

PART III

PROVINCE PACIFICATION: 1962-1965

SYNOPSIS

In Part III pacification is examined in depth at the province level, including the province administrative context, the bi-national pacification apparatus, and the agreements, procedures, resources, and funding involved. The role of United States advisors and representatives is analyzed.

After a description in Chapter VII of the elements involved in the pacification effort as a whole, subsequent chapters are devoted to province-level analysis of national programs and locally initiated innovations in the special fields of security, administrative improvement and political-psychological warfare, and economic, social, and community development programs.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROVINCIAL PACIFICATION SYSTEM

I. PROVINCIAL POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

The diversity and distinctiveness of the regions and peoples of Vietnam were counterbalanced by what used to be a highly centralized governmental system. The forty-three province governments are entirely dependent for their authority on the central government in Saigon. Since the fall of Diem, the four Army Corps commanders have exerted considerable influence over civil as well as military activities in their areas.

The Vietnamese provinces vary in population from less than 20,000 to more than 800,000. Each province (tinh) is comprised of from two to eleven districts (quan), which are made up of villages (xa). For pacification purposes the village has been further subdivided into hamlets (ap), which have no legal status as a tier of government. In some cases the village coincides with the traditional Vietnamese community (described as a village in Chapter II). In other situations a hamlet may be the traditional community. The French and the Diem regime occasionally lumped traditional villages into larger units for administrative convenience. In every case, however, the administrative and legal entity is the village, and therefore the focus of the peasant's relation to his government. In some areas, particularly

in the Delta, there is an intermediate layer of organization, called canton, between the district and the village.

The province could be compared, in American terms, to a county or small state, although the relationships of control from the central government are quite different. For purposes of more concrete description, the large central lowland province of Quang Nam will be examined in some detail.¹

Quang Nam Province. The Thu Bon river valley in which most of the population of Quang Nam lives, is typical of the densely populated rivers in the narrow strip of lowlands along the coast of Central Vietnam. Settled nearly 500 years ago by Vietnamese, its strong village tradition is similar to the ancient Red River Delta area in the North.²

Quang Nam's population of 578,000 dwells in 525 hamlet communities organized into 120 villages that comprise nine

¹ The pacification program in Quang Nam will be presented as a whole in Chapter VII. The writer was USOM Province Representative there from December, 1962 through August, 1964. Ironically, the name of the province is translated "Pacified South."

² Three studies concerning Quang Nam may be of interest to the reader. An administrative analysis of Dien Ban, the province's largest district, includes interesting historical detail. It was prepared by Luther A. Allen and Pham Ngoc An, op. cit. John D. Donoghue's, Cam An: A Fishing Village in Central Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, Agency for International Development, n. d.), discusses village organization and customs. In George K. Tanham, War Without Guns, op. cit., Chapter IV deals with pacification efforts in Quang Nam and was contributed by the writer.

districts.³ The population, except for several thousand Highlanders under Viet-Cong control, dwells in rural communities--averaging about a thousand people each--in the flat lowlands which comprise the eastern third of the province. The western area is dense and mountainous jungle.

The Province Chief is in full administrative charge of the government, responsible militarily to the commander of the ARVN Second Division in Danang and to the I Corps headquarters also located there. He also reports to the Ministry of the Interior on most administrative matters. The Province Chief had direct access to the Presidency during the Ngo Republic.⁴

The Province Chiefs have varied in military rank from major to colonel in Quang Nam--which is the usual range of rank for other large provinces. He commands nine district chiefs, all military, with ranks varying from lieutenant to major. The Province Chief is also the administrative superior for twenty provincial technical services each of which is also responsible to its counterpart ministry or directorate in Saigon (Public Works, Education, Agriculture, Information, etc.). The larger

³ The statistics concerning Quang Nam in this chapter were supplied by provincial authorities in 1964.

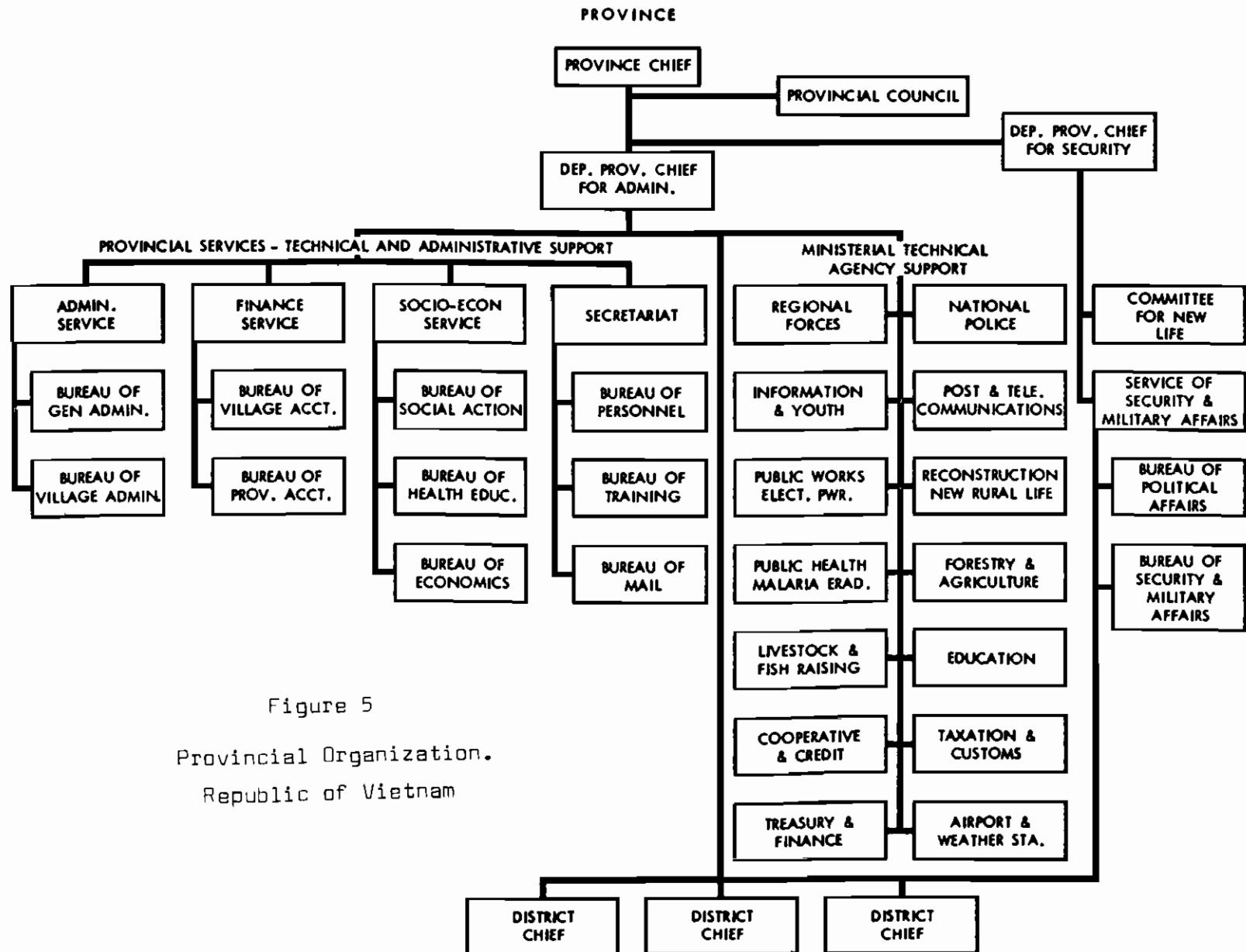
⁴ A more complete presentation of a Province Chief at work is available in Jason Finkle and Tran Van Dinh, "Provincial Government in Vietnam: A Study of Vinh Long Province." (Saigon: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, August, 1961). (Mimeographed.) Several other Michigan State University studies not cited in this chapter may be useful to the student. They may be found in the bibliography.

technical services have field staffs attached to each of the nine district headquarters.

In 1964, Quang Nam employed 1,897 civil servants--not counting pacification cadres. The Province Chief has an administrative staff and various local government offices that report to him and not to Saigon. His key subordinates are a deputy chief for administration (a civilian) and a deputy chief for security (an army major). An important assistant is his Chief of Cabinet, who is responsible for presiding over the routine of the Province Chief's office and maintaining liaison with the technical services, who form, in effect, a province cabinet. The Province Chief commands the Regional Forces (also known as Civil Guard, Bao An) and Popular Forces (formerly Self Defense Corps, Dan Ve).

The Province Chief's office is also the political center of the province, and a steady stream of local luminaries from outlying districts may be seen in his anteroom almost any day. An elected Province Council of five to eleven members advises the Province Chief on a wide range of public affairs. The councils vary in the degree of their advisory activity and influence. Under Diem they were strictly a figurehead group.

The Vietnamese administrative system burdens the Province Chief with enormous amounts of inconsequential paper work--a heritage from the fonctionnaire mentality inculcated by the French. He may have to affix his signature to thousands of documents in a single week.



The military character of the province leadership increased with the rising insurgency in all of Vietnam. Scigliano notes that in 1958, only 13 of the 36 Province Chiefs were military, but that 36 of 41 Chiefs were military by August, 1962.⁵ Under Diem the Province Chiefs were nearly all Catholic, according to Donnell.⁶ Often the Province Chief was not a native of the region in which he served. The province government of Quang Nam was hampered during the Buddhist crisis by the triple burden of a militantly Catholic Province Chief who was an Army major with no previous civil administrative experience--and a native of Hanoi.

In 1962, Quang Nam was divided by Diem, the lower third becoming Quang Tin. The intent was more effective administration of the remote lower portion where the Viet-Minh had previously ruled for years. The strategy of chopping up provinces into smaller, theoretically more manageable, pieces has been attempted several times.⁷

The province technical service departments in Quang Nam are hampered by the Viet-Cong presence in the countryside. Their field personnel are often unable to travel in the rural areas. Many of the educated officials yearn for the day

⁵ Scigliano, op. cit., p. 166.

⁶ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam," op. cit., p. 489.

⁷ Other new provinces formed for security reasons are followed in parentheses by their parent province: Bac Lieu (Ba Xuyen), Chau Doc (An Giang), Go Cong (Dinh Tuong), Hau Nghia (Long An, et. al.), Chuong Thien (An Xuyen), Phu Bon (Phu Yen, et.al.).

when they will be transferred to Saigon. A few earnest officials wanted to do field work but had no budgets for extension personnel in the quieter years through 1962. Now the money is there but manpower cannot easily be found. The Viet-Cong and the army have taken most young men.

Local government at the village level is usually administered by persons native to the village, acting under the influence of the District Chief. In 1956, when Diem abolished the traditional elected village councils, the last shred of local self-rule disappeared. Since the 1963 coup, elected village councils have been established in all controlled areas but their role is limited mainly to fiscal and property matters. The village administrative committee is appointed by the Province Chief through the District Chief. The committee has members who deal with finance, police, propaganda, and youth. The police chief handles the deployment of the popular forces in the village, and works with the various hamlet chiefs in the use of volunteer militia. He is also responsible for other security affairs.

II. VIETNAMESE PACIFICATION ORGANIZATION

Many provinces have appointed a special deputy chief of province for pacification, but earlier in the campaigns pacification was usually in the hands of the deputy for security. The earliest "self-sufficient" phase of the strategic hamlet program was almost without extra budget, and the paperwork at

headquarters was handled by personnel seconded from other departments. Eventually, however, special pacification bureaus were created--again often with funds from other budgets and borrowed staffs. These bureaus vary a great deal by province but usually have divisions for planning, finance, reports, economics and logistics. Sometimes the finances are handled within the regular province financial section.

The main burden of local planning for pacification falls on the District Chief, particularly for the choice of operational areas and sequence of activity in his own district. The planning of the various functions of pacification is carried out through the pacification bureau, in concert with the various sections and technical services. These province-wide program elements must usually be approved and funded by Saigon before being implemented in the province. A pacification committee, comprised of all service chiefs and military officers, usually holds a formal meeting to reconcile elements of the plan--under the presiding hand of the Province Chief. Americans are not always invited to these sessions, particularly if the Vietnamese have not come to a clear policy on their own side.

Kien Hoa province has operated an elaborate war room since 1964, which combines military and civil pacification operations and is equipped with maps, charts, and graphs. It is manned around the clock to facilitate response to hamlet attacks and less urgent crises. Similar operations centers have been constructed in other provinces, although no formal policy for their creation has been established. Unfortunately the

typical war room tends to become a briefing room to impress dignitaries, rather than being a control center for pacification activity.

In Quang Nam a pacification bureau of more than twenty employees, many of them hired specifically for the purpose, was geared to support field operations of pacification cadres, through a self-help project section, a logistics section responsible for storage and transportation of commodities and materials, and a motor repair system to maintain more than a dozen vehicles. Vietnamese pacification authorities in Saigon objected to expenditures in Quang Nam (and other provinces) for these extra personnel at headquarters. Even with more staff, the multiplied paperwork (most of it required by the objecting Saigon authorities) retarded disbursements of pacification funds many times.

In Binh Thuan province, the USOM Representative facetiously reported an "administrative defeat" by the Viet-Cong who kidnapped a Government messenger carrying many freshly prepared pacification documents. It took the province bureau ten precious days to remake the documents so they could resume the affected operations.⁸ Complications in dealing with the Saigon bureaucracy have been considerably increased by the greater civil roles of the Corps and Division levels of the Army. At times Corps commanders have

⁸AID province report, Binh Thuan, 30 April 1965.

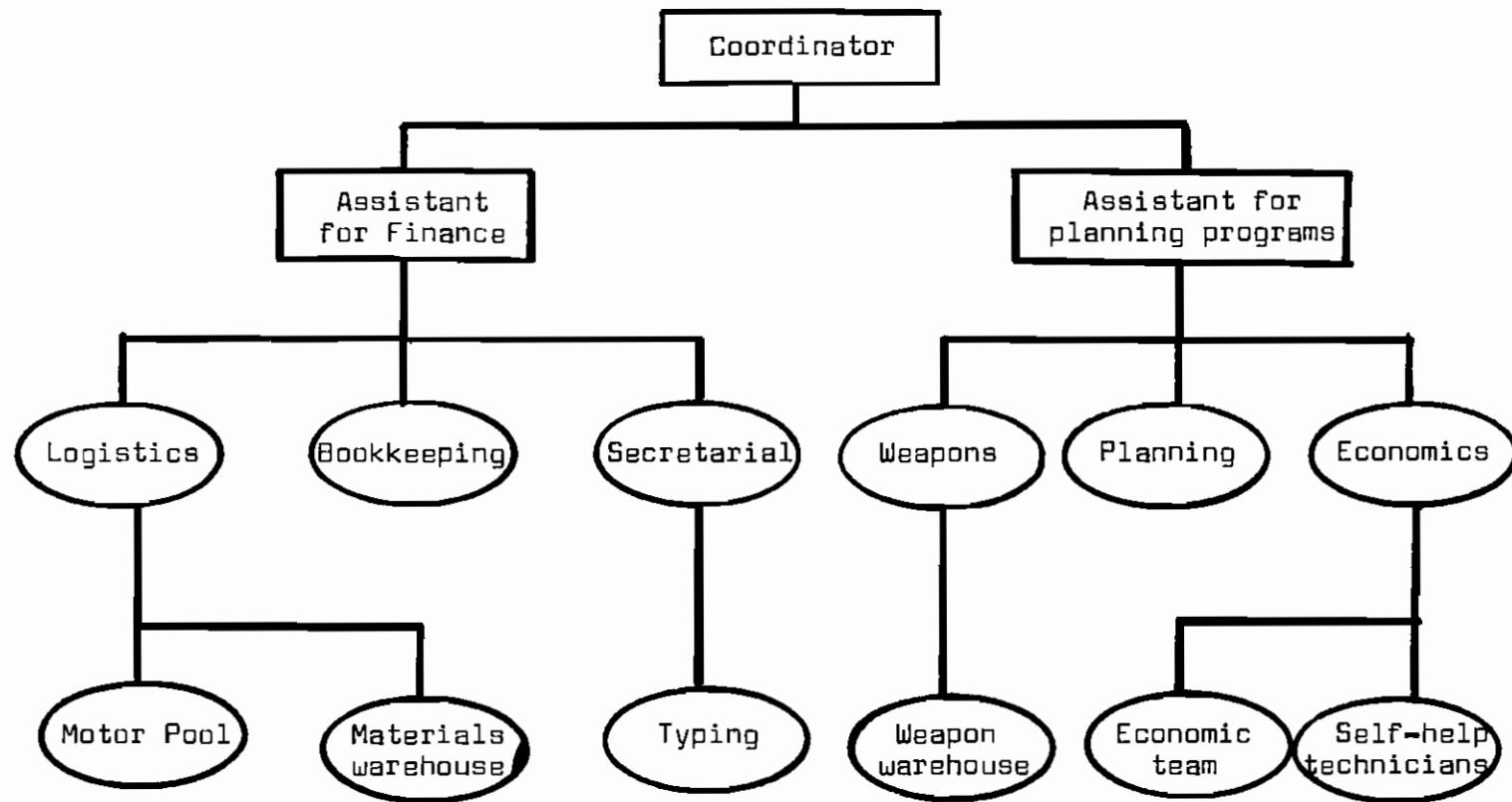


Figure 6. New Life Hamlet Bureau
Quang Nam Province, 1964.

ruled on pacification and political matters with little regard for the Saigon leadership.

As pacification efforts have become more sophisticated, the regular village, district, and province officials have been better informed about the new government policies through the innovation of orientation sessions on rural development in some provinces. Administrators at every level of the pacification apparatus have been helped to see the larger picture and, as a result, coordination has been improved within the province.⁹

Sometimes USOM Representatives have been directed to encourage new organization for pacification by local innovation. As the development phase of the strategic hamlet program approached, some provinces established USOM-recommended Province Development Councils to facilitate coordinated economic planning among the technical services.¹⁰

Additional regular ARVN forces are sometimes needed for pacification duties by the Province Chief. They may be attached by the Division to a given district or province for a special pacification mission. In this case, the operation usually comes under the control of the visiting regimental commander who almost invariably outranks the District Chief.

⁹AID province report, Chau Doc, 30 April 1965.

¹⁰"USOM Province Representatives Guide," op. cit., pp. 106-107.

The National Police are also a part of the pacification apparatus, and function under the administrative command of the Province or District Chief. The police role will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

Pacification cadres. The key element in the pacification apparatus, vis-a-vis the civilian population, is the pacification cadre, who works directly with the rural people. The evolving and varied concepts of the cadre's role, and the proliferation of various cadre systems will be discussed in Chapter VII.

III. UNITED STATES PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION

It has been noted that the early phases of the strategic hamlet program had started ahead of the United States buildup in the provinces. The first "advisors-in-residence" on the provincial level were the MAAG (later called MACV) Sector Advisor and his staff. USOM Representatives took up residence in most provinces by late 1962. As the American buildup continued, United States Information Service (USIS) officers acquired field offices serving one or more of the provinces. The staffs of both MACV and USOM have been greatly enlarged since 1962.

A. The MACV Sector Team

There has been steady buildup of the American military advisory staff at the province level. The key man is always

MACV PROVINCIAL SECTOR ADVISORY TEAM

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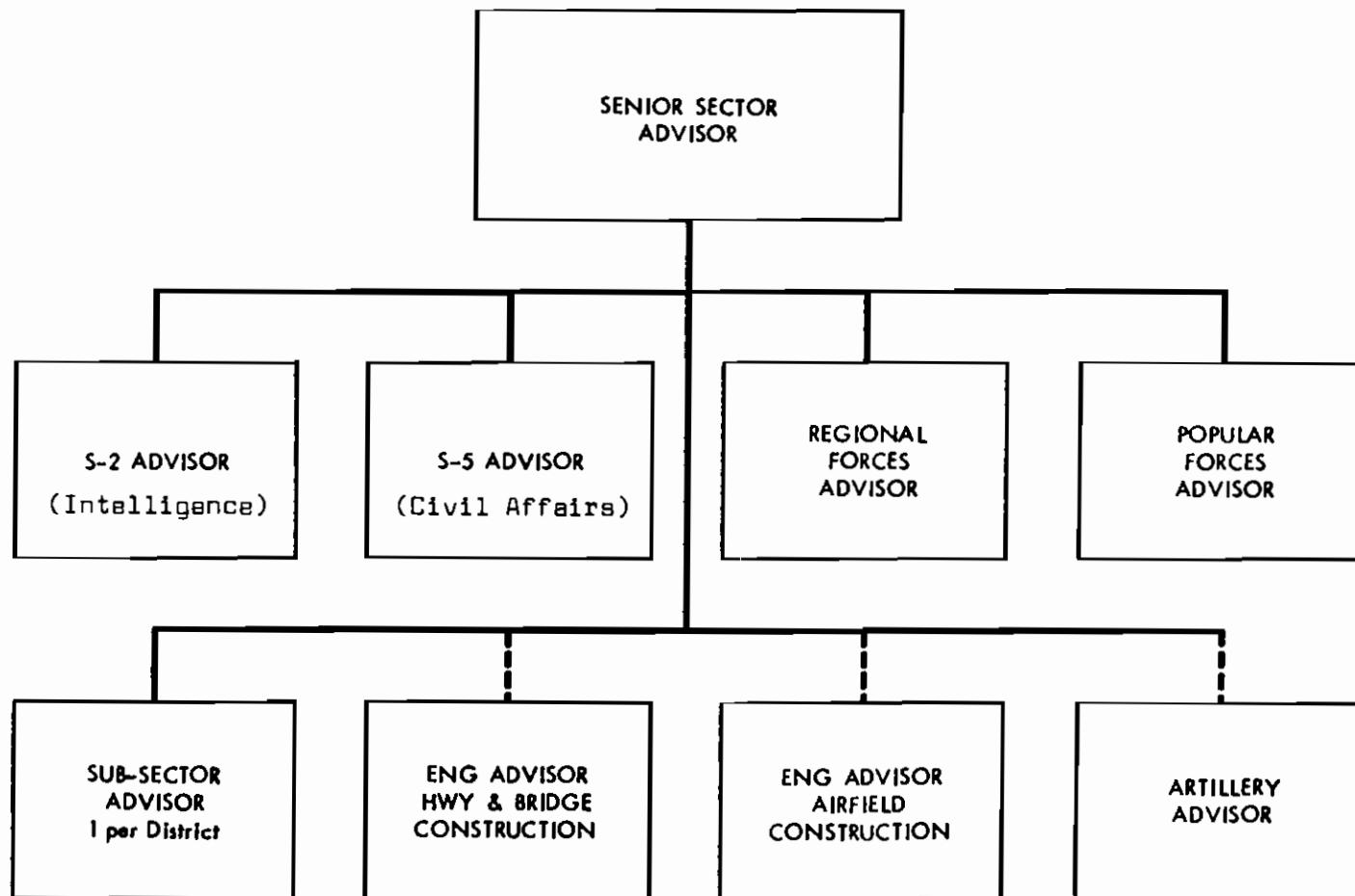


Figure 7

the Sector Advisor usually with a rank of major or lieutenant colonel. During the earlier period he handled most advisory duties directly, with special assistants for intelligence and Popular/Regional Forces training--plus a radio operator and office personnel.

The Sector Advisor serves as a personal military counselor to the Province Chief, often making field inspections with him. The Sector Advisor participates in planning and project approvals for pacification as a member of the provincial Coordinating Committee (to be discussed later). His role has been to foster the improvement of training and operating effectiveness of province armed forces, intelligence, and pacification activities as a whole. As his own staff has increased, supervision of his subordinates has become a major responsibility. The buildup continued into 1964, and Civil Affairs (S-5) Advisors assumed many of the duties related to pacification.

Starting in 1964, the creation of sub-sector advisory teams --attached to district headquarters--brought the MACV advisory role into more direct, daily contact with the actual process of pacification. These five man teams regularly support the provincial USOM Representative by assisting in the activities of approval and inspection of social and economic projects. The Sub-Sector Advisor is officially authorized to "act as United States area coordinator" in the sub-sector, covering all

US-related programs.¹¹

In 1965, Viet-Cong preference for Americans as targets necessitated the addition of American security forces in the provincial MACV. By the end of the year, the headquarters establishment was staffed by about 30 to 40 Americans in the larger provinces. By then there were advisory specialists in intelligence, regional forces, popular forces, civil affairs, and medical aid--occasionally further augmented by engineering and artillery advisors. In early 1966, sub-sector teams were at work in 118 of the 238 districts in South Vietnam.¹² Each headquarters unit maintains a pool of Vietnamese interpreters procured through ARVN.

B. USOM Provincial Staff

The urgency of the rural pacification effort and the enormous American financial and material input prompted USOM to furnish province level representatives to expedite the program. Unlike many advisors, the USOM Representative had significant power to approve, reject, or propose projects, on a day to day basis. The Representative is expected to be a generalist, with flexibility and experience in working under difficult administrative conditions.

¹¹ MACV memo MACJ 32, 14 August 1964.

¹² Interview with Major Arthur Brown, Department of Defense, 1965.

His prime role is intended to be an administrative catalyst, who could encourage more dynamic and effective administration in pacification. The day to day contact with pacification projects in the field gives the USOM Representative a valuable reporting and control function for both American superior and Vietnamese counterparts.

The initial assignment of area development officers as province representatives for pacification began in mid-1962. For more than a year, however, some Representatives were handling two or more provinces, shuttling from one to the other. By mid-1964, each province had its representative and most of these had received American assistants. USOM assigns a Vietnamese "area specialist" to each American. These men function as interpreters and sometimes as administrative assistants, depending on individual abilities. An increasing number of USOM Representatives have been able to communicate in Vietnamese or French, since the program began in 1962. In many provinces, key Vietnamese have become fluent in English and use it in dealing with USOM and MACV. In late 1964, some provinces began receiving Vietnamese USOM personnel trained as rural technicians who worked closely with provincial technical services (for a typical USOM province staff see Figure 8).

Assignment of Filipino experts in community development in 1964 increased the USOM capability, particularly in the self-help program. In many areas, International Voluntary Services (IVS) had field personnel at work in agriculture,

health, and education. IVS is the prototype on which the better known Peace Corps was patterned.

The Regional offices of USOM send American specialists into the provinces regularly. They maintain continuing advisory relations with the appropriate province technical services and consult with the USOM Representative. USOM/Public Safety has the largest network of rural advisors, with one to a province in some areas.

Teams of rural experts from the Republic of China are sometimes assigned for a year or more to agricultural development projects. USOM nursing advisors are beginning to serve in province hospitals, in an effort to upgrade the quality and efficiency of these institutions. Although not directly responsible to the USOM Representative, the nursing advisor will provide counsel on province health programs. The pressures of the Province Representative's advisory role have eased considerably with the increase of USOM specialists and assistants.

C. Other United States Agencies

Many provinces have United States Special Forces teams operating in specially assigned areas, who are not under the direct command of MACV. USIS personnel visit every province at least every week in pacification-related information activities. CIA representatives also deal with Vietnamese officials concerning programs related to pacification. United States voluntary agencies operate social welfare programs in many provinces, often in conjunction with USOM and MACV activities.

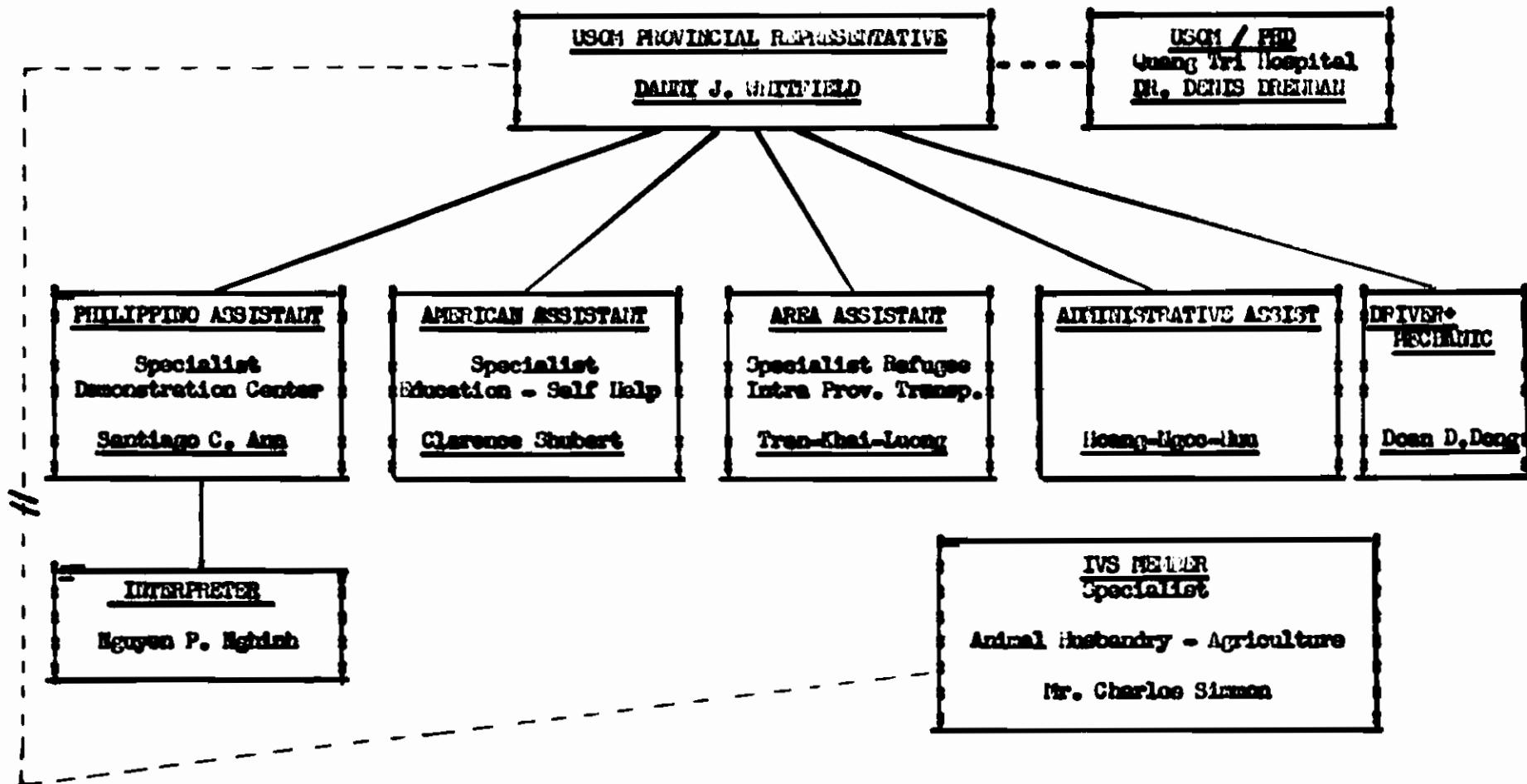


Figure 8
USOM Provincial Staff
Quang Tri Province

D. A New Experiment: The United States Team Captain

The obvious need for coordination of the United States provincial advisory effort led to the establishment of a "team captain" in three provinces (Binh Thuan, Darlac, and Dinh Tuong), in May, 1965. The team captain serves as the coordinator of all American programs, without command authority, but with special status as the key American in dealing with the Province Chief.¹³ The guideline for determining whether the USOM or MACV Representative is made team captain depends on the security situation and consequent pacification emphasis. Started on a three month trial basis, two of the captains have been retained, and Washington has recommended extension of the plan to another province.¹⁴

IV. VIETNAMESE-UNITED STATES ORGANIZATION

Agreements. The American provincial advisory system exists on the basis of aid agreements negotiated at the national level and confirmed in the province. As a method to speed the flow of assistance to the villages, the Vietnamese and Americans established a new policy of providing money directly to provincial pacification programs in lump sums to be expended by the joint Vietnamese-American apparatus there. Regular Vietnamese government funds and foreign aid resources had

¹³ Washington Post, 25 May 1965, p. 1.

¹⁴ Interview with Source Number 50, State Department, 1966.

normally required years between the appropriation and the expenditure dates. In the new system, funds or materials could be released in a matter of minutes. Joint Vietnamese-American teams, containing members of the armed forces and civilian officials, visit the province and discuss the budget proposals for the pacification effort. The general guidelines, noting the types of programs to be conducted and the financial and material resources to be employed, are used in advance by the province authorities to plan the particular provincial requirements. A suitable agreement is drawn up in Saigon and signed at the national and provincial levels.

Coordinating Committee. The agreement is administered by the Coordinating Committee (sometimes called Province Rehabilitation Committee) comprised of the Province Chief, who is Activity Manager, and the MACV and USOM advisors. In the first pacification agreements of 1962 and 1965, the Province Chief and the MACV and USOM Representatives had to approve requests before the committee. In 1965, the American approval role was removed by the action of the Director of USOM. The role still was kept in some provinces by request of local Vietnamese authorities. USOM has asked for return of the approval system for the 1966 agreements.

The earlier agreements listed separate columns noting which were USOM and which were Government of Vietnam funds. Later, all funds were placed under the Vietnamese finance

system. The Military Assistance Program requirements are usually negotiated without the approval of the USOM Representative, although the details of such agreements are available to him. Day to day allocations of MAP resources often include USOM approval, presumably as a courtesy. The usual practice between the American advisors has been to interfere as little as possible with the special field of the other.

Meetings of the Coordinating Committee are regular in some provinces, but in others the committee often is supplanted by less formal decisionmaking regarding some question. On day to day questions in the social and economic area (approval of self-help projects, minor shipments of materials, etc.) the crowded schedule of the Quang Nam Province Chief was eased by meetings attended by the Pacification Bureau Chief (as his substitute), the USOM Representative, and the civil affairs advisors of MACV. Formal committee meetings were reserved for an accumulation of higher policy matters, and often even these were settled by ad hoc conversations over tea in the Province Chief's office.

Many province representatives use office space adjoining or in the pacification bureau, thus facilitating quick concurrence on questions as they arise.

Material resources. In addition to funds, a wide variety of materials and commodities are made available for hamlet programs. The USOM and MAP agreements include the following:

barbed wire, steel pickets (fence posts), weapons, ammunition, communications equipment, wheat, corn, fertilizer, United States Army surplus tools, cement, roofing, cloth, ad infinitum. Province warehouses have been constructed and supervised storage and shipment systems have been devised in most provinces. Several provinces solved early acute transportation shortages through the use of rebuilt World War II type 2½ ton trucks. In 1964, USOM distributed as many as ten new 5 ton trucks to larger provinces. Quang Nam province asked for regular military transportation occasionally, usually meeting with little success. The decay of rural security in 1965 has led to reliance on air transport in many areas.

CHAPTER VII

PACIFICATION OPERATIONS

In order to convey the perspective of a province pacification campaign as a whole, Chapter VII will survey the changing program of Quang Nam province. Significant campaigns in other provinces will be examined briefly. The cadre role in pacification will be analyzed, including the changes of approach beginning in late 1965. Pacification operations will be critically analyzed in this chapter, but a more comprehensive evaluation will be presented in Chapter XIII.

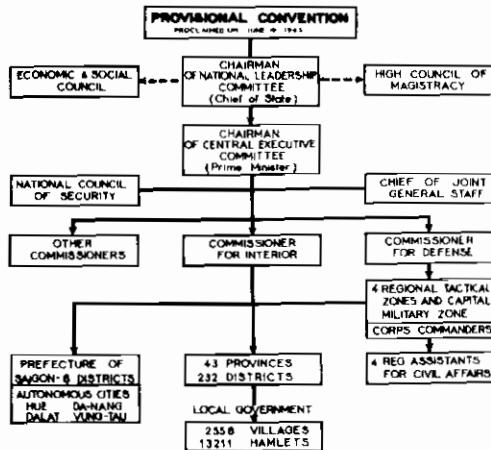
I. GEOGRAPHICAL EMPHASES AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

As American support of the strategic hamlet program developed, special areas for high intensity pacification were chosen through joint Vietnamese and American planning. The first was Operation Sunrise, which had begun in March, 1962 in a Viet-Cong controlled area of Binh Duong province north of Saigon.¹ The "Delta Plan" included ten key provinces which were Viet-Cong dominated or seriously threatened. The provinces formerly held by the Viet-Minh in Central Vietnam

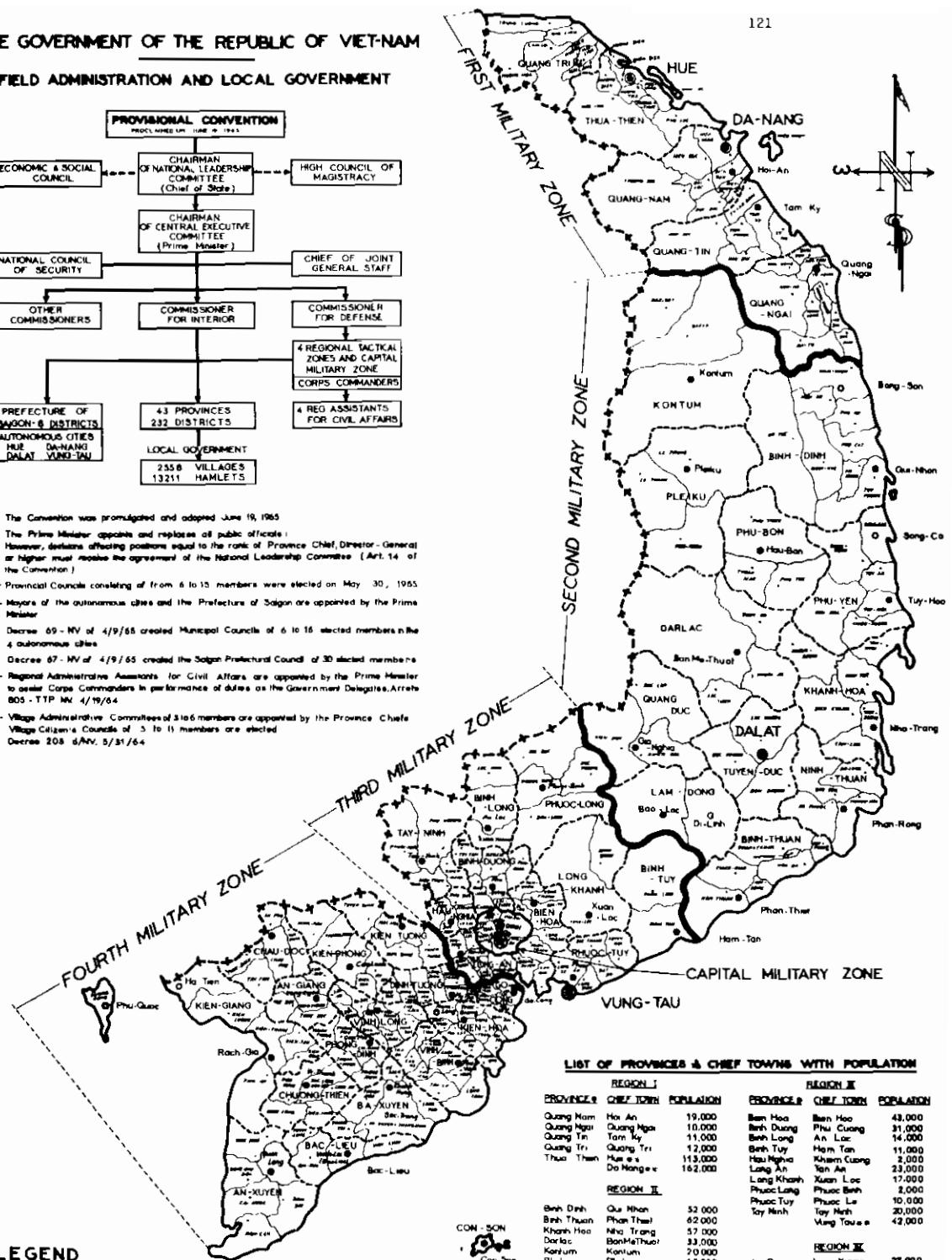
¹Operation Sunrise is described and critically analyzed by Bernard Fall in The Two Vietnams, op. cit., pp. 374-379.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

FIELD ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



- 1 - The Convention was promulgated and adopted June 19, 1965
 - 2 - The Prime Minister appoints and replaces all public officials.
However, definite executive positions equal to the rank of Province Chief, Director-General or higher must receive the agreement of the National Leadership Committee (Art. 14 of the Convention)
 - 3 - Provincial Councils consisting of from 6 to 15 members were elected on May 30, 1965
 - 4 - Mayors of the autonomous cities and the Prefecture of Saigon are appointed by the Prime Minister
Decree 69 - NV of 4/9/65 created Municipal Councils of 6 to 16 elected members in the 4 autonomous cities
Decree 67 - NV of 4/9/65 created the Saigon Prefectural Council of 30 elected members
 - 5 - Regional Administrative Assemblies for Civil Affairs are appointed by the Prime Minister to assist Corps Commanders in performance of duties of the Government Delegates.Arrebs 803 - TTP NV 4/19/64
 - 6 - Village Administrative Committees of 3 to 6 members are appointed by the Province Chiefs
Village Citizens' Councils of 3 to 11 members are elected
Decree 208 - NV 5/31/64



LEGEND

-  NATIONAL BOUNDARY
 REGIONAL BOUNDARIES
 PROVINCE BOUNDARIES
 DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
 NATIONAL CAPITAL &
AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE
 AUTONOMOUS CITY
 PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OR
CHEF TOWN
 OTHER IMPORTANT COMMUNITIES

Figure 9.

UNOFFICIAL AS OF AUGUST 1965
NSCOM / PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

LIST OF PROVINCES & CHIEF TOWNS WITH POPULATION					
REGION I		REGION II			
PROVINCE	CHIEF TOWN	POPULATION	PROVINCE	CHIEF TOWN	POPULATION
Quang Nam	Hue	19,000	Bien Hoa	Bien Hoa	48,000
Quang Ngai	Quang Ngai	10,000	Bien Dong	Phu Cuong	31,000
Quang Tin	Tam Ky	11,000	Bien Lang	An Lac	14,000
Quang Tri	Quang Tri	12,000	Bien Thuy	Hem Tan	11,000
Thua Thien	Hue's e	113,000	Hai Nghia	Kham Cuong	3,000
	Da Nang	162,000	Lan An	Tan An	23,000
REGION II			Lang Khoai	Xuan Loc	17,000
Binh Dinh	Quy Nhon	32,000	Phuoc Long	Phuoc Nhieu	10,000
Binh Thuan	Phan Thiel	62,000	Phuoc Tuy	Tay Ninh	20,000
Khanh Hoa	Nha Trang	57,000		Tay Ninh	42,000
Dak Lak	Bon Me Thuot	33,000			
Kontum	Kontum	20,000			
Perkru	Plenkru	15,000	REGION III		
Quang Anh	Bao Loc	11,000	An Giang	Long Xuyen	27,000
Quang Binh	Quang Binh	23,000	An Xuyen	Quang Trach	33,000
Quang Doan	Hau Bon	3,000	Ba Xuyen	Kham Phung	45,000
Quang Gia	Tuy Hoa	25,000	Bien Hoa	Vinh Linh	20,000
Quang Ngai	Gia Nghia	3,000	Chau Doc	Chau Doc	11,000
Quang Tuy	Dac Lata	60,000	Chueng Then	V. Thanh	3,000
			Dinh Tung	My Tho	67,000
			Go Cong	Go Cong	18,000
			Kien Giang	Rang Gia	48,000
			Kien Hoa	Truc Giang	10,000
			Kien Phung	Can Gio	3,000
			Phu Nhieu	Thien	7,000
			Phuoc Dinh	Can Tho	77,000
			Vinh Phu	Vinh Phu	20,000
CAPITAL MILITARY ZONE					
PROVINCE	CAPITAL CITY	POPULATION			
Gia Dinh	Gia Dinh	78,000			

- Projected to July, 1965
• Autonomous City
• Administrative Delegation as of April 21, 1968

CHART 10000 POPULATION

also got intensive support: Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, and Quang Tin.² Provinces that had few security problems were allocated less support. Those provinces denoted as "critical" received priority treatment on all types of monetary and material assistance. American officials visited them more often and special weekly progress reports went to Washington.

The number of critical provinces varied from eight to as many as thirteen. Some were reclassified non-critical and others were added. Regulars on the list included: Long An, Kien Hoa, Binh Duong, Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, and Quang Tin. The classification was eliminated in late 1964 and the provinces around Saigon (as part of the Hop Tac plan) became the focus of special attention.

In 1964, a new strategy for non-military aid was introduced by the newly appointed USOM Associate Director for Operations, Dr. George K. Tanham. He proposed concentration of substantial economic assistance in rural areas where security was not yet a serious problem, thus facilitating operations and denying Viet-Cong supporters the benefits of increased prosperity. These areas would serve as examples of what could be done by a major effort to improve the life of the peasants.³

²Another of the early pacification campaigns involving substantial American support was Operation Sea Swallow in Phu Yen province in mid-1962. For a summary of the early months of the campaign see Warner, op. cit., pp. 204-216.

³Interview with George K. Tanham, 1966.

The four intensive pacification areas for 1966 include one such province: An Giang, which will be discussed later. The other three zones--Binh Dinh, the Hop Tac area, and the Danang special zone--are keyed to Viet-Cong concentrations and important government centers.

II. ANATOMY OF A PROVINCE CAMPAIGN:

QUANG NAM

The pacification campaign in Quang Nam is reviewed as an example of efforts and problems in other areas of Vietnam for several reasons (other than the writer's personal acquaintance with the situation).⁴ One of the larger provinces, it is much like other provinces in the central lowlands. There are both Highlanders and lowland Vietnamese. A special high priority campaign in a communist controlled district (Duc Duc) was conducted. A direct American pacification role is expressed in the Danang special zone under the Marines. Finally, although the province is largely controlled by the Viet-Cong today, the period up to mid-1964 was sufficiently free of Viet-Cong control to permit the development of a wide range of political, economic, and social activities. Given the sharp disparities of the three regions in South Vietnam, Quang Nam can probably be called as "typical" as any other major province. Specific

⁴Data for this chapter, unless otherwise cited by footnotes, is taken from the writer's observations and personal records while assigned to the province. Subsequent interviews and reports have provided more recent information.

Quang Nam programs will be further examined, along with those of various provinces, in the special subject Chapters VIII-X.

A. Strategic Hamlets: The "Self-sufficient" Phase (Ap Tu Tuc)

Quang Nam was well launched in the "self-sufficient" phase of the strategic hamlet program by the time MAP and AID funds began to arrive in January, 1963. Over 100 hamlets had been reported as "completed" (having fulfilled the six-point criteria). Most of these hamlets were built in secure areas close to roads or district headquarters. Peasants had been required to work a given number of days on the hamlet, the duration depending on the area, and in some places they were also assessed 1000 VN\$ (about \$10.00 U.S.) or bamboo for materials. In Quang Nam bamboo is always someone's property and it has a market value. In effect, the assessment of time and materials was a serious drain on the poorer peasant, who often must consume his entire rice crop just to survive.⁵ Few families were moved inside the walls of the hamlets because they were usually in a secure area. No funds were provided to cover the relocations at that time. Later these hamlets were included in the first phase of the nationally financed program, but there was no compensation for the construction of the fences and it is questionable that these relocated families

⁵ The average peasant in Central Vietnam is much poorer than his counterpart in the Delta, consuming 69 per cent of his crop for food. See Robert H. Stroup, Rural Income Expenditure: Sample Survey (Preliminary Report) Saigon: USOM, July, 1965), p. xxix.

QUANG NAM TINH ĐOAN 670

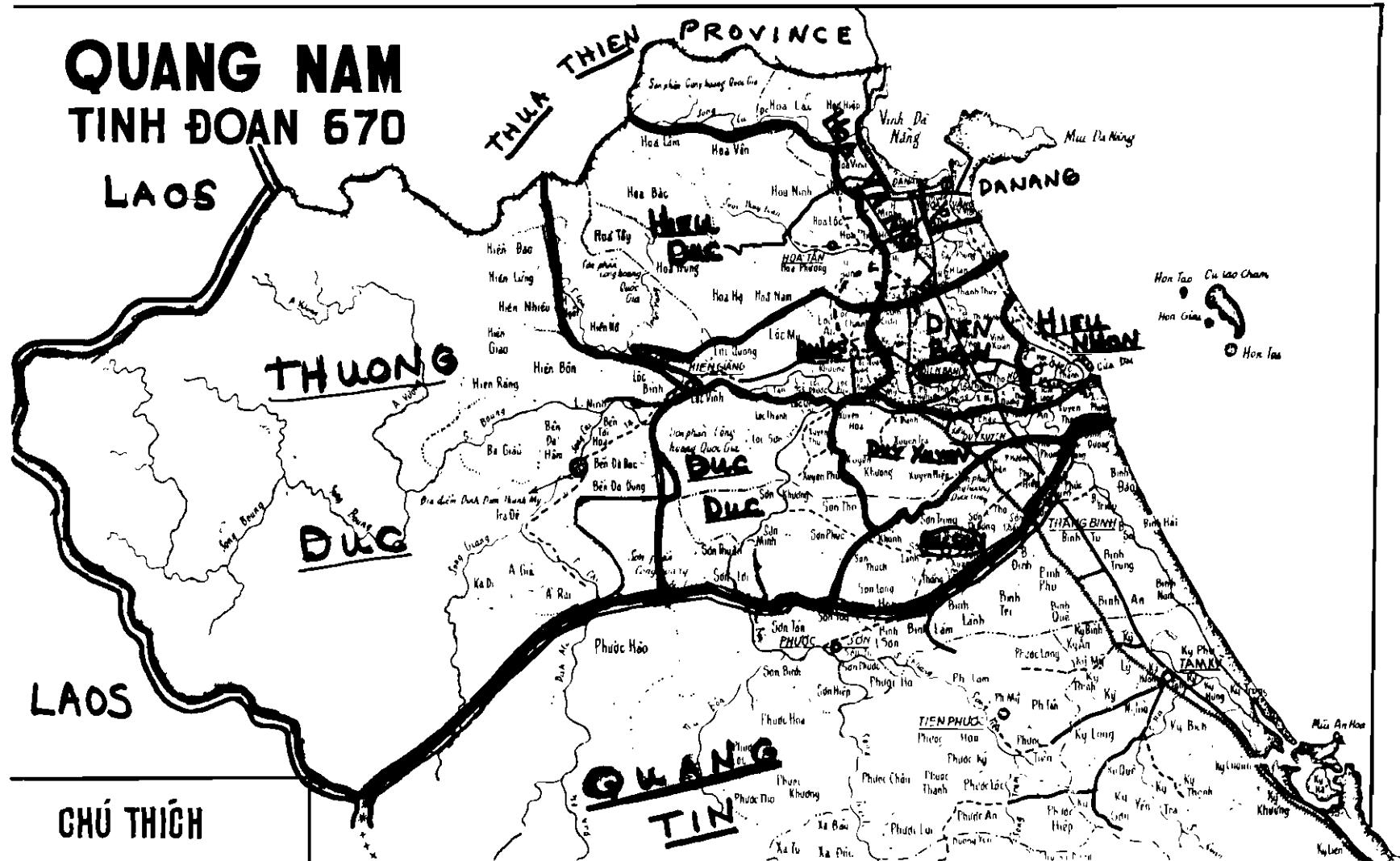


Figure 10. Quang Nam Province, with District and Village Boundaries.

were ever paid, since no promises were made at the time of their relocation. Civil servants and Civic Action cadres⁶ directed the organization and construction process.

Quang Tri province, relatively secure at the time, had reported completion of 411 of its 498 hamlets by January, 1963, done entirely by the populace and the regular civil officials.⁷ In Quang Tri and Quang Nam these hamlets were sometimes referred to among knowledgeable Americans as "paper hamlets." Their fences were built, but they were not yet defended by armed or trained militia, and there were incidents of Viet-Cong propaganda penetration.⁸

B. The Special An Hoa-Nong Son Campaign

One of the dreams of Ngo Dinh Diem was the development of a major industrial complex in western Quang Nam, built around the Nong Son coal mine, which is South Vietnam's only significant source of mineral energy.⁹ The An Hoa area, five miles to the north, was to be the site of coal-related industries--financed by French and West German interests.

⁶ Each province had a section of the National Civic Action Commission, organized in 1954 for the pacification efforts described in Chapter IV.

⁷ Vietnam's Strategic Hamlets, op. cit., p. 22.

⁸ These conditions in Quang Tri were described to the writer in visits to hamlets while he was assigned in that province October and November, 1962.

⁹ The mine produced 100,000 tons of coal in 1962 and it was planned to increase production to 250,000 tons by 1965. See Republic of Vietnam, Eight Years of the Ngo Dinh Diem Administration 1954-1962 (Saigon: October, 1962), p. 296.

The Government sought and received American backing for a top priority effort to pacify the 43 hamlets in the An Hoa-Nong Son area as a means of providing security for the economic project. The ARVN Second Division, quartered in Danang, began work in December, 1962. The ambitious Division Commander, Lam Van Phat (later famous for the bloodless coup of September 13, 1964), proceeded with the project--using an advance guarantee of American funds and the considerable resources of his Division.

Soldiers were positioned at strong points on the steep mountains that overlooked the hamlets in the valley below. To the west is mountainous jungle and to the immediate east a small but rugged range of mountains that cuts the valley off from the safety of the lowlands on the opposite coastal side. The area had a long history of relations with the communists and part of the famous "Interzone 5" of the Viet-Minh. It was the worst possible place to begin a pacification effort, in terms of working out from a secure base.

The new Duc Duc district had been created from uncontrolled areas of three other districts to encompass the An Hoa-Nong Son pacification effort. It had no cohesive administrative tradition, few internal transportation links, and no previous defense system. The province authorities had to handle the paperwork for the operation but had no executive role while the Second Division was in charge. The Division commander, eager to please Diem, accelerated the schedule for completion to a span of two and one-half months instead of six months, as

previously programmed. The Province Chief resented the Division commander's control over the operation and slowed its progress by delaying paperwork for fund releases. The Division commander's monopoly of province manpower resources for construction cadres delayed, in turn, pacification in other parts of the province.

The province government was required to send regular civil servants as "construction cadres," and 104 special recruits were hired for the same purpose and trained for 15 days. The expert Civic Action section of the ARVN Division helped the cadres learn to deal properly with the villagers.¹⁰ Cadre pay was 900 VN\$ per month, and a uniform was provided.

Census and defenses. Working in eight man teams, the cadres made a thorough census of each hamlet, specially noting the history of families having Viet-Cong relationships, land ownership, and house location. A photographic map of each hamlet was made, and a perimeter was drawn to determine the location of the double fence of barbed wire, separated by a moat filled with bamboo spikes. The maps and a summary of census data were mounted on displays in an operations center near the coal mine. Roads were improved for heavy vehicle use to facilitate delivery of construction materials and to permit rapid response of troops in case of Viet-Cong attack.

¹⁰ These military civic action cadres were the only cadres of any kind whom the writer ever found working in the villages while wearing the "black pajamas" of the peasants. All other male cadres wore western style clothes in Quang Nam.

Peasants provided the labor on the fences and moat and were promised .7 kilograms (about a pound and a half) of rice for each day's work. This payment for labor was a special dispensation, not typical of the regular hamlet program but it was deemed appropriate because a great deal of work was being demanded in a very short time.

Transportation problems prohibited full payment in the rice promised, and a resort to a compromise of one-third payment in wheat and two-thirds compensation in cash was arranged. Even then there was a delay of eight months before paperwork was received and approved by the province.

Relocation. All houses outside the fence were moved inside, with relocations in some hamlets running as high as 40 per cent of the hamlet population. The release agreement called for 1,290 relocations, but the total was over 2,000--forcing reduction in level of payments. Records were made of each house relocated, but payment depended on the arrival of these records in satisfactory condition at province headquarters for approval. Delays of four to six months were ascribed to "paperwork." It was later learned that the Province Chief had delayed the payments until the departure of the Second Division. Then he had the opportunity to embezzle sizable portions of the relocation funds, also including the compensation for construction of the fences.¹¹

¹¹Information received from local Vietnamese officials just before and after the November coup.

Armed defense. Two squads of volunteer militia for each hamlet (totalling more than 800 men for the area) were recruited and sent to Danang for two weeks of training by the Division. These costs were covered by American funds supplied through USOM and MACV. They were armed with carbines and shotguns. Self Defense Corps units were increased. The critical difference in security, however, was the presence of at least a regiment of the ARVN Division.

Hamlet leader training. Elections of hamlet officials were conducted after the cadres had screened out candidates with strong family ties to the Viet-Cong. Four elected officials from each hamlet attended a ten day training course to learn their new duties as leaders of the civil defense organization and intelligence system for their hamlet. They also were taught about government social and economic projects to be offered the hamlet population. The course was taught by province civil servants. Economic and social projects were conducted several months later, when the regular provincial pacification apparatus had been set up and the Division had turned over the campaign to province authorities.

The campaign clearly improved the security of the area and denied the Viet-Cong access to the hamlets. A civil guard unit had been sent to the area after the ARVN forces were removed at the end of the construction period. The Province Chief continued to retain cadres in the hamlets to work at

rooting out the Viet-Cong infrastructure (the secret organization within the hamlet), which, he maintained, had not yet been eliminated.

With the decline in government control of the area outside the hamlets after the soldiers left, the Viet-Cong slowly began to come back. The rapid deterioration of security in the entire province during 1964 affected the Duc Duc area, but the thoroughness of many of the defense aspects of the operation was demonstrated in the reduction of incidents and the willingness of the population to defend themselves when attacked was evident in 1963 and 1964.

While the campaign was a temporary tactical success it was a strategic failure. The site was too far away from the coast to be defended as part of a larger pacified area. Inadequate planning for documentation eventuated in broken public promises for prompt and full payment of the people and regular government services never were provided when the pacification period ended.

C. The Province-wide Strategic Hamlet Campaign

With the arrival of substantial funds via the province rehabilitation agreement at the end of January, 1963, the hamlet program took on new life. The initial agreement--including a special section for the An Hoa-Nong Son campaign--amounted to 26,164,700 VN\$ (about \$300,000 U.S.), and was designed to finance the first quarter of 1963. The Province

Chief preferred to go more slowly, using the haste of the Duc Duc operation as an example to avoid. He noted that the Duc Duc activity had drained the province of personnel resources that forced a slower pace for the regular campaign. All of the seven other District Chiefs (Hieu Nhon, the ninth district, was created out of Dien Ban later in 1963) were ready with their recommended locations and sequence for establishing the hamlets in their areas.

Using national criteria, the hamlets were classified by province officials according to security as follows: A Zone, secure; B Zone, contested; C Zone, enemy controlled. Under the nationally approved standards on which fund allocations were based, the formula was as follows: A Zone hamlets were authorized one squad of armed militiamen, a single fence with no barbed wire, and no funds for relocation; B Zone hamlets received two squads of militiamen, would have two fences, one of which was barbed wire, and could relocate an average of twenty families; C Zone hamlets were allowed two squads or more of militia, two barbed wire fences, and could relocate twenty or more families.

The Province Chief set a goal of completing about half the program by July of 1963, with the other half to be done by the end of the year.

Four hundred young men were hired as cadres (in addition to those from the Duc Duc campaign) and given two weeks training in the mechanics of organizing the people and

constructing the defenses. They worked as fifty eight-man teams distributed among the districts according to their population. The quality of personnel was low and supervision by the harried District Chiefs was loose.

The sequence of the hamlet activity was the same as that described in Duc Duc, except that the pace was slower. Barbed wire and steel pickets were several months late in arriving (Duc Duc had used military supplies controlled by the Division). When wire did arrive it was discovered that there were no funds or vehicles available to transport it. For months, field visits revealed neatly formed moats and earthen foundations for fences that were not there.

Many of the same hamlets received their squads of trained militiamen without weapons because the supply was not keyed to the rate of training. Only 5,000 of the 9,000 militiamen ever received arms. Two-way radios were programmed by USOM for all hamlets as a system to call in reinforcements and artillery support. Only a few hamlets received their sets during the construction period. The gravity of these errors in program coordination became costly to the peasants as Viet-Cong terrorists and propagandists chose these newly completed hamlets as special targets, since they had cooperated with the government. Often there were no fences, no weapons, and no radios to call for help as the Viet-Cong arrived. It became obvious later that these delays, often involving months of waiting, gave the Viet-Cong ample time to establish "agreements"

with the villagers not to oppose their propaganda or their calls for taxes and recruitment.

By midsummer of 1963 the barbed wire and pickets had begun to arrive--after a steady barrage of requests to Division and Corps headquarters in Danang. Transportation of MAP supplies got a big boost by USOM payments to local trucking contractors to haul the materials (although this was not an authorized USOM role).

The bottlenecks of paperwork continually obstructed the progress of pacification. There were province-wide delays in payments for relocation. Field checks indicated that the delays cost some peasant relocatees dearly. Some had borrowed at monthly rates of 5 per cent interest to cover relocation costs, but still had not been compensated six months later. The plan had called for immediate compensation during the move. The delays were the result of the cumbersome and complicated documentation system used by the Vietnamese. Corruption as another delaying factor will be described below.

Social and economic programs were introduced in the spring of 1963, focussing on the hamlets that had been completed. Fertilizer was distributed to all farmers in qualified hamlets. A pilot pig raising program, using American surplus corn for feed, was instituted for 250 families. USOM/Education provided for construction of 18 hamlet schools (42 classrooms) and the training of local villagers for teachers. There were many more calls for schools from other hamlets--an illustration of the

great desire and respect for learning among the peasants.

Political problems further complicated the administration of the hamlet campaign. Quang Nam has been a strong Buddhist province for centuries, and the 1963 crisis deeply affected popular feelings there. Considerable attention was given by the regime to the removal of Buddhist officials thought to be anti-administration. The three key pacification officials, including a Deputy Chief of Province, were removed for this reason. This brought central administration of the hamlet program, never strong, almost to a halt.

As the crisis deepened, evidence of embezzlement of pacification funds by the Province Chief and several District Chiefs was discovered. The Province Chief had directed subordinates to find means for taking money from the relocation funds. Problems of corruption came to a head in October, 1963, when falsified records on cement distribution were discovered in a routine check by the USOM Representative. The distribution implicated the Province Chief directly. USOM refused to approve further aid (except that of an emergency nature) and requested a government investigation. The coup brought removal of the Province Chief for political reasons. Despite confirmation of the irregularities, the man was never penalized in any way for his fraud.

Shortly before the November coup, the USOM Representative visited a district headquarters to discuss a forthcoming fertilizer distribution. He discovered a complete set of signed

receipts for the distribution, which was still months away. The District Chief, perhaps at the instance of higher authority, had allocated fertilizer to exactly 150 families in each village (about 1/8 of an average village's population) and secured their signatures in advance. The fertilizer, as jointly agreed in Saigon, was intended to be given in equal amounts to all farmers in each community, and it was finally distributed according to this approved formula.

The distribution plan that was discovered had provided for allocation of equal quantities for each village, regardless of its population or amount of land--a Vietnamese administrative inclination. The 150 families within each village apparently included only those who were supporting the regime politically--as opposed to the recalcitrant Buddhists.

Highlander program. The Release agreement allocated funds for the special care of 2000 Highlanders to be resettled in safe areas. As noted in Chapter III, the Katu tribe had undergone total removal from areas adjoining South Vietnamese villages starting in 1957. Forty-three Highlanders, all from a single village, chose not to follow the Viet-Cong into the deeper jungle areas. Mostly older men and women, these Highlanders were under the care of a Vietnamese Protestant minister near An Diem, the last Vietnamese settlement to the west before the jungle begins.

A United States Special Forces "A" team decided to begin a resettlement program, using these 43 people as contacts to bring in others. USOM assisted in the financial and material support for resettlement, underwriting the cost of all the new homes, a pig for every family, a rice ration, and a school.

The result of the effort to find other Highlanders was a complete failure. Occasional contacts were made with a few Katu but the only promising effort was ruined by a Vietnamese Air Force bombing attack on the area where the Special Forces had made the friendly contact. The huts were completely destroyed. It was claimed the area had been designated a "free zone" for air attacks.

In the summer of 1964, United States Special Forces closed the camp, returning the same 43 people to the care of the same Protestant preacher. By the end of the year the entire district (Thuong Duc), except for the district headquarters, had come under the control of the Viet-Cong. It should be noted that the long history of Katu disaffection with the Vietnamese and the French made it unlikely that any resettlement effort would succeed. The opportunity for winning the Katu to the Government side was when officials were in regular touch with approximately 8,000 of the tribe in 1955-1959 period. At that time, however, the government was not concerned about their steady removal by the Viet-Cong beginning in 1957, and there was no American program until 1963. The American province advisors had no success in arousing serious Vietnamese interest in the Highlander

problem, even though a staff of more than twenty Highlander cadres were on the province payroll (but doing other work) until 1964.

D. Post-Coup Pacification Efforts

The November 1 Revolution ended the Diem regime and created a temporary upsurge of relief and confidence in Quang Nam. Most of the joy was in the cities, however, and the rural areas waited to see what would happen. In remote areas, Viet-Cong political cadres moved in quickly, claiming credit for the overthrow of Diem and encouraging the people to tear down the hamlet fences and fortifications. In the north-western area of the province--due west of Danang--most of the fences were destroyed in a few days. USOM Rural Affairs in Saigon developed an emergency policy designed to build confidence in the new government, by permitting use of USOM funds on hand to catch up the rural programs uncompensated by the Diem regime.

The old Diemist Province Chief was removed the week following the coup after great pressure from Buddhists and students. When the new Province Chief arrived, ceremonies were held in key districts to pay the back salaries of 380 hamlet workers who had been on the job six months without pay. It was part of a national USOM effort to show the "good faith" of the new government. At the same time, three USOM ambulances were given to outlying districts. An intensive effort was made to pay relocated families, but lack of

documentation again deferred the critical problem for several more months.

Political and administrative changes, based on the unsettled Saigon climate, hampered decisive action. Within a month a capable ARVN colonel replaced the first revolutionary Province Chief and more personnel changes were made. But he, too, left within three months and his successor lacked administrative competence. The entire provincial government apparatus declined steadily in its performance from that point.

Rural Restoration

By December, the I Corps area, commanded from Danang, began a new pacification campaign on its own--in the absence of Saigon action--to substitute a plan for the defunct strategic hamlet program. "Rural Restoration" involved some very sound principles, starting with getting all the civil servants out into the rural areas to tell the people the plans of the new government and to conduct elections for village councils--the first since Diem's abolition of local elections in 1956. It did not, however, include any local planning in association with Americans. Unfortunately, adequate security against Viet-Cong propaganda efforts and intimidation was not provided at the same time. Its themes and programs were discarded once the New Life Hamlet program took its place.

Local Economic and Social Programs

Before the November coup, plans had already been devised in Quang Nam for the Development Phase of the strategic hamlet

program which had been planned as the followup phase to the construction period. The joint pacification budget committee from Saigon had been scheduled to visit the province and examine the development plans, but the 1963 coup had interfered.

In place of the Construction Cadres, who were underpaid and underqualified, a new Economic Cadre (Kinh Te) concept had been developed in Quang Nam. These cadres were intended as semi-permanent representatives of the various province technical services to the various villages, representing the interests of each to the other. The cadre was to be a "living link" between the government and the people. He would serve as a catalyst for community action and be an agent for government assistance. By December the cadres had all been recruited, one for each of the 120 villages in Quang Nam. They were given 17 days of training by the various pacification officials and technical services chiefs, then sent to the field in teams to work with the Rural Restoration campaign. They were paid 1500 VN\$ (about \$18,00 U.S.) a month. Most had a ninth grade education or more. Unfortunately many had not been reared in a village (although this was part of the job requirement) and some were not at home with peasants. A later recruitment effort was aimed at getting outstanding farmers as cadres, to serve in their own districts after the training period. They were more successful. They were older men, and though less educated, they were familiar with the peasant viewpoint.

One of the International Voluntary Services men assigned to the province agreed to work with USOM as an advisor to these cadres. Trained in agricultural extension methods at Ohio State University, he worked to encourage, inspire, and improve the work of these cadres.

The cadres were supervised by district cadre chiefs and selection of program emphases for each month was made by a cadre control committee, including several technical services chiefs and the USOM Representative. In the six months after their training they stimulated requests for several hundred self-help projects such as wells, schools, bridges, etc., by living and working in the villages. They were each loaned a new bicycle, a mosquito net, and a brief case. The cadres organized 64 young farmer's clubs, 16 4-T (like 4-H) clubs for boys, volleyball leagues with 376 teams (USOM supplied the initial ball and net for each), distributed thousands of fruit trees, and generally tried to make the government presence in the village respected and supported by the people.

Other projects were developed by the province to support the field operation of these cadres. A dozen trucks in the motor pool were kept busy shuttling materials to various project sites for construction. Six motorbikes were purchased in order to aid the coordination of materials deliveries and the distribution of documents. A special section in the pacification bureau for self-help projects included three construction

experts to analyze the proposed plans and to check the quality of construction. Unfortunately the construction outran the inspectors, and many substandard buildings were completed. A pre-cast concrete yard was put into operation to assist village self-help projects and a nursery, with 40,000 fruit trees for later distribution to farmers, was begun.

An efficiency study of the Hamlet Bureau led to the development of a streamlined management information system, involving printed, bi-lingual and color-coded forms for various activities. A pacification operations center was tied by telephone to the military Tactical Operations Center. MACV advisors led in the establishment of a single center for all intelligence systems in the province. Control boards in the pacification center contained data on work loads and schedules for the finance and logistics activities. Although the system greatly facilitated the enlarged operations, breakdowns in paperwork and supply were frequent.

Twenty of the economic cadres were girls. It was decided that all the girls would specialize as "home improvement" workers. Two Saigon experts gave them a two-week course in farm and home skills, and the province had its first, and Vietnam's largest, staff of home improvement workers. They were assigned to various districts in pairs, and went to work organizing women's clubs and giving demonstrations in food preparation and preservation, child care, and home hygiene.

Quang Nam Pacification Programs in 1964

SECURITY OPERATIONS	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL	
Relocation of families	Self-help projects	NACO
Highlanders	A. Schools	A. Pig-corn program
Combat youth	B. Roads and bridges	B. Village credit unions
Village police	C. Wells	C. Farmer's Assoc. warehouses
Radio communications	D. Health facilities	D. Dist. NACO cadres
Family census	E. Conference halls	
	F. Hamlet offices	
	G. Markets	
	H. Dams	
	I. School repairs	
	J. Institutions	
		Animal Husbandry
		A. Chickens-flocks
		B. Livestock center
		C. Cadres
	Elementary Education	
INFORMATION-PSYOPS		
Radio station	A. New units/teachers	Forestry
Radio receivers	B. Self-support com.	
Drama teams	C. School textbooks	A. Self-help tree planting
Agitprop teams	D. Wells and toilets	B. Charcoal kiln
Hamlet movies		
Administrative training for officials		
Rewards for Viet-Cong officials	A. Village level staffs	Fishing
Rewards for weapons	B. Hamlet workers	A. Fish ponds
	C. Medcat teams	B. Fishing equipment
	D. Hospital improvement	C. Boat motors
	E. Village dispensaries	D. Motor training
Open Arms		
		Public Works
ADMINISTRATION		
Gasoline and diesel	A. Dams and dredging	A. Precast concrete yard
Vehicle pool	B. Pumps	B. Tool kits
Warehouses	C. Windmills	
Repair pool	D. Survey teams	
Mobile Action Cadres		Economics Section
Headquarters staff		
Indemnification for field personnel (KIA)		
		Agriculture Services
	A. Young farmer's clubs	A. Community industry center
	B. 4-T youth	B. Sericulture extension program
	C. Home improvement	
	D. Fruit tree nursery	
	E. Secondary crops	
	F. Garden seeds	
	G. Gift fertilizer	
		Youth Section
		A. Hamlet volleyball
		B. Aid to Scouts, etc.
		C. College student vol. work proj.
	Joint Projects	
	District demonstration centers	

Figure 11

More than twenty clubs were organized and eventually USOM supplied sixteen sewing machines for hamlet sewing classes.

Information Programs

In an effort to build greater contact with the hamlet population, several local information programs were assisted by USOM, USIS, and other American agencies. These included ten drama teams (travelling around the hamlets with music and short plays), showing of movies monthly in many hamlets, and the building of a 250 watt radio station. The most significant program was the Open Arms Policy (Chieu Hoi). This was a campaign to win the Viet-Cong back to the government fold and provide them assistance for a new start by learning a trade and returning to their hamlet. By 1964, an Open Arms center had been constructed, and several returnees each month were coming in. But the steady Viet-Cong buildup in the province increasingly hampered the program. Another serious problem was the lack of understanding and appreciation of the Open Arms program among key province officials, who gave little attention to its promotion.

After Saigon began recovering from the coup of January, 1964, the New Life Hamlet program was launched in Quang Nam. It was the national successor to the old strategic hamlet program. Considerable revision had eased the harsher requirements of the old program. No one was to be forced to relocate his home. The six points were changed--as noted in Chapter V. There was

to be a much heavier emphasis on economic and social development and an effort to strengthen and expand the strategic hamlets organized so far. The general stress was supposed to be quality rather than quantity in hamlet-building, better training of officials, more careful work to destroy the Viet-Cong political infrastructure in the hamlets, and more sensitive response to peasant attitudes as a whole.

Planning. Secretary McNamara's visit to Vietnam in early 1964 created a rash of planning by Vietnamese to spend the 40 million dollars he said the American would supply for civilian counterinsurgency programs. Quang Nam's Province Chief, by this time the third replacement of the man under Diem, set his military and civilian planners to work to prepare a comprehensive pacification plan covering the next three years, and including anything the service chiefs wanted. They had only two weeks to complete the plan. The province itself had no time to reconcile the plans submitted by the various sections. MACV and USOM representatives were not asked to participate. There was no time.

The result was a 437,000,000 VN\$ program for one year--so unwieldy and unrealistic that it was never even discussed in Saigon. (According to reports of other USOM field personnel, planning elsewhere was being conducted under similar conditions.) A similar exercise was repeated by the Government about two months later and again most USOM advisors were not consulted in

the field or in Saigon about the planning for the various technical service budgets.

Despite these expensive delays in planning, the Quang Nam economic and social operations continued to gain momentum, based on locally concocted development plans framed before the death of Diem. The agricultural and animal husbandry divisions in Quang Nam had asked for and obtained (from the provincial Coordinating Committee) the most complete field staffs in Vietnam at that time, functioning as technical support personnel to assist the multi-faceted economic cadre operations. In the absence of directives from Saigon the USOM Representative had requested guidance and received informal approval from Vietnamese and American technical advisors in Saigon for the scores of programs that were actually in operation. The funds left over from earlier agreements made it possible for these local programs to continue. (More than 60 million piasters had been directly budgeted for pacification).

As the Saigon ministries and other bureaus recovered from the political removals and shifts, the national New Life Hamlet Permanent Bureau began to function. This resulted in the disapproval of many of the projects started in Quang Nam on the grounds that they were not part of some nationally authorized program. Some of the programs were curtailed or shut down by the end of 1964. However, a surprising number survived and were fused into other nationally approved programs by the Saigon budget team when it visited Quang Nam in March, 1965.

Hamlet construction. The critical failing of the efforts in Quang Nam following the coup was the absence of any comprehensive consolidation or construction plan for securing the rural areas from increasing Viet-Cong intrusions. While province, division, and corps officials ordered and reordered comprehensive planning, only irregular, incomplete, and superficial pacification efforts were attempted in Quang Nam.

Throughout 1964, the Second Division had maintained its Fifth Regiment in sweep operations in the lowland areas west of the railroad. The eastern portion of the province was assigned to the Civil Guard. These ARVN sweeps were not coordinated with province pacification, however, and provincial authorities had no control over the ARVN movements. Provincial authorities considered the ARVN plan wasted motion.¹²

The "Four Corners" Operation. The second new Province Chief after the November coup helped initiate in January, 1964, a program to pacify a small but vital area 12 miles west of Danang. The 17-hamlet region is known as the "four corners" because four districts meet at a point surrounded by five villages--all of them deeply involved with the Viet-Cong. This was their center of power in the lowlands. It conveniently (for the Viet-Cong) borders the mountains and straddles a quick water route to Danang twelve miles away. The Province Chief asked for a comprehensive program of pacification, involving the long term presence of ARVN troops coordinated with intensive

¹²Briefing by Source Number 53, ARVN, 1964.

efforts of all provincial civilian servies. Locally, USOM and MACV pledged cooperation and the Second Division agreed to provide the troops. Twenty-five different civilian programs were developed for application in this area. Maternity clinics, health stations, schools, and markets were to be built. Hamlet officials were to be carefully trained. Census projects and resources control were to be scrupulously carried out. The people could talk to the officials about the Viet-Cong because they would be protected. This was the plan.

Before the various service chiefs and the USOM Representative could get into the area for the preliminary survey, the troops were pulled out on an unrelated "search and kill" mission elsewhere. The Viet-Cong immediately moved back in and punished those who had begun to cooperate. For a total of four times in three months, civilian and military forces moved into the same 17 hamlets, and each venture ended in failure for the same reason: the withdrawal of previously committed ARVN forces. Appeals by MACV and USOM advisors to their higher echelons got no action.

Subsequent pacification projects were clearly military in objective and method. In mid-1964, the MACV Sector Advisor and USOM Representative were asked to approve the release of barbed wire and pickets that had already been installed in 32 hamlets along the railroad in the province. The main purpose was the security of the railroad rather than protection of the people in the hamlets. No planning or coordination for economic and

social development had been attempted. Installation of wire and pickets was the only program activity.

By May, 1965, six pacification plans, mostly centered on securing Highway 1, had been started and given up.¹³ The Viet-Cong had extended its hold all the way to the ocean by early 1965, killing three economic cadres in the once peaceful fishing village of Cam An, near Hoi An, the province capital. Intense pacification efforts were conducted in the vicinity of the province capital after December, 1964, only to be answered by the Viet-Cong who shelled Hoi An itself in February, 1965.¹⁴

National and provincial authorities had begun to impose more careful completion criteria and inspection techniques following the November coup. Consequently, many hamlets were reclassified as not "complete," in terms of the more stringent six points of the New Life Hamlet Plan. The 450 completions (out of 537 hamlets at that time) were listed in the November report, based on pre-coup estimates.¹⁵ By April, 1964 the number of completed hamlets had decreased to 346. The deterioration of security and more careful inspections pressed the number steadily downward until only twelve hamlets were rated as completed in March, 1965.¹⁶

In November, 1964 one of the most severe floods in the

¹³ Interview with Warren Parker, USOM, 1965.

¹⁴ AID province report, Quang Nam, February, 1965.

¹⁵ AID province report, Quang Nam, November, 1963.

¹⁶ AID province report, Quang Nam, March, 1965.

history of the province submerged almost the entire lowland area for a week. More than 7,000 people are estimated to have drowned or starved in the following month.¹⁷ Government and American facilities were devoted to relief operations that clearly indicated the Government's concern for the people.¹⁸ When the floods receded, however, the Viet-Cong managed to come back more strongly than ever, and steadily increased until after the arrival of American Marines in Danang in March, 1965. Once again, the necessity for protection as the context for other public services was demonstrated in the aftermath of the flood.

E. United States Combat Forces: Pacification in the Danang

Special Sector

Within a few weeks after the Third Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) had established its position circling the air base in 1965, units were already moving steadily inland among the hamlets in northern Quang Nam. The Marines were assigned the role of pacifying the hamlets surrounding the air base to a depth of several miles. This area was designated the Danang Special Sector.

Coordination of all Marine operations in the I Corps area was effected through the establishment of the Joint Coordinating Council for Civic Action at Danang. The Council includes Viet-

¹⁷ Interview with Francis Savage, USOM, 1966.

¹⁸ USOM Representative, Warren Parker, and Francis Savage, his assistant, were awarded the Vietnamese Medal of Merit for their role in flood relief.

namese officers and officials of the National ministry of reconstruction, the United States Consul from Hue, MACV, USOM and USIS representatives. A permanent USOM Representative has been assigned as economic advisor to the MAF.¹⁹

After considerable confusion in the initial weeks, a pattern of village operations was worked out in close cooperation with the Chief of Hoa Vang district.²⁰ The District Chief himself chooses the villages and the sequence of the pacification operations.

Before the operation to secure a village, leaflets are dropped asking the people to get into the open fields for safety, so they can freely hit the Viet-Cong in tunnels around the houses and in hedgerows. After taking the village, the Marines operate a medical aid station for several months and train local girls as nurses, who take over as permanent staff. Food is handed out to those in need.²¹

Security inside the village is provided by province Regional Forces, while the Marines guard outer approaches. A quick census is made by pacification cadres and the village administrator begins to discover the other personal and public needs of the people. Commodities from USOM and CARE are provided for these individual needs.

¹⁹ Col. Norman R.K. Stanford, "Bamboo Brigades," Marine Gazette, Vol. 50, No. 3. (March, 1966), p. 43.

²⁰ Interview with Major Marc A. Moore, United States Marine Corps, former Battalion Operations Officer, III MAF, 1966.

²¹ Ibid.

Marine construction equipment is used to set up building projects, and USOM materials are provided for the people to construct their own schools and dispensaries. The most popular innovations have been the playgrounds, public showers, and latrines.

After an initial period of popular caution, the populations of the pacified villages have begun to grow, with refugees from Viet-Cong areas moving into the protected area.²² With the Marines as a powerful spearhead, the pacification effort in the area appears to be well begun. As the villages are made safe, security duties are turned over to local Vietnamese forces, and the Marine units move outward from the secure villages into areas under Viet-Cong control.

F. Summary Evaluation of Pacification in Quang Nam

In addition to the evaluation that follows in Chapter XIII, a retrospect on the Quang Nam experience is appropriate at this point.

By the time the American advisors had been in Quang Nam long enough to understand the situation, the Buddhist crisis had monopolized the attention of province officials. After the coup, political instability and the consequent administrative paralysis continued through 1964 and 1965.

Given these unplanned events, it is unlikely that the management of pacification could have been adequate for its task.

²²Ibid.

It is surprising, in fact, that so much was accomplished--apart from security programs (which had failed completely)--in 1964.

The government fought the wrong kind of war in Quang Nam during 1963 by focussing on building fortress-like hamlets in the remote Duc Duc district instead of countering the comparatively weak subversion efforts among the hamlets along the coast. The hamlet construction cadres were not trained or skilled in identifying the secret Viet-Cong organizations within the hamlets. This task required well trained police and a good intelligence network which the province did not have. Instead, the province authorities (and the Americans) in 1963 settled for visible signs of pacification--fences and moats--instead of the destruction of the hamlet infrastructure of the communists.

Despite the arrival of more Viet-Cong regular force units in Quang Nam in 1964 (and North Vietnamese soldiers in 1965), the battle for Quang Nam was lost by the government to Viet-Cong forces recruited for the most part from within the province. It is quite possible that the plethora of economic and social programs carried out in 1963 and 1964 increased the strength of the Viet-Cong through providing the peasants more income for the communists to tax. Despite the persistent efforts of American advisors in 1964 to get troop support for comprehensive pacification efforts, it was not obtained.

The Marines provided substantial protection in the Danang special sector, but it came too late to conserve the key pacification resource in the villages: young men who will defend themselves and their families when armed. There was an abundance of such manpower in most of the hamlets as late as mid-1963. Now that manpower is in the service of the Viet-Cong and much of the hamlet population in the area is related by blood to these insurgents.

A second problem confronts the Marines: the peasants doubt they will stay to protect them. Repeated withdrawals by ARVN troops have taught the peasants to be leary of promises of protection.

In sum, the pacification of Quang Nam province, a realistic goal in 1962 and 1963, became all but impossible by late 1964. The insurgent forces control most of the province by a combination of terror, propaganda, kinship ties, and substantial military power.

III. SPECIAL PACIFICATION OPERATIONS

Many provinces conducted special pacification campaigns that were different in size and scope from the Quang Nam effort. Three such campaigns are described in this section of the chapter.

A. Long An Province

On the province level, probably the greatest attention was given to Long An, which borders the Saigon area (beyond Gia Dinh) on the south and southwest. Shortly before the

November revolution of 1963, this was one of the provinces in dispute as to the actual progress of its strategic hamlet program. It was established that the Viet-Cong did, in fact, dominate the area despite the hundreds of "completed" hamlets. They freely went through the hamlet gates without resistance and the people did not report the penetrations to the Government.²³

In January, 1964 Ambassador Lodge took a personal interest in the situation and marshalled the full resources of the nearby USOM, USIS and MACV elements in Saigon to help the Vietnamese evolve a plan and program. Teams of experts in propaganda, education, health, and agriculture were sent to make in-depth surveys on peasant attitudes, needs, and conditions. A top USOM Rural Affairs staff was placed in the province to coordinate the USOM portion of the campaign.

The Vietnamese leadership had other fish to fry, however. Recoiling from a second coup in three months, Quang Nam had had five different Province Chiefs in the first six months of the program.²⁴ In Saigon, the ministries were also changing management and were afraid to move until the political dust had settled. USOM experts stood helplessly by and urgently needed programs awaited approval and implementation by the stymied Vietnamese officials.

²³ An example is given by Hickey, op. cit., p. 54.

²⁴ Interview with David Shepherd, former Long An USOM Representative, 1965.

Thousands of tons of barbed wire and pickets, commodities, and building materials were sent to the province, but awaited approvals for distribution. Coordination among both Americans and Vietnamese was extremely difficult in the face of the large number of programs and the rapidity of buildup.

The greatest threat to the special Long An campaign came from the enemy. The Viet-Cong developed their own campaign against the special government effort, and demolished most of what the government had attempted.

The province went through four pacification plans in the next year, before its inclusion in a larger pacification enterprise: The Hop Tac plan.

By the end of 1965, limited progress was beginning to appear via three significant indicators: 1) Open Arms returnees were increasing; 2) Incidents were down; and 3) It was possible to recruit for government programs. However, only 76 hamlets were officially regarded as pacified in October of 1965, and the USOM Representative regarded this estimate as optimistic.²⁵

B. Hop Tac--A Regional Pacification Program

The mounting strength of the Viet-Cong around Saigon led to the development of an elaborate plan of pacification called Hop Tac. The scheme linked the provinces²⁶ surrounding Saigon

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Hop Tac provinces are: Long An, Hau Nghia, Go Cong, Bien Hoa, Binh Duong, Kien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Phuoc Thanh, and Phuoc Tuy.

into a zone of intensive pacification activity involving coordination of various civilian and military agencies. Primarily American in its genesis, (first called PICA: Pacification Intensification Capital Area) a multi-agency team of pacification experts devised a large number of programs. In addition to the familiar projects in relocation, militia training, self-help, etc., new goals were set in these provinces for rural public facilities. Funds and materials were allocated for their construction. For example, in the field of health, the target was set for a well staffed maternity-dispensary for each village and a health worker for each hamlet.²⁷ USOM province Representatives worked closely with their various provincial technical services chiefs on the requirements and timing of these programs for their province situation. Clearly a new era in bi-national pacification coordination was being initiated.

Perhaps the most significant innovation of Hop Tac was the provision for a resources control system and a sizable quota of rural policemen to coordinate and execute the plan. Until Hop Tac, the police role had been largely ignored in the national planning for rural pacification.

Most officials have been cautious in their estimates of the extent of the success of Hop Tac. It has now become one of the four focal areas of pacification emphasis in the new 1966 format. But the consensus appears to be that considerable improvement

²⁷ Taken from an undated USOM planning sheet (1964).

in planning and operational coordination was effected in the Hop Tac system was in the priority allocation of policemen his province received.²⁸

An internal coordination problem arose in provinces which had only part of their areas within the Hop Tac plan. Although an extra Assistant Province Representative was specially assigned to each province in the Hop Tac zone, American and Vietnamese province staffs found their pacification chores complicated by having to divide their attention between the special projects for the Hop Tac area, and those of the rest of the province.

C. An Giang Province: Variable Response in Pacification

In accordance with the strategy suggested in 1964 by George Tanham, one of the 1966 areas of intensive effort is An Giang province--a strongly Hoa Hao region in the western part of the Delta. The province is one of the most peaceful in Vietnam, and consequently, was for a long time among the lowest priority provinces for counterinsurgency assistance. The Tanham theory, as explained earlier, calls for massive economic aid in such areas in order to preempt the spread of insurgency and to utilize fully the massive American assistance available in the economic and social development field. Further, it was felt that such an area could serve as a successful example of government-people teamwork to the nation as a whole. Relocation

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Interview with David Shepherd, Long An province, 1965.

measures, stiff controls, and large troop inputs will be unnecessary in the program. The suitability of An Giang for such a special program was persuasively argued by the USOM province Representative in March, 1965:

The province representative offers three principal reasons why An Giang enjoys relative peace as opposed to other areas even in adjoining provinces:

1. There is the cohesiveness and the political solidarity of the Hoa Hao people. This group comprises over 80 per cent of the population of An Giang. They are closely knit and especially loyal to the local Hoa Hao leaders to the extent that any VC cadre attempting to operate in the area have had difficult times and their presence is soon revealed by ordinary citizens to the provincial government.

2. There is the topographical factor and the military factor. To a large degree, An Giang consists of vast open rice fields where floating rice is planted. There are no significant forested areas where the VC may remain in concealment. VC activities affecting the province usually occur only in border areas. VC units operate out of other provinces where they have concealment and where they have some measure of political support. The VC are discouraged from many actions because of the constant patrolling of the border by Regional and Popular Forces under control of the Province Chief and by relatively prompt reaction by these forces to any VC attack.

3. There is a solid psychological factor; that is the provincial administration has been relatively successful in projecting a favorable image of the government and its activities to the people. The Province Chief and his officials make numerous trips to the districts, villages, and hamlets. Oftentimes the visits take the form of official dedication ceremonies featuring honor guards, bands, speeches, with flags and banners and the appropriate awarding of gifts, followed by an official luncheon. These tactics are effective in presenting the government in a favorable light and in creating a feeling of nationalism.

The province Representative feels that because An Giang has been so successful in keeping out the VC it should be included in the Hop Tac priority area or as a major oil spot in a separate Hop Tac area. This plan may

maximize the political potentials of the Hoa Hao people in the surrounding provinces. Priority should be given to An Giang in all economic programs. This would project the image of the government to the people and would be used as a model of what can be done when the people support the government and resist the VC.²⁹

In a previous report, the same USOM Representative made the relevant comment that the local Open Arms policy seemed to be winning back more dissident Hoa Haos than Viet-Cong.³⁰ This may suggest the need for pre-emptive economic, social, and political programs in areas not troubled by communist insurgency.³¹ The separatist tendencies of the Hoa Hao could perhaps be rechanneled into support of the central government if a carefully balanced policy of friendship with firmness is followed by Saigon. The indications appear to be that Saigon policymakers are more cautious than necessary about arming the Hoa Hao.

By March, 1966 the new plan was underway in An Giang. Economic and social development projects had been successfully conducted at a lower level of intensity, however, since 1962.

In addition to An Giang, there are other provinces similarly free of severe insurgency which may benefit from a comparable emphasis. Tuyen Duc, surrounding Dalat City, and Ninh Thuan, in the central coastal area, are both appropriate to this selective type of intensive pacification process.

²⁹ AID province report, An Giang, March, 1965.

³⁰ AID province report, An Giang, February, 1965.

³¹ Bernard B. Fall comments on Hoa Hao insurgency and its relevance for pacification in the Washington Post, 9 March 1966, p. A20.