelectric generating facilities. Both existing and planned facilities are included in this projection. New thermal plants are included if PNUCC considers them essential to meet area load requirements. Inclusion of a new thermal plant usually implies that major equipment has been ordered and plant sponsors have been identified. The criteria for including new Federal hydro projects in the forecast require that the projects are authorized and under construction, or are funded for construction or preconstruction planning. Non-Federal hydroprojects are included if they have been licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The capabilities of hydroelectric plants are based on their expected output during critical streamflow conditions.

The second step in resource planning consists of (1) providing long-term reliability by reserving some of the gross generating capacity to cover contingencies and (2) adjusting the rated capacity of hydropower facilities to recognize, for planning purposes, that the hydroelectric system cannot maintain its instantaneous peak output for extended periods. This last factor is known as the "sustained peaking adjustment."

As shown in enclosure II, regional peaking reserves are broken down in the Long-Range Projection into four major categories. The combined reserve requirement for these

categories is specified in the uniform regional planning assumptions adopted by PNUCC to be the greater of

- forced outage reserves (computed so that the probability of a loss of load will not exceed 5 percent per year), plus one-half year's load growth and hydro maintenance (a statistical criterion), or
- 12 percent of the peakload for the first year of the forecast, increasing 1 percent per year up to 20 percent and remaining at 20 percent thereafter. This is a "rolling" criterion which starts anew at 12 percent at the beginning of each annual forecast.

The "rolling" criterion has been used in all recent PNUCC forecasts.

ANALYSIS OF THE SUSTAINED PEAKING ADJUSTMENT

We examined the sustained peaking adjustment in some detail because ^{it was of special interest to the Montana delegation.} ~~This adjustment appeared~~ ^{supervised by PNUCC} for the first time in PNUCC's 1979 forecast. It reduced the reported capability of the Federal hydrosystem by about 1,400 megawatts ^{1/} and contributed significantly to PNUCC's projected peaking deficits. The rationale for the sustained peaking adjustment is described below.

The Federal Columbia River Power System consists of a series of 30 dams, each of which has one or more installed hydroelectric generators. The maximum instantaneous electric output from this system is dependent on the height of the water behind each dam at a particular time. The system cannot be counted on to continuously operate at this instantaneous output level, however, for several reasons:

^{1/}The sustained peaking adjustment shown in the forecast included 1,543 megawatts due to temporary restriction on the output from Grand Coulee Dam. We have not included this restriction in this discussion of the sustained peaking.

- Some dams cannot store enough water to produce their maximum power over extended periods of time.
- The water being used at one dam can be replaced with water released from the next dam upstream. In many cases, however, it takes considerable time for the water to travel from one dam to the next. During this delay, the downstream dam's output is limited.
- Hydraulic imbalance prevents certain dams from operating at their full capacity without spilling water. 1/ The turbines in an upstream dam may not be able to discharge water as fast as a downstream dam, and as a result the downstream plant could run low on water unless the upstream project both generates and spills. The reverse situation (the downstream dam has more limited capacity than the upstream dam) can also occur, in which case the upstream dam would have to reduce its output to prevent spilling at the downstream project.
- Nonpower constraints, such as river fluctuation limits and minimum flow requirements for navigation, recreation, or fishing interests, may limit the output which could otherwise be achieved at hydropower projects.

Until 1979, regional power planners had attempted to account for these limiting factors by applying a 5-percent "realization" (reduction) factor to the Federal hydro-system's installed peaking capacity. However, BPA officials had recognized for some time that the realization factor only approximated the real limitations on the sustained peaking capability of the Federal hydrosystem.

↪ In its 1979 forecast BPA substituted a "sustained peaking adjustment" for the realization factor on the Federal hydrosystem.

↪ The sustained peaking adjustment reduces the Federal hydrosystem's projected capacity to the highest average

1/The passing of water over the dam rather than through the turbines.

level which it can maintain for 10 hours per day, 5 days per week. BPA determined this adjustment through computer simulation, assuming critical (1936-37) water conditions, no significant spillage, and compliance with all nonpower constraints (flow rates, fluctuation rates, etc.). The simulation showed that the highest 10-hour sustained load which the Federal hydrosystem could meet was about 12 percent (2,400 MW) below the system's 1-hour peak. The major cause of this reduction was an inability of upstream reservoirs to supply sufficient water to maintain water levels in downstream plants. This condition is reportedly most pronounced at four Lower Snake River dams. Only when the Salmon River, which is unregulated by dams, flows high in the spring runoff is there sufficient water to fully load the Lower Snake River generating plants for sustained periods. According to BPA officials, the sustainable peak would not increase very much in good water years.

We believe that BPA's sustained peaking adjustment is a valid refinement for measuring the Federal hydrosystem's capabilities. Although this adjustment was applied only to the Federal hydrosystem in PNUCC's 1979-99 forecast, several northwest utilities have recognized the need to apply such adjustments to their hydrosystems. We should point out, however, that uncertainty exists as to what time period best represents a sustained regional peaking need. BPA selected a 10-hour period as being most representative, but it has also considered 6- and 14-hour peak periods. The Corps of Engineers believes a 14-hour peak period (which would lower projected capabilities by another 600 MW) would be better because a longer peak is more likely during periods when extremely cold weather causes high demand.

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PEAKING RESOURCES

BPA's introduction of the sustained peaking adjustment caused PNUCC to project serious peaking deficits in 8 out of the next 11 years. Although we agree with the use of a sustained peaking adjustment, we doubt that additional peaking facilities are so urgently needed that important decisions should be rushed. Our brief review of regional power planning practices led us to believe that regional power planners should not hurry their judgments on constructing new peaking facilities because (1) present forecasting methodologies are questionable and (2) adequate time should be taken to thoroughly compare the costs and benefits of alternative means of meeting peak power needs.

FORECASTING METHODS USEDComparability of loads and resources

The deficits shown in the PNUCC forecast represent the difference between the maximum 1-hour load and the highest average generation which can be sustained for a 10-hour period. A BPA official told us that such an imbalanced comparison would show a larger deficit than is actually the case. However, he thought that the difference would not be great. We believe that good planning requires use of a forecasted peakload which is comparable to the forecasted available resources--i.e., a 10-hour sustained peakload should be compared to a 10-hour sustained generating capacity. We noticed that the average sustained peakload on the BPA system during one extremely cold week in the winter of 1978-79 was about 8 percent below the highest 1-hour peakload. If this relationship holds true for all peakloads in the region, PNUCC's forecast peak could be reduced by over 2,000 MW. This would eliminate most of the peak power deficits forecasted by PNUCC through 1989.

Planning reserves based on conservative policies

Based on certain assumptions we believe that PNUCC's reserves for contingencies may be overly conservative. Three factors contribute to this conclusion. First, loss-of-load calculations are based on the probability of no more than one expected outage in 20 years. Most utilities in other regions require a reliability of no more than one expected outage in 10 years--a level which may still be too high, according to a recent report by the Congressional Research Service. 1/ Second, the region's planned reliability appears to have been even greater than this once-in-20-years probability, because of the conservative "rolling" criterion used for estimating system reserve requirements. Finally, over 1,000 MW of power sold by BPA to its direct service industrial customers can be interrupted at any time for any reason, and could be used as system reserves to help meet peaking needs. 2/ This reserve, however, has

1/"Are the Electric Utilities Gold Plated? A Perspective on Electric Utility Reliability," Congressional Research Service, Apr. 1979.

2/The potential use of the interruptible DSI load as a regional reserve is discussed in more detail in our Report, "Impacts and Implications of the Pacific Northwest Power Bill," EMD-79-105, Sept. 4, 1979.

not been taken into account in determining the region's peaking surplus or deficit.

Forecasting accuracy

While we did not review the PNUCC peaking forecast in detail, we found evidence which raised questions about its accuracy. A private consulting firm which prepared a study ^{1/} of the PNUCC forecasts for BPA in 1976, identified several deficiencies. The consultant's report showed that forecasting methods used by utilities were different, varying from simple trend analysis to sophisticated modeling techniques. It also showed that (1) variables used for forecasting differed between utilities, (2) no allowances were made for price elasticity, and (3) forecasts were seldom formally checked for accuracy. A PNUCC official told us that PNUCC cannot mandate that utilities use any standard forecasting methodology assumptions nor do they check to see if the uniform regional planning assumptions are being followed. We also noticed that, although PNUCC has been reducing its projected rate of increase for peak loads, actual peak loads in the region reportedly averaged nearly 8 percent below forecasted peakloads during the period 1973 to 1977.

ALTERNATIVES TO MEETING PEAKING NEEDS

Spilling water to meet peaks

Gains in peaking capability could be made by spilling water when necessary. Such a procedure sacrifices energy which could have been generated by the water spilled and is therefore not a particularly desirable way of meeting peakloads. Nevertheless, this procedure has been used at times in the past, and, according to a BPA official, Bonneville will do so again if it is the only way to meet the load. A BPA analysis showed that spilling a weekly average of 20,000 cubic feet per second at the Dworshak Dam would increase the sustained peaking capability of the Lower Snake River plants by 1,000 MW during peak hours. BPA computed a benefit/cost ratio of 1.9 if spills were required for 40 days each year, but estimated that this procedure would be needed only 10 days per year. The reduction to 10 days per year

^{1/}"Review of Energy Forecasting Methodologies and Assumptions," Ernst and Ernst, June 1976.

would increase the benefit/cost ratio considerably. We believe that BPA's benefit/cost analysis is conservative, and that the actual benefits from spilling water at Dworshak Dam could be much higher.

Other alternatives identified by GAO

Our report, "Montana's Libby Dam Project: More Study Needed Before Adding Generators and a Reregulating Dam" (EMD-80-25, Nov. 20, 1979), identified five other potentially viable ways to increase generating resources and to better manage peak power loads. These alternatives are:

- (1) --Combustion turbines, which are similar to aircraft engines except that they drive electric generators.
- (2) --Cogeneration, which uses heat from industrial operations to power electrical generators.
- (3) --Power exchanges using the intertie, which stretches from California to Washington and has an existing capacity of 4,100 MW.
- (4) --Load management, which can smooth out the peaks in electricity use by means of remote control switches, thermostats, and circuit breakers in homes and businesses.
- (5) --Peak pricing options, which involve increasing power prices during periods of heaviest demand.

Pic We believe that BPA should thoroughly analyze ~~these and~~ other potential means of balancing peakloads as a means of selecting the most cost-effective alternatives for implementation. *including:*

Year	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	
1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	
1	26848	16754	27346	17578	28675	18198	30856	19326	31163	20828
2	2866	629	2188	665	1754	567	1760	351	1562	283
3	24186	17373	29452	18235	38429	14952	31886	19677	32725	20231
4	26856	11681	28978	11639	27622	11669	29713	11667	30232	11696
5	659	434	659	414	659	434	659	434	659	434
6	23505	12017	29624	12064	30372	12181	30891	12138	31868	12128
7	224	54	218	53	218	53	218	53	218	53
8	1198	109	1198	109	1198	109	1198	109	1198	109
9	1324	1489	1415	1503	1648	1652	1701	1648	1641	1494
10	1499	1409	1499	1409	1499	1409	1499	1409	1499	1409
11	1313	983	1313	982	1313	982	1313	982	1313	1008
12	1130	888	1130	888	1130	888	1130	888	1130	888
13	330	251	330	251	330	251	330	251	330	251
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	35024	18198	37687	17329	37919	17538	39968	17792	40888	18883
26	1546	0	1552	0	1575	0	1589	0	1615	0
27	416	0	488	0	652	0	983	0	966	0
28	684	0	981	0	1221	0	1911	0	2188	0
29	559	338	534	318	566	338	548	325	557	324
30	5963	0	3978	0	4883	0	4863	0	2552	0
31	0	34	0	34	0	34	0	34	0	34
32	04	28	04	28	57	11	57	1	50	0
33	27852	15774	28893	16821	29583	16954	29292	17170	32388	17396
34	-294	-1599	-1359	-2214	-866	-1998	-2514	-2459	-345	-2838
35	-1484	-2611	-1484	-2611	-1484	-2611	-1484	-2611	-1484	-2611

Table 1, p. 1
 M. G. Arca
 Peak Power Loads and Resources for the Pacific Northwest through 1999
 Figures are January Peak and Contract Year Average Energy in Megawatts

Table 1

Peak Power Loads and Resources for the Pacific Northwest through 1999
 Figures are firming Peak and Control Year Average Energy in Megawatts

Table 1
 p. 2
 W. G. Aco

Year	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
LOADS							
1 SYSTEM LOADS	34785	35180	37462	38845	40220	41752	43386
2 EXPORTS	989	209	248	174	105	105	174
3 TOTAL LOADS	35774	35389	37710	38953	40325	41857	43560
RESOURCES							
4 MAIN HYDRO	30488	30558	30520	30554	30554	30554	30554
5 INDEPENDENT HYDRO	1674	1771	1697	1647	1647	1647	1647
6 TOTAL HYDRO	32162	32329	32217	32198	32198	32198	32198
7 EX. SM. TRM. & MISC.	211	211	211	211	211	211	211
8 COND. TUBINES	1198	109	1198	109	1198	109	1198
9 HANFORD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 EXPORTS	1417	1215	1424	1214	1424	1214	1424
11 CENTRALIA	1313	914	1313	935	1313	935	1313
12 TROJAN	1138	888	1138	888	1138	888	1138
13 COLSTRIP 1 & 2	338	251	338	251	338	251	338
14 HWP 2	1188	825	1188	825	1188	825	1188
15 BOARMAN (CARTY COAL)	477	358	477	358	477	358	477
16 COLSTRIP 3 & 4	848	638	848	638	848	638	848
17 HWP 1	1258	938	1258	938	1258	938	1258
18 HWP 4	1258	938	1258	938	1258	938	1258
19 HWP 3	1248	938	1248	938	1248	938	1248
20 SKAGIT 1	1248	938	1248	938	1248	938	1248
21 HWP 5	1248	759	1248	938	1248	938	1248
22 PEGLE SPRINGS 1	0	252	1268	945	1268	945	1268
23 SKAGIT 2	0	0	1268	915	1268	966	1268
24 PEGLE SPRINGS 2	0	0	1268	945	1268	945	1268
25 TOTAL RESOURCES	45423	45994	47842	49038	49924	50811	50808
26 HYDRO, SM, TRM., & MISC. RES.	1627	0	1638	0	1631	0	1631
27 LARGE THERMAL RES.	1719	0	2181	0	2298	0	2298
28 PLANNING RESERVES	2644	0	3187	0	3451	0	3891
29 LOAD GROWTH RESERVES	619	156	654	388	689	489	749
30 SUS. PRNG. ADJUSTMENT	2582	0	2587	0	2598	0	2598
31 HYDRO MAINTENANCE	0	34	0	34	0	34	0
32 BPA MW-SM INTERFILL LOSSES	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
33 NET RESOURCES	36288	42284	37763	42857	48826	47871	48826
34 SUPPLUS OR DEFICIT	432-1162	544-1816	195-1834	-282-1828	-2155-1751	-3986-2713	-5974-3725
35 BPA INT. INTERPPTABLE	1188	1898	1127	1117	1137	1147	1167

Peak Power Loads and Resources for the Pacific Northwest through 1999

Figures are January Peak and Contract Year Average Energy in Megawatts

Y. O. Aron

Table 3, p. 3

Category	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG	PK AVG
LOANS						
1 SYSTEM LOANS	44,922	28,123	4,651	2,908	4,236	3,067
2 EXPORTS	105	124	105	174	20	109
3 TOTAL LOANS	44,997	28,297	4,662	2,925	4,256	3,198
RESOURCES						
4 MAIN HYDRO	30,554	11,647	10,554	11,647	30,554	11,647
5 INDEPENDENT HYDRO	659	434	659	434	659	434
6 TOTAL HYDRO	31,213	12,081	31,213	12,081	31,213	12,081
7 EX. SH. THRM. & MISC.	1,190	109	1,190	109	1,190	109
8 COMB. TURBINES	0	0	0	0	0	0
9 HANFORD	671	412	671	412	671	412
10 IMPORTS	1,313	935	1,313	935	1,313	935
11 CENTRALIA	1,130	800	1,130	800	1,130	800
12 TROJAN	1,130	800	1,130	800	1,130	800
13 COLSTRIP 1 & 2	330	251	330	251	330	251
14 COLSTRIP 3 & 4	477	350	477	350	477	350
15 HOAROMAN (CARTY COAL)	1,100	825	1,100	825	1,100	825
16 COLSTRIP 1 & 2	630	450	630	450	630	450
17 WNP 1	1,250	930	1,250	930	1,250	930
18 WNP 4	1,250	930	1,250	930	1,250	930
19 WNP 3	1,250	930	1,250	930	1,250	930
20 SKAGIT 1	1,200	966	1,200	966	1,200	966
21 WNP 5	1,200	966	1,200	966	1,200	966
22 PEABOLE SPRINGS 1	1,260	945	1,260	945	1,260	945
23 SKAGIT 2	1,200	966	1,200	966	1,200	966
24 PEABOLE SPRINGS 2	1,260	945	1,260	945	1,260	945
25 TOTAL RESOURCES	46,599	24,811	46,518	23,311	44,266	23,984
26 WYMO, SH. THRM. & MISC. RES.	1,631	0	1,631	0	1,631	0
27 LARGE THERMAL RES.	2,290	0	2,290	0	2,290	0
28 PLANNING RESERVES	4,209	0	4,806	0	5,212	0
29 LOAD GROWTH RESERVES	760	440	462	460	666	505
30 US. PRNG. ADJUSTMENT	2,590	0	2,590	0	2,590	0
31 HYDRO MAINTENANCE	0	34	0	31	0	51
32 WYMO MW-SH INTERTIE LOSSES	0	0	0	0	0	0
33 NET RESOURCES	36,991	23,829	36,524	23,390	35,539	23,164
34 SUPPLUS OR DEFICIT	-8,086	-4,768	-10,100	-9,856	-12,312	-6,974
35 GFA IND. INTERCEPTIBLE	1,177	1,167	1,187	1,176	1,197	1,186
36	1,217	1,206	1,226	1,215	1,226	1,215