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Date: Wed, 28 Oct 1998 17:40:30 -0500 (EST)  
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To: jjrec@TTACS.TTU.EDU  
Cc: vietnam.center@TTACS.TTU.EDU

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To: jrec@ttacs.ttu.edu  
Subject: Your 1999 Symposium  
Date: Wed, 28 Oct 1998 16:47:17 EST  
Mime-Version: 1.0  
Content-type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII  
Content-transfer-encoding: 7bit

Jim:

Just got your notice of the 1999 Vietnam Symposium. I want to be there and have reserved a room at the Holiday Inn 14 thru 17 April, and am sending in my registration for all events.

I would like to be considered for a part in the Symposium, not necessarily a prominent spot as I was last time in opening the event, but a meaningful one.

To remind -- three tours in Vietnam:

(1) 1963-64, senior advisor to the 21st Infantry Division in southernmost Vietnam. In this mostly paddy-land region the size of Connecticut, two rival governments were contesting for the loyalty of 1,500,000 inhabitants. One government was the Republic of Vietnam, with its province, district, and

village chiefs, and with its armed forces, from hamlet militia to district and province contingents to the 21st Infantry Division. The other government was that of the communist Viet Cong, with its own province, district, and village chiefs and with main force guerrilla units that roamed the countryside while local platoons and squads operated down through hamlet level. Each government had its tax collectors, schools, information cadres. Each had its military/civil program for expanding its control of the land and its people.

In an article for Army magazine, March 1966, "Pacification Concepts Developed in the Field by the RVN 21st Infantry Division," I described how our advisory team and the Vietnamese division and province authorities had developed together and had begun to put into practice an effective program for the step-by-step extension of government control of the countryside. In the spring and summer of 1964, using a huge roll of charts that I had brought home with me, I briefed many authorities in Washington and elsewhere on our "recipe" for pacification. I emphasized that U.S. troops should not be introduced into the countryside; unable to tell friend from foe, they would do more harm than good.

My deputy, Col Robert M. Montague, and our US Aid advisor, one Richard Holbrooke, 24 years old, later worked for Bob Komer in the White House to develop the CORDS plan finally installed in 1967 (Bob went to Saigon with Ambassador Komer). It was simply a more rounded and well beefed-up version of what the 21st Infantry Division had done in 1963-64, and could have been done two years earlier.

By the end of 1964, while a student at the National War College, I had arrived at my judgment of what to do in Vietnam. In my NWC student paper, I

proposed

a "winning strategy." It had two components:

(a) Inside the country, organize and mount a massive, U.S. supported but Vietnamese executed, pacification effort along the lines of what we had begun in the 21st Infantry Division.

(b) Outside the country, employ U.S. and allied air/land forces -- in a combination of modern conventional technology, infantry battalions using guerrilla and counter-guerrilla tactics, supported by air mobility, artillery, air reconnaissance, air fire support, air logistics, mines, demolitions, defoliation, and whatever other means were useful and available -- to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail. I have laid out that strategy for you before. (I know that some believe it to have been impractical to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but the last word on that has not been heard.)

(2) In 1967-1968 I took a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division to Vietnam and commanded it in the fighting during Tet and its aftermath from around Hue to Quang Tri. We had spectacular success with encirclement operations that drove the NVA from our area, destroying on one occasion the full 8th Battalion of the 90th NVA Regiment, taking 107 prisoners and all the battalion's radios. I have a 175 page memoir of this tour of duty, along with a 54-minute videotape made after a 1996 visit to the area -- both of which I have sent you.

On returning to Vietnam less than two years later, I learned that that battalion had been reconstituted through the Ho Chi Minh trail and was back in the division enemy order of battle. How could our side prevail under such circumstances?

(3) Deputy Senior Advisor, then Senior Advisor to the commander of IV

Corps/MR4 from March 1970 to January 1972. This included the Cambodian incursion and its aftermath, cross-border support to the Cambodians after US forces were withdrawn on 30 June 1970 (including Cobra gunships staged from USS Cleveland, an LPD stationed in Kompong Som bay), and initiation of draw-down operations and Vietnamization.

Of particular interest was what we did dealing with discipline, morale, and drug usage among American troops, from when I made major general and took command in the Delta in May 1971. While in the States on leave I became very much aware of the public and media perceptions about the gravity of the drug situation in Vietnam, and decided that I would do something about it when I returned. My direct command responsibility was only for the MACV advisory teams within the three ARVN infantry divisions (7th, 9th, and 21st) and the Special Tactical Zone, and the sixteen provinces. As "area coordinator" I had responsibility for discipline, law, and order and like matters for the USARV troops (an aviation group, engineer battalions, signal units, etc), and US Navy advisors and units scattered around the Delta, and a few USAF contingents. A total of some 12,00 troops altogether.

Upon taking command I got busy, planning in secret for a major drug crackdown that would involve all of these. We were to launch our crackdown on 20 June. A few days before that I asked for an appointment with General Abrams so that I could tell him about it and save him from being surprised. He was in that very spare office of his -- small grey metal table, grey metal chairs, and grey metal desk. He sat at the head of the table; I was on his right; General Weyand was on his left. I took out my papers and explained what we had in mind. I showed him various elements of the plan -- the message to be

read to  
the troops, instructions for gate guards, etc. He listened silently.  
After a  
while General Weyand spoke up with words like this... "Jack, it looks  
to me  
like you're going to create a big hullabaloo -- maybe you shouldn't  
be so  
far-reaching, so ambitious." I defended my approach, and we talked  
back and  
forth. Abe said a few words, asked a question or two, and then said,  
"Go  
ahead as you see fit. It's your's to decide. All this (referring to  
his  
remarks and Weyand's) is just free advice." What a guy!

We gave drug use a setback, but it could not be a final solution. I  
have sent  
you my Senior Officer's Debriefing report on this tour.

This is too long, but it's only to let you know that I'm interested in  
participating in your Symposium. Think it over and decide on  
something, or  
give me a call to discuss.

I'm also sending you a piece that I did for the West Point Forum,  
which is a  
list-server for USMA graduates.

Jack Cushman

Lt Gen John H. Cushman, US Army, Ret

P.S. I tried to reach your Home Page (advertised as  
<http://www.ttu.edu/~vietnam>) and got a rejection, namely "The  
requested object  
does not exist on this server. The link you followed is either  
outdated,  
inaccurate, or the server has been instructed not to let you have it."