



# VIET-NAM INFORMATION NOTES

OFFICER OF MEDIA SERVICES, BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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## NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM

If the Government of South Viet-Nam is to establish itself as a popular, representative government, it must pursue programs which will secure the support of the entire population, including its citizens now fighting in the Viet Cong. To this end, the declaration of "The Purposes of the Government of Vietnam," issued at the Honolulu conference on February 8, 1966, called upon all citizens of South Viet-Nam to work together for development of the country:

"We must bring about a true social revolution and construct a modern society in whichevery man can know that he has a future . . . .

"To those future citizens of a free, democratic South Vietnam now fighting with the Viet Cong, we take this occasion to say come and join in this national revolutionary adventure:

— come safely to join us through the Open Arms Program,

— stop killing your brothers, sisters, their elders and their children,

— come and work through constitutional democracy to build together that life of dignity, freedom and peace those in the North would deny the people of Vietnam."

### POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the long run, the Government's success in winning Viet Cong sympathizers to peaceful and constructive participation in Vietnamese society will be closely related to the support it receives from the population as a whole. The progress of the government program to place political organization of the country on a democratic and constitutional base (See Viet-Nam Information Note No. 5, "Political Development in South Viet-Nam") is an increasingly important factor in building public support. The Viet Cong effort to prevent and disrupt elections indicates its recognition that effective and representative self-government in South Viet-Nam is totally incompatible with Communist goals.



A U.S. Information Service officer explains to former Viet Cong why American troops are in Viet-Nam and the reasons for bombing Communist targets. These men then return to contested areas and explain government policy to the residents.

Along with implementation of the new Constitution, the Government's second broad effort to win popular support is the Revolutionary Development program. This was established to initiate the social, economic, and political reforms needed to improve the lot of the rural population, and to strengthen its confidence in the Government and its resistance to the Viet Cong.

The basic unit of this program is the Revolutionary Development team. Each team is composed of 59 men and is armed for self-defense. When a team arrives in a recently secured area, it helps to establish local security, identifies and weeds out any remaining Viet Cong, and initiates the development program.

Among the accomplishments of the program are: holding local elections of hamlet and village officials by secret ballot, creating economic development projects, and the fostering of physical security.

One measure of the importance of this program is the Viet Cong efforts to oppose it. Nearly 400 attacks on Revolutionary Development teams were mounted by the Viet Cong in the first 5 months of 1967, at a cost to the Communists of 506 known killed by Revolutionary Development resistance. (The Revolutionary Development program will be described in a forthcoming Viet-Nam Information Note.)

In connection with these efforts, the Government has recognized the need to provide clearly understood opportunities for those who have been associated with the Communists to return to the side of the Government. To this end it has instituted two major programs of reconciliation. The first of these is known as the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program and the second the Doan Ket (National Reconciliation) program.

#### CHIEU HOI (OPEN ARMS) PROGRAM

The Chieu Hoi program began as early as 1963. In April of that year President Diem announced an amnesty for those members of the Viet Cong who would return to the side of the Government. This program was initially well received, and more than 5,700 Viet Cong accepted the opportunity to return in the first 4 months of the program (May 1 to August 31, 1963).

The unstable political conditions in the last half of the year, along with Communist military successes, caused the number of returnees to drop sharply. Only 1,400 Viet Cong returned in the last 4 months of 1963. In 1964 fewer than 5,500 were returnees.

With the arrival of large numbers of combat troops from the United States and other allied countries, the failure of the Communists to win the promised quick victory, and the establishment of a stable government in Saigon, the number of defectors again increased. In 1965 more than 11,000 Viet Cong defected to the Government. The number of defectors nearly doubled again in 1966, to more than 20,000. The first 3 months of 1967 show a large increase, with 11,700 returnees as of March 31.

The Government conducts an extensive information campaign to attract returnees. Leaflets, radio broadcasts, loudspeaker announcements, drama teams, and folk singers are a few of the means used to spread the Chieu Hoi message.

During the truce for the lunar New Year, Tet, the Government enlarged the campaign to reach the guerrillas at a time when they were considered most receptive to their appeals. Many of the Viet Cong returned to their homes during the holiday. The Government propaganda teams visited the home of each suspected Viet Cong before the holiday and left an envelope containing the New Year's greeting of the Government, a description of the Chieu Hoi program, a safe-conduct pass, and instructions on how to defect, including a map showing the route to the nearest reception center.

Before the holiday, the Government information media had stressed the fact that the Viet Cong were losing the war and that the soldiers would all be in danger of being killed if they remained in the Communist ranks. Emotional appeals were made for the Viet Cong to remain home after the holiday had ended. The project continued for a week after the holiday, providing instructions on how to defect for those soldiers who had returned to their units and then decided to leave. The program was successful, as shown by the large numbers of returnees in February and March of 1967 (see chart). A similar, though smaller, project in 1966 had the same result.

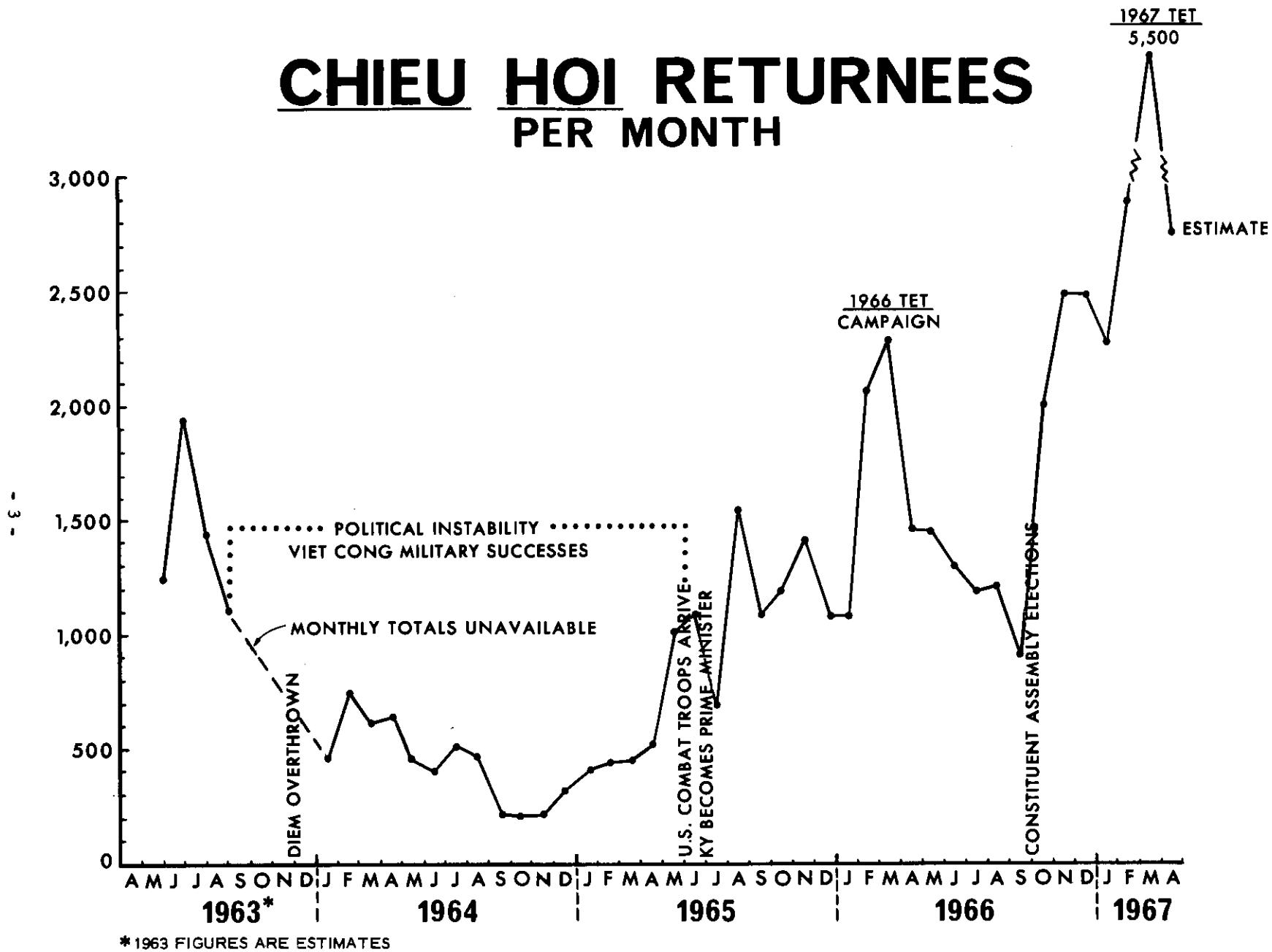
Within the areas controlled by the Government, the citizens are asked to welcome any Viet Cong who wishes to give himself up. Soldiers and policemen are ordered to treat returnees well and to take them immediately to the nearest reception center. The Government stresses the value of treating returnees kindly, as their experiences may aid in recruiting other Viet Cong.

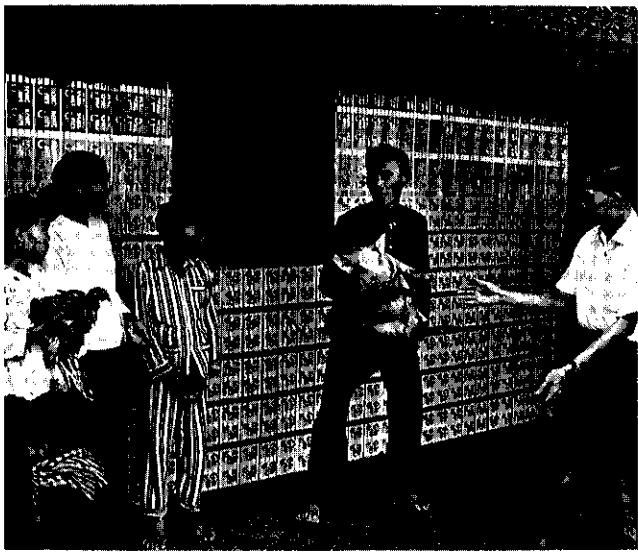
#### Rehabilitation Under Chieu Hoi

The Government has established reception centers for returnees in each of the 44 mainland provinces, in three autonomous cities, in four regional locations, and in one national center in Saigon. These 52 centers have a yearly capacity of 45,000 returnees based on six 2-month cycles.

When the returnee, known as a Hoi Chanh, arrives at a reception center, he is carefully interviewed to determine his sincerity in coming over to the Government and to develop information about the Viet Cong operations in the area. He is given food, clothing, housing, medical care if needed, and a cash allowance for incidental expenses. If he has brought along weapons or significant documents, he is given a cash reward.

# CHIEU HOI RETURNEES PER MONTH





The families who settle in "New Life" hamlets with defectors from the Viet Cong are given land, animals, food, and a financial allowance. The men receive training in a new skill at a Chieu Hoi center.

Once he is settled at the camp, the rehabilitation process begins. The Hoi Chanh is indoctrinated in the aims and purposes of the Government and the role of the allied forces in the war. The returnee is encouraged to plan for his own future.

Most of the returnees go back to their home villages and resume their old occupations, generally farming. The Government will assist the returnee with food and farming supplies and a resettlement allowance. If he has no home, or if his home is in Viet Cong territory, he may settle in a special Chieu Hoi village. Here he will receive a house, some land, and subsistence for 6 months for himself and his family.

It is estimated that 30 percent of the returnees are serving in the Armed Forces of the Government—most of them in the Popular Forces, which are volunteer home guard units, serving near their homes.

The Armed Propaganda units are composed in some cases of Hoi Chanh who have volunteered to serve in these units. The mission of the units is to weed out the Viet Cong political cadre in contested villages and to tell the villages about their own experiences with both sides. These units often accompany regular military forces to interrogate prisoners, search for hidden arms, and make use of their own experience in searching for guerrilla bands. They are organized in 36-man platoons and are lightly armed for self-defense. Currently, more than 2,000 former Viet Cong are serving in these units.

Few Hoi Chanh are known to have returned to the Viet Cong, although enemy propaganda invites them back.

When the returnee leaves the reception center after his two-month stay, he receives a standard identity card, with no mention of his membership in the Viet Cong. There have been few reports of reprisals against returnees by loyal South Vietnamese. In general, the returnees are well received by the South Vietnamese.

#### NATIONAL RECONCILIATION PROGRAM (Doan Ket)

To give effect to its new appeal to the Viet Cong, announced at Honolulu, to "join in this national revolutionary adventure," the South Vietnamese Government this year promulgated a National Reconciliation program, known as Doan Ket. In a proclamation issued on April 19, 1967, Prime Minister Ky set out the basic points of the program in these terms:

National Community: The blood ties of the Vietnamese people demand tolerance rather than hatred.

National Concord: Disputes will be settled by democratic means.

National Progress: The social revolution being carried out by the Republic will bring social justice and economic progress.

In its proclamation the Government announced expansion of the amnesty program already in effect for members of the Viet Cong, and offered them the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction and development of the country. The three principal points of the offer were:

"First, all those who decide to leave the ranks of the Communists and re-integrate in the national community will be warmly welcomed as citizens with full rights of citizenship . . . .

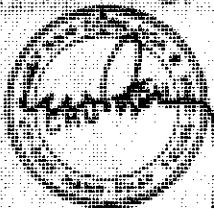
"Second, the citizens who rally to the national cause will be employed in accordance with their ability . . . .

"Third, the citizens who rally to the national cause but who have violated the law under Communist coercion or deception, whether they have been convicted or not, will enjoy all the guarantees set forth in the Constitution."

The Doan Ket program is based on the idea that the Government has begun to attract support from individuals working with the Viet Cong by offering reforms which are eliminating valid grievances. The Doan Ket program offers more to the middle and upper ranks of the Viet Cong hierarchy than does the Chieu Hoi amnesty program which had already been operating for some time. The provision that returnees are to be employed in accordance with their ability, presumably in positions at a level comparable to those they held in the Viet Cong, provides the necessary self-interest

## MẠNG TÂM GIẤY THÔNG HÀNH này về công tác với Chính Phủ Quốc Gia các bạn sẽ được :

- Đón tiếp tử tế
- Bảo đảm an ninh
- Đại ngộ tương xứng



ĐIỀU KIỆN ĐƯỢC HỘ KHẨU QUỐC GIA  
ĐỂ QUAY TRƯỜNG QUỐC GIA TỰ TUYỂN QUỐC GIA



This safe-conduct pass bearing the seal and signature of the Prime Minister of South Viet-Nam states: "Use this pass to rejoin the National Government and you will be entitled to a cordial reception, guaranteed security, equitable treatment."

consideration for some higher-ranking Viet Cong. The returnees, once they have been rehabilitated, have all the rights of citizens, including the right to vote and to run for office.

The highest ranking Viet Cong who has returned to the Government thus far is a Viet Cong regimental commander now employed by the Ministry of Information in the Chieu Hoi program.

### WHO DEFECTS AND WHY

Most of the returnees have been lower ranking Viet Cong military and political personnel. Recruits and draftees comprise a large percentage of the returnees. The higher ranking Viet Cong have not begun to defect in significant numbers.

Many reasons have been cited by returnees for defecting. Among the most important are:

**Hardship.** The guerrilla forces are constantly on the move, and usually short of food and medicine.

**Disillusionment.** The Viet Cong have been unable to keep their promise of a quick victory, and their methodical use of terrorism against the villagers is repugnant to some of their sympathizers.

**Family.** The Vietnamese have a particularly strong attachment to their homes and families. They do not like to serve in areas away from their homes. In addition, the Viet Cong are increasingly drafting women and children for

military service and forced labor, and these pressures on his family may persuade the father to defect with them.

**Military pressure.** The Government and allied forces are growing in strength, and many of the Viet Cong are beginning to realize they cannot win the war.

Most of the defectors have been from the Viet Cong guerrilla units and political cadre. The regular North Vietnamese units have few defections, and the main force Viet Cong units have fewer than the part-time troops. This is attributed to several factors:

Regulars do not have as much opportunity as do guerrillas to defect. It is not difficult for a part-time guerrilla who lives at home to go over to the Government forces.

Regular units are under closer control. It is not as easy to reach them with propaganda. These soldiers are not allowed to listen to Government broadcasts or to read information leaflets.

North Vietnamese do not have homes or families to return to in South Viet-Nam. All regular units tend to develop a camaraderie from long periods of close association and interdependence.

Captured documents have shown that the Viet Cong are worried by the success of the Chieu Hoi program. Special sessions are now held for Communist political officers to help them counter the Chieu Hoi efforts. In some cases, soldiers have been ordered to beat on pans to drown out loudspeaker broadcasts. And while



GIỜ CHƯA PHẢI LÚC TRỞ VỀ VỚI GIA ĐÌNH SAO ?  
ANH CHỌN CẢNH NÀO TRÊN NÀY ?

This South Vietnamese leaflet appeals to Viet Cong to give up fighting and return home.

Viet Cong propaganda derides the returnees as cowards, it does offer to take them back.

#### DESERTIONS NOT DEFLECTIONS FROM ARVN

The Government also must contend with desertions from its own forces. For each of the past 3 years, the armed forces have listed over 100,000 men as deserters. This figure is explained in part by the fact that in Viet-Nam a soldier is automatically recorded as a deserter if he fails to answer muster, whereas in the U.S. Army, for example, most such cases would be labeled Absent Over Leave (AOL), or Away Without Leave (AWOL). A large number of these Vietnamese "deserters" soon return to their units. Many soldiers who do not return to their own units are later found serving in another unit closer to home. As the Government understands the attachment of the Vietnamese peasant to this ancestral village, punitive action is rare in such cases.

While exact figures are not available, U.S. military advisers estimate that only 20 to 30 percent of the total listed as deserters are actual deserters. It is interesting to note that while the Viet Cong radio reports the total number of deserters from the Government

forces, it makes no claim that a significant number of these deserters have defected to serve in the Communist ranks.

The desertion rate has declined in the past year, primarily due to changes in Government policies. The Government has begun to grant more leave to numbers of the regular forces in order to forestall their taking it illegally. Several penalties have been announced for clear-cut deserters.

While the total number of desertions in 1966 was almost the same as 1965, the quarterly figures show the effect of the new policies. In the first quarter of the year, 37,000 men deserted; in the second quarter, 37,000. After the announcement of the new policies in August, the number fell to 24,000 in the third quarter and 20,000 in the last quarter of 1966.

The Armed Forces of the Government of South Viet-Nam have increased in strength every year since 1963, despite normal releases from the service, casualties, and desertions. The total strength of the Government forces has grown from 400,000 men in 1963 to more than 700,000 today. This growth obviously would not have been possible if more than 100,000 men actually had deserted every year.

As is true in all armies and noted previously, most of the desertions occur among draftees and recruits in the regular forces. Only 13 percent of the Vietnamese forces are comprised of draftees, a percentage comparable to that in the United States Army. The Naval and Air Forces, which are almost entirely volunteer, have low desertion rates. The Popular Forces, volunteer home guard units, have low rates of desertion, partly because they serve in their own villages.

As a percentage of total forces, desertions are declining. The introduction of reforms, such as the more liberal leave policy, strict penalties on flagrant violations, and a system of fingerprinting and photographing new recruits, has helped reduce the total number of desertions. Also, while the armed forces have increased in size, the proportion listed as deserters has dropped.

While the desertion rate for the Government forces is declining, it appears that the Viet Cong desertion rate is increasing. There is no accurate method of estimating the number of Viet Cong deserters. However, the increase in the number of defectors arriving at the Chieu Hoi camps would seem to indicate a rising number of desertions as well.

The Government hopes to attract more returnees with the National Reconciliation program. If the Revolutionary Development program can make life under the Government safe and attractive, the amnesty provisions of the Doan Ket program should induce many more Viet Cong to return to their homes and families. The increasing military pressure on

the guerrilla forces also offer a reason for defections; men in the ranks of the Viet Cong begin to realize they cannot win a military victory.

#### U.S. SUPPORTS RECONCILIATION

The United States has assisted the Government of Viet-Nam in supporting the Chieu Hoi program since its inception. The Agency for International Development (AID) initially provided approximately U.S. \$400,000 for construction of the provincial centers. AID also provides the centers with office supplies, instructional materials, surplus food, and building materials.

Each province has an American adviser who assists in administration of the center. The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, (JUSPAO) assists the Government in attracting returnees. The information campaigns are often developed with the cooperation of JUSPAO.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Information and Chieu Hoi administers the program. The budget for 1967 is U.S. \$11.3 million, of which one-fourth is contributed by AID. The administration of the program is entirely Vietnamese, although the United States does support the program with financial and material resources and administrative advisers.

The success of the Chieu Hoi program with the lower ranking Viet Cong was one of the



*This professional dance team, part of a group of 50 musicians and dancers who rebelled against their harsh exploitation by the Viet Cong, defected en masse to authorities in South Viet-Nam.*

reasons for the expansion of the program under Doan Ket. The Government is working to expand vocational training programs at reception centers and to improve the system of resettlement allowances.

While the programs laying the basis for national reconciliation in Viet-Nam will continue to receive substantial U.S. support, their ultimate success will rest on the vigor and wisdom with which they are carried out by the Government of Viet-Nam.

## VIET-NAM INFORMATION NOTES

Viet-Nam Information Notes is a new series of Department of State publications. Each paper in the series summarizes the most significant available material on one important aspect of the situation in Viet-Nam. Viet-Nam Information Notes are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for 5¢ each (with a 25 percent discount for quantities of 100 or more copies of any one Note mailed to the same address). Remittances, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, must accompany orders.

### PRESENTLY AVAILABLE ...

1. Basic Data on South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8195) summarizes general information on the land, people, history, government, and economy of the country.
2. The Search for Peace in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8196) reviews the efforts of individuals, governments, and international bodies to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict in Viet-Nam. The policy of the Government of North Viet-Nam with regard to a peaceful settlement is included.
3. Communist-Directed Forces in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8197) seeks to answer such questions as: What is the Viet Cong? Who are its leaders? How is it related to party and government organs of North Viet-Nam? What are the Communists' objectives? Their strengths? Their weaknesses?
4. Free World Assistance for South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8213) describes the scope of the international aid program for the Republic of Viet-Nam. It gives facts and figures about the contributions of 36 participating nations (U.S. aid is not included—a separate Note is to be devoted to that subject).
5. Political Development in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8231) discusses South Viet-Nam's steady progress toward an elected government and representative institutions at all levels of government.
6. Why We Fight in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8245) describes the origin of the conflict and the principal reasons for U. S. involvement.
7. Viet-Cong Terror Tactics in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8259) describes the deliberate campaign of terror by which the Viet-Cong hope to break the resistance of South Viet-Nam.

### COMING SOON ...

Several other Viet-Nam Information Notes will be available in the near future. Anticipated subjects include "The Legal Basis of the U.S. Commitment"; "The Military Struggle"; and "Communist Aggression Against South Viet-Nam." The Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, on request, will place individuals on its mailing list to receive Selected United States Government Publications—a free, biweekly announcement of new publications, including subsequent numbers of this series.

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