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A S T U D Y

**VIET CONG
USE OF TERROR**

MAY, 1966

UNITED STATES MISSION IN VIETNAM

SAIGON-VIETNAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 1959, the Communist leaders in North Vietnam were growing increasingly impatient. They had won the Viet Minh war five years before and then been cheated out of what they felt was rightfully theirs: control of all Vietnam. That the government in the south was not party to the agreement delivering Vietnam to the communists, or that the people in the south did not want and would not accept such an arrangement, was beside the point. The Viet Minh leaders had won the country and they meant to have the fruits of victory. For five years they had waited for unification placing their faith in Soviet and Chinese Communist diplomatic process. For five years their fellow communists -- using the argument that the south was so divided, its government so weak that soon the whole structure would collapse of its own weight -- had dissuaded them from taking direct action to bring all of Vietnam under the red banner.

But finally the waiting game could no longer be endured. Worse, the south steadily was gathering strength and daily its government was becoming more viable. Time was running against the men in Hanoi. And so on March 13, 1959, the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party, meeting in Hanoi, declared that the time had come to begin the task of "liberating the south ... to struggle heroically and perseveringly to smash the southern regime."

To smash the southern regime -- that was the stated objective. The method was to eliminate by force the southern governmental apparatus, the country's official and natural leaders and establish in each village an apparat tied to Hanoi. The assault began in the villages and was to work its way up through the district and then provincial governmental levels until at last there would be a direct attack on the central government itself. Along the way, the enemy's instruments of power -- his police and his armed forces -- would be won over by proselyting means or nullified by force.

A two-pronged attack was ordered -- what is called the political struggle and the armed struggle. Underlying the entire effort was the rational use of terror. Terror was an integral part of the planned campaign to achieve the single political objective: unification of Vietnam under the communist banner.

This is a study of the specific uses which the Viet Cong have made of terror during the past six years. Terror has had great utility for the communists and the Viet Cong terror program has become sophisticated and highly developed, shaped by a number of forces: rural Vietnamese climate of opinion, the availability of resources and personnel, the inherent dangers involved in its use, governmental countermeasures, historical lessons, and Viet Cong Grand Strategy.

The public rationale for use of force was that the enemy had given the Viet Cong no alternative. Said an early indoctrination booklet:

"During the first years following the reestablishment of peace (Post-1954) the people of South Vietnam engaged in a peaceful political struggle. But the warlike and terrorist policies of the enemy forced them to take up rifles and begin an armed struggle ... The U. S. -Diem clique uses collaborators, villains, spies, Self Defense Corps members, and secret police agents to carry out fascist policies and to terrorize and suppress the people's political struggle. Thus it is necessary to counterattack the enemy's military units, to destroy collaborators, villains, secret police agents and spies ... (violence) is required (1) because the enemy's political weaknesses has forced him to resort to force of arms to impose his will and this must be countered ... (2) Because it will enhance the political struggle ... (3) and because it prevents the enemy from mingling freely among the village masses ... helps isolate him and thins out his ranks ..."

Later, and chiefly for the benefit of cadres, justification for use of terror added doctrinal correctness to necessity. Justification

was never an easy matter for the NLF. The natural abhorrence by rural Vietnamese for systematic slaughter formed a major and continuous problem which the leadership constantly sought to overcome. Among NLF cadres, especially those recruited locally, the use of force seemed both repugnant and unnecessary. Even among more sophisticated cadres there was the widespread belief that the NLF could win by the political struggle alone and need not use terror. The response by the leadership to these reactions was thoroughly to mix the violence program and the political struggle and insist that the result was essentially political. It also involved administering to cadres, massive doses of indoctrination to convince them that victory could be achieved only by measured use of force and violence. "We have learned," said an indoctrination booklet, "that the only correct way to organize revolutionary forces and make preparations in all areas to smash the enemy's machinery of violence is to use the appropriate form of armed struggle . . . Therefore from the masses' struggle movement there has emerged a new struggle form, the armed struggle. Emergence of this new struggle form not only meets an urgent demand, but is an inevitable result of the revolutionary movement. It does not contradict the political struggle, but supplements it and paves the way for the political struggle to develop."

At any rate there is no doubt that the historical development of the NLF from 1960 to 1966 (as well as the 1957-60 period) was characterized by the growing use of violence and terror and by increased efforts to make its use more palatable in and out of the Viet Cong ranks. And whereas the early effort had been essentially the political struggle, the attack against the post-Diem governments was basically the armed struggle.

The primary objective of the violence program was to make the political struggle movement possible. The terror program was central to the violence program -- it was the hardener in the formula, the steel in the superstructure.

Early acts of terrorism, in the 1957 to 1962 period were mainly local in genesis, sporadic in nature and consisted largely of assassinations and kidnappings designed to eliminate or nullify local leadership opposition. A more concerted program of terror and violence began in December 1962 when the NLF Central Committee issued orders for increased use of terrorism:

"We should organize attacks against the enemy in his rear areas, to upset him. In the past this activity has been neglected. There has been no adequate preparation or organization. Weapons and facilities were lacking. Now, we should set up specialized units and clandestine forces to attack communication centers, warehouses, airports, and U.S. offices particularly. Public utilities such as electric plants, machines, etc., are not to be sabotaged yet. In carrying out sabotage activities in urban areas, always protect our organization. Clandestine organizations for sabotage in urban areas should be set up separately and have no connection with political organizations. When using such organizations, in Saigon in particular, consider carefully all immediate and all future advantages and drawbacks before performing an act."

2. THE TERRORISTS

The basic unit of all Viet Cong elements, as is common in a communist organization, is the three-man cell. In GVN controlled areas where of course it is covert, it is known as the Secret Guerrilla Cell (Tieu To Du Kich Bi Mat). All Viet Cong individuals within government controlled areas belong to such a cell. In addition, in the GVN controlled areas, there is a second type cell which goes under the bland name of Special Activities cell (Tieu To Dac Cong) but is one of the most deadly instruments in the Viet Cong arsenal. *

Highly motivated, willing to take great risks, operating in either urban or rural areas they know well, members of the Special Activity Cell have the capability of being able virtually to strike anywhere, at any time. From the rosters of these cells are drawn the assassination teams, the volunteer grenade hurlers and the death or suicide squads. Most of the spectacular acts of terror, sabotage, assassinations throughout Vietnam are the work of the Special Activities Cell. Although highly motivated and possessing good knowledge of local terrain these Special Activities cell members usually lack technical skill, such as the ability to manufacture and detonate explosive devices. This technical skill, and sometimes leadership is supplied from the provincial or zonal level headquarters of the National Liberation Front. The frogman who blew a hole in the U.S.S. Card, May 2, 1964, when she was docked in Saigon harbor, undoubtedly was such a specialist sent in for the job. The bombing of a major building in Saigon, which requires careful planning, timing, coordination and must be rehearsed until letter perfect, also is supervised by a specialist from zonal headquarters.

A typical Viet Cong terrorist was Nguyen Anh Tuan, 36, who was captured January 7, 1966 while enroute to the Alabama Hotel, U.S. enlisted men's billet in downtown Saigon. Tuan, and the two other members of his Special Activities Cell were arrested by alert police a few blocks from the hotel and a 264 pound bomb discovered hidden under

the false floor of their three-wheeled cart.

Tuan appeared before the press on January 13, still defiant, and declared he would try again if he ever escaped his government prison. A Vietnamese school was located adjacent to the Alabama hotel, and police had estimated that perhaps 100 Vietnamese school children would have been killed or injured had the terrorist act been successful. When an incredulous Vietnamese reporter asked whether he would have felt even slightly remorseful about killing or maiming innocent Vietnamese, Tuan replied: "No, I wouldn't feel any remorse at all. This we cannot help."

Terrorists quite obviously must be strongly dedicated and highly militant. Most of them are young. Tuan's chief assistant for example was 19. Except for major terror acts, such as the attempt to destroy the Alabama, daring and risky terror enterprises are assigned to youths in their teens. They are more easily influenced in their thinking, are more willing to take risks, physically are more capable of the tasks assigned them, are less prone to question orders and less likely to be or to become double agents. The optimum age for Viet Cong terrorists appears to be around 18. Some of the city saboteurs, such as grenade throwing boys aged 13 or 14, and seldom past 25. The exceptions of course are the specialists.

3. THE TERROR

Harry Eckstein in the book Internal War defines terror (in internal war) as "a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence." This definition is employed here. It is a broad one. It includes, for example, both agitational terror designed to disrupt the existing order and achieve power, as well as enforcement terror, activity by an incumbent who wishes to suppress the challenge to its authority. And it includes activities far beyond the stereotype view of terror, the dynamiting of buildings or the mass execution of a village's Council of Notables. As used here it involves 1) terror acts which are part of military or paramilitary assaults either offensively against defended hamlets or GVN and Allied military installations or units, or defensively in the field against GVN and Allied military operations; 2) terror acts which are part of the ambush, so common and distinct to the Vietnam war as to be a sui generis; an ambush may be directed at military units, or at civilians traveling along roads or through canals; 3) harassing villagers for coercive or intimidation purposes with or without the taking of life; 4) sabotage and subversive acts which involve direct use of violence; 5) acts directed against specific individuals, such as kidnappings, assassinations and executions.

An effort has been made here to assemble data to describe the five terror categories listed above. Statistics of the sort that could yield precise listings of Viet Cong acts of violence are not now and never have been available in Vietnam. The figures quoted here are estimates based on a careful study of partial data from GVN and U. S. sources. The error, if there is one, is on the side of conservatism. It is quite likely that Viet Cong terror exceeded these figures in every category.

The total number of Viet Cong incidents, which include all five

of the above categories:

| Date : | 1957 | 1958 | 1959 | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 | 1965 | 1966 | (2 Mos.) |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|----------|
| under | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Incidents: | 500 | 500 | 1500 | 3000 | 5000 | 19000 | 19500 | 25500 | 25500 | 7000 | |

YEAR TERROR ACTS¹ ASSASSINATIONS² KIDNAPPINGS³ ATTACKS⁴

| | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 1957 to 1960 | NA | 1,700 (est.) | 2,000 (est.) | Negligible |
| 1961 | NA | 1,300 (est.) | 1,318 | NA |
| 1962 | 20,000 (est.) | 1,118 | 1,118 | 5,484 |
| 1963 | 25,280 | 827 | 1,596 | 3,735 |
| 1964 | 21,733 | 516 | 1,525 | 15,500 |
| 1965 | 18,300 | 305 | 1,730 | 15,200 |
| 1966 (3 mos.) | 4,000 | 35 | NA | NA |

Footnotes:

1. Includes sabotage, harassments, harassing fire, armed agit-prop team visits to villages, but not the acts of terror listed in subsequent columns.
2. Officials only and not random killings. (Records were kept only on officials and even these are incomplete.) Based on a 1964 study it probably is safe to conclude that for every official Vietnamese assassinated four natural leaders were killed.
3. Officials only and not natural leaders and other village residents. Based on 1964 study the ratio between kidnappings of officials and non-officials was one to two. The GVN has estimated the total number of kidnappings at: 1962 10,000; 1963 7,200; 1964 10,450 and 1965 11,500; it makes no estimate prior to 1962 but it is quite possible that the 1957 through 1961 figure is at least equal to the 1962 figure, which is 10,000 persons.
4. Military attacks on villages; ambushes, etc.

In order to provide the reader with a sense of the type of Viet Cong terror activity during the past six years typical examples have been selected from government files, newspapers morgues and International Control Commission reports. This list is in no way complete. It does provide a representative picture of the kind of terror activity which the Viet Cong have engaged in during the 1960's:

February 2, 1960 -- The Viet Cong sack and burn the Buddhist temple in Phuoc Trach village, Go Dau Ha district, Tay Ninh province. They stab to death 17-year old Phan Van Ngoc who tries to stop them.

April 22, 1960 -- Some 30 armed Viet Cong raid Thoi Long hamlet, Thoi Binh village, Thoi Binh district, An Xuyen province. They attempt to take away villager Cao Van Hanh, 45. Villagers protest en masse. Farmer Pham Van Bai, 56, is particularly vehement. The Viet Cong, angered, seize him. This arouses the villagers who swarm toward the Viet Cong and their prisoner. The Viet Cong fire into the crowd. A 16-year old boy is shot dead.

August 23, 1960 -- Two school teachers, Nguyen Khoa Ngon and Miss Nguyen Thi Thiet, are preparing lessons at home when Viet Cong arrive and force them at gun point to go to their school, Rau Ran, in Phong Dinh province. There they find two men tied to the school veranda. The Viet Cong read the death order of the two men, named Canh anh Van. They are executed. The Viet Cong stage the execution presumably to intimidate the school teachers.

September 24, 1960 -- A band of armed Viet Cong sack a school in An Lac village, Tri Tan district, An Giang province. They pile seats and desks together and set fire them and the school. All that remain are four bare walls.

September 28, 1960 -- Father Hoang Ngoc Minh, much loved priest of Kontum parish is riding from Tan Canh to Kondela. A Viet Cong road block halts his car. A bullet smashes into him. The guerrillas

drive bamboo spears into Father Minh's body. A Viet Cong fires his sub-machine gun point blank, killing him. The driver Huynh Huu, his nephew, is seriously wounded.

September 30, 1960 -- A band of ten armed Viet Cong kidnap farmer Truong Van Dang, 67, from Long An hamlet, Long Tri village, Binh Phuoc district, Long An province. They take him before what they call a "people's tribunal." He is condemned to death for purchasing two hectares of rice land and ignoring Viet Cong orders to turn the land over to another farmer. After the "trial" he is shot dead in his rice field.

December 6, 1960 -- The Viet Cong dynamite the kitchen at the Saigon Golf Club, killing a Vietnamese kitchen helper and injuring two Vietnamese cooks.

December 1960 -- The GVN reports to the ICC that during the year the Viet Cong had destroyed or damaged 284 bridges, burned 60 medical aid stations and, through destruction of schools, deprived some 25,000 children of schooling.

March 22, 1961 -- A truck carrying 20 girls is dynamited on the Saigon-Vung Tau road. The girls are returning from Saigon where they have taken part in a Trung Sisters Day celebration. After the explosion the Viet Cong open fire on the passengers. Two of the girls were killed and ten wounded. The girls are unarmed and traveling without escort.

May 15, 1961 -- Twelve Catholic nuns from La Providence order, are traveling on Highway One toward Saigon. Their bus is stopped by Viet Cong who ransack their luggage. Sister Theophile protests and is shot dead on the spot. The vehicle is sprayed with bullets seriously wounding Sister Phan Thi No. The ambush takes place at Tram Van hamlet, Thanh Phuoc village, Go Dau Ha district, Tay Ninh province.

July 26, 1961 -- Two Vietnamese National Assemblymen, Rmah

Pok and Yut Nic Bounrit, both Montagnards, are shot and killed by Viet Cong near Dalat. A school teacher traveling with them on their visit to a Montagnard resettlement village, is also killed.

September 20, 1961 -- One thousand mainforce Viet Cong soldiers storm the capital of Phuoc Thanh province, sack and burn the government buildings, behead virtually the entire administrative staff. They hold the capital for 24 hours before withdrawing.

October 1961 -- A U.S. State Department study estimates that the Viet Cong are killing Vietnamese at the rate of 1500 per month.

December 13, 1961 -- Father Bonnet, a French parish priest from Konkala, Kontum is killed by Viet Cong while he was visiting parishioners at Ngok Rongei.

December 20, 1961 -- S. Fukai, a Japanese engineer working on the Da Nhim dam, a Japanese government war reparations project to supply electric power to Vietnam, is kidnapped after being stopped at a Viet Cong road block. His fate is never learned.

January 1, 1962 -- A Vietnamese labor leader, Le Van Thieu, 63, is hacked to death by Viet Cong wielding machetes near Bien Hoa, in the rubber plantation on which he works.

January 2, 1962 -- Two Vietnamese technicians working in the government's anti-malaria program, Pham Van Hai and Nguyen Van Thach, are killed by Viet Cong with machetes, twelve miles south of Saigon.

February 20, 1962 -- Viet Cong throw four hand grenades into a crowded village theater near Can Tho, killing 24 women and children. A total of 108 persons are killed or injured.

April 8, 1962 -- The Viet Cong execute two wounded American prisoners of war near the village of An Chau in Central Vietnam. Each, with hands tied, is shot in the face. They cannot keep up with their retreating Viet Cong captors.

April 25, 1962 -- Two French civilians are shot and killed by Viet Cong while boating on the Saigon River just outside the city.

May 19, 1962 -- A Viet Cong grenade is hurled into the Aterbea restaurant in Saigon wounding a Berlin circus manager and the cultural attache from the German embassy.

May 20, 1962 -- A bomb explodes in front of the Hung Dao Hotel, Saigon, a billet for American servicemen, injuring eight Vietnamese and three Americans who are in the street at the time.

June 12, 1962 -- The Viet Cong ambush a civilian passenger bus near Le Tri hamlet in An Giang province, killing all the passengers, the driver and the driver's helper, a total of five men and woman.

October 20, 1962 -- A teen-age Viet Cong hurls a grenade into a holiday crowd in downtown Saigon killing six persons, including two children, and injuring 38 persons.

November 4, 1962 -- A Viet Cong hurls a grenade into an alley in Can Tho killing one American serviceman and two Vietnamese children. A third Vietnamese child is seriously injured.

January 25, 1963 -- Viet Cong dynamite a passenger-freight train near Qui Nhon killing eight passengers and injuring 15 others. The train is carrying only rice as freight.

March 4, 1963 -- Two Protestant missionaries -- Elwood For- reston, an American and Gaspart Makil, a Filipino -- are shot at a road block between Saigon and Dalat. The Makil twin babies are shot and wounded.

March 16, 1963 -- Viet Cong terrorists hurl a grenade into a home where an American family is having dinner, killing a French business- man and wounding four other persons, one of them a woman.

April 3, 1963 -- Viet Cong terrorists throw two grenades into

a private school near Long Xuyen, An Giang province, killing a teacher and two other adults. Students are performing their annual variety show at the time.

April 4, 1963 -- Viet Cong terrorists throw grenades into an audience attending an outdoor motion picture showing in Cao Lanh village in the Mekong Delta, killing four persons and wounding 11.

May 23, 1963 -- Viet Cong mine the main northern rail line killing five civilian passengers. Twelve other passengers and crew are injured.

May 31, 1963 -- Two powerful explosions set off by terrorists on bicycles kill two Vietnamese and wound ten others in Saigon. Police believe the explosive accidentally detonated prematurely.

September 12, 1963 -- Miss Vo Thi Lo, 26, a school teacher in An Phuoc village, Kien Hoa province is found near the village with her throat cut. She has been kidnapped by the Viet Cong three days earlier.

October 16, 1963 -- Viet Cong terrorists exploded mines under two civilian buses in Kien Hoa and Quang Tin provinces, killing 18 Vietnamese and wounding 23.

October 26, 1963 -- The French Embassy in Saigon reports that four French planters were kidnapped and two others wounded in machine gun attacks on French rubber plantations East of Saigon.

November 9, 1963 -- Three grenades are thrown in Saigon injuring a total of 16 persons including four children; the first is thrown in a main street; the second along the waterfront and the third in the Chinese residential area.

February 9, 1964 -- A bomb exploded in the Playboy Bar in Saigon killing four Vietnamese and injuring 35 Vietnamese and four Americans.

February 9, 1964 -- Two Americans are killed and 41 wounded including four women, five children when a Viet Cong bomb is set off in a sports stadium during a softball game. A second portion of the bomb fails to explode. Officials estimate that had it detonated fifty persons would have died.

February 16, 1964 -- Three Americans are killed and 32 injured, most of them U.S. dependents, when the Viet Cong bomb the Kinh Do movie theater in Saigon.

February 21, 1964 -- The Saigon - Da Nang train is derailed, with 11 persons killed and 18 seriously injured.

July 14, 1964 -- Pham Thao, chairman of the Catholic Action Committee in Quang Ngai is executed by Viet Cong when he returns to his native village of Pho Loi in Quang Ngai.

October 1964 -- U. S. officials in Saigon report that from January to October of 1964 the Viet Cong killed 429 local Vietnamese officials and kidnapped 482 others.

December 24, 1964 -- A Christmas eve Viet Cong bomb explosion at the Brink officer billet kills two Americans and injures 50 Americans and 13 Vietnamese.

February 6, 1965 -- Radio Liberation announces that the Viet Cong have shot two American prisoners of war as reprisals against the Vietnamese government which had sentenced two Viet Cong terrorists to death.

February 10, 1965 -- Viet Cong terrorists blow up an enlisted men's barracks in Qui Nhon killing 23 Americans.

March 30, 1965 -- A Viet Cong bomb explodes outside the American Embassy in Saigon killing 2 Americans, 18 Vietnamese and injuring 100 Vietnamese and 45 Americans.

June 24, 1965 -- Radio Liberation announces the execution of an American prisoner as a reprisal.

June 25, 1965 -- Terrorists dynamite the My Canh restaurant in Saigon killing: 27 Vietnamese, 12 Americans, two Filipinos, one Frenchman, one German; more than 80 persons are injured.

June 1965 -- Vietnamese officials report that Viet Cong assassinations and kidnappings of rural officials doubled in June over May and April. A total of 224 officials were either killed or kidnapped.

August 18, 1965 -- A Viet Cong bomb at the Saigon Police Directorate office in Saigon kills six and wounds 15 Vietnamese.

October 4, 1965 -- One of two Viet Cong planted bombs explodes at the Cong Hoa National Sports Stadium killing eleven Vietnamese, including four children and wounding 42 other persons.

October 5, 1965 -- A Viet Cong bomb goes off, apparently prematurely, in a taxi on a main street in downtown Saigon killing two Vietnamese and wounding ten others most of them Vietnamese.

December 4, 1965 -- A Viet Cong terrorist bomb kills eight persons when it explodes in front of a Saigon hotel converted to quarters of U. S. enlisted men, 157 are injured, including 72 Americans, three New Zealanders and 62 Vietnamese.

December 12, 1965 -- Two Viet Cong terrorist platoons kill 23 unarmed Vietnamese canal construction workers asleep in a Buddhist Pagoda in Tan Huong village, Dinh Tuong province, and wound seven others.

January 7, 1966 -- A Claymore mine explodes at Tan Son Nhut gate killing two persons and injuring 12.

January 17, 1966 -- Viet Cong in Kien Tuong detonate a mine under a highway bus, killing 26 Vietnamese civilians, seven of them children. Eight other persons are injured and three listed as missing.

January 18, 1966 -- Viet Cong mine a bus in Kien Tuong province killing 26 civilians.

January 29, 1966 -- Viet Cong terrorists kill a Catholic priest father Phan Khac Dau, 74, at Thanh Tri, Kien Tuong province. Five other civilians, including a church officer are also killed. The marauders desecrate the church and destroy its statuary and religious artifacts.

February 2, 1966 -- A Viet Cong squad ambush a jeep load of Vietnamese information personnel, killing six and wounding one in Hau Nghia province.

February 14, 1966 -- Two Viet Cong mines explode under a bus and a three-wheeled taxi on a road near Tuy Hoa killing 48 farm laborers and injuring seven others.

The Viet Cong themselves were not shy in their claims of violence and terror although generally they attempted to cast their activities in military terms, eschewing mention of certain types of their terror activities. From Radio Liberation and Radio Hanoi output during the years it has been possible to assemble Viet Cong statistics involving its violence program. The following are the Viet Cong claims and are cited not because they bear any relationship to reality but because they indicate the massiveness and the scope of the Viet Cong violence program as the Viet Cong themselves conceived it.

Viet Cong Statistics On Its Violence Program

| | 1961 | 1963 | 1964 | Jan. 1961 to Jan. 1965 | 1) |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|------------------------------|----|
| ARVN KIA and WIA | 32,000 | 100,000 | 230,000 | 438,000 | |
| U. S. casualties | 30 | 982 | 2,111 | 4,336 | |
| Weapons captured | 7,300 | 30,000 | 17,569 | 44,789 | |
| Planes destroyed or damaged | NA | 714 | 1,027 | 1,876 | |
| Armored vehicles destroyed or damaged | NA | 1,200 | 992 | 1,591 | |
| Ships sunk | NA | 184 | 292 | 681 | |
| Military attacks | NA | 779 | 1,391 | 2,170 | |
| Hamlets Destroyed | NA | 3,900 | 3,659 | 7,559 | |

1) Separate claim, not total of earlier years.

Harassing of villages probably has been the most common form of terror used by the Viet Cong during the past six years. And the most common form of harassment has been small arms sniper-type fire. It seldom receives much attention in the press or in official reporting because of its apparent inconsequential results. Pro-GVN hamlets serve as primary targets. Periodically, during the night and day, guerrillas will approach a village and fire into it a half a dozen random rifle shots. This alerts the defenders who can never be sure that a full scale attack is not underway. Word is radioed to the nearby military headquarters whose commander is then obliged to decide whether the action is harassing fire or an attack, and if an attack, whether an ambush is its real purpose

or possibly a feint designed to draw his unit away from the scene of an actual attack elsewhere. Any guess he makes is apt to be the wrong one. The correct military decision, usually, is for the moment to do nothing and await developments. This causes villagers to doubt that the unit would aid the village if it actually were attacked and thus raises the anxiety level in the village, precisely as the Viet Cong hoped it would, and adds to the sense of insecurity which villagers naturally feel when from time to time a rifle bullet whizzes by them.

The harassing fire often continues sporadically for weeks, generally accompanied by nocturnal megaphone taunts, threats, and appeals; sometimes after a few weeks of softening up, a full scale attack is launched. Harassing fire is cheap, costing only a few dozen bullets, and can be handled easily by even inexperienced guerrillas. It creates a great sense of anxiety within the village, keeping villagers awake at night, impairing their farming and normal daytime activities. And it builds up confidence within guerrillas ranks. Armed propaganda team visits is another form of harassment.

Psychological objectives dominate Viet Cong sabotage and subversion efforts. In the early years the guerrillas were under strict orders not to destroy or interfere with permanent fixed economic installations such as power stations or port facilities. But beginning in 1965 even these were no longer immune to sabotage efforts. Road and bridge sabotage is common as is destruction of telephone and telegraph communication equipment. Railroad trains frequently are dynamited whether or not they carry military cargo. Travelers boarding a train in Saigon or Hue often find stuck between the boards of the seat a leaflet which reads:

"The U. S. - Diemists use the trains for military purposes ... Compatriots are advised not to travel by train. If they are obliged to travel by train they must absolutely refrain from traveling on trains which carry weapons, military equipment or soldiers and must resolutely protest against allowing army men to mingle with passengers ..." "

In the cities there has been no end to the ingenuity employed in terroristic sabotage. The grenade is the most common instrument, often rolled into a cafe by a young boy who peddles away rapidly on a bicycle. Sometimes the bicycle itself is the instrument of death, its hollow tubular frame packed with plastic explosive and the timing devices located under the saddle. Terrorists ride the bicycle into the area, lean it up against the building to be destroyed, set the fuse, and walk off. Two such explosive devices were employed in Saigon in May 1963, using a motor bicycle and a motorcycle to blow huge holes in the side of a U. S. military warehouse. The Brink officer's billet in Saigon, was dynamited by an explosive-packed vehicle which had been driven into the parking lot Christmas Eve 1964, despite intensive U. S. internal security measures. The Pershing Sports Field explosion in Saigon involved burying under the grandstand a length of soil pipe packed with explosive and attached to a calendar watch detonator. The Kinh Do Theater explosion in Saigon was the work of Viet Cong terrorists who shot their way into the lobby carrying a pail of explosive, set it down, and dashed out. Grenades lobbed into vehicles stopped for traffic lights, poison injected into bottles of wine with hypodermic needles poisoned darts; doors, drawers, or automobile motor engines booby-trapped--all form part of the subversion effort. Often simply the threat of violence achieves subversion. In November 1964, a young Vietnamese girl typist in a U. S. aid program contractor's office in Saigon was caught with program plans in her purse. She told security officials a man came to her apartment and told her that unless she stole the documents her family, living in rural Quang Tri province, would be harmed. Sometimes Viet Cong actions are inexplicable. Visitors to An Lac village in An Giang province in late 1960 were shown an example of sabotage that had taken place the night before: Viet Cong had entered the village school, piled all the benches and tables together and set fire to them. Only the four bare walls remained. The villagers, and the teacher, maintained they had no idea why it was done.

Terror in the urban areas was minimal in the early Viet Cong days but has grown steadily as indicated in this table of Viet Cong terror acts for the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh zone which roughly is urban and suburban Saigon :

| YEAR : | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 | 1965 | 1966 (Jan-Feb.) |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|
| TOTAL : | 14 | 33 | 57 | 103 | 43 |
| MONTHLY AVERAGE : | 1.5 | 2.8 | 4.8 | 8.6 | 22.5 |

A sense of the Viet Cong approach to sabotage can be gained from this criticism report by the Chau Phu District NLF Committee to the Chau Doc Province NLF Central Committee, dated October 25, 1965 on sabotage efforts from September 15 to October 15, 1965 :

"The sabotage of the enemy's communication axis was not regular nor well coordinated. Sabotage activities in enemy hamlets this month was very weak. Only seven or eight out of 73 hamlets in the province were destroyed, all in Chau Thanh, Can Long and Can Ngang areas and these were not destroyed totally. After destructions we usually withdrew without enlisting personnel or motivating the people to destroy their own hamlets . . . "

"During the month continuous sabotage activities were conducted to destroy road: O Chuc to Tieu Can road, O Chuc to Tra Vinh road, Kinh Xuoi Road, Cau Ke road, Tieu Can to Tra Vinh road . . . (there follows lengthy list of road cuts - Ed.) . . . The result was that 85 road cuts were made and a total of 396 meters of macadam road removed . . . 183 mounds were built on macadam roads . . . 341 meters of cuts made on dirt roads, 150 obstacles erected on dirt roads, 28 mounds built on dirt roads, a concrete bridge severely damaged and ten wooden bridges destroyed . . . "

"In the hamlets . . . we destroyed ten kilometers of bamboo fence, 1250 meters of barbed wire, 220 meters of ramparts, three gates . . . burned two administration buildings, two information halls, and seized 73 meters of telephone wire . . ."

It is violence against the individual villager, in his own village -- an assassination, execution or kidnapping -- that strikes home hardest. Turgid accounts of "struggle movement" led by the Viet Cong or endless claims of military victories by agit-prop teams mean little to him. But when death strikes in his village, against someone he knows a scar of fear is formed on his mind.

The individual targets of Viet Cong terrorism are Vietnamese government officials, social or natural leaders in the villages and Americans, in that order.

A U. S. survey of terror against GVN officials in the January to October 1964 period indicated that in almost every case the 429 village and hamlet officials assassinated and the 1482 officials kidnapped were people native to the village in which they served and were not Saigon appointees coming in from the outside. Civil servants, village officials, civilians holding some form of authority -- these are the chief targets of Viet Cong guns. The assassination pattern appears to be directed toward the very best and the very worst officials, against the highly popular and effective government civil servant and against the most corrupt and oppressive local official. Such a policy obviously stimulates mediocrity among civil servants.

A document captured in zone D in January 1966, apparently written about a month earlier explained in some detail the secondary purposes of this kind of terror :

"During the month . . . (we) attacked policemen who were searching people in the streets (of Saigon) and also attacked police stations. The Directorate General of National Police headquarters was attacked by our

Liberation Army. These attacks caused confusion in the enemy ranks and aroused enthusiasm among the people ...

"Our activities have frightened the Lien Gia and living quarter wardens ... Enemy officials dare not oppose us. Policemen dare not stay in slums at night. Those guarding remote areas (of the city) are withdrawn ... Policemen enter the slums now only in groups ...

"Targets : in addition to attacks launched against personnel in the enemy's lowest echelons we must deal heavy blows against high ranking enemy personnel. Only blows like the attack on the Directorate General of National Police headquarters and on Americans can have the proper repercussions, hurt enemy prestige and exert sufficient pressure on the low echelon personnel. Therefore our attacks must be essentially aimed at wicked enemy ringleaders ..."

The second major target are the natural village leaders, those individuals who do not hold office but who, because of age, sagacity or strength of character, are the ones to whom people turn for advice and look to for leadership. They may be religious figures, school teachers or simply people of integrity and honor. Because they are superior individuals these people are more likely to have the courage to stand up to the Viet Cong when they come to their villages and thus most likely to be the first victims of Viet Cong terror. Potential opposition leadership is the Viet Cong's most deadly enemy. Steadily, quietly and with a systematic ruthlessness, the Viet Cong in six years have wiped out virtually a whole class of Vietnamese villagers. Many villages today are virtually depopulated of their natural leaders. Natural leaders are perhaps the single most important element in any society. They represent a human resource of incalculable value. This loss to Vietnam is inestimable and it will take a generation or more to replace. By any definition, this is genocide.

Captured Viet Cong documents outline this process in clear and coldblooded terms. The Zone D document cited above declared:

"The plan for elimination of tyrants (i. e. assassinations) must be very carefully worked out. Investigation of those to be eliminated must be meticulously conducted. Leaflets must be disseminated to make the people clearly understand the crimes of the tyrants to be executed and our motives in executing them and to warn other tyrants. The plan for the elimination of tyrants must be very detailed so that our personnel can withdraw safely after accomplishing their mission. Men must be deployed to prevent enemy pursuit, if any, and leaflets disseminated (by those departing) as mentioned above ..."

"Then take advantage of the deaths of tyrants to terrorize the enemy generally and cause the lowest echelons of his organization to disintegrate ..."

The Viet Cong attempt to place the aura of legalism around their assassinations. A kangaroo court meets and the villager, not present, is condemned to death. His death warrant is sent him through the mails or left at his front gate. It declares that he has been "tried" and has been "found guilty" and is to be "punished," "which always means execution" in accordance with the instructions of the people's court." Then the villager is assassinated.

Such activity is freely recounted in Viet Cong mass media, where it takes on a moralistic tone. A typical assassination, told in typical communist terms, was described by Australian Communist Wilfred Burchett, quoting a Viet Cong and broadcast by Radio Hanoi (July 2, 1964) :

"In Mo Duc District, Quang Ngai Province, was one Chau, a main Diemist agent responsible for the deaths of hundreds of former resistance members. We sent a group of guerrillas disguised as Diemist officers to his house on the night of May 18, 1960. Our men persuaded him that the next day was President Ho Chi Minh's birthday and that the Viet Cong would certainly make trouble, so action must be taken that very night ..."

Eventually he agreed and we set out with some of his agents. About one kilometer from his house he was executed and his agents arrested ..." The guerrilla interviewed by Burchett added :

"In each village.. We compiled a detailed dossier of the various local despots. If someone merited the death penalty we sent a group to deal with him. Afterwards we used loudhailers to explain the crimes committed ... we posted names of other tyrants who would be dealt with if they did not cease their activities.. The executions .. and the warnings .. played a major role in breaking the grip of the enemy throughout the country ... and created conditions under which we could move back into the villages, either permanently or in organizational visits ..." "

A typical recent example of Viet Cong terror against an individual involves doctor Dang Van Sung, editor in chief, and Tu Chung, editor of Chinh Luan (Political Discussions) one of the most respected Saigon newspapers. They are the Vietnamese natural leaders whom the Viet Cong seek to silence.

Chinh Luan is an anti-communist newspaper. But it does not hesitate to criticize the Government of Vietnam or the United States, and has done so when it disagreed with GVN or U.S. policies. Dr. Sung has said of his newspaper: "Our main object is to inform. The second is to provide enlightened opinion. I want to give my readers a digest of everything about Vietnam both here and abroad with no false news. I want to help my people bury the past, to give an impact for new political organizations, to stand on the people's side vis a vis the government -- to tell the people what the government is thinking and tell the government what the people are thinking."

In this task he succeeded. He and Tu Chung also succeeded in being placed on the Viet Cong assassination list. In June of 1965 a warning letter arrived on the Chinh Luan offices accusing Dr. Sung, Tu Chung and the paper of "serving American bosses" and threatening the pair with

assassination. It was signed by Vo Cong Minh, "Commander of Detachment 628, Liberation Armed Forces of Saigon-Gia Dinh area." The letter was turned over to the police.

Then in mid-December the Viet Cong sent their "last warning" to Dr. Sung and editor Tu Chung. It said that the Viet Cong planned to dispose of the two "scabby sheep."

Dr. Sung and Tu Chung published the Viet Cong letter and also replied to it, declaring that the paper sought to serve only one master, truth, and that proof it had done so could be found in the fact that it had been criticized by all. But only the Communists, declared the editorial, go beyond criticism to threaten terror and death. It declared that, while the paper could fight the Communists ideologically or politically, it of course had no defense against its terror. It concluded; "We love the life that God has breathed into our bodies, as all men love life. But we will look straight into the gun barrel held by the murderer who comes against us and will say : you can kill us but our spirit will live on."

On December 30, Viet Cong terrorists fired four bullets into editor Tu Chung as he stepped from his car in front of his home, killing him instantly. The two terrorists escaped on a motorbike.

4. DOCTRINE AND TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Viet Cong have employed terror for the sake of five proximate objectives¹:

1. Morale building within the Viet Cong ranks. A successful terrorist act does much to create the aura of invulnerability within a guerrilla band and helps bolster spirits throughout the insurgent organization. The Zone D document cited earlier for example declared that terrorist acts in Saigon had "aroused enthusiasm among the people." Radio Liberation, after a terrorist act in Saigon, was quick to take credit for it in the name of the NLF, usually in boastful terms. Obviously the broadcasts were aimed as much at the faithful as at the enemy.

2. Advertising the Viet Cong movement. Kropotkin called terror, "the propaganda of the deed." Undoubtedly there is no cheaper nor easier way for an insurgent band or dissident group to single itself out from other opposition than by use of terror. In the early period Viet Cong terror acts quite obviously had advertising the movement as one of its objectives. For example a civilian might be shot down in a market place after which his killer would remain on the scene long enough to pin a note to his shirt even though it increased his chances of apprehension. The leadership wanted no ambiguity, no unexplained killings. In some cases it would go so far as to issue leaflets denying the killing of individuals, asserting that they were killed by bandits. But of course this sort of activity cuts both ways -- it advertises but it also horrifies, especially abroad. Thus on January 12, 1966 Yugoslavia, the United Arab Republic and Algeria jointly urged North Vietnam and the NLF to cease

1. Organization of this chapter owes much to "Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation" by Thomas Perry Thornton in Internal War, Harry Eckstein, ed. The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964. The book is highly recommended.

their terror activities, quite obviously because terror was hurting the North Vietnamese and NLF image in their countries. Apparently there was never any reply to this appeal.

3. Disorientation and psychological isolation of the individual Vietnamese. This is done by destroying the structure of authority previously a source of security. The particular target is the Vietnamese villager. The response which the Viet Cong seek through use of terror is fright, anxiety and despair. Terror removes the underpinnings of the orderly system in which the villager lives out his life. It disorients the villager by demonstrating to him that his government cannot give him the safety and order he normally expects from it. The usual protections of his life suddenly vanish and disorientation results. This Viet Cong demonstration however, is but one aspect of the disorientation process. On a much deeper level, the Viet Cong seek to isolate the villager in his social context. Terror isolates. A villager can no longer draw strength from customary social supports. He can rely only on himself. He may be physically undisturbed but he is terribly alone in his anguish. Villagers then become impotent and of no threat to the Viet Cong. A terrorized villager is in a condition associated with anxiety neurosis. He seeks only one thing -- means of fixing his own security

4. Elimination of opposing forces. This of course is the chief utility of Viet Cong terror. By means of terror the Viet Cong have sought to eliminate an entire class of Vietnamese villagers, the local officials and governmental representatives as well as the natural leaders of the village. A leaderless village is further disoriented. The assassination program is directed at total elimination of the GVN apparatus in the village, thus is as much genocide as terror. Nor does the Viet Cong pursue terror in a random or indiscriminate pattern. On the contrary, the killing of individuals is done with great specificity. Terror is also used to immobilize the remaining GVN officials standing between the Viet Cong and their domination of the rural area. For this reason there has been re-

latively little terrorism in Saigon and virtually none directed at top level governmental officials. The Viet Cong, for example, has had ample opportunity to kill Ngo Dinh Diem or subsequent Prime Ministers but as far as can be determined never has made the effort.

5. Provocation of the GVN. There were in the early years Viet Cong terror acts committed with the express purpose of provoking reprisals but the practice was not as widespread as in other insurgencies. Any government faced with terror acts finds it necessary to attempt to suppress the terrorists. Ideally that suppression is by regular and orthodox use of law enforcement. But if the terrorist is effective and if the government sees itself in a crisis, it will almost inevitably use extraordinary repressive measures. Unfortunately, this also is manifested on the individual level without sanction -- the ARVN soldier whose family has suffered at the hands of a Viet Cong terrorist finds himself with a Viet Cong prisoner and orders to extract information from him. Torture under such circumstances, while not excuseable is understandable; an insurgency that also is a civil war unleashes more passion than any other type of war.

The Viet Cong has before it the Viet Minh experience in which suppressive or enforcement terror was conceived as a holding action pending the buildup of Viet Minh strength among rural Vietnamese. As the Viet Minh's strength increased its use of this form of terror diminished. Its use of disruptive terror, as pointed out by Brian Crozier in his book, The Rebels, was to make repression by the French so costly that the French government would prefer to withdraw rather than to continue the struggle. In general the experiences of the Viet Minh did not particularly recommend wide use of disruptive terror.

The Viet Cong leadership has experienced at least one major failure in the use of terror. This came in the Highlands in the summer of 1962 and involved the Montagnards. After years of patiently cultivating

the Montagnards, the Viet Cong leadership apparently came to the conclusion that the policy had not paid off and that a harder line was in order. It was true that despite concentrated efforts, the Montagnards remained hostile to the Viet Cong. The GVN's resources control program in the Highlands (where it is possible to starve to death) and the organizational work among the Montagnards, chiefly by the American Special Forces teams, combined to create an inhospitable climate in the Highlands for Viet Cong cadres. When food became short, these cadres under the new policy did not hesitate to take the food of the Montagnard and allow him to go hungry. The marked increase in the use of terror among the Montagnards that resulted was designed to coerce them into supporting, feeding, and generally assisting the guerrilla bands operating in the mountains. The Montagnard response to such use of force, a traditional gesture of discontent, was sudden migration; the people of a whole village might vanish in a simple night to reappear as refugees in GVN military and civilian centers. Total Montagnard exodus may have reached as high as 300,000 persons, more than a third of the total Montagnard population in South Vietnam. Eventually most of these people were relocated and a number of them were recruited to antiguerilla CIDG teams.

Beginning in February 1964, the NLF began a terror campaign against Americans in Vietnam. It was random, indiscriminate, and closely resembled the Thornton proximate objectives. It probably did build morale among the terrorists; the bombing of the American Embassy on March 30, 1965 most certainly was for morale building purposes. The killing of American civilians, as in the theater or sports field explosions obviously advertised the Viet Cong in the United States. The terror also served to disorient Americans in Vietnam and create within them a sense of psychological isolation. Terror, however, was not used to the extent it might have been in eliminating American opposition. American death rate for example, could have been much higher in the 1960-1965 period than it was. And finally, the protective measures taken at the American

Dependent School and other civilian installations in Saigon did communicate a sense of insecurity both to the Americans and to the Vietnamese which lasted until the evacuation of American dependents in February 1965. The initial burst of intensified violence in February and March of 1964 stopped almost as suddenly as it began. Within a ten day period there were about two dozen major and minor terror-type attacks on Americans, some large and deadly in scope (had the Pershing Field bomb not partly misfired and had all three lengths of pipe exploded rather than just one, the number of dead would have been in the hundreds and might have been as high as one thousand). But the campaign suddenly ceased for reasons that were never clear.

From studies of captured Viet Cong documents and from questioning of Viet Cong prisoners it is possible to assemble a fairly complete statement of Viet Cong doctrinal approach to terror. Viet Cong cadres consider the proper use of terror as being terror applied judiciously, selectively, and sparingly. They have found that terror, turned on and off, paradoxically produces both pro and antiguerilla feelings among villagers. On the one hand, of course, it engenders fear and hatred, with the first usually predominating over the second. But when relaxed after an area-wide terror campaign, an exaggerated sense of relief spreads through the villages and villagers tend to regard the guerrillas as being not nearly as inhumane as they are capable of being. Terror, the Viet Cong hold, is virtually useless against a dedicated opponent. In general, Viet Cong theoreticians consider terror to be the weapon of the weak and hold that as guerrilla control increases it should be used less. They hold that from terror a guerrilla band gets rapid but quickly diminishing returns. They believe that terror methods are successful only when the objectives of the terrorist have popular support. And to judge from their terror acts, they believe that terror works better on friends than on enemies. It is also true, whether or not the Viet Cong recognize it, that terror is most effective when the general population is sympathetic

to the cause and least effective when the population actively is committed against the terrorist. From this it follows that in the months ahead, if there is an increase in Viet Cong terror, it will work to the detriment not the benefit of the communists.

5. WE BOMB THE KINH-DO THEATER

Editor's Note: The following is a translation of a captured Viet Cong document. It is a report on the bombing of the Kinh Do Theater in Saigon, February 16, 1964 and apparently written for training and indoctrination use. At any rate it provides a graphic and accurate picture of the world of the Viet Cong terrorist.

Purpose and Significance. After studying the Party Central Committee resolution of November 11, (1963) the (Interzone) Party Committee decided to deal a heavy blow to the enemy in the capital city. We sought to begin the year with a spectacular achievement in order to create intense political impact on the people in the capital city and throughout the area. We also sought to widen the rift in the enemy ranks, which is already marked by mutual suspicion and distrust as a result of repeated coups and counter coups. And we sought to strengthen and enhance the combat spirit of our forces and improve their tactical and technical know-how.

After careful consideration of three proposed targets we selected the Kinh Do Theater. Reasons: at this theater gathered large numbers of important persons such as general and field grade officers. In attacking this target we will destroy a great amount of the enemy potential. Also, this target is located in the center of the city, near the Presidential Palace (it is about five blocks from the Gia Long Palace - ed.) Attacking it will create a strong impression at home and abroad and will greatly affect the morale of the Americans, both in Vietnam and in the United States.

Preliminary preparations. Le Van Duyet street runs past the Theater. On the left is Bui Thi Xuan street and on the right, Ngo Tung Chau street. Bui Thi Xuan and Ngo Tung Chau streets intersect behind

the Theater. Traffic is heavy on these streets, especially on Le Van Duyet street. Traffic will be heavier on the day of the attack, which will fall on the third day of the Tet holidays (lunar new year - ed.)

Across Le Van Duyet street, directly opposite the Theater, is the headquarters of the General Labor Union and behind it, the Botanical Gardens and a riding club. In front of the General Labor Union is a parking lot for about 40 vehicles, reserved for U. S. moviegoers.

Approximately 100 meters in front of the Theater is the US Dispensary, the US Special Forces Headquarters and the house of a U. S. General, all located on Nguyen Du Street. Next door to the Kinh Do Theater to the left is the office of the Farmers' Association and to the right is the house of an American. In the rear of the Theater are a network of alleys and houses of GVN civil servants and the city bourgeois. The people in this area are indifferent to politics and during Tet they gather in groups in the alleys to gamble.

About one kilometer in rear of the objective to the southwest is the headquarters of the National Police. The 2nd Police Precinct is located southeast of and approximately two kilometers from the objective. The 3d Police Precinct is located 1200 meters from the objective and down Le Van Duyet Street.

The objective, the Kinh Do Theater, is known to the Americans as the Capitol American Theater. This theater is reserved strictly for the American community. Estimated dimensions: length, 40 meters; width, 25 meters; thickness of wall, 20 centimeters. Capacity; 600 seats. However, our investigation revealed that there usually were only 300 people in the theater. Sometimes there were VIPs and high ranking officers.

A one meter high wooden fence is erected on the sidewalk 0.40 meters from the street curb. No pedestrian is allowed to loiter on the sidewalk and vehicles are forbidden to park in the area right in front of

the theater. One meter inside this fence is another fence which looks exactly like the first one. Entrances to these fences are wide open before the show. Inside the inner fence is a yard, of about five to seven square meters.

The theater has a large facade with the following signs on it: "RAP CHIEU BONG KINH DO" (THE KINH DO MOVIE THEATER) Below the sign is an accordion gate, with an opening about two meters wide when halfclosed. Inside the gate, is an open space of about four meters in width and five meters in length, with two booking offices. Two steel sheets are used to block off the staircases. Between the staircases is a velvet curtain about two meters wide. Inside the theater running alongside the wall are two narrow aisles leading to the latrines separated from the auditorium, and behind the screen is a small room for storing movie equipment. The Americans sit both on the ground floor and the balcony.

Early defenses: there were two policemen standing guard in front of the theater and, at one time, no U.S. MP's. One policeman stood guard at the corner of Bui Thi Xuan street and another in front of the U. S. dispensary. One white Chevrolet usually was parked in front of the Theater. On this section of Le Van Duyet street there always was one cell of plain clothes police patrolling. At each intersection leading to the Kinh Do Theater there was a traffic policeman.

The Theater was attacked on September 19, 1963 by a Special Activities Cell from the Interzone Headquarters. At that time the attack was directed at the rear of the theater. (A low grade bomb was exploded in back of the theater inflicting no serious injuries and doing little damage - ed.) These experiences were gained from this attack :

- Five minutes after the attack, policemen and security agents flocked down every alley.

Le Van Duyet street and all alleys leading to it were blocked

off so no one could leave or enter.

- Our vehicle was searched ... (meaning not clear-Trans.)

After the attack the enemy improved his security measures. Two policemen were stationed at the intersection of Le Van Duyet and Bui Thi Xuan, streets. Two policemen were stationed in front of the Farmers Association Office next door to the Kinh Do Theater on the left. Two policemen were stationed in the parking lot. Two policemen were stationed in front of the Kinh Do Theater. The white Chevrolet remained at the same place. A jeep, bearing the license number NBD 448 was parked at the filling station near Nga Sau intersection. Two or three security agents were ordered to circulate in the alleys back of the theater. Two U. S. MP's and one security agent were stationed in front of the theater. Two guards were stationed inside.

The movie schedules: shows began at 2000 hours and ended at 2230 hours. On Sundays there were two or three shows. Before the show the moviegoers gathered in groups in front of the theater. At show time they all went inside the theater. As the last man went into the auditorium they closed the door. When the show was finished they came out in groups of 30 under the supervision of the two U. S. MP's.

Taking the Decision. It was determined that this was an important target because most of the people gathered there were VIP's and high ranking advisor officers and there would be no Vietnamese, and that a great number of American aggressors would be killed if the target were attacked.

Investigation and study indicated that the target would be easy to attack. The Theater was well protected in the front but neglected in the rear. Although the routes of approach were long and closely watched by security agents, it was determined that this could be overcome by secretly infiltrating necessary supplies and conducting the raid lightning fast. Though police and security forces were deployed in the area no

reaction by them was anticipated during the first three minutes after the explosion. This slow reaction is attributable to their lack of aggressiveness and courage. Possible reinforcements from adjacent enemy installations had to be anticipated :

- National Police Headquarters : 10 minutes
- 3rd Police Precinct : 10 minutes
- 2nd Police Precinct : 15 minutes
- Police stationed at Nga Sau intersection : 5 minutes

From the previous attack we know that five minutes after the attack, police and security agents appeared at all alleys, and that within ten minutes, the enemy was capable of blocking off the Le Van Duyet, Ngo Tung Chau and Bui Thi Xuan Streets. We knew accordingly, the attack, including the time for penetration and accomplishing the mission should be completed in one minute and attackers should withdraw from the area within three minutes.

Based on this assumption and on the situation stated above, this decision was taken initially :

- 1) Use one cell (three men) to attack the main objective.
- 2) Use one Bazoomine, ten kilogrammes with a time fuse set at 15 seconds.
- 3) Penetrate the objective area via the alley located in the rear of the theater. Place the bomb on a stool, three meters high located near the left hand wall to slant toward the right hand wall.

The attack was scheduled for the night of February 15, 1964, just after the movie has started.

Plan of the attack. At 2000 hours the vehicle would leave the assembly area, follow Ngo Tung Chau street and stop in the alley in the rear of the Theater. Number One would pick up the stool, three meters

high, place it in the predesignated position and take up a position from which he can protect Number Two. Number Two would then swiftly run to the stool with the bomb, place it on the stool and pull the safety pin. Then both men would run back to join Number Three and all would withdraw along a predesignated routes.

Of the three men selected for the mission: Number One was the cadre and cell leader. He had received basic political indoctrination and had been thoroughly briefed on the attack. He was qualified as a pistol marksman, knew judo, had combat experience and was a good leader. Number Two had no combat experience, but was ideologically sound. He had received political indoctrination and had received training in pistol marksmanship. He was enthusiastic and accepted the mission without fear. Number Three had received political indoctrination, but was not as good as pistol shot as Number Two or Number Three. He had no combat experience. They key personnel were Number One and Number Two. They were repeatedly briefed on the mission, and were indoctrinated thoroughly on the purposes and importance of the mission. The training continued before the attack as we strengthen ideology and improve their skill with mines, pistols and grenades. They were given the benefit of experience from previous operations and were taught ways to use initiative in such attacks. Training and indoctrination continued after the attack as well.

Equipment and materials issued: one Bazoomine (apparently an explosive device involving use of a mortar, rocket launcher or bazooka round - ed.) of ten kilogram; two fuses; two safety firing pins; a 15-second detonation cord; one 12-mm Colt Pistol; five fragmentation grenades, one smoke grenade and two knives; one basket, one three meter stool (apparently this was a ladder type arrangement nearly ten feet tall with a basket for the explosive on top - ed.); two suits of clothing and two pair of shoes to be used as disguises in case of an emergency.

Number One was equipped with the Colt pistol, one smoke gre-

nade and one knife. He was the leader and responsible for the entire operation. His specific mission, in addition to leadership, was to protect Number Two during his part of the mission.

Number Two was equipped with a ten kilogram Bazoomine; two grenades and a knife. His specific mission was to explode the bomb.

Number Three was equipped with two grenades and the vehicle. His specific mission was to provide overall cover, stand by the vehicle, and pick up Number One and Number Two after they had completed their mission. Note, Number Two was to be separated from Number Three.

The Attack - Saturday February 15. Number Three, being informed of the imminence of the mission, lied to his wife and told her he was going to the country. This gave him more freedom of action and improved the security situation. Information on the location of the attack was not given to Number Three but nevertheless he remained enthusiastic about the task.

Number One and Number Three were to meet at 1200 hours together with weapons and equipment at a predesignated location. However it was not specified whether the meeting time, 1200 hours was to be Saigon time or Hanoi time (Hanoi is one hour behind Saigon - ed.) Number Three went to the meeting place at 1200 hours Saigon time, failed to meet Number One and so went to a place as per his instructions for rendezvous in case of untoward developments. Before leaving he passed word to a liaison man on the scene (who did not know anything of the operation). Number One arrived at 1200 hours Hanoi time. Failing to meet Number Three, he continued to study the scene of the operation.

Number Two meantime studied the area of the operation from 1500 until dark. In accordance with the plan Number Two, at dusk, carried the three meter stool to a house under construction in the alley. Failing to contact Number One on the scene he returned to where he had started and there met Number One. Number One informed him of the

error over time and of not being able to meet Number Three. He suggested that Number Two return to headquarters the following morning and report that the plan had to be aborted but that the cell was determined to carry out the mission when the opportunity arose.

Number Three meanwhile had contacted the liaison man and learned that Number One had come to the 1200 hours meeting late. So he knew the situation was not in jeopardy. He went searching for Number One and found him at 2400 hours.

But the attack had not materialized that day. It was decided to make the attack the following day.

The Attack - Sunday, February 16. At 1300 hours Number Two met Number One at a predesignated rendezvous with the specific message from Interzone: "Destroy the Theater at all costs." Number Two said Interzone authorized the cell to use its initiative in deciding the best means of attack. Number One informed Number Two that he had contacted Number Three and that everything was ready. He asked Number Two to remain calm and to continue his surveillance work. Number Two continued the surveillance work. At 1440 hours Number One and Number Three went to the rendezvous point.

(Note: The cell might have taken advantage of enemy negligence that afternoon and launched the attack at 1500 hours. In driving by the Theater Number One and Number Three noted that the Americans were pouring out of the Theater. The showing had ended earlier than usual that afternoon. Thus they missed a good chance.) (At that moment Number Three still did not know where the attack would take place.)

Number One and Number Three drove to the rendezvous area. Number Three parked the vehicle in a secure area. Number One went to meet Number Two. After exchanging information, Number One decided the attack would be launched at the evening show.

At 1830 hours Number One and Number Two went to the alley back of the Theater by way of Ngo Tung Chau Street. There they noticed the presence of three or four strangers who acted suspiciously. At the alley entrance there were three parked automobiles. Many gamblers were playing dice.

Faced by this unexpected development, Number One and Number Two returned to the rendezvous area to discuss the situation with Number Three. The discussion brought out these difficulties: it was possible the attackers could be trapped in the alley. There were a large number of people in the alley and an explosion would kill them all. (It was at this point that Number Three realized that the objective was the Kinh Do Theater.)

At 1920 hours Number One and Number Two once more approached the objective, along Ngo Tung Chau street. They found the situation there unchanged. They then drove along Bui Thi Xuan street and past the front of the Theater on Le Van Duyet street. Observation revealed the following: the police were at their usual posts; a plain clothes agent was standing at the entrance of the outer fence talking to a U. S. MP who was standing at the entrance of the inner fence. The other U. S. MP was standing at the left side of the entrance of the inner fence. American aggressors, buying theater tickets, were in a short line.

The cell held a quick meeting and the new situation discussed. A new plan was then developed and adopted. The concensus was this: although the enemy had many men in front of the Theater they were nevertheless negligent and tired as a result of too much celebrating during the Tet holidays. Moreover, based on experiences in the past, we believed the police and plain clothsmen were cowardly, unaggressive and, on hearing the first shots surely would run away. It was essential that the two U. S. MP's be killed at the outset. We decided we had the superiority of weapons and of morale. The route of approach to be used was short and direct, providing best chances for quick penetration and withdrawal.

The three or four men in the alley and the two or three cars parked in the alley were believed to be part of the security apparatus of the enemy. At any rate an attack in the rear of the Theater could easily be detected; even approaching it would be difficult. Distances involved in the alleys were relatively long. If the enemy detected us in time they could block off the alley and corner us. An attack in the rear would produce less results since the capability of our weapons could not be exploited to the utmost.

An attack at the front of the Theater would be more difficult but it had a number of advantages: a good avenue of approach permitting quick penetration and withdrawal. The enemy had many guards but they were not vigilant. We had the capability of (momentarily) overwhelming the enemy. We could develop the effectiveness of our weapons to the utmost thus increasing their destructive effects on the enemy potential.

Based on these considerations a frontal attack was decided upon. H-hour would be immediately before showtime, after all the Americans had gone into the theater and before the accordion gates were closed. We also decided that all three cell members must be calm and courageous and act with precision.

The new plan was this: the vehicle will stop in front of the Theater. Number One quickly will jump out and kill the two MP's with his pistol. At the same time he will call to the security agents to run away. If they resist he will kill them all. It is vital that he get rid of the policemen and security agent. After the two MP's have been killed Number Two will run into the Theater with the bomb. The farther he runs into the theater the better. Number Three will be outside the vehicle with two grenades in his hands ready to throw them at the police on guard in front of the Farmers Association or in the parking lot, if they react. After Number Two has penetrated the Theater and the policemen and if the security agents have been killed or run away; Number Three will return to the vehicle, pick up Number One and then Number Two and they will

drive away.

The Bombing. At 1955 hours Number Two went to study the objective for the final time before the attack. He noted that the velvet curtain had been drawn and that the accordion gate was open just enough to let in one person at a time. The show was about to start. Noting that there was no change in the enemy set up, except that a few late movie goers loitered in front of the theater, Number Two went back to report the situation to the other two men.

All three got into the vehicle and crossed the line of departure. Number Three, armed with two grenades, drove the vehicle. Number One armed with a pistol and a smoke grenade sat in the back seat of the vehicle at the left. Number Two set in back on the right, armed with two bazoomines and two grenades. Everyone was tense.

The vehicle drove up to the theater. It stopped quickly. Number One jumped out of the vehicle. He shot and killed the MP with two shots. At the same time he shouted: "We attack the Americans. Run away brother policemen and agents." One policeman ran away. But the security agent remained. Two American moviegoers outside the Theater, panic stricken pushed their way into the theater.

Seeing that the enemy in his path had been killed, Number Two took the bomb and dashed into the Theater just behind the two American moviegoers. Fearing that the two Americans would block the door, Number One shot at them. But his pistol misfired.

Then one security agent seized Number One and swung his fist at his face. Number One dodged and the blow landed on his right shoulder. Number One hit the security agent with his pistol and his fist sending the man sprawling. But he got up and rushed at Number One and they traded many blows in the street. Number Three rushed back to the vehicle, got in and tried to run over the security agent but instead almost ran over Number One. Then he drove off alone. He went to the rendezvous point

in the alley. Number One broke loose from the security agent, recovered his pistol pointed it at the security agent and once more pulled the trigger. This time it worked and the shot killed the security agent.

Meantime Number Two, in the Theater lobby, approached the staircase leading to the balcony and was only one meter away from the velvet curtain (across the door leading from the lobby to the main floor of the auditorium - ed.) An American came down the staircase. The American moved to seize Number Two. Unwilling to wrestle with the American, Number Two put down the bomb and pulled the cord to detonate the bomb.

There was a snapping sound. The American aggressors fell back panic stricken. One ran into the theater shouting something. (He shouted "Bomb, hit the deck," according to eye witnesses - ed.)

Number Two ran out of the Theater calling to Number One, "Withdraw immediately." Number One hurled his smoke grenade. He turned to run. There was a terrific explosion. Number One was thrown to the ground. Stunned by the explosion he got to his feet and leaned against an electric light post for a moment before he staggered to the alley where Number Two was waiting. They walked to the vehicle. Number One led the way, followed by Number Two with a grenade in each hand. People came up the alley and asked what happened. "We attacked the Americans" Number One said as they got into the car and drove away. (Note: killed in the attack were: the U. S. Army military policeman, corporal Peter M. Feiersbend; Marine Corps Captain Donald E. Koepler, whom Number Two met in the lobby and who had run into the theater with the warning (- He was buried alive under debris when part of the balcony collapsed;) and SP/5 William Reed sitting in the last row of the auditorium. Injured and requiring treatment were: 23 American servicemen, six American male civilians, three American women, two American children and one British civilian. All recovered. The security policeman shot by Number One was not killed and later recovered - Ed.)

As they withdrew, Number One had the mission to drive the vehicle and watch in front; Number Two was to watch and protect the left flank; Number One was to watch and protect the right flank. When they reached a certain point all three went their separate ways, agreeing to meet again in three days time. They crossed Hong Thap Tu street just three minutes before it was blocked off by security police.

According to the enemy radio two Americans and one security agent were killed among the five hundred people in the theater at the time. But our reconnaissance agents reported that only about ten Americans came out of the Theater alive, while all others were killed. The bodies were taken to Tan Son Nhut in ten ambulances and two and a half ton trucks. Ten-wheeled cranes were used to lift the collapsed stairs and two walls. Most of the seats in the theater were smashed, the wall behind the screen and the roof collapsed. (Above, a gross exaggeration - ed.)

Enemy reaction: Five minutes later enemy security agents and policemen in the area began to react. Ten to fifteen minutes later fire engines arrived, along with policemen from the Second Precinct who blocked off the area. The enemy arrested a taxi driver, four policemen who had been on duty and ten civilians. Twenty minutes later Vietnamese Marines and military police arrived and surrounded the area, from Hong Thap Tu to Ngo Tung Chau to Nga Sau to Nguyen Du Streets.

The effect: All of the inhabitants in Saigon were very enthusiastic. They came that night and the next day to look at the scene of the attack. The people said: "Once they have succeeded in attacking this objective, they will easily succeed elsewhere." Another effect was that U. S. and Vietnamese Army troop morale was badly shaken. After that the Vietnamese Marines and the U. S. troops set up barbed wire fences and mounted guards everywhere. They always went armed. Over 20 Americans demanded to return to the U. S. (Press reports so stated this; however of the 1800 American dependents living in Saigon at the time, three families accepted the U. S. Mission offer the following day of immediate

return to the U.S. for any dependents so desiring - ed.)

Observations and Lessons Learned. The strong points were these: There was a thorough understanding of the meaning, purpose and importance of the attack. There was high resolution by the cell. Their calmness, courage, ability to overcome all difficulties ensured the successful accomplishment of the attack. Success was due to: secrecy, suddenness, quick penetration of the objective. Maintaining the initiative and keeping flexible so as to adjust to any situation increased the injury to the enemy and helped achieve greater success. Most importantly, precisely evaluating the enemy situation and adopting an alternate attack plan enabled our agents to find the enemy weak points and seize opportunities. The attack also involved coordination of troop proselytizing with combat (i.e. calling on the police to flee - ed.)

The weak points were these: Failure to understand clearly the time for meeting on the night of February 15. It was dangerous to carry the explosive around in the vehicle. There were too many trips past the theater by our agents for observation purposes; they could have been noticed. There was failure to maintain security during the return to the unit (not clear - ed.) There was the failure to make a false license plate for the car to avoid it being traced. There was failure to anticipate all possible developments in the situation.

During the attack on the Kinh Do Theater, even after encountering many difficulties, our agents always kept in mind the importance of the attack, and they were determined to carry it out. Within a short time after the first abortive mission, the three agents made an accurate assessment of the enemy situation, and devised and discussed an alternate plan. This stresses the importance of flexibility to cope immediately with any situation. In any attack it is necessary to devise a primary plan and one or two contingency plans. In the Kinh Do attack our agents were confused when their first plan was upset, although they successfully accomplished our mission by applying the other plan.

The first rule is: Evaluate the enemy and find out his weak points. One of the weak points is the enemy's cowardice, escapist and negative spirit. Number One fired and killed the enemy who obstructed the road, while urging the enemy security agents to run away. This enabled Number Two to penetrate the objective. The same thing occurred during the attack on the US Embassy. When Number Two opened fire and killed the two policemen, thinking that Number Two was alone, other policemen rushed out from adjacent coffee houses to capture Number Two. When fired at by Number Three from the other side of the street, they fled.

However, we must recognize the enemy active defense. Because of money and pressure from the wicked leaders, there are stubborn security agents and policemen such as the policeman who fought with Number One during the attack on Kinh Do Theater and two security agents and policeman who ran after and fired at Number One during the attack on the US Embassy.

For the first time our agents did enemy troop proselytizing during combat. In the city, the security agents and policemen are apparently escapist and negative but they still have a spirit of nationalism (this means that they do not like the Americans). We have to take advantage of their spirit during our attack to isolate the Americans. This limits enemy resistance, reduced our difficulties and creates a situation favorable to successfully accomplishing the combat mission. Prior to appealing to them, we must punish and suppress them to render our appeal effective. Our experience was that in the attack on Kinh Do Theater our appeal was only effective after we had killed two U.S. MP's.)

Also, for the first time the tactic of attack using superior force was carried out in Saigon where such a tactic is hard to be successful. Lessons of the evaluation of the enemy situation, the people's situation and the study of the terrain features in the attacks on the Kinh Do Theater and the US Embassy clearly show that when conducting attacks in the city, we can use the tactic of attack with superior force.

The two attacks on Kinh Do Theater and the U. S. Embassy had good timing, destroyed much enemy potential and preserved our forces well. In addition, organization of an attack with superior force does not require as careful planning as other forms of attack in the city. Time needed for preparation can be reduced. In the Kinh Do attack, half an hour after the first plan was discarded a second plan had been completed and was carried out successfully.

The attack on the US Embassy was the first attack made on orders of the Military Region. In addition to a methodical preparation, choice of the right moment for attack and a rapid action, it is required that fighters be resolute, brave, calm, resourceful and flexible to the utmost to suitably cope with any situation, seize good opportunities and create the moment for combat. The attack on Kinh Do Theater clearly indicates the creation of the right moment for combat (our agents penetrated the objective after having killed the two U. S. MP's.) The enemy situation and plans for combat coordination must be thoroughly known and the timing precise. These were realized in the attack on Kinh Do Theater. If Number One were poor in technique and self-defense, Number Two would have failed to accomplish his mission. In the coordinated attack, unity of will and action of agents must be absolutely maintained. Agents must know how to exploit speed and surprise. In the training of personnel it is exceedingly important to continuously train for morale, technique and tactics.

During our attack in the city we have many advantages. The city is crowded and we can take advantage of the density of the population to attack the enemy and withdraw. However, we also encounter several difficulties. We operate under strict enemy surveillance. Large quantities of explosive would be easily detected by the enemy during transportation. Due to these difficulties, we have to pay more attention to supply of equipment and weapons.

If possible, use kinds of explosives which are small but powerful to facilitate camouflage and transportation to the objective. When we need a large quantity of explosive we encounter difficulties in transporting it into the city. Study the use of smoke and tear gas grenades, as were used in the attack on Kinh Do Theater, in order to prevent the enemy from interfering during our attack and withdrawal. Tear gas grenades are very useful. Our attack on the US Embassy would have been ensured if our agents had been equipped with smoke and tear gas grenades. Agents should be equipped with Browning Canadian pistols because they contain more rounds (15 rounds in each magazine). Rounds and grenades must be in good condition to avoid being duds.