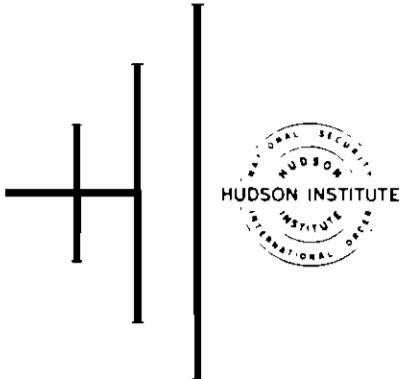


FOUR PAPERS ON THE VIETNAMESE INSURGENCY

II. COUNTERINSURGENCY AND SOUTH VIETNAM: SOME ALTERNATIVES

Raymond D. Gastil



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Four Papers on the Vietnamese Insurgency

II: COUNTERINSURGENCY AND SOUTH VIETNAM: SOME ALTERNATIVES

By

Raymond D. Gastil

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Four Papers on the Vietnamese Insurgency

- I. A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam, HI-878/2/I
- II. Counterinsurgency and South Vietnam: Some Alternatives, HI-878/2/II
- III. Principles for Settlement in South Vietnam, HI-878/2/III
- IV. Toward the Development of a More Acceptable Set of Limits for Counterinsurgency, HI-878/2/IV

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Some of those who have been kind enough to review and contribute to the document disagreed considerably with the author over the concepts contained in this report, but the criticisms were almost invariably constructive, and in general are reflected in the document, even where substantial disagreement still remains.

Four Papers on the Vietnamese Insurgency

General Preface

In these papers I have attempted to consider a number of alternative means to raise the level of security in South Vietnam so that the tide of allegiance begins to flow strongly against the communists. In developing these papers I have been aware of the many important issues relative to security with which I have not dealt, or have only dealt with tangentially. These issues have been ignored because: 1) I thought I had little to say that others haven't said; 2) I felt that they were of second priority; 3) I thought that the United States, or at least an American analyst at a distance, could have little of real use to say on these topics.

I am convinced that the evolution of a more legitimate Saigon government is crucial, and, more importantly, the collapse of the Saigon consensus could ruin all other plans. This is something to worry about and try to avoid, but this subject does not appear to be one to which we can add much to analytically.

I believe that economic, social and educational development are of great importance in South Vietnam. Land reform is an important aspect of this, although increasing land and man productivity may be equally important. In many parts of South Vietnam, however, the issue is more one of finding steady, remunerative employment for a locally surplus population than it is a matter of dividing up land more equitably. I believe that the country can be made to grow now, and may really "take off" if peace is achieved. For example, a subsidized rice price for the farmer might go a long way toward reversing production trends in the Delta. But I do not believe that economic development is generally a very effective counter to insurgency once stated. Indeed, the readjustments attendant on the economic development of underdeveloped countries often prepare a fertile ground for communist or other radical ideology.

I believe that there does have to be change in the Vietnamese social and political structure to accomplish the demands of a changing economic situation. There needs to be institution building. Yet the question is one of timing. For example, a change toward greater centralization which might be desirable in 1990 might merely further disorganize society in 1970.

I am confident that there is administrative insufficiency in South Vietnam. There need to be better men, more trained men, and a more organized national structure. However, to say this does not solve the immediate problems. My reaction is to reduce or restrict the demands on the structure rather than to imagine its rapid improvement. However, at the apex of the command structure I believe that a joint Vietnamese-American war council may help to solve the most general problem of insufficient direction and coordination. It is necessary to have a generally accepted strategy, including priorities and standards of performance, even if we are to use a generally decentralized administration for the actual execution of plans.

The security suggestions given in these documents stem from a number of alternative assumptions and judgments of the current scene. The first paper (A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam) is based on the observation that many Vietnamese and American advisers at the district and province level believe that if they were simply provided with more resources at this level--perhaps another regional force company in every district--then they could vastly improve and perhaps solve their pacification problem. Since in most areas our conventional offensive makes it extremely difficult for the VC/NVA to match these increases at the district level, I judge that this may well be correct. If so, then only a rather modest change in priorities may be necessary for the Vietnamese forces with almost no reallocation of U.S. forces. This approach stresses a primarily Vietnamese solution to the insurgency problem. To a large extent, a discussion of district emphasis and decentralization is a plea for a solution which fits GVN's administrative capability and which builds on the strengths available in the South Vietnamese society.

Yet this minimum approach may be insufficient. The security problem of most pro-GVN areas in the country is severe, for the war is everywhere and there is no front in terms of which success can be measured. A review of alternative counterinsurgency systems and of the present war in Vietnam suggest that we need to separate the people from the insurgents more positively than the districts can do in isolation. (Counterinsurgency and South Vietnam: Some Alternatives) But if we are to set up an effective frontal system, I believe we must make a major reallocation of all friendly forces in Vietnam. This appears to require deep fronts of patrolling, both area saturation and what I call a thickened perimeter. On the basis of this set of assumptions I have tried to look at the forces which might be required and the degree to which present deployments might have to be altered.

In addition to these questions I have tried in the remaining papers to ask what we want by way of final settlement, what we might expect to end up with if things go moderately well. (Principles for Settlement in South Vietnam) I have also tried to inquire into the possibility of improving the morality of our position in Vietnam--maintaining stringent limits which are sometimes costly to us, but also accomplishing our objectives with less cost to everyone involved. (Toward the Development of a More Acceptable Set of Limits for Counterinsurgency) In particular, I am thinking of the legacy of this war. What are we going to think of ourselves after it? What lessons might it have for our next one?

**COUNTERINSURGENCY AND SOUTH VIETNAM:
SOME ALTERNATIVES**

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PART I

ALTERNATIVE MILITARY APPROACHES TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

Introduction

By now there is considerable literature on the military aspects of counterinsurgency. Somewhere in this literature perhaps all of the reasonable possibilities have been covered. Yet I think it is fair to make two remarks: 1) nearly all of the material is based on the same few examples of recent guerrilla wars; 2) there has been little attempt to critically compare alternative approaches under varying future conditions. For example, what difference must it make if insurgent-counterinsurgent force balances are 1/1 instead of 10/1, if the population is hostile or friendly, if there is an easily available outside sanctuary for the communist insurgents or not, if the population is traditionally armed or unarmed, if we feel under strong moral constraints or not? Certainly, the approach in one set of conditions should not be that which would work in another. But there seems to be little serious attempt to take a stab at defining alternative systems, and the possible conditions appropriate to each. In a very speculative and preliminary manner, this introduction is an attempt to open up this area of inquiry, with particular reference to current problems in Southeast Asia.

This paper is primarily an attempt to discuss alternative responses to rural insurgencies, and I believe that these have certain characteristic differences from urban insurgency which are not often understood. At first glance it would appear that the broad expanses of rural areas would be almost impossible to control. This is true as long as the insurgents can remain really separate from the people. But once they must operate in areas that are populated at all, then they live in a fish bowl environment quite different from that of the big city. Almost every rural society reports every stranger to its internal leadership, and the more rural it is, the more this is so. Recently communist infiltration into rural South Korea has seemed to run up against this translucency of peasant society.

I believe that in rice areas of Iran and Thailand, for example, it is almost impossible not to be known to the local leadership. And this is not the leadership of the smallest community, but at a higher level. Most rural societies seem to be organized into small area groupings around a larger hamlet or village (Thailand: Tambon; Vietnam: village). These natural groupings may be determined by religious centers, schools, markets, tradition, or government regulations. Therefore, for the central government to create an effective, nationwide intelligence system in times of relative peace, it needs merely to establish reliable, day-to-day channels of contact with something like the Vietnamese village level of rural life.

That neither Thailand nor Iran, nor most societies of this type, have established intelligence channels between the small peasant power structures and central government officials can be ascribed to several factors. First, most governments play to the audience of the cities and ignore the peasants.

Therefore, rural people may not be anxious to cooperate in national defense. Secondly, most government officials responsible for rural areas stay out of these areas as much as possible. Often their only contacts are to take bribes. Next, most officials responsible for rural security have such a low opinion of the rural leaders that they wouldn't think of using them for an intelligence system. Finally, responsible officials of the central government in rural areas often have large territories to cover with difficult roads and a lack of rapid communication devices such as radios in each small rural area linked to a district capital. Of course, in a fully developed insurgency many rural leaders receive less information and become less willing to impart it than is true in peacetime. But even in Vietnam today, I suspect there is more significant information available in the information channels of the peasant power structures than is regularly gathered. Whichever one of the following approaches is chosen to combat incipient or fullblown insurgency, I will assume that the government plugging into its rural intelligence system is necessarily a first step of central importance.

The following outline summarizes the alternatives to be discussed.

I. At the Pacification Level

A. Point and Value Defenses

1. Fixed values
2. Movable values
3. Armed populace
4. People-centered

B. Clear and Secure Area Control Concepts

1. Total area saturation
2. Saturation with thickened perimeter

C. Strike Force Emphasis (Guerrilla-Guerrilla)

1. With national intelligence only
2. With self-generated intelligence

II. At the Conventional War Level

A. Search and Destroy

B. Expansion of Conflict into Sanctuary or Supply Areas

C. Isolate and Immobilize

Perhaps the first reaction to this outline by one acquainted with the Vietnamese and Malayan situations is that all of these approaches are tried simultaneously. I think that this is true, especially where the counterguerrilla forces and resources are relatively large. Until recently in South Vietnam it was perhaps a mistake to try to follow all approaches simultaneously, while today this may make sense. For we did not have the resources until 1966 (we may still not have enough qualified manpower). But the point is that no matter how many men we might have, mixtures emphasizing certain features in this outline will simply be more efficient than others. In this sense there should be meaningful choice among these alternatives.

I A. Point and Value Defenses

The insurgent challenges his government's control over material values and people. The government's most direct and immediate response is that typical of police and military forces everywhere--direct protection. Thus, small forces are put in every village, check points are set up, the cop makes his rounds. The system operates as a deterrent against poorly motivated thieves, but for well-armed, highly organized guerrilla forces, it is quite simple to achieve local superiority repeatedly against such a defensive system, thus repeatedly overrunning the government's defensive positions. If the guerrilla attacks are platoon sized against squads, then the government may counter by replacing squads with platoons in a force consolidation program. Necessarily, however, fewer points are then defended, and a number of the values and people about which the war is fought have to be left undefended.

However, if there is a sufficiently loyal population, good intelligence and some efficient reaction forces, the system described here should generally work. It works because the government can outguess the guerrillas too often, while guerrilla movement according to plan into its target areas becomes very difficult.

In the absence of a population willing to give this level of cooperation, a reluctance due either to the guerrillas' previous success, or to more fundamental factors, there are variations on the point and value defenses which may help somewhat. One approach is to concentrate the people and values in fewer, more defendable locations (agrovilles, strategic hamlets). Unless extremely well administered, however, such an approach is likely to engender a great deal of opposition from a largely neutral populace, without sufficient change in the basic problems of the point defense concept.

Another approach is to arm the populace. If every man has a gun and can use it, then even a small hamlet may be able to fight off a VC platoon, and the government can conserve its forces for reaction and other missions. There are costs, however, to this approach. There is clearly a trade-off between the demands of the regular forces and those of hamlet defense. If the best men are drafted out of the hamlets, then the hamlets cannot stand nearly as well. But more important to the national government is the loss

of control over so many weapons within the country. In a peaceful country this dispersion of weapons can stimulate large scale banditry; in a more threatened one, hamlet defense may be a major source of captured or bartered armaments, even recruits, for the guerrillas. As the situation deteriorates, and the population becomes less reliable, then this approach becomes even less workable. But even if there is actually a good deal of loyalty, if 5% of hamlet militia show disloyalty, an insecure government may stop the whole program for these reasons. Arming the populace also has the drawback that it may be worse than useless to give just a few simple guns, and little ammunition and practice to the hamlet defenders. They have to feel the equal of a tough guerrilla squad or they will just cave in.

One approach to the gun diffusion problem used at times in a number of systems, including the Hoa Hao, Viet Cong, and early America is the local armory. The individuals in this case do not control the weapons except in practice sessions or emergencies. Of course, this system suffers from what may be a crucial time lag, especially if an attack comes with little warning.

Another approach to point defense is to be willing to sacrifice the material values in essentially indefensible villages or hamlets as long as the people can be protected in strongpoints or "stockades." In Vietnam this might mean an underground chamber system beneath a typical Vietnamese triangular fort. If the families can be evacuated before attack and put with the defenders, the average hamlet-type defender is more apt to turn in a pretty good account of himself.

I B. Clear and Secure Area Control Concepts

I B.1. Total Area Saturation

Lack of sufficiently good intelligence and of a generally friendly population often makes the point defense concept an incomplete answer in Vietnam. Current emphasis has, therefore, been placed upon a more active patrol and ambush approach generally referred to as area control. In this approach guerrillas are often hit before they reach their objective, for the whole area around the objective is infested with patrols and ambushes. As the approach shows signs of success, local intelligence on insurgent activity replaces reliance on blind patrolling.

The strategic hamlet program as originally conceived for Vietnam was to have had many aspects of an area control system, in that the hamlets were to be in a solid "front" or mass. However, the development of a secure hamlet program under both the strategic hamlet and the Marine CAC system has tended to be spotty, thus offering islands of security rather than a more or less continuous front. This has continued to be true in the New Life Hamlet and RD programs, yet certain "priority areas" have come to take on the more consistent appearance of a truly pacified area with more or less definable borders.

I B.2. Saturation with Thickened Perimeter

An alternative clear and secure approach suggested by Frank Armbruster* offers, however, some possible advantages over an expansion of the area approach. Mr. Armbruster appears to assume: 1) the degree of security attained by this system in rear areas is insufficient for the attainment of the desired political and security objectives; 2) the conventional war will not go well enough to prevent the continual loss of months of patient pacification effort by just a few successful jabs by insurgent main forces through a loose perimeter of blocking forces; 3) the use of troops throughout a secured area is an inefficient use of forces for area control; 4) the basing of area defense units in hamlets and villages continues to give too much of a point emphasis for efficient area coverage; 5) the area defense approach is unnecessarily unsuccessful in separating the people from the field of battle, thereby severely limiting the employment of heavy firepower in many situations.

Mr. Armbruster proposes for South Vietnam that we protect secured areas by an in-depth belt containing a relatively large number of patrolling and ambush units. This belt will be moved out when and if high levels of security can be achieved by police-like (constabulary) operations in rear areas (including, but not limited to, current approaches in this area). Insofar as possible, the belt will be placed outside of inhabited places, in jungles or rice fields. Patrols assigned to small areas, perhaps one or two platoons per square mile, will become thoroughly familiar with their area, infesting it with a number of detection devices, concealed lookouts and so on. By moving day to day, the patrol units will not offer ready targets for destruction in detail by VC attack. The task the belt faces will be two-fold. First, because their area will be temporarily off limits, except for main arteries with check points, they will be able to question, capture or kill a significantly larger percentage of persons or small groups moving from the uncontrolled area to the controlled than is possible today. Secondly, the belt units will be able to report the movement and position of larger groups of VC/NVA which approach or pass through the belt. Reaction would then be in terms of heavy firepower applied at the direction of the belt units, and the dispatch of reaction forces through the controlled area toward the periphery.

Of course, the belt would be permeable on occasion, but Mr. Armbruster believes that considerably less penetration into "secured areas" than occurs today could be attained by a relatively light belt. For example, one might use 100 men per running mile, over 1300 miles** of front. This would amount to 130,000 men plus support. Perhaps half of these could be second- or third-

*Frank E. Armbruster, Military and Police Security Program for South Vietnam, HI-881-RR, August 10, 1967.

**Justification of this "interim front length" is given in Part 3.

line troops after initial operations. In the hamlets immediately behind the perimeter belt, point or area defenses would be maintained much as they are today. It is hoped that five or more miles back, the lower perimeter penetration achieved by the belt could be reflected in reliance chiefly on police and hamlet militia forces, with significant reductions in forces guarding roads, canals, urban areas and other values, as well as significant reductions in the size of reaction forces in areas ten or more miles behind the belt (i.e. further than one night's march in).

A compromise between current total area systems and the thickened perimeter might be to have units on the CAC model manning a perimeter of villages around a more secured area. This system is worked out in detail in Part III as part of a National Defense Plan for South Vietnam. Here one might think of CAC units in every hamlet in the front line, and in every village behind the perimeter. As applied to Vietnam, rear areas would maintain the compliments of regional forces and police typical of today, or augmented police as in the Armbruster scheme. As now, regular force units might guard behind and sweep in front of the perimeters, while long-range intelligence patrols would also penetrate the area beyond the perimeter. At any one time, then, one-third of the forces in perimeter villages might operate close to the VC boundaries in ambush positions monitoring trip-wires as in the Armbruster model, while the other two-thirds would operate with the combination of patrols, ambushes, and fixed positions characteristic of the current Marine system. The suggested set-up is reminiscent of the Special Forces-CIDG screen, although it is much thicker and with a much higher percentage of first-line troops.

Compared to the Armbruster scheme the compromise suggested here has the disadvantage of putting the fighting closer to the people. However, it has two advantages. The people appear to have confidence in troops that stay with them. With more confidence they are more likely to provide intelligence. Vietnamese seem to get a strong feeling of security from the presence of troops in their hamlet, especially if some of these men are their own people.* This system also has the advantage of using the people for a larger part of its intelligence screen, since the forces and people are together. In either case there need be quick reaction forces, as well as forces capable of minor ambush and sweeping operations. For the latter this requires RF forces and for the former ARVN or allied forces on call.

I C. Strike Force Emphasis (Guerrilla-Guerrilla)

I think it is of great importance that we examine the possibilities of defeating insurgencies with small numbers of troops with low firepower. I suggest that we may want to use elite Special Forces-type units which operate like guerrillas. However, their frequent access to modern logistics, rest periods, etc., give them considerable advantages over the insurgent. In an ideal form such units might be completely free from responsibilities to protect anything or to train or help anybody. Their mission might be only to find, destroy, or capture enemy units and their logistics.

*See Long An Province Survey--1966 (Saigon: JUSPAO, October 1966).

There are a number of possible political and military advantages to this approach. First, the United States wants to be able to help local governments defeat communist insurgencies without such massive introduction of U.S. forces that the local government is shaken. Secondly, we want to be able to help countries in this position without exciting the extensive internal opposition in the U.S. which a massive build-up might cause. Third, an elite force approach may be more efficient. Fourth, low firepower is more discriminating, and thus is less apt to result in mistakes, with both their real and propaganda losses.*

There are several reasons to think that the small, elite anti-guerrilla-guerrilla unit could be made to work against a broad range of insurgencies. We have reports that the Germans' most effective weapon against guerrillas in Russia and the Balkans was the employment of such forces. Grivas believes that the small British forces acting against him in this way in Cyprus were the best tactic the British used. In Malaya, however, such tactics seem to have had mixed success. More recently, it seems to me that no one has taken seriously what the effect might be, of say a 1000 U.S. Special Forces A teams operating in the most affected portions of Northeast Thailand without training and other responsibilities. This would be only 12,000 men in the field, and perhaps no more than 30,000 all together in Thailand at one time. Frequent rest periods would, of course, increase the numbers required for field work, but not necessarily the political-economic burden on Thailand. What would a similar force put into Vietnam in 1961 have accomplished? Or today? In Vietnam a thousand teams would mean more than 4 teams per district. We are not speaking here of small teams taking on large, organized enemy units. Where large communist forces exist Special Force units would help locate enemy forces, and keep out of their way. But against the small units of guerrillas fanning out over the country, they might be very effective.

There have, of course, been many poor experiences with taking a small unit and dropping it into an area for a single operation, or in chasing a guerrilla force through miles of jungle. The concept here, however, is quite different. One to five A-force units might operate continuously, over a period of months, in an area ten miles on a side. After the first couple of weeks (perhaps a first jungle "tour") devoted to self-preservation and familiarity with the area, the unit (or inter-locked units) would then move toward an attempt to "control" their TAOR to the extent of making it extremely difficult for opponent guerrillas to store, train, communicate, or send patrols through the area without detection if not destruction. An undetected build-up of company-sized enemy units over a period of days in an area of this size in which more than one A team was operating would become very difficult for the insurgents (assuming that there are outside government or U.S. reaction forces of air, artillery or troops which can converge on a target in a few hours).

One may consider two alternative methods of integrating the suggested forces into the over-all counterinsurgency effort. The first would be to tie the elite strike forces only into national or regional intelligence and

*Cf. the discussion in the accompanying paper. R.D. Gastil, Toward the Development of a More Acceptable Set of Limits for Counterinsurgency, HI-878/IV-RR, August 8, 1967.

command nets, keeping them out of the sight of the people as much as possible. In this mode the elite units would be informed by their own American channels as to suspected enemy movements and any special missions. On the other hand, they would report through these same channels to the local forces of the country they were in. A number of teams would be locked together by communications, and there would be a command structure making possible larger, integrated actions on occasion. The elite units would treat the local people with respect, but be friends to no one. If necessary, they might occasionally demand intelligence from the people as might seem a natural prerogative of an armed band. However, the principle effort would be to develop rapid transmission of local government intelligence indirectly to the elite units in the area.

An alternative approach is to have strike force units develop contacts with the people, or some people. In this mode they could engage in simple civic action programs, such as offering medical help or having food flown into a starving hamlet. Elite forces in this mode would have direct access to a great deal more local intelligence and would develop a better image. But they would also come dangerously close to taking on responsibility for the defense of the local people. This was the road to the perhaps overly static employment of Special Forces which has characterized Vietnam. Nevertheless, if the main communist insurgent activity, and even their places of general residence are within, rather than between, hamlets, then this second mode would seem to be required.

One way to reduce the strike force responsibility for local defense is to directly compromise only a few central communication links--e.g. the village policeman or hamlet chief, emphasizing only the protection of these individuals and their families rather than the protection of the population in general. Thus, a couple of Americans with automatic weapons might serve as bodyguards for individuals or families, and/or rapid escape procedures might be developed.

This suggestion calls into question the general assumption that in insurgency situations the U.S. should provide heavy firepower and conventional forces, while the local people handle pacification. In fact, pacification probably takes the better officers and the higher training. ARVN has always been poor at pacification and fairly good in major battles, and I think this may characterize many developing nations. American troops are well-paid, and do not need to exploit the local people, except perhaps sexually. The national forces of underdeveloped countries are often poorly or irregularly paid, and have traditions of general exploitation. Politics in underdeveloped countries are often determined in urban areas--national forces should be what appears to dominate this world. U.S. forces may, then, make their best and most socially acceptable contribution far out in the back country, fighting a largely unseen war against hundreds of small guerrilla units.

II. At the Conventional Level

This section is primarily concerned with the "little war," the struggles of small units and pacification. But insurgency wars can have many conventional war aspects, as illustrated by Vietnam. Four conventional objectives come to mind: search and destroy, expansion of the area of conflict, isolation and immobilization, and clear and hold.

When the forces are available for the occupation and pacification of an area under insurgent control, then a clear and hold operation is clearly in order. If the insurgent units are dangerously investing friendly positions, then a search and destroy operation is indicated. In the Greek civil war, the combination of these two approaches led to quick victory. The communist army was small, and had limited areas of operation. As a result the government simply massed overwhelming strength and destroyed their forces in a series of battles. In Vietnam there appears to be too large a communist army too easily re-inforced, too large an area, and too undermined a population for any rapid achievement of this kind.

However, in situations such as Vietnam the isolation and immobilization of the larger insurgent units may be a sufficient interim goal. This supposition is based on the assumption that insurgent forces supported from outside, must go to a considerable effort just to keep their field forces alive and ready for defensive actions in jungle or other desolate areas. It is difficult to bring these forces up to the point at which they can engage in major offensive actions. If this is so, then it may be quite possible without the commitment of large conventional units to the jungle to keep the insurgents sufficiently off balance to reduce their offensive capability to near zero, while it would take a really substantial commitment of forces to the jungles to really destroy the effectiveness of the insurgents in defending themselves and their jungles. On the other hand, if killed, the insurgent forces can be replaced as long as their logistics system operates. Thus, logistics rather than numbers may be crucial to the conventional insurgent threat, and killing soldiers may be less effective than we often seem to imagine.

The means of isolating and immobilizing are not novel, but again it is a matter of emphasis. First, by emphasizing pacification, perhaps with a thickened perimeter, it is possible to make more difficult the supply of insurgent forces from local resources. As pacification proceeds one assumes that the source of insurgent recruits also dries up, and chieu hoi succeeds more rapidly. Indeed, it may be more the ability to live successfully at home and without great fear that motivates defection and desertion from insurgent ranks than the scale of military pressure. Life in the jungle quickly pales with or without this pressure. Secondly, it should be possible to maintain or increase long-range intelligence patrols by small units, perhaps specially trained units, advanced aerial surveillance and other means of intelligence. On the basis of this information we may augment aerial bombardment of insurgent base areas and supply routes.

The final alternative of expanding the conflict is, of course, often militarily desirable in a narrow sense. Yet I believe that it is in our national interest to emphasize an ability to control aggression at the point of attack with the least possible expansion of the arena. Ultimately, this restraint will lead to a greater willingness for the U.S. to intervene in insurgencies, and thus reduce the advantage to the communists of supporting such efforts.*

*Related arguments may be found in accompanying papers: R.D. Gastil, Toward the Development of a More Acceptable Set of Limits for Counterinsurgency, HI-878/IV-RR, August 8, 1967, pp. IV-10 to IV-11; and R.D. Gastil, Principles for Settlement in South Vietnam, HI-878/III-RR, August 8, 1967.

PART 2

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A MODERATE REDEPLOYMENT
OF FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAMPreface

After briefly considering in Part I some of the strategic and tactical alternatives for insurgency war, I would like in this section to sketch in the nature of our effort in South Vietnam. Since this effort appears to have been largely an attempt to apply conventional war philosophies to the South Vietnamese situation, most of this discussion will refer to this aspect of our effort. The discussion will then attempt to formulate certain general suggestions for a moderate redeployment of the forces available to us in Vietnam.

Reading accounts of American military actions in South Vietnam by West, Marshall and Murphy* while concurrently reading Liddell-Hart's Strategy suggests that our forces are making many of the classical mistakes of poor generalship, in spite of apparently "winning." It seems particularly important to stress these failures of approach, because the accounts of Marshall and others are generally optimistic, reflecting a tendency to praise rather than condemn on the part of most of those visiting the American battlefields. But "relative" success in the battles detailed should not blind us to the fact that the success is due to extremely heavy firepower, high morale, capable troops and tremendous mobility. It appears to be hardly due to our basic strategy for the conventional war.

A Historical Sketch of the More Conventional Aspects
of the Second Vietnamese War

As I understand it the Vietnamese communists expected to achieve a mass political-military movement which would overwhelm the GVN. Douglas Pike suggests that when it appeared as though this movement would succeed with the overthrow of Diem in 1963, the North tightened its control over the NLF.** But out of the confusion following Diem's overthrow we can discern two facts: 1) ARVN did not immediately collapse; 2) politically the movement against Saigon had lost much of its impetus because removing Diem was the objective for many of the people and groups that had allied with the NLF.

*Captain Francis West, Jr., USMCR, Small Unit Action in Vietnam: Summer 1966 (Washington: USMC, Historical Branch, G-3, 1967); and "The CAC as a Catalyst," n.d. S.L.A. Marshall, Battles in the Monsoon (New York: William Morrow, 1967). Charles Murphy, "How the Battle Got Turned Around," Fortune, April 1967.

**Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), pp. 116-117.

At this juncture Hanoi apparently decided to push directly for a military victory which its Viet Cong troops alone did not appear able to achieve. They needed both to send NVA troops south and step up recruiting in the South. The more the communists pushed in the military direction, however, the more they appear to have lost their chance to gain the good-will of the people--though they surely gained their fear and often acquiescence.

At first this military approach worked, and many district capitals were lost to the communists. In II Corps in the highlands the Viet Cong and NVA had achieved moral and perhaps even numerical superiority by 1965, and were poised to take Pleiku and Kontum, and drive down Highway 19 to the ocean.

At this point the Americans brought in their first important forces, plunged into the highlands, and found a major engagement in Ia Drang Valley. But remember two parts to this engagement. First we successfully defended Plei Me with an encircling action. Then we pursued the communists, putting our men in a new and tougher spot, and shattered the NVA once again. It is important to remember this second action, for it was this somewhat bloody success (I would say unnecessarily bloody), that established the pattern for many future American actions.

It is hard to criticize these initial moves, because U.S. commanders felt they had to move fast and achieve victory and restore confidence. They really didn't yet know how well their men, equipment and organization could do. Therefore, while appearing to embark on a new strategy based on the air cavalry's mobility, they really stuck to the standard tenets of infantry war for territory.

Comparison of U.S. and NVA Conventional Strategy

But since these battles the Americans and communists have begun engaging in a new type of maneuvering in which I believe the NVA has achieved more success than we imagine, no matter what its losses. Let us see how this looks from the American and the communist sides, respectively.

The Americans continue to have a picture of the communist effort as one in which communist conventional units gradually try to build up for major co-ordinated attacks against American or Vietnamese targets à la Dien Bien Phu. If we allow them to succeed in this effort, then the propaganda and morale losses will be great. To avoid these losses, we must make spoiling attacks which continually fix and destroy, or keep on the move, the communist regiments, so that they cannot mass for an attack. To achieve this result, we use a number of approaches, including airplane spotting and bombing, spotting by recon teams, and penetration by ambush teams. But the primary means is the big operation, the sweep, the "fixing" by walking into an ambush and then calling in air and artillery. There are, of course, many versions of this approach, including checker-boarding.

At the same time U.S. forces are used in a variety of other roles. These include defending U.S. installations, augmented quick reaction forces for relief of smaller Vietnamese or allied units guarding the population, clear and secure operations in preparation for detailed pacification and reconstruction, and the securing of necessary military positions, such as at Khe Sanh or along the DMZ. And U.S. forces participate in a few places in a direct role in hamlet and village pacification.

Now let us turn to a hypothetical NVA estimate of their best strategy. In most of South Vietnam they have learned they can barely supply the main force units they already have. Their units in Cambodia, Laos, in Zone C and the highlands are diseased and half starved. These forces cannot mount significant offensives and hold anything, particularly with the quick reaction forces and firepower of the allies. But these forces can still fight well and can take a lot of Americans with them if the Americans can be enticed into the abandoned jungles and elephant grass to "smoke out" VC. Even a sick and starving man can fight from a prepared bunker or machine gun nest next to his cot. If he is killed it makes less difference to the NVA planner than we imagine, because at any rate North Vietnam only has a logistics capability for maintaining a limited number of men in the South. Their main goal is to keep the American casualty figures high enough to help the erosion of American morale at home. In addition, by keeping U.S. troops engaged in a wide range of operations away from the populated areas, relatively small communist units can make very important propaganda and morale gains by bypassing our forces on operations and directly raiding populated centers such as Quang Tri.

Of course, I exaggerate the degree to which Hanoi is satisfied by the present situation. Yet I believe there has rarely been a war in which the approach of each side fitted the other so well. I do not mean to suggest that the communists do not want to get their big units primed for an attack on a major target. But I think it quite possible that in most of South Vietnam, they now find this goal quite beyond them, even without our spoiling operations.

I am drawing up a hypothetical relationship of U.S.-NVA strategies which may be wrong. As suggested in HI-878/I-RR* we may be winning now, and require only a minor reallocation of GVN forces to translate this win into pacification. Let's see what the arguments for the present approach are. First, we may be attriting their men or their officers at a pace faster than they can replace without a steady decline in force quality. In particular, South Vietnamese are being replaced by North Vietnamese in the communist force system at places where the North Vietnamese are at a disadvantage. Secondly, instead of the primary effect of jungle search and destroy operations being to draw U.S. forces away from protecting the people, it may be that these operations drain the guerrilla, VC strength away from the people. Leaders of main force VC and NVA regular units may simply have the highest prestige and power in the system. Next, the North Vietnamese may require a direct conventional victory in the next couple of years for reasons which we can surmise but cannot know. (These might include a high North Vietnamese official staking his political life on this approach.) Finally, without our spoiling operations, the VC/NVA might

* Raymond D. Gastil, Counterinsurgency and South Vietnam: Some Alternatives, HI-878/I-RR, August 8, 1967.

be able to score occasional conventional victories with seriously destabilizing psychological if not military effects.

But more pessimistically, we might view the present U.S. effort as a necessary choice because it is all we can do. It may be that short of a period of colonial rule, we cannot pacify South Vietnam in any lasting sense. If through improving security the people cannot be made to rely on the GVN, then the U.S. sweeps make a kind of bitter sense. This paper is clearly based on a judgment that this picture of South Vietnam is wrong--but this judgment doesn't make the picture wrong.

Improving the Relation of Strategy and Tactics of our Objectives

If one were to look at this war with the view of a Liddell-Hart, we should probably be attacking in the North, cutting off the beginning of the Ho Chi Minh trail south of Vinh. But I believe we are fighting within constraints appropriate to a nuclear world and to the strongest world power. We want to confine the action and win in one country against an enemy who defends nothing, but attacks everywhere. This has historically been such a difficult problem that it required great numerical superiority for the defense. But I believe that our demonstration that we can win in almost any field situation through the use of heavy firepower should suggest ways to win both earlier, at greatly lowered cost, and with less numerical superiority.

Let us consider what the objectives of our military efforts in Vietnam should be. I believe they should be:

A. Conventional Objectives

- 1) Breaking up the capability of the communist "jungle regiments" to attack populated areas*
- 2) Blocking conventional communist attack in and into Quang Tri province
- 3) Interdicting communist supply routes to southern fronts
- 4) Protecting major cities and transportation routes against large scale communist attack

B. Guerrilla War Objectives

- 5) Clearing and holding territory
(removal of large VC units from populated areas or other areas meant to be held)
- 6) Rural defense in detail
- 7) Protection of cleared areas from outside attack

* Destroying base areas by search and destroy is basically a means to this objective which must compete with other means.

Notice that "killing VC" is not an objective. Although it may be a legitimate means to attain some of these objectives, it must compete with alternatives.

I) Breaking up the Capability of the Communist "Jungle Regiments"

If we talk of the necessity to break up the communist jungle forces, then we must compare the alternatives that our accounts give us. First, there is the small recon patrol used in a "recon/strike" mode. Patrols may be as small as five men, but sometimes similar units are larger and are also meant to set ambushes, etc. But the concept is primarily of a unit which can fix targets and help to "walk in" artillery or air on enemy positions. In ideal form, such a group is not relieved by sending in more men when in trouble. They can be supported by artillery or air--for they are in continual contact with these. When pressed their other alternatives are to be flown out or to fade away.*

The alternative approach favored by the Army in II and III Corps is to send out company strength units, and if they get into trouble develop the battle with the aid of other company strength units. A very good example of this kind of sweeping operation developed in the battle at Toumorong (operation Hawthorne) described by Marshall.

I am sure that both approaches have their losses and successes. But two things impressed me about the series of accounts being discussed here. First, the majority of the killing by the U.S. forces appeared to be achieved by the air and artillery rather than the soldiers in both approaches. Secondly, the recon missions can move in and out with surprisingly little opposition or chance of discovery in the truly unpopulated country. It is also clear from the accounts that the NVA is not, and cannot be, continuously "hiding" in the mountains and jungles. They live a normal life, move around, talk and play. They can be located by Americans moving in for a couple of days in a continuous "hiding" mode.

What I am suggesting here is that what is needed is analogous to a "cost-effectiveness" approach, where the costs give due consideration to the loss of American lives. I imagine that a large increase in the frequency of the recon/strike missions would involve no more than half of the ground forces we presently use on pure search and destroy missions. (For example, in the Toumorong battles instead of using four battalions of infantry we might have used one company broken down into half-squad sized recon teams. This would allow us to maintain four teams in the field at a time over a period of weeks. Of course, air support requirements would not be decreased, and heavier artillery at Dak To or closer might have been necessary.)

*Description of the concept may also be found in the account of "The Indians" in Captain West's account, op. cit.; also in the following articles in the Marine Corps Gazette: Major D.A. Colby, "Four Rules for Recon," December, 1966, pp. 48-49 and Major Colby and Major B.N. Bittner, "Recon's Artillery," January 1967, pp. 49-51. Cf. also accompanying Appendix B, Problems in Interpreting the Vietnamese War (U), HI-878/II/B-RR (SECRET) for some information on the relative effectiveness of the recon/strike approach.

What is being suggested is a redeployment of troops from offensive missions deep to unpopulated areas to other more pressing tasks. I think that the redeployment could be done because we could do as well by switching emphasis to very small recon missions with heavy fire support. But I also believe we do not have to do as well as we are doing in this mission. Excluding Quang Tri province, there has not been one coordinated communist large-scale attack originating from the areas of American search and destroy attention, and hardly any such operations in the country as a whole during the past year. This indicates, as do reports on the condition of the troops we meet in III Corps and coastal II Corps, that we are doing considerably more than we need to in this regard. If we look at samples of some of the few attacks on bases that have occurred, it also appears that when Americans accept the defensive mode, waiting for them to come to us, our quick reaction firepower is quite as decisively successful in defense as it is in offense, and with considerably less loss to our forces.

There are, of course, risks and losses to any redeployment. You hope to make gains in one area while taking losses elsewhere.

2) Blocking Conventional Attack

There are, areas in which we must continue offensive search and destroy operations, although I would generally use these operations for "mop-up" behind the recon/strike attacks discussed above. Areas where search and destroy must be used include those in the jungle and mountains immediately surrounding our bases and major transportation arteries. They would also be necessary in areas just beyond the periphery of all those populated areas which we intend to hold. The conventional objective of blocking attack on value targets is, of course, particularly necessary in Quang Tri province where the communist supply lines are very short and attacks can be mounted from areas across the border. These latter are areas in which we feel constrained not to do ground reconnaissance.

Aside from special situations, such as the DMZ, military units will not defend themselves or their TAOR by relapsing into inaction. Thus, to prevent conventional attack there must be recon penetration for firepower attack into suspected areas of communist movement or jungle concentration. Closer to our lines there is generally a belt in which armed patrolling in the jungle is regularly undertaken by the U.S. or allied conventional forces responsible for the area. As these forces become accustomed to this more static role, and consequently become really familiar with relevant areas of jungle, this belt greatly reduces the chance of successful VC attack.* The importance of this patrolling is also seen in the fact that the VC/NVA do not often make major attacks from deep in the jungle, but rather tend to invest a position, pre-positioning their forces and guns sometimes days before an attack.

*Cf. Frank Armbruster's comments in an accompanying paper (Military and Police Security Program for South Vietnam, HI-881-RR, August 10, 1967) on the difference in effectiveness between patrolling virgin areas and patrolling familiar ground, as he suggests his jungle belt be designed to do.

3) Interdicting Communist Supply Routes

Another conventional goal being pursued, but perhaps of even higher priority than it receives today, is the interdiction of major supply routes. The combination of very long-range reconnaissance and air power can probably be most effective here. Occupation of certain border points, where we can be reasonably certain of avoiding another A Shau may also disrupt seriously the primary communist routes. In some cases this effect could be achieved by sitting astride these routes; in others we may want to channelize communist supply into fewer, more easily attacked paths.

4) Protecting Major Urban Points

It is clearly necessary to defend urban centers at a very high level of efficiency, for communist attacks here have disproportionate psychological effect. Putting heavy forces in the immediate adjacency of cities, a long criticized practice of ARVN, has the additional benefit that these forces also provide protection to the rural population which is often jammed quite tightly around these cities. This is particularly true today. What I am suggesting here is that the desire to be aggressive in the jungle allowed a sudden attack recently on Quang Tri. Quang Tri was simply too lightly defended in the known presence of very large communist units within striking distance.* Part of what I am suggesting is that we station more forces in close to large cities, particularly to threatened points such as many cities in I and II Corps, and points in Tayninh and Hau Nghia provinces, using them both as a quick reaction reserve for a large rural area, and as an urban defense force. Thus, I believe that with our fire-power and mobility we can make a strategy work which almost led to the collapse of ARVN in other years.

5) Clearing and Holding Territory

If, then, we can "save" men by reducing emphasis on sweeps against jungle regiments, we should be able to make more sweeps for the purpose of clearing and securing populated areas, or other areas of strategic or tactical importance that we intend to hold. Even though we will be moving here against second-and third-line communist guerrillas in many cases, we should first recon and soften up the defending forces in the close-in jungle and swamp patches of the populated area to be captured. Then we should move in with unopposable force. The object should be to avoid serious battle in these areas by a demonstration of force, allowing the communists to get away as a partial cost. Instead of taking hamlets by frontal assault, we should envelop them, and then let the VC fall back.** But our losses will be less initially, and when the battle does develop later, it will be the communists on the attack against our positions. And we will occupy a much less destroyed rural area, perhaps one with less bitterness against the attackers.

*I do not mean to criticize the Marines here, but some of our II and III Corps jungle power should have been shifted into this area earlier for urban defense.

**Thus avoiding the kind of operations West describes in "Mines and Men," op. cit., or Kano Knoebel, Victor Charlie, Praeger, 1967, pp 199-224.

In general the present concept of clear and hold operations, if carried out systematically, with offensive units replaced by blocking forces, and followed up by RF/PF occupation, and police interrogation and RD work, might well be sufficient to pacify South Vietnam. This effort worked well in the Greek civil war. However, the resources put into this are trivial compared to the search and destroy operations which seem to be planned purely for attrition. But even if the balance were altered, the situation in South Vietnam is several magnitudes worse than the Greek and Philippine and other cases so often discussed. Here the convergent resources for target areas are not apt to be relatively so great as were available to the Greeks. The population is much less cooperative here, and the enemy more determined and aggressive. At least quantitatively, the opponent has an almost unlimited capacity to replace the forces lost, something few insurgencies have had. Therefore, it seems to me that we will have to sacrifice more of the aggressiveness of our offensive capability to make a defense really work than has been the case in other insurgencies.

6) Rural Defense in Detail

Currently the area approach (See Part 1) is often implemented after a clear and secure operation. First, large forces are brought in to break up or drive away the main or regional force VC units. Then, the regular force units stay while a variety of measures are used to strengthen the combat potential of the people and to root out the VC infrastructure and intelligence network. Most notably this program involves the census grievance program of the RD, the efforts of local and national police in interrogation--backed up by RF/PF or other forces--and the training of more effective hamlet militia by the RD cadres.

The intention of the program is to gradually increase the size of secure areas behind first-line blocking forces. With success, the first-line troops can be moved farther out and the RF and RD units moved into new sectors behind them. In the secured rear areas government attention will then be concentrated on economic and social development rather than security. However, to date I do not believe anyone knows if there have been any really successful transitions to this stage of peace and light.

One of the most detailed attempts to apply the area defense principle has been near Da Nang. Here the Marines have used a combination of short patrols, long-range patrols, reaction forces and combined Marine-PF forces to saturate more or less successfully an arc of rice country around Da Nang. My impression is that they cannot yet reliably thin out their forces even in rear areas. Of course, perhaps the RD and police program which should accompany the Marine effort has not been good enough. Certainly the existence of large NVA units near to the Marine TAOR's makes for an unusually difficult situation. But I do not think this is the whole story. Even without the NVA there appear to be guerrilla forces lying outside of Marine control which can, albeit with difficulty, penetrate and knock over small units, or headmen, several miles within the Marine perimeter.

However, in most areas of Vietnam it may be a dream to expect to be able to thin out defensive forces anywhere while the insurgency continues. This may not be a requirement. Quite possibly the village security the Marines now have near Da Nang is enough peace for the Vietnamese to develop a more resolute identification with Saigon. I think so, especially if the Marine effort could be done without Marines.

The Marines put 12 men under a Sergeant with about 30 Vietnamese PF's in a village. They place a fixed camp in one hamlet, typically more closely related to the actual dwellings than the old triangle forts often used by PF's. Here they have a dispensary and they do some civic action. But their primary job is to patrol the whole village with the help of the local PF's and the civilian structure (village chief, police chief, hamlet chiefs). Patrolling continuously day and night in mixed small units, they establish a presence in all of the hamlets of the village. The civilian structure, and in particular the village chief, stays in command of the area and comes to use the Marine-PF units as bodyguards, and to arrest or kill known communists. Although several CAC units have been hit and hard, the Marines never leave. The helicopter which takes out the dead and wounded brings in their replacements.

The CAC unit accomplishments have not been striking, but I believe they are significant. They have not eliminated the infrastructure in every hamlet in their villages, nor do they stop every VC crossing the village boundaries. Nor have they ever been able to feel they could leave a village safely behind. Yet it appears fair to say that the village climate has changed. For the first few months the Marines are steadily shot at and harassed and small battles occur. Thereafter, the pace of action seems to slow down. Intelligence flows in from what were formerly contested hamlets, VC slip furtively in and out of the hamlets they formerly had full control of. Intelligence is not perfect, it may be after the fact, but often it leads to arrests and ambushes. As intelligence improves the CAC units are informed of impending attacks on hamlets in the village, and are able to move out and thwart these. Thus, a mobile defense capability builds up, based on local intelligence. For the peasant the local tide of the war seems to have shifted, and in most hamlets he will shift with it.

To get a feeling for what an area saturation approach of high quality might accomplish, the Marine CAC units should be applied to a solid mass of villages, as they have not been up to now. If the Marine approach were to be applied to the whole country the force requirements would not be staggering. If we assume that we need 12 first-line men and 30 PF's for each of 2,500 villages in South Vietnam, and that the first-line men will require a 50% augmentation for a light staff and support organization,* then the manpower requirements are 45,000 first-line men and 75,000 PF's.

*Current Marine CAC practice is to figure about a 30% augmentation for this requirement.

This would involve essentially no change in PF deployment, but would require a considerable reallocation of our first-line manpower.* However, it would probably take at least two years to build up a mixed CAC-like effort to this level.

7) Protection of Cleared Areas from Outside Attack

According to newspaper accounts, success in pacification in Quang Diem District near Hue was quickly halted and reversed when the peasants learned that a VC battalion had moved into the area. Nothing worked anymore, information did not come in, and finally the District Chief was killed.** This is a recurring story all over Vietnam.

The standard solution is to propose the introduction of "blocking" forces in the area. The Marine allotment of battalion TAOR's was meant to add consistency to the organization of blocking forces. However, the Marine effort continues to suffer from inconsistency and insufficiency. Each Marine battalion was to have an area within which it could provide the defense against any major VC/NVA incursions. Yet the TAOR's have not been maintained as consistently as they might. Significantly, trouble on the DMZ has forced the thinning out of the TAOR system of area control rather than a reallocation of maneuver battalions elsewhere in Vietnam from search and destroy to the conventional defense of the DMZ.

My impression is that at least half the pacification battle might be won by keeping blocking forces in place. If the blocking force is of equal size to the communists, and stays in the district, then pacification can again proceed, at least in many parts of the district. But this is apparently insufficient. Too many assassinations and small raids continue. Therefore, proposals have been developed to stiffen the perimeter of the cleared area. (See Part 1, and Part 3 below.)

The Question of Prisoners

Our efforts in Vietnam appear to be hamstrung by the lack of prisoners. This effect is two-fold. First, we sometimes go through whole operations without the benefit of prisoner interrogation, and secondly, our pressure produces no ground swell of enemy surrender, even though their morale is low. Large scale surrenders would lower their morale further, raise ours, and save lives on both sides.

*I am told that the Marines find lack of PF's a limiting factor in I Corps. Since there are 100-150,000 PF's in South Vietnam this must be more a problem of Vietnamese reluctance to put PF's in these units than anything else. CAP-district chief relations should perhaps be improved. See Lt. Col. A. Clement, "Le My: Study in Counterinsurgency," Marine Corps Gazette, July 1967, Vol. 51, No. 7, p. 18. The New York Times (July 28, 1967) suggests a 50,000-75,000 increase in PF's in the next two years is being planned.

**The New York Times, March 13, 1967.

All the wrong traditions seem to build up on both sides. Even though we treat prisoners well, I get the feeling the average NVA soldier might surrender to ARVN as easily as the U.S. forces. It might even be easier. Our people don't understand the VC/NVA and partially as a result deeply fear and distrust them. The Americans resolve to never surrender, and may project this resolve on their opponents. And too often opponent action supports this prejudice. Thus, the traditions of a no-surrender-war go on building.

I believe we should have special groups within the military working on this problem from every angle. In many of the combat stories on which this paper is based, one sees VC/NVA which might have been captured if we had had weapons less than lethal or had known even a few words of the language (cf. PFC McGowan's use of a couple of words in Marshall's account).* Training each squad leader in the ability to yell about 10 Vietnamese words successfully might help. A quick acting gas-smoke grenade or dart gun might be used. These might be especially acceptable to our soldiers for use in "mop up" operations after heavy firepower has been used. Ways in which VC/NVA might indicate their desire to surrender from a distance might be popularized. To avoid detection by their own people they might be induced to place signs which could only be seen from the air. If possible, tear gas attacks on bunkers or caves should not be followed by shooting, but by capture. Light-weight nylon nets or incapacitating gas might help here as the communists try to break out. These are just stray suggestions--but this should clearly be an area of serious study.

Conclusions

What I am suggesting, then, is a greater emphasis on economy of force in the Vietnamese war. I do not believe that frontal assaults on communist jungles follow this principle.** I do not believe that simply killing the VC or NVA is the most efficient or acceptable way to end the war. Get them away from the people, isolate them, harass them, starve them for supplies, capture them--these are more important ways of winning.*** What I am suggesting is the concentration of our manpower in the populated areas of the country, and a shift of our battles from those of tactical offense to tactical defense, a defense backed up by an integrated firepower system the French and ARVN never came near to having in previous years.

*S. L. A. Marshall, op. cit., pp. 389-396.

** "To apply one's strength where the enemy is strong weakens oneself disproportionately to the effect attained." Liddell-Hart, Strategy (New York: Praeger, 1954 (1962)), p. 228.

*** "A strategist should think in terms of paralyzing not of killing." Liddell-Hart, ibid.

PART 3

A SKETCH OF A NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

The suggestions presented above involve a considerable reorientation of our effort in South Vietnam. In this section I want to go beyond this and sketch in some of the details of how a radical application of the principles upon which these suggestions were based would look in terms of available manpower, taking into account primarily the military aspects of the problem.

Accompanying papers and the foregoing sections suggest at least the following as the basic principles upon which a National Defense System should be built:

1. Training in Responsibility

The United States is not going to always be in Vietnam in the strength we are today. Therefore, we need to think of all of our actions in terms of legacy values. These considerations suggest subprinciples such as the following:

- a) Do not give too much too easily
- b) Do not require a more highly structured bureaucracy than is likely to be available to run the country
- c) Develop local initiative and responsibility at all levels of GVN authority and at the top levels of local authority
- d) Train the Vietnamese by the mixing of Western and Vietnamese security forces in local security responsibilities
- e) Let Vietnamese take more responsibility in all kinds of battles, especially on the DMZ, as well as in negotiation.

2. An Intelligence War

Anti-communist security forces in Vietnam will be adequate for victory only when the quality of intelligence we receive equals or surpasses that available to the communist political-military structure. For any new gadgets or tactics to succeed without success in intelligence would require very high wastage of resources. In many respects it is reasonable to consider this an intelligence war.

3. Intelligence from the People

We cannot mechanically reproduce the intelligence resources the people can easily give us. They will give information only where we stay consistently with them. This can only be done if we confine the areas of operation of most of our forces to populated areas, and if we establish areas of responsibility down to the hamlet level which will not be abandoned.

That the crucial intelligence in the Vietnamese war comes from the people is noted by many observers. In spite of their patrolling, word of attack on CIDG camps has repeatedly come from the local peasants or montagnards. The CAC units survive because they receive notice from the people of impending attack. The Hoa Hao area is hard for the VC to operate in, because the people simply report them. Hoa Hao willingness to report is based on local security. In Vietnam security at much lower than American civilian standards is probably sufficient for adequate availability of peasant intelligence resources.

4. Intelligence, People and Transportation

Control of roads, railroads and canals is essentially an intelligence operation, and is generally dependent upon the intelligence offered by the people living along these arteries. As these people come to feel more secure, the greater part of this problem should disappear.

5. Integrated Military-Police Responsibility

Rural police work is an integral part of rural defense in place, but should be integrated in one military-police operation for the present. While police specialists should be developed, another bureaucracy should not be introduced into the rural scene in a large way. Train and upgrade what is there now for military-police operations.

6. Supplementary Use of RD

Revolutionary Development is a helpful supplement to the pacification resources of the local officials and military-pacification effort, but is not necessary to attain pacification in most areas if the security situation is improved.

7. Reduce Large Operations in Jungles and Waste Lands

We should avoid land battle, other than battle for territorial gain or defense, in those locations in which the enemy is strongest and we are weakest, and in which the terrain favors concealment.

8. Replace Search and Destroy with Reconnaissance and Destroy

Locating enemy units for air and artillery destruction does not require the use of large ground forces, but can be more effectively accomplished by very small recon/strike units.

Civilian Aspects of the System

In accompanying documents the civilian and political-military aspects of the problem have been discussed. In one, I have discussed the advantages of maintaining a considerable degree of autonomy and local control over

pacification.* In appendices to this paper I discuss the relative importance of military versus political considerations in South Vietnam. Another appendix suggests that experiments should be made in the possibility of achieving political gains in old Viet Cong areas in conjunction with, and complementary to, military operations. A separate paper outlines principles for settlement, including the idea of emphasizing GVN's role.**

Military Aspects: The Establishment of a Defensible Front

The suggestion is, then, to place our forces in a configuration which will allow them to directly protect the people in detail. I believe this can be best accomplished by establishing and defending a frontier between the people and the VC/NVA. If we take this concept very seriously, we might then radically redeploy and reorganize our forces. This section is an attempt to look at what such a radical reorganization might look like.

We can identify the following uses for our regular force manpower in South Vietnam.

1. Forward TAOR battalions
2. Regular force components of CAC units
3. Recon/strike battalions
4. Conventional defense (DMZ)
5. Strategic Reserve (reserve/strike)
6. Residual offensive force

*R. D. Gastil, A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam, HI-878/I-RR, August 8, 1967. This paper discusses a district emphasis approach more compatible with the moderate redeployment suggested in Part 2 above than with the material below. However, many of the aspects of this emphasis could be maintained in the National Defense System.

**R. D. Gastil, Principles for Settlement in South Vietnam, HI-878/III-RR, August 8, 1967.

Let us assume that we have the following force in U.S. battalion equivalents which can be assigned to these tasks.* They are:

U.S.	90 battalions
GVN (regular forces)	75 battalions (U.S. equivalent)
3rd Nations	25 battalions

GVN has more than twice this number, but 75 makes a reasonable approximation in terms of available manpower and equipment.

The foregoing discussion suggests a considerable reallocation and redistribution of manpower and attention. Most of our U.S. Army "maneuver battalions" are now employed in operations, perhaps half of which are in areas of very low population. If these forces were held back, with long-range patrolling of the recon/strike type described above by half of each battalion employed in these areas, many of our maneuver battalions could be redeployed. As this redeployment occurs, then other forces would be sprung loose for further redeployment. In particular, forces occupied in the more or less static defense of cities, transportation routes, etc., will be moved into the National Defense System as this system improves.

The first objective of the National Defense System will be to define TAOR's by battalion for about 1300 miles of front, with the TAOR's about 16 miles long and ten miles deep.** Ten miles is perhaps a Viet Cong unit's night walk distance to make an average attack. 1300 miles is not an entirely unreasoned figure. If we had a continuous front, the distance would be 600-700 miles. But for the interim I imagine that only the coastal provinces can have such a front. There will be pockets in the highlands, and some eastern as well as western frontage in the Delta.

*This estimate is based on an assumption the United States will have the equivalent of nine and one-half divisions in Vietnam by mid-1968, with an average of between nine and ten infantry-type battalions per division (see FM 61-100). The Koreans and Australians provide another two divisions and two brigades. At the same rate this would imply about 25 infantry-type battalions. U.S. News and World Report (August 29, 1966) mentioned 164 GVN regular battalions. They are often very understrength. Because of the frontless nature of this war, ARVN battalions have typically never been withdrawn from their areas of responsibility for rest and retraining. This may be a mistake, and perhaps all ARVN battalions should go through some rotational retraining cycle out of the line. If this were to be done, it would be to improve the efficiency of ARVN, and thereby should not effect the "effectiveness" implied by the battalion figures suggested here.

**This will provide about thirty TAOR's with a twenty mile front, thirty-five with sixteen, and ten with twelve miles. A geographical outline of the front is given below, pp. II-29 and II-30.

Let us then consider what the battalion TAOR's along the 1300 mile front would look like. Over a twelve to twenty mile front the battalion commander might place his forces in U.S. company sized units about every four miles, with battalion artillery support in each location. Thus, there will be four company TAOR's within the battalion, with a headquarters in the approximate middle of each. The companies will essentially be reaction forces for the local forces also deployed in the company TAOR. Patrolling responsibilities within the TAOR will be almost entirely assigned to CAP (Combined Action Platoons) or other local defense units which the regular forces will reinforce as needed. The battalion forces will, however, have limited patrol responsibilities directly in front of the TAOR. TAOR forces will generally not be shifted, but will be reinforced by helicopter-borne strategic reserve on a Corps basis, as well as by those local strike forces, such as regional forces, which may be in the area.

Secure Village Defense forces would be placed in every village. One thousand of the 2500 villages in Vietnam would have CAP's placed in them. These would consist of a platoon with twelve first-line, heavily armed soldiers and thirty lightly-armed PF's. The requirements of first-line troops in this configuration would be 12,000 men. However, there would also be a light staff and support organization of CAC and even CAB (Combined Action Battalion) organization. Considering Marine experience this should require no more than a fifty per cent augmentation of these figures, or a total of 18,000 first-line troops. The requirements for PF's here would be about 30,000.

However, for many parts of the frontier established by the 1300-mile line of TAOR's, the placing of one CAP per village is too thin. Thus, for an outer ring of "frontier villages" along the most contested parts of the line one might think of putting a CAP unit in every hamlet. For perhaps 300 villages with an average of five active hamlets, we would have 60 first line men and perhaps 50 PF's (or other local forces) established in five small platoons, perhaps organized into a small special CAC directed at village level. The reason for the smaller complement of PF here is that PF's in this military-police role should ideally be from the village or immediate area concerned, and manpower resources available to friendly forces here near the "frontier" of the TAOR line may be scarce. The overall requirements in addition to those mentioned for all 1000 villages under the CAP concept will then be 48×300 plus 50% or 21,500 additional first-line men and 20×300 or 6,000 additional PF's. The total first-line CAP requirement would then be 40,000 men, or about 40 U.S. equivalent battalions. These will provide the nucleus for 2200 CAP units.

Of the remaining 1500 villages, perhaps 500 are largely unpopulated jungle areas far beyond the suggested fronts. For the residual 1000 villages, I imagine that District and Province Chiefs can work out their own defense and security on the basis of a concentration of available RF, CIDG and popular forces in these villages. Some of these 1000 villages will consist of market towns and their environs in which national and local police can also make a considerable contribution. One can imagine about 50 PF's and 50 RF's (or CIDG's), with some bolstering by hamlet defense

units such as the Combat Youth for each of the 1000 villages. This would require about 100,000 of the perhaps 300,000 actually existent irregular and local forces in Vietnam. Some of these 1000 villages will be within the "front" established in the interim model suggested below, while others will be beyond the front with U.S. Special Forces, or otherwise, in enclaves or outposts.

Behind the TAOR-Secure Village Defense front there must be reaction forces which can be quickly dispatched to danger points which develop along the front. Most of the Vietnamese Marine Corps is now in such a "strategic reserve," primarily based near Saigon. In addition, there should probably be four reserve/strike battalions in I Corps, six in II Corps, two in III Corps and three in IV Corps. These had best be first-class troops, perhaps effectively airmobile. An additional strategic reserve will, of course, be offered by the residual offensive forces noted below.

As the interim goals of the model are reached, offensive operations of search and destroy will have ended and more and more troops will be tied down. Near the DMZ there will always be a necessity to "hold a line" in a very traditional sense. Several battalions will need to be held here, but these might well be mostly ARVN, including some of their better units such as the Rangers.* Here is a most direct sense, ARVN will be taking on responsibility for the country. Finally, once the interim goals are reached, we will want to have several battalions available to help move forward the lines, to clear new areas, to straighten the lines, and gradually to reclaim the whole country. Here, once again, there should be considerable emphasis upon ARVN taking a large part of this responsibility.

In over fifty per cent of the country, we will not be sweeping, not destroying VC/NVA in direct ground attack during the approach to the interim goals. However, instead of the perhaps four battalion equivalent of recon/strike units today, we have suggested that 25 such battalions be fielded. Experience has shown that most of the patrols of these units can be quite small--4-8 men--while the results obtained should indeed be considerable (see discussion above and references cited there). One imagines that perhaps 20% of the patrols would be purely for intelligence, often very deep, with reaction to the intelligence only long after its collection. The rest of the patrols would be on spoiling missions, designed to bring in heavy air or artillery attacks on any enemy forces which may be located.

* There will, of course, be rotation. Thus, if the DMZ is very hot, TAOR battalions will be rotated in and out of their role to the DMZ. Unlike CAP units, continuity of units is not a stringent requirement for TAOR battalions, but some battalion must always be on the front in each TAOR. It would, of course, be desirable to have TAOR battalions with familiarity with their TA. However, the priority is much lower than for the CAP's.

To fulfill the requirements discussed above, the following allocations might then be reached as the interim goals of this program are attained.

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>GVN (regular)</u>	<u>3rd NATION</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. Forward TAOR	25	35	15	75
2. Used in CAC Organizations	30	10	-	40
3. Recon/Strike Battalion	15	5	5	25
4. Conventional Defense (DMZ)	5	10	-	15
5. Strategic Reserve	10	5	5	20
6. Residual Offensive Force	5	10	-	15
	<hr/> 90	<hr/> 75	<hr/> 25	<hr/> 190

In our foregoing discussion we have also used about 50,000 RF (or CIDG) and 100,000 PF's. This leaves perhaps 75,000 local troops and additional thousands of militia to be used independently of the system by District Chiefs and other civilian-military authorities.* Most of the 50,000 RF's, at least, will serve as district and provincial reaction forces more or less irrespective of the battalion TAOR fronts. This will include 200 RF's per district plus 200 per provincial capital.**

We are, then, suggesting a change from the defense of points, of villages, hamlets and roads here and there, to the establishment of much thicker and more defensible fronts. There are fronts now, thousands of little fronts, even running through the middle of hamlets; but these provide few solid areas of security the defense of which can be tested and felt by all. These fronts are so narrow as to provide almost no "rear area" at all. Thus, in establishing a front we will not be doing anything really new but we will be shortening the thousands of miles of "line" between the safe and the unsafe areas now held by thousands of more-or-less isolated units all over the country.

A rough outline map of the suggested TAOR fronts may be found on page II-30. The front would run 850 miles from the DMZ parallel to the coast to a point east of Saigon, thence west to above Tay Ninh City, around that city and back into Hau Nghia and thence to Ha Tien. This would then be paralleled by secondary lines consisting of two fronts on the Ca Mau peninsula, and another from

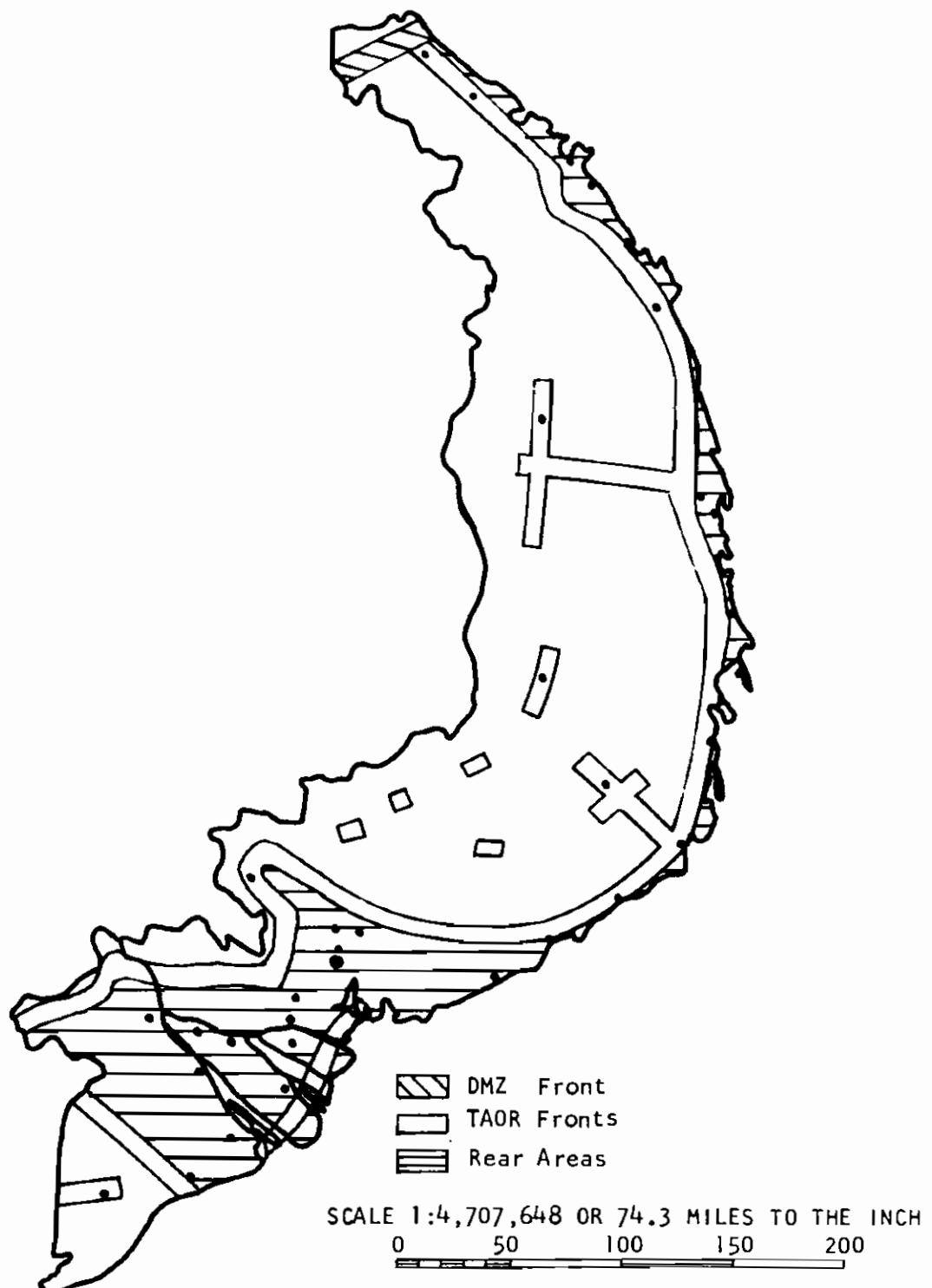
*Present plans suggest perhaps another 50,000 should be added to this figure (New York Times, July 28, 1967).

**Where there are other forces around, these can truly be reaction forces, but where, as in Phu Bon, these are essentially the available force, then they will be pretty well tied down to the static defense of politically important points.

11-30

HI-878/11-RR

Sketch of TAOR Fronts



SOUTH VIET NAM

the mouth of the Bassac, skirting the eastern swamps of the Delta up to the southern edge of Bien Hoa. In these secondary fronts there would be about 180 miles. This would leave about 270 miles of line to be found in discontinuous pieces in Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and the inland provinces of II Corps. Here there would be few "fronts" in the real sense, but only battalion TAOR's in the main areas of population.

In II Corps, and everywhere beyond the front, the war will look much like it did before the plan was initiated. Yet it will be a toned down, "holding action." Here we will find many of the current types of local defense forces scattered ahead of the fronts described above. Many of these will be CIDG units. The defense of the people will depend more on reaction forces than in the TAOR front system elsewhere. Many people to be protected will live outside rather than within the front. II Corps will have the strongest Corps strategic reserve and the most armor. In addition, perhaps 10 of the 25 recon battalions for the country will be placed in II Corps, thereby giving a potentially significant reserve pool to be used against any VC/NVA offensive which may develop against our outposts in this area.

Several objections will be made to the proposed deployment. First, it is defensive-minded, relatively static, gives the initiative to the opponent. Yet this is only apparently the case. By moving "back" we are really moving "forward" to occupy in a more meaningful way the land the battle is all about. Thus, in a curious way we are striking through his "front" to attack his "rear" by apparently retreating. For much of his other supply of men and food continues to come from the area we will now be occupying.

The argument will be made that by abandoning search and destroy operations we will be granting the enemy an ability to accomplish major build-ups, leading eventually to massive VC/NVA attacks. However, part of this buildup must depend on supplies coming from the areas the suggested system will gradually increase control over. We will continue to interdict his other supply routes at least as severely as today. And with the recon/strike units we may be able to deliver as much firepower as accurately on jungle based VC/NVA forces as we ever did before. As suggested above, the fact that with modern firepower we do not have to massively deploy battalions to "get" the enemy is perhaps not sufficiently realized. By not going out in large units we are not losing contact with the enemy or creating an intelligence gap. If recon units are developed massively as suggested here, and regularly used over the whole of unoccupied South Vietnam, there will probably be more adequate and consistent intelligence on VC/NVA movements and intentions than there is today.

The argument will be made that the line will be stretched very thin in the presence of VC/NVA regiments of considerable power. However, the line is not as weak as it appears. Support and staff (including logistics, artillery, etc.) will provide a fighting capability around cities and provincial towns which is often not recognized on the charts. In addition, there appear to be some armored units which I have not considered in my

run-down of what is available. They can provide rapid augmentation of power, especially in the Highlands. Here, too, U.S. Special Forces and their CIDG units have not been taken fully into account.

Basically the concept is that for large VC/NVA offensives the TAOR or DMZ forces develop the battle while the reserves come in with the punch to finish it. Today, the opponent would be hard pressed to mount more than one regimental sized attack in the Delta at a time, and the Delta's own strategic reserve should be able to meet this threat.* Elsewhere, throwing four battalions of the VNMC into a front could probably handle any probable offensive that could not be handled by the strategic reserve in the respective Corps area. Residual offensive forces will also provide extra weight to the strategic reserves.

As mentioned above, another reserve would be the 25 recon battalions. Most of the men in these units are in camp at any one time, and many of these battalions could be reformed and despatched to fill in for other units in the event of a really serious major offensive that could not be met by line forces or the strategic reserves.

Still, relative to present arrangements, the suggested approach is relatively inflexible. The vast mass of troops in TAOR structures or CAC structures are never to be moved except in the direst emergency. But this is the central idea--restore confidence, protect, never leave, change the war from one fought everywhere to one fought to establish and defend a front.

I have suggested elsewhere** that many ARVN units are not prepared by their experience and traditions to participate successfully in a direct relationship with the people in pacification. I have even suggested that RF might be built up in terms of manpower, equipment and training at the expense of ARVN. Yet, for the purpose of explicating my approach by way of a numerical example, as well as in an attempt to leave the lower Delta largely to the GVN, I have put 10 battalion equivalents or about 10,000 ARVN in the CAC role. In the document quoted I have suggested that if ARVN could take over some of the static defense duties of RF's, these latter might preferably be used as the forces more directly with the people. Thus, we can conceive of CAP's in certain areas with 12 RF's and 30 PF's, but admittedly this does not seem a strong alternative, particularly because of the lack of sufficiently experienced or motivated junior officers and non-coms in either ARVN or Regional Forces. However, the over-all structure of a stable front, with two ARVN companies every four miles, and a much heavier concentration of RF/PF than today in a 10-mile

* This is a small VC regiment of about 1000 men. Three full-sized battalions should field 2000 (in addition to the local government forces on the spot).

** R. D. Gastil, A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam, HI-878/I-RR, August 8, 1967.

deep line would probably be a considerable improvement over the mosaic we find today in the Delta, even if it does not achieve the level of rear area security the system may accomplish elsewhere.

One way to improve performance of ARVN or RF CAP squads would be to organize the CAC and CAB on a thoroughly mixed basis. Thus, there might be some Americans in leading positions in every CAC unit who could upgrade the training and performance of the CAP's. By having a few American CAP's in every province, we might considerably upgrade the performance of all units. Of course, such mixing poses very difficult problems.

In the program as set forth, there is not a great emphasis on hamlet militia, combat youth, or other irregular local defense forces. These forces are present in Vietnam and are being built up somewhat by RD. However, continuing buildup of RD and/or RF forces as now planned must limit growth in hamlet militia nationwide. Many a hamlet owes its security to the efforts of these groups. But these successes are spotty, and I do not want to emphasize doing everything at once and therefore nothing. Where there are hamlet militia, they should be used; where there are hamlet forces they should probably be maintained. But I feel the system is helped by these forces, not dependent upon them as a system. The main defense of a hamlet must be its ability to get the word out that VC are there or intend to come in. It is the roving patrols of the CAP or other Secure Village Defense system, backed up by the regional or other available forces which must provide the firepower which gradually reduces the VC's willingness to enter an area. Thus, while this system is broadly static, on the local village level it avoids reliance on fixed positions.

As discussed above, I believe that this approach to the rationalization of the situation is more practical and efficient in terms of the present forces and force structures in Vietnam than the military barrier plus rear area constabulary concept of Frank Armbruster.* However, it might be quite useful to experiment with use of aspects of his system in some areas. For example, the use of an interlocking set of sensors might be tried by the small CAC companies with heavy CAP concentrations in frontier villages. Along the edge of such a frontier village, the CAP's might successfully use considerable equipment of this kind to develop a screen. Where local PF's are not available for frontier CAP's reliance on Armbruster's ambush belt might be a preferable solution to manning the line. For the advantages of the CAP program would largely be lost under these conditions.

Mr. Armbruster's system also suggests a fairly elaborate development of constabulary units, and strives for a much higher level of security behind the front than I imagine. I am impressed that most of the assassination and small terrorist acts that occur today seem to be mounted from

*I derived the original suggestion that the war should be fought along fronts from Mr. Armbruster.

outside of the populated areas, and the VC simply walk in and out between security units to perform their missions. Of course, they have accomplices within, and these must be weeded out. But it is a matter of priorities and capabilities. I believe that if given security, present police forces, even village policemen, can find out and break up the communist organization in many areas. But many village policemen are not going to move or even ask questions in the present situation. The CAP system I am suggesting is in effect a multipurpose military-police system on a deep front. The CAP and TAOR battalion units will be aided in police work by RD cadres, local policemen, the District Chief and his RF's, and a gradually developing national police capability, especially the police field forces. But most important they will give the muscle to the police functions. Of course, behind the 10 mile frontal zones the responsibility will be more on the police and the RF's because of the thinness of CAC or other Secure Village Defense forces and the lack of the battalion TAOR structure.

In establishing a radically new disposition of troops in South Vietnam, the question must be asked as to whether we will not be shaking the political-military structure of the country. The plans has been developed with this danger in mind. First the greatest changes in disposition are of the U.S. Army rather than ARVN. Secondly, I have avoided the attractiveness of doing everything in the Delta first before moving on. The Delta is emphasized in this plan, but there is always considerable effort in every corps area. While I am not wedded to the Corps or Division area control now practiced by ARVN, the development of this plan could be carried out with or without radical changes in this system. While it might make sense to abandon montagnard areas, I believe that the possibilities of success in developing closer montagnard-GVN relations, and the positive relations of many of these people to Americans precludes a greater degree of de-emphasis upon the highland than I have suggested. I also believe there would be serious morale disadvantages to abandoning any province.

There will be considerable scope for flexibility in the interlocking of the many disparate elements in the suggested system. For I have deliberately not suggested that the system be under one tight command, but that many commands and levels work together in terms of checks and balances. I have done this for several reasons. I want to block a tendency for the "big battle" picture to again overwhelm local security interests. Secondly, I wished to develop more responsibility and capability for self-defense at lower levels in the system. Finally, I wished that the system be kept responsive to local realities and interests. Nevertheless, it will be reasonable to suppose that reconnaissance battalions will often be stationed near the front along particularly threatened sections of the line, and take over the forward patrolling responsibilities of a threatened TAOR. Similarly, as suggested above, a District Chief whose districts are wholly or largely within a TAOR front will work out a more limited and concentrated responsibility for the security of part of his area of responsibility.

It would seem preferable to accentuate the emphasis of the CAC on local security, on military-police considerations, by establishing it in a separate chain of command. However, it will need to have many local interface relationships with other structures. The CAP-village chief relationship for the Marines will be repeated on the district level. The CAC's most enduring relation should be with the district, for the district chief knows the area and is responsible for the safety of its people. In the absence of a battalion TAOR, the district chief will be the superior officer in the district, and should properly receive much of the credit for any CAP successes that occur. While the CAP's will initially have some independence, there should rapidly develop at the district level a combined operations center which will coordinate the current and attached systems. The CAC units must also relate closely to the battalion commanders. Yet the basic relation should be asymmetrical. Most of the time the battalions support the CAP's and other local defense organizations rather than vice-versa. The battalion commanders patrol beyond the CAP's in VC territory, protect the major arteries and towns, take much of the load off of the local security people. But the TAOR is temporary. After a while in many areas the fronts will be moved forward, and eventually the battalions will be gone. Although the CAP's will be reduced in number, the CAC-District Chief relationship should be enduring for many years.

However it should be stressed that I am sketching only the general out-lines of a plan for South Vietnam. In fact, the plan will have many variations of detail which I cannot imagine, and will have to be decided on the ground, perhaps as the plan is implemented in a particular area.

Assignment and Time Phasing

Insofar as possible, forces now assigned to certain general areas would be kept in those areas. Thus, the Marines would stay in I Corps, while ARVN would have most of the responsibility for the Delta. However, the Marines would relatively keep a lead in their contribution to the CAC-CAP concept, and on a mixed basis U.S. forces would be introduced under this concept in the Delta, especially Long An, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong and Kien Hoa provinces.

I have tried to keep the concepts simple, the movements of forces minor and related to what is going on now, in order to facilitate the speed of the proposed reorientation. I imagine that a movement toward an interim goal of establishing a frontier around 95% of the more heavily populated areas of the country (above 250 persons/square mile) while abandoning none of the "outpost peoples" might be achieved in 18 to 36 months.

There are a number of ways in which one might plan to phase in the suggested National Defense system. Below I suggest a "rapid version" in which sweeps move to the front section by section and a "slow version," in which six months of direct experience in the front is afforded to rear areas before the front is moved forward.

Rapid Version

Presently there is considerable Viet Cong controlled area behind the interim fronts as suggested for the country. However, there is no Viet Cong base area here. The objectives of the sweeps in the early stages of the suggested approach would be to sweep out more than catch the Viet Cong main and regional force units behind the suggested fronts. Some guerrillas would be left behind, but these would be the responsibility of the CAP's and other Secure Village Defense systems, as well as the regional forces.

One can imagine sweeps designed to establish pieces of the line beginning about three months after the initiation of system training and preparation. During the succeeding twelve months the residual offensive forces would have thirty full-sized battalions, rather than the final fifteen. Thus, the last 15 TAOR and recon battalions would be formed out of the offensive battalions used for creating the line only in the final stage of completing the front system.

Let us then suggest how the process might be initiated. The battalion TAOR map (p. 11-30) indicates the establishment of a sixty to seventy mile front from south of Rach Gia into western Bac Lieu. One can imagine a campaign mounted from Bac Lieu, Soc Trang, Can Tho and Rach Gia with 12 full sized-battalions (i.e. more than 24 present ARVN battalions). This action might take two weeks (the longest distance from Soc Trang to the final front would be 30 miles). In each district the District Chief would be involved in the plan to use his local forces to plug up the gaps in the moving ARVN front, and to pick up any groups passed over. My guess is that the larger VC units would fall back in the face of such a large force rather than face destruction by taking a firm stand. Once the line is reached, the ARVN units on the line would phase down to three full-sized battalions in the TAOR line concept over a period of three months. After the first month there would be seven battalions. During the second and third month, the extra ARVN battalions would aid in the establishment of CAP's and the organization of other parts of the defensive network in and behind the front (i.e. in the area cleared). In addition a special force of police at the rate of 1 per square mile of cleared area would be detailed for three months to the district chiefs of the cleared area.*

* These would presumably come from the police field forces (10,000), perhaps retrained for this mission. The sweep here would be one of the largest required in area terms and might require about 2000 special police for three months. This could then phase down to a 30 man platoon per district after 3 months, which could be the permanent special police force static allocation nationally.

In many ways the sweeping operation and follow-up described here is similar to that described by Frank Armbruster in his accompanying paper. Thus his concept of a moving patrol belt would be one way of accomplishing the movement to the interim front--it is, however, presumably slower and more painstaking. The type of sweeping operations described here are also similar to the "staggered" sweeps of the Greeks against the communists. The Greeks did, however, have relatively more resources to throw into their sweeps. Cf. D. George Kousoulas, Revolution and Defeat: The Story of the Greek Communist Party (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp 254 ff.

At the end of the first two weeks there would be six regular battalions which could be released for another operation elsewhere. Thus, one imagines that a clearing operation of this scale could be mounted about every month. Compare the following chart:

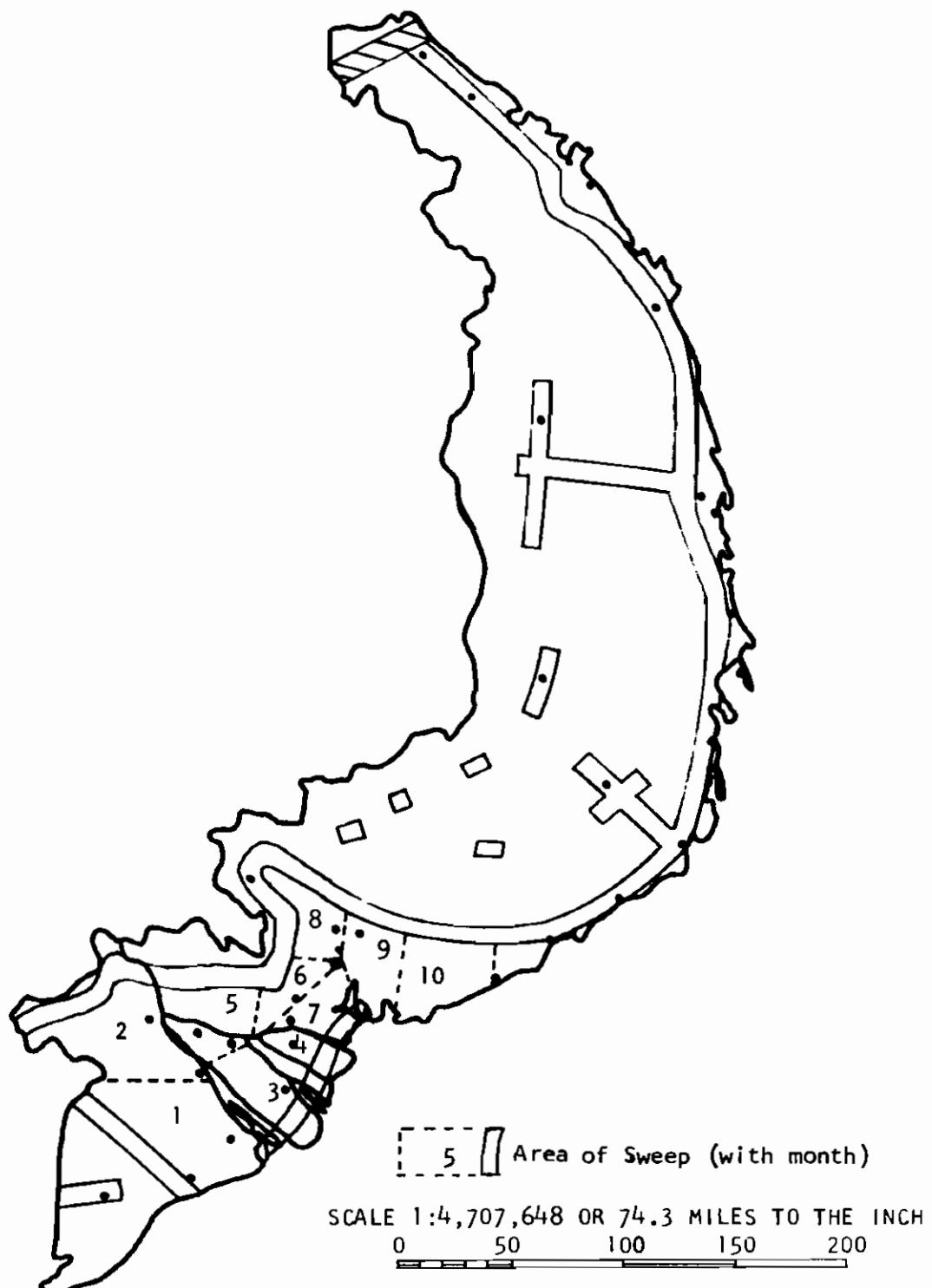
	<u>1-2 Wk.</u>	<u>3-4 Wk.</u>	<u>2nd Month</u>	<u>3rd Month</u>	<u>4th Month</u>
Offensive battalions in operation 1	12	6	4	2	
operation 2			12-6	4	2
operation 3				12-6	4
operation 4					12-6

Thus, the number in operations at any one time averages fifteen battalions, with the other fifteen being reformed and rested. The time at rest would not have to be large, since most of the actions, because of their size, should not be heavily resisted. Some actions should be quite short.

If one looks at the proposed front, sweeps will have to be mounted primarily in the Delta and in the area east of Saigon. Since for most of the central coast, much of the rear area not presently controlled would be withing the front, and the principle is that the front controls itself, the line can be initially established here without sweeps. There will not need to be sweeping operations to establish the isolated front fragments.

It appears, then, that about 600 miles of front would require major sweeps before being fixed. At an average rate of sweeping the area behind 50 miles of front a month, this should be accomplished in twelve months. A suggested order for the first ten sweeps is given in the map, p. II-38. The offensive forces will be reduced to fifteen battalions during the next two sweeps. One suspects that there will be special areas of "incompletion" behind the fronts into which the offensive battalions will have to be sent over the following several months (e.g. in the area between Saigon and Ham Tan and south of Xuan Loc). But I repeat, the goal is not the elimination of all armed Viet Cong behind the front, but the destruction or driving out of the larger Viet Cong units.

In areas of the central coast where sweeps do not occur prior to the formation of the TAOR fronts, the fronts will gradually be established serially over the first 15 months. Seven months after the establishment of a front it may then be moved forward to cover unprotected areas more than ten miles from the coast. Elsewhere the fronts will gradually be moved forward and straightened after several months as the situation permits. The gradual elimination of the Eastern and Southern Delta lines through this process should allow a considerable reduction in the number of troops committed to the more static aspects of the National Defense System.

Progress in Rapid Version
First Ten Monthly Sweeps

SOUTH VIET NAM

Slow Version

Alternatively let me suggest a "slow," more experimental version of the suggested plan. In this version forward movement would only occur after the CAP's and other team village defense systems had had a chance with TAOR and national police backing to open up the peasant intelligence network and gain a fairly high level of security. Thus, in stage one we might establish about 22 battalion TAOR's in key areas. In the Delta these would be spatially well back of the interim goals described above. An outline of a sample beginning of this type is given in the map on page II-40. One notices that in the first stage there are two lines or a 20 mile thick strip running from Rach Gia to Can Tho to Vinh Long, a long coastal strip in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa provinces, and another along the coast from Danang to Chu Lai.

Since there are 22 TAOR's to be established, and these take relatively little of the static defensive load off of the rest of the country, the sweeping forces here would be rather smaller in size than in the rapid version. Essentially the sweeping would be done by the battalions to be placed in the TAOR configuration, with battalions temporarily added for particularly difficult spots. Because of the smaller areas involved, these front areas might well have two special police per square mile in the fronts as long as the front is immobile.

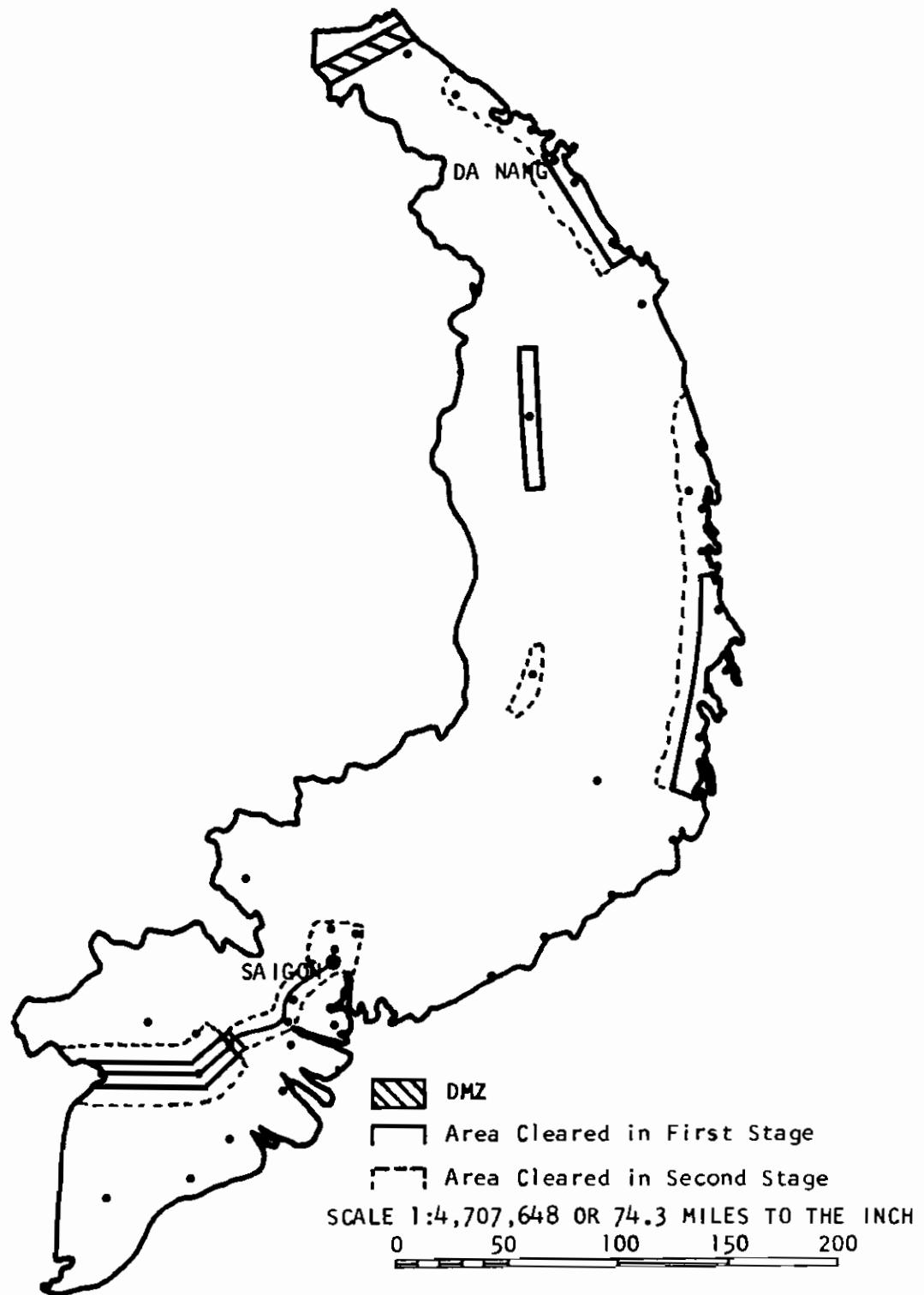
Here we might assume that the initial sweeping operations took about one month, and the period of consolidation about six. We are told by the CAC people that it takes about six months for the peasants to become convinced of the government presence and for intelligence lines to open. If these figures are approximately right, then a map exercise suggests that after about four equivalent seven month periods most of the lines for the interim goals would be achieved, and after a fifth period the system delineated on page II-30 would be complete. This would require 35 months or approximately twice the length of time suggested for the more rapid version.

Comparison of the Rapid and Slow Versions

The slow version has several clear advantages. Here few CAP's need to be placed in front of the TAOR's. CAP's will generally be developed within the protection of the heavy front systems. The "sweeps" which must be conducted here are also much more intensive, because the area to be swept is much less, and a large force stays around for over six months in the area swept.

However, the rapid system has certain advantages that lead me to favor it. First, of course, it is possible to show more rapid progress here if it succeeds. While it will not succeed everywhere at once, there may be a broad enough sense of success that everyone's attitude toward the war will begin to change in a few months.

Progress in Slow Version



SOUTH VIET NAM

I also believe that it is very important at an early date to get the transportation systems of the country working without regular VC interference, and only the rapid version does this. In the rapid version this is often accomplished not by putting tracks and roads in rear areas but right through the battalion TAOR's front.

Secondly, the rapid version will seem consistently more offensive in its development than will the slow. Thus, in terms of this system, there will be large operations going on almost continuously in South Vietnam, and every month the flag will be moving forward. This should make the approach more acceptable and understandable to wider groups of U.S. and ARVN officers. Simultaneously, success in the pacification area will not have to be as rapid and startling here as in the slow version. Paradoxically, I believe it may be easier to get troops for the rapid version and to keep them in their TAOR's than would be with the case with the slower version. For by attempting to install the system in many places simultaneously the system in effect "reassigns" most of the available manpower to the place it would be anyway in any system de-emphasizing remote area sweeps, but emphasizing searching and clearing operations in populated regions.

There is also a considerable advantage to a fast moving program against which the opponent has only a limited time to reorganize and counteract. By moving forward in many places at once this approach makes it more difficult for an opponent to concentrate his effort and attention on a few points. If he can "pick off" a few "show places" he may discredit a basically sound system before it gets off the ground. If the extensiveness of VC effort has kept the GVN off balance in the past, then a GVN program once under way should reap the same benefits from broad coverage.

VC/NVA Counteractions

It will be objected that anything other than the most painstaking creation or rebuilding of a government infra-structure at the hamlet level, in the strategic hamlet or RD sense, will bring merely superficial success. Such success will inevitably be followed by failure through over-extension. However, I believe that a consistent front concept has never been applied in Vietnam, and until it is applied we will not know what it requires in the way of resources and how quickly it can achieve successes. We do know that the strategic hamlet's dramatic failures were often in isolated frontier hamlets far from government support. The attempt to support these required great resources which were taken away from a more orderly development in rear areas where chances of success were greater. We know that air, ground and artillery reaction times are faster today. We know that regular forces have seldom been held consistently in defense of the populace until the last two years, and then too seldom. Therefore, I do not think past experience is necessarily a very good guide for the present

situation in which our resources are relatively much greater and our understanding of what has to be done much clearer.*

Let us consider what the VC/NVA counteractions might be. First, they will try to avoid having their forces destroyed or captured in the initial sweeps. Generally they will evade serious battle. For in most cases the communists will be out-numbered by the sweeping forces and will know it. In almost no cases will our battalions be sweeping "base areas" where serious defense must be expected.

However, once the goals of the proposed system are realized, some VC regional force units, at least, will try to "submerge" themselves either in available patches of jungle or in the population. I imagine they will prefer the jungle, for the tempo of the initial sweeps will in most areas be slow enough that the allied regular forces, or the regional force-police units that follow them in, will have too high a chance of picking up VC regional force units hiding in the hamlets.

Another method to avoid the effects of the sweep is for the VC/NVA to initially allow themselves to be swept out of an area, but quickly to re-infiltrate into jungle areas behind the front before the front system has had a chance to achieve the degree of impermeability hoped for after the first months.

The result will be that shortly after a front is established, intelligence will report fairly large VC units behind or within the front. This may occur weeks or months after the front is established. If the VC units are hiding in an area within a front TAOR, or not more than a couple of miles from it, the TAOR forces will be expected to handle the matter through special, very short operations based on intelligence. If, however, the VC have re-established or maintained themselves further behind the front, then they should be attacked by units of the residual offensive forces. These may attempt either to destroy the VC directly, or to drive them against the TAOR line, which will serve as an automatic blocking system for such operations. If such a re-clearing is a first priority offensive force mission after the sweeps have been completed, the demands of this kind of problem should not be overwhelming. Assuming three full-sized battalions and

* In a recent account of the Greek civil war, two strategies are criticized in much the same terms as similar actions have been criticized in Vietnam. The time-limited clearing-up operations in Greece lasted five to seven days, and when it was over the troops were withdrawn. They learned to do a more thorough job and/or stay. Static point defense was also disastrous, but it is pointed out, "Static defense would have made sense if mobile forces had been available to come to the assistance of the besieged garrisons...." (Kousoulas, op. cit., p. 241) The TAOR and other forces of the system proposed here does, I feel, make sense of what has often been ineffectual. In the presence of more available reaction forces the VC can still make attacks, but as the time before the VC must plan to break off an attack becomes shorter and shorter, the attacks may become more ineffectual.

perhaps a battalion of police field forces per operation, and one week operations, a large rear area clearing effort of this kind might well be mounted twice a month, leaving enough offensive capability over for the sweeps and other efforts mentioned above. However, during the period of the sweeps in the rapid version, such internal campaigns would have to depend on strategic reserve, local forces and off-the-line offensive forces-- and this would be tighter. As noted before, in Phuoc Tuy province and neighboring districts there are large primitive areas behind the front such as I have tried generally to avoid. This area may require repeated small offensives just to keep the opponent off balance (i.e. a miniature version of our present national strategy in remote areas).

The next VC/NVA response will be to test the system by trying for some dramatic successes against it. One of the difficulties of starting an RD or strategic hamlet program in an area has been that the VC can then single out the initial teams or hamlets for attack, thereby giving the system a bad name. In the suggested systems, however, fairly large scale forces stay in the adjacency of most CAP's for months or longer, so that the destruction of the CAP's is more difficult. The introduction of CAP's on a rather massive scale in an area also makes the CAP's harder to single out and destroy than has been the case of other units in the past. Because of the thickened perimeter, penetration through to the CAP's and escape after attacks, will be at least more difficult than today. Moreover, if the CAP's follow the present Marine practice of never giving up a village, confidence will tend to be degraded less by successful VC attack than has been true in the past.

The greatest challenge to the proposed front system is that of distractive VC tactics. Thus, the VC will try to draw off protective troops allotted to an area by making threatening actions and feints elsewhere. These distractive tactics may be tactical or strategic, dangerous or alluring. Thus a provincial VC force will pretend to attack B while directing their real attack on A--or their goal may not be to attack A, but rather to slip forces back into hideout X. On the other hand, the chief VC/NVA response to the proposed system is likely to be heightened pressure on the DMZ or highland fronts, thereby hopefully pulling the forces detailed for TAOR or CAC use into the "war away from the people." This is the strategic use of distraction.

The key response to these tactics of distraction must be to carefully distinguish between dangerous distractions in which SVN may really suffer a set-back and merely alluring distractions which are intended to make us feel that by pouring our forces into a situation we can really gain an important victory. If we are to save enough forces for the dangerous distractions, taking advantage of the latter opportunities must be generally avoided. For the missions of most forces in the system suggested must be to stay in position, ready and able to respond to any local emergencies which may develop.

The dangerous distractions must of course be responded to, although we should be more inclined to let the opponent develop the battle than we have been in the past. And for these emergencies we must use the potential of the strategic reserve, recon battalions and non-infantry forces. The ability of these reserves to respond to likely crises has been discussed elsewhere. The high command should turn to TAOR line battalions not stationed in the immediate scene of action only in the direst emergency.

Defining an Interim Level of Success in Pacification

Winning in Vietnam has both a local aspect and a national aspect. But if nationally the VC/NVA do not take large pieces of important real estate away from the GVN, non-communist success will be achieved through winning hundreds or thousands of little wars for local areas. It may be suggested that success may be defined as achieving an internal condition in which the GVN controls the chief urban properties and receives more usable information than the insurgents in most populated rural areas.

Paul Mus suggests that the people of Vietnam continually evaluate which is the winning side, at least locally, and the presumptive winner is given support.* The Marines suggest that the information flow into their CAC units results from the confidence the local people feel when they note the VC can no longer walk bravely into an area, but must slink in. Diem's forces appear not to have fought to annihilate opponents, but to achieve moral victories over them, or establish their pre-eminence.** Accounts of the time suggest that the VC they faced did likewise. This moral war*** was something the Americans did not understand then and may not now.

What I am suggesting is that the Americans see the standards of security necessary for peace in Vietnam to be quite definite and high. Men no longer should live with the threat of assassination hanging over them. This is true, but if the assassins look like losers at the same time as they kill, much of the effect of the killing is lost. Vietnamese do not mind taking a chance; it is taking a chance for what appears to be a lost cause which appears foolish, even immoral to them.

As an interim pacification goal, then, I think we should take the level of success of the majority of the Marine CAC teams in their villages after six months. Here security is by no means perfect, but the tide of the little war seems to be going against the VC, the people are changing

*Cf. Paul Mus, "Cultural Backgrounds of Present Problems" in Asia, 1-4, Winter, 1966, pp. 10-21.

**Cf. also Nighswonger's description of the "force populaire." William Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 67-69.

***"Moral" is more in the Greek sense as in, "a moral victory."

their commitments. It is relatively more dangerous to be pro-VC than anti-VC. In villages like this elections can be held in most hamlets, if not all. For nationwide success in the near term, I suggest these must be the standards to be achieved, not those of crushing every communist parallel hierarchy. The standards achieved by the British and Malayan police in the 1950's are beyond the U.S.-Vietnamese effort. I suggest that if the Vietnamese can be helped to a more modest level of peace, then they can acquire the strength and organization to reduce terrorism to even more acceptable levels. In the end some hamlets may end up with isolated, fragmented VC organizations in control. But nationwide the VC will no longer have the will or ability to effectively challenge Saigon by force.*

Reconquest of the Country

If success is achieved in pacification and the front holds, then the VC/NVA effort may gradually die down to a minor security problem. But if this does not occur, then while the fronts are held, the residual offensive forces should help the TAOR forces move the front forward along selected areas of the line. These actions will initially allow TAOR's to shift into straighter lines. Next these offensives should allow the battalion TAOR fronts to incorporate outposts that continue to be only line fragments. In the Delta, as the eastern and southern line fragments are removed, the offensive forces may be increased to the point where they can begin to occupy the whole country.

Summary of Advantages of the Suggested National Defense System

In the foregoing material I have tried to suggest some principles for the Vietnamese war. These are not new, but they have never been really carried out, particularly in their military aspects. Let me summarize how this plan follows the principles suggested above.

1. By mixing U.S. and Vietnamese forces in CAC units it provides a basic training experience for thousands of Vietnamese soldiers and potential junior officers (policemen, etc.), without causing Vietnamese officers to lose face as the U.S. training of ARVN units often seems to involve. By placing more of the conventional war-offensive war burden on ARVN, Saigon can achieve the more newsworthy victories, and gain a sense of responsibility in the defense of the country. By giving the District Chief autonomous power and forces, and subordinating pacification to him in all areas other than the CAC, he is given a better chance to develop into a responsible leader with future potential for higher position (the District Chief position is traditionally the training ground for Vietnamese leaders).

2. By reorienting our forces to the location of the people, and radically insisting on strategic immobility in their defense, we will build up the confidence the rural people require to become the source of intelligence we require to win. But more directly, by putting soldiers in a

* Cf. accompanying volume on settlement (R. D. Gastil, Principles for Settlement in South Vietnam, HI-878/III-RR, August 8, 1967).

military-police-intelligence role among the peasants we develop more quickly than in any other available way the quasi-police or constabulary capability which it is generally agreed is essential for success.

3. We gradually extend control over major transportation routes as a natural by-product of protecting the people living along these arteries.

4. By abandoning the use of large units in search and destroy operations, we reduce the exposure of our forces on the enemy's preferred battle-ground. By using the recon/strike approach instead we increase many-fold the ratio of firepower used to men exposed on our side. Where we do go into enemy areas on the ground, we operate as part of a plan for the extension of a front we intend to hold, generally reducing thereby the length of the front we must subsequently hold.

The suggested system is radical, yet in many ways it expands what is being done today, and what is generally assumed as necessary. The recon/strike replacement of sweeps is merely an attempt at a more cost-effective attrition strategy. The TAOR line is an alternative way of placing blocking forces around the pacification effort. The introduction of CAP's everywhere is a way to "beef up" the popular forces by giving them more firepower and advice, and by providing perhaps half of them with much more adequate staff and support than they've ever had.

Finally, the proposed interim system should be judged somewhat independently from the alternative time phasings suggested in the text. Primarily I am trying to show what an emphasis on establishing a front around populated areas might look like in terms of the available security resources. I am asking whether it might make sense to put troops in this kind of configuration. The exact method of getting there is a related but separable issue.

APPENDIX A

APPLICATIONS OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM TO A DISTRICT

In an accompanying document* I have suggested how a particular approach to pacification might be applied to the island areas of Long Phu District in Ba Xuyen province. (See map, p. II-48) Let us use this same district to illustrate by two brief scenarios how the proposed system might help a district.

Long Phu is located in the Delta on the southern edge of the mouth of the Bassac River. It was recently broken in two, with the southern part becoming the small district of Lich Hoi Thuong. There are no cities or even much of a market town. The district as it is now constituted runs a little over twenty miles along and in the river, and is 5 to 10 miles deep.

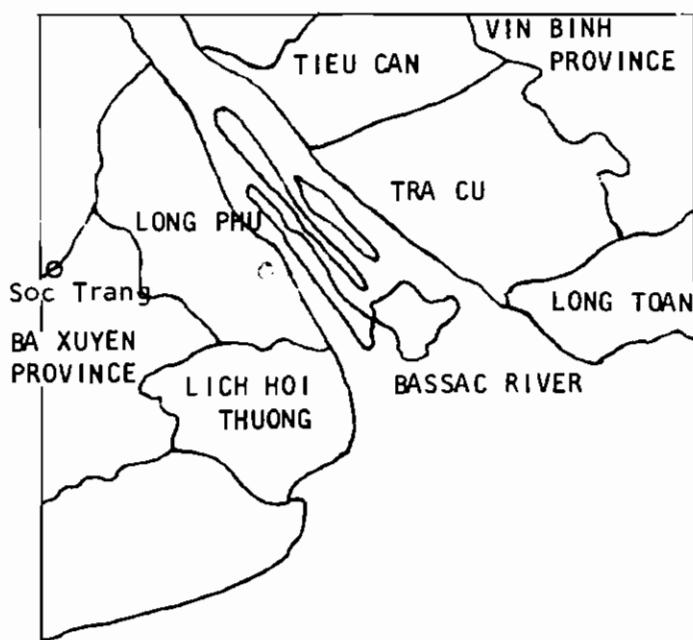
About a fourth of the district lies on islands in the river. Nearly all of the island area is Viet Cong controlled. Across from the islands lie some presumably quite insecure districts of Vinh Binh province--Tra Cu downstream and Tieu Can above that. Apart from the islands, however, Long Phu is a "good district," with many Cambodians and other elements resistant to the Viet Cong. Most of the mainland is now government controlled or influenced. But with only two RD teams, the usual scattering of PF's and a couple of very light RF companies, the District Chief doesn't try to go forward very fast--he just holds what he has and inches forward.

Let us then place this district in the context of the National Defense System and run two scenarios for it. In scenario I, Long Phu is not involved in a battalion TAOR. The Ca Mau Line ends in Bac Lieu, and the Eastern Delta Line begins in the Tra Cu district of Vinh Binh province across the river. In Long Phu there are thirteen villages, and twelve of these have been given secure Village Defense systems. One village on the insecure islands has no government presence and remains outside of the system. In the first stages of the establishment of the National Defense System, Long Phu was only a peripheral part of the clearing operations for the Ca Mau and Vinh Binh fronts. To protect the flanks of both operations, a battalion was held in the mainland part of the district for one week on both occasions, and with a large police detail VC suspects were picked up in all VC hamlets. The "VC islands" were also occupied for a week by a blocking force in the Vinh Binh operation.

Although the district might appear to be a "weak" point in the final form of the front system, in that it makes a relatively undefended channel for VC movement out of Eastern Vinh Binh, nevertheless the VC forces in that area are not considered strong enough to make a larger than company-sized attack across the island. An attack of VC company size could probably be contained by Long Phu's local and regional forces.

* R. D. Gastil, A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam, HI-878/I-RR, August 8, 1967.

Long Phu District and Environs



Of the twelve villages, five have been given CAP's and seven have been able to use their own defensive forces under District. Two of the CAP's have American squads and three have Vietnamese, with a staff and support CAC organization for Long Phu and Lich Hoi Thuong District to the south. The local CAC headquarters is in Long Phu District Town. The "regular forces" in the three Vietnamese CAP's are ARVN forces. The CAP units average about 25 PF's. For three months after the Ca Mau and Vinh Binh campaigns there were two platoons of special police in the district. One platoon remains in the district after this period.

At first glance Long Phu, because it falls outside of the TAOR system and is relatively secure, seems to have been helped relatively little by the introduction of the new systems. Yet this is deceiving. The CAC staff and support in Long Phu may, in fact, offer more support than the district has ever had. The CAC communication system, and its vehicles, will improve the District's Chief's ability to receive and respond to information. The addition of 90 new men, 24 of whom are better soldiers than have been seen here before, is most welcome. The CAP's allow the District Chief to concentrate the work of his RD's, Regional Forces and other PF's over a smaller area. In particular, he expects the two villages with American led CAP's to gradually come to take care of themselves. With the quality and magnitude of threat present here, this is not an unreasonable assumption. The police platoon allows the investigation and follow up of intelligence in more places simultaneously than was previously possible.

In this scenario the district is still run by the District Chief. The reaction forces of the district are still the Regional Forces of the District Chief. (In addition, one full-sized Vietnamese company in Soc Trang acts as a reaction force reserved for Ba Xuyen.) However, major pacification and security responsibility for the six CAP villages are taken over by the CAC captain in Long Phu.

In scenario II the threat from within Long Phu and Lich Hoi Thuong, and from eastern Vinh Binh is judged more serious. After a clearing operation of the type described above for the rapid system, Long Phu District is placed near the southern end of the Eastern Delta TAOR line, and is completely contained within two battalion TAOR's. One TAOR extends from Lich Hoi Thuong up to above Long Phu town, and the other extends from the northern part of the district through Tieu Can District in Vinh Binh. Because of the low Viet Cong strength in Vinh Binh, each battalion TAOR runs twenty miles of front here. The northern-most island of Long Phu remains a VC salient into the front, but it is heavily guarded against on all sides.

Of the twelve government "controlled" villages in the district, six have CAP units while six have completely local defensive systems. Because this is a relatively quiet area, only one village has a CAP unit in every hamlet, but there are six hamlets in the district which are given additional squads, making a total of 12 CAP units in the district in this version. Only five of these have American squads, five have Regional Forces,* and the

* Thus, we have traded RF's for ARVN's. The ARVN's released in this way would be used in static defense positions formerly occupied by RF's.

remaining two have ARVN squads. All have PF's but are undermanned. The CAC company headquarters in Long Phu is now oversized, but handles all of the units in the district to preserve the CAC-District Chief relationship as primary, rather than being organized in terms of the TAOR organization which crosscuts the district. The police strength added to the district parallels that suggested for the first scenario.

The local situation in this scenario is an embarrassment of riches, but serves the purpose of illustration. For detailed pacification and patrol there are now 144 new, well-armed, often much higher quality men. In addition, there are full company sized units every five miles along a line running north and south through the district. There is also a police platoon. The District Chief can now aggressively move into difficult areas, aware that he is not opening up his flanks to attack, and in the knowledge that there are large reaction forces immediately on call.

For as long as the whole district is "front" however, the district will be militarily under great influence from the ARVN battalion commander. Therefore the interests of the District Chief will tend to be more focused on civilian affairs and police-type work than formerly.

With the number of men allocated to this front, one imagines that it should be a moving front. After perhaps three months in the area, the battalion TAOR's in Long Phu would probably move forward and occupy the VC islands of Long Phu. After a couple of weeks of clearing they would then place a full sized company force in the islands, and thin out some of the CAP groups on the mainland in order to place them on the islands.* Eventually most of the frontier hamlet CAP's on the mainland would be moved over to the islands. This movement forward should considerably straighten the TAOR line, thereby allowing the battalion in the upper part of the district to pull out and place its forces entirely in Vinh Binh, with adjusted savings in the total personnel requirements of the line. Long Phu will, however, continue to be more than adequately supplied with reaction forces.

In scenario II, we have described a Delta area with rather low requirements and a long TAOR front. For a piece of line such as that defending the district of Huong Thuy south of the Hue the requirements would be much stricter. Here we might imagine a TAOR front of only twelve miles, with the ten mile depth reaching out of the district to include the hamlet of Nam Hoa. An average TAOR in South Vietnam will have four frontier villages, or sixteen hamlets defended by CAP's in addition to the normal CAP or other Secure Village arrangement for nearly every operating village. The TAOR in southern Long Phu and Lich Hoi Thuong in scenario II might have about ten additional CAP's. Therefore, for a section of the Hue front we can imagine that the frontier hamlet line will be fully operative. There are only three villages on twelve miles of front here. But other

*For an alternative plan as to how this should be done compare the accompanying document, R. D. Gastil, A Conservative, Decentralized Approach to Pacification in South Vietnam, HI-878/I-RR, August 8, 1967, Appendix C.

villages will be so close to the front that we may wish to give them additional CAP's. Special police will be added as above. And to protect the system there would be every three miles along this front a full-sized company, perhaps American, assigned as a reaction force for any battles the local forces of the TAOR may develop.

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