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Chapter 22

GROWTH OF FORCES IN RVN TO END OF 1965

The US buildup and concurrent expansion of operations in Vietnam did not cause NVN to scale down support of the insurgency. On the contrary, NVN responded to US actions by increasing its infiltration of forces and supplies into the RVN, and it soon became apparent that further US force increases would be required.

On 7 June, General Westmoreland notified Washington that regular NVN Army (PAVN) forces had entered the RVN and he believed more were on the way. Intelligence reports had located elements of the 325th PAVN division in the northern zone of II CTZ and it appeared that the major portion, if not all, of the division was in the vicinity of Kontum and Pleiku. General Westmoreland reported that the VC had begun determined and large-scale demonstrations of strength in the same general area, suggesting the beginning of a summer campaign to destroy GVN forces and isolate towns. General Westmoreland also stated that the main VC force units had shown improved training and discipline and a much improved firepower, resulting from a new family of weapons. He warned that the enemy was capable of launching regimental sized attacks in all four CTZs with little or no warning, and of being reinforced swiftly from NVN.¹

While the VC strength had increased, said COMUSMACV, the readiness of the ARVN had deteriorated. Desertion rates and battle losses were up and morale was down. General Westmoreland thought that the ARVN troops were beginning to show "signs of reluctance" to assume the offensive and in some cases their steadfastness under fire was questionable. The ARVN force buildup in the II CTZ had not materialized, and he saw no hope of the force ratio changing in ARVN favor.²

The only remedy to this deteriorating situation, said General Westmoreland, was the rapid movement of additional US or third country forces to South Vietnam. He called for specific

1. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and JCS, 070335Z Jun 65, JCS IN 92244.

2. Ibid.

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deployments, including the remainder of the III MAF, a US Army airmobile division, a ROK RCT to be followed by the balance of a ROK division, additional tactical fighter squadrons, and appropriate logistic support units for these forces. COMUSMACV also recommended preparation of studies and plans for even larger deployments "if and when required."³

Admiral Sharp, Ambassador Taylor, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff all agreed with COMUSMACV on the need for a further substantial buildup of US and allied forces in the RVN. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 11 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a program for additional deployments. Secretary McNamara approved the program, with some modifications, on 17 June. The approved program raised US forces from the previously authorized 69,593 to approximately 117,000 with the majority of the troops scheduled to arrive in South Vietnam in the next several months. This program would add seven US maneuver battalions, bringing the total to 22. The program also provided for an increase of 1,250 men in allied forces, bringing the total to 19,750 by 1 November 1965.⁴

Neither the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington nor COMUSMACV and CINCPAC in the field believed that the newly approved deployment program would be sufficient. General Westmoreland advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the latter part of June that his recommendations of 7 June were measures needed merely to stabilize the situation and that to carry the war to the enemy a substantial increase in ground and air forces would be required. He pointed out that the struggle had become a war of attrition. Short of a decision to introduce nuclear weapons, General Westmoreland saw no likelihood of achieving "a quick, favorable end to the war." He believed it was time for the United States to face up to the fact that it was in for a long war and one that would involve increasing numbers of US troops.⁵

Admiral Sharp supported COMUSMACV's call for additional forces. He stated that a total of 34 US and nine third country maneuver battalions was required.⁶

3. Ibid.

4. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 072325Z Jun 65, JCS IN 93177. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-457-65 to SecDef, 11 Jun 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602); (TS-GP 4) JCS 2343/602-1, 17 Jun 65; JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65).

5. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV 3240 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65; COMUSMACV 3237 to CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 65.

6. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 250542Z Jun 65, same file.

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DP After studying the detailed force requirement recommendations of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 2 July 1965 to approve an additional deployment program "to insure that the VC/DRV cannot win in South Vietnam at their present level of commitment." The program called for the deployment of the Air Mobile Division, the remainder of the 1st Infantry Division (one brigade of the division was already approved for Qui Nhon), one MAB, a Marine Fighter Attack Squadron, and necessary support forces numbering 8,000 men. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recommended additional movements to the RVN: three artillery battalions, three HAWK battalions, four additional attack squadrons, various helicopter units, a field force headquarters, and additional logistic support. In all, total US forces in the RVN would amount to approximately 175,000 men, including 34 maneuver battalions. The program repeated the requirement for 19,750 allied troops, including a ROK division of six maneuver battalions and four other third country maneuver battalions.⁷

Secretary McNamara, who was planning a trip to the RVN later in July, decided to defer action on this new program until he had a chance to discuss the situation with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Taylor. Before leaving for Saigon, he laid down a schedule and guidance "leading toward" a national decision on additional deployments. The schedule provided that, following the Secretary of Defense's return, there would be discussions with the State Department and White House during the period 22-26 July with a Presidential decision tentatively set for 26 July. The Secretary of Defense stated that the rationale for force increases remained "what it has been under three Presidents: To provide whatever support is necessary to assist South Vietnam in preserving its freedom." He directed that there would be no net reduction in personnel or equipment deployed in Europe and that the possibility of a Presidential declaration of emergency should be avoided in favor of Congressional action similar to that taken in the Berlin crisis of 1961.⁸ OSD

The Combat Picture - The CTZs

The more direct efforts made by the United States had not, by mid-July, prevented the combat situation from

7. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-515-65 to SecDef, 2 Jul 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602-3), JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65) sec 2.

8. (TS) Memo for Record, SecDef Meeting, 9 Jul 65, "Build-up to Meet Vietnam Situation," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 65.

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deteriorating on the ground in RVN. In all of the four Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) the VC, now augmented by regular NVA units, held the initiative, with the most serious threat obtaining in the two northern CTZs. Even after the arrival of the first US troops, the VC continued to expand their control over rural areas and succeeded in isolating provincial and district towns from the bulk of the rural population, thus facilitating recruitment through persuasion or coercion. Their apparent willingness to accept large casualties in offensives (the 1965 rate was exceeding that of 1964) indicated an adequate reserve of manpower. Moreover, the number of organized units and the overall estimated strength of the VC had continued to increase. The gain had come in part from infiltration from NVN. Local recruitment remained the main source of VC manpower, however.

Since the first of the year, in the I CTZ the intensity and number of VC-initiated actions had risen sharply, mainly along the coastal lowlands. The enemy had cut almost all the transportation routes in the area. Even coastal Route 1, the principal north-south highway, was impassable through much of the CTZ. The railroad was operable only between Hue and Da Nang. Government control was limited to major cities. VC attacks in II CTZ against district towns in the Kontum Province had forced the GVN to abandon several districts. Even Kontum City had been mortared. The VC campaign in the highlands was obviously gaining momentum, with Pleiku and Phu Bon Provinces little better off than Kontum. All roads and rail lines within the II CTZ were either cut or under effective interdiction. All major routes leading into II CTZ had been cut, effectively isolating several major towns. The only means of resupply into the high plateau was by air lift. GVN convoys had been repeatedly ambushed throughout II CTZ. As a result, ARVN commanders had more and more gone on the defensive, leaving the initiative to the VC. The GVN controlled only a small part of the population, concentrated largely along the coast.

Further south, in III CTZ, the VC had recently launched several regimental attacks. They were active throughout the Corps area, but particularly on the edges of the Hop Tac zone around Saigon. The VC objective of destroying the ARVN was being sought by capturing important towns and then ambushing reaction forces. Again, all major routes had been cut and most of the minor ones leading from Saigon were under almost continual harassment. The GVN currently controlled only small areas of the III CTZ and these were in the Hop Tac zone.

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The only area that had remained relatively stable during the first half of the year was IV CTZ, the Mekong Delta. The VC were applying just enough pressure there to tie down three ARVN divisions. In all of the Corps areas the VC clearly retained the capability to conduct multibattalion size military operations whenever they wished.

In April, intelligence information had confirmed the presence in the RVN of a regiment of the NVA 325th Division, believed to have moved into the country during December and January. Some reports indicated that two other regiments of the division were also in RVN but this had not been confirmed by July. US officials believed that Hanoi had sent NVA units into RVN to assist the VC in increasing the tempo of its campaign and to hasten a victory. The enemy's current strategy tended to confirm this. The VC were employing widespread harassment and terrorism, punctuated with occasional multibattalion or larger "spectaculars" when the circumstances seemed right. An appraisal of enemy strength furnished to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 14 July stated that the enemy had 10 regimental headquarters, 65 battalions (about 400 men each), 188 companies, and 144 platoons with a total strength of 48,550. The regiment of the NVA was included in this total. In addition, 17,600 personnel were believed engaged in combat support operations. US intelligence estimates showed that the enemy had increased his strength in organized combat units over 50 percent since mid-1964. There was little reason to doubt that the enemy intended to continue his buildup at the same or an even higher rate unless he was stopped.⁹

A New Ambassador Is Appointed

On 8 July 1965 President Johnson announced that he had accepted the resignation of Ambassador Taylor and nominated former Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge to replace him. In his letter of resignation, Ambassador Taylor recalled that he had originally accepted the Ambassadorship with the understanding that he would hold it only one year. Widespread reports that his resignation was due to differences over national policy were described by President Johnson as "irresponsible and untrue."¹⁰

9. (TS) Ad Hoc Study Group, Rpt, "Intensification of the Military Operations In Vietnam-Concept and Appraisal," 14 Jul 65, OJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 65.

10. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 1966, p. 21351.

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The Ambassador-designate, who was not to take over from Taylor until 20 August, accompanied the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff on their visit to the RVN in mid-July.

COMUSMACV Calls for More Troops

General Westmoreland told the visiting officials that the RVNAF had lost the initiative and that the South Vietnamese people were displaying a loss of confidence in the GVN because of the increasing inability of the RVNAF to secure and hold critical rural areas and LOCs. The only way to arrest this unfavorable trend, General Westmoreland said, was to greatly increase US and FWMAF troop strength.¹¹

COMUSMACV cast his force requirements in a two-phased plan that had Ambassador Taylor's approval. Phase I included the forces needed to "stem the tide," i.e., halt the VC offensive, and would cover the remainder of 1965. Phase II represented the forces to "turn the tide" or to make sufficient viable progress in high priority areas to convince the VC that they could not win. Phase II forces would be deployed during the first half of 1966. Phase I ground force requirements included 44 maneuver battalions, 26 combat support battalions (22 artillery and four air defense), 13 engineer battalions, 20 US Army helicopter companies, seven USMC helicopter squadrons, and three US Army helicopter battalions and service units, totalling 154,662 men. Phase I requirements also included 4,000 naval personnel and 26 Air Force squadrons of various types totalling 17,500 men. Total Phase I requirements would be 176,162. Phase II would include 24 maneuver battalions, 17 combat support battalions, various helicopter units, and nine USAF squadrons, totalling an additional 94,810 men. The grand total for both Phase I and II amounted to 270,972, nearly four times the approximately 70,000 US forces in the RVN at that time.¹²

General Westmoreland warned his visitors that without these additional forces the VC would gain a more favorable strength

11. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 41-42.

12. Ibid. (TS-GP 4) "Questions by the Secretary of Defense and Replies by the US Ambassador to South Vietnam (U)," 22 Jul 65, JMF 9155.3 (22 Jul 65).

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ratio, the stability of the GVN would be weakened further, and there would soon exist a requirement for even greater US resources on a more urgent basis and against greater odds.¹³

The Secretary of Defense returned to Washington convinced that a significant troop increase in the RVN was required, and later in July he recommended a force increase to the President. The program approved by the President more than met COMUSMACV's Phase I requirements. It provided for a total of approximately 186,700 US troops in the RVN by the end of 1965, including 34 maneuver battalions and 24 combat support battalions. This July Presidential program fell far short, however, in meeting COMUSMACV's Phase II requirements. It provided for an addition of only 3,000 troops during the first half of 1966, approximately 81,000 spaces short of the 270,000 figure requested by General Westmoreland.¹⁴

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The President had already attempted to prepare the public for a substantial increase of US forces in the RVN. At a 9 July news conference, he had stated that manpower needs in the RVN were increasing and would continue to do so. He had added that whatever was required would be supplied. On 28 July he announced his decision. He explained that the large increase in US forces was necessary to meet the continuing rise in the enemy's strength. The President said that, in response to General Westmoreland's request, he had ordered to the RVN the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces, raising the US fighting force from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately." While not giving figures for the remainder of the increase he did say that additional forces would be needed and would be sent at a later time. The President also stated that the Reserves would not be called into service at this time, but added that, if later developments required such action, he would make the decision only after careful thought and adequate warning.¹⁵

The President's July program marked another turning point in the war. The United States had decided to increase its already substantial forces in Vietnam to the extent necessary to match the buildup in enemy forces. This decision began a trend that was to require a steady expansion of US forces to balance an equally steady expansion of enemy strength.

13. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 42.

14. For the approved July program see (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Recommended FY 1966 Southeast Asia Supplemental Appropriation (U)," 11 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2458/42-12, 16 Dec 65, JMF 7000 (24 Nov 65) sec 2.

15. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, II (1966), p. 725 and p. 795.

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8 In the following months deployments to the RVN proceeded within the authorized figures. In view of the great work load generated by the deployments, the Secretary of Defense had already made it known to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that deployment of individual units, as long as they were within approved authorizations, would not require his approval.¹⁶

The story of US force deployment planning throughout the remainder of 1965 and into 1966 was one of continuous refinement and adjustment upwards to meet new and changing conditions of the war. Scarcely had the Secretary of Defense departed from Saigon when COMUSMACV found it necessary to adjust his requirements. Consequently, on 30 July 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented to the Secretary of Defense a revised deployment program adding approximately 20,000 troops to Phase I and 10,000 to Phase II, raising total figures to 195,887 for Phase I and 300,599 for Phase II. (On 4 August the Joint Chiefs of Staff reduced these figures to 195,378 and 300,090.) Since the Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated further adjustments in this program, they told the Secretary of Defense that they would comment further, including specific recommendations regarding Phase II deployments, as refinements were made.¹⁷

In an attempt to establish a more orderly procedure for these refinements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed a deployment planning conference to coordinate and complete, insofar as possible, all matters relating to Phase I deployments. This conference met at Headquarters, Pacific Command, from 3 through 6 August 1965 and included representatives of the Joint Staff, the Military Services, OASD (I&L), CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and COMUSKOREA. This conference produced a refined program for Phase I deployments to RVN and other WESTPAC and Southeast Asia bases, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August. This program still provided for 34 maneuver battalions for the RVN, but raised the total number of required personnel to 210,000. The program also called for approximately 41,000 US troops in other Pacific and Southeast Asia areas outside of the RVN, including three maneuver battalions in the Japan-Okinawa area.¹⁸

16. (TS) Memo for Record, JCS Meeting, 21 Jul 65, JMF 9155.3, 1965.

17. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-590-65 to SecDef, 30 Jul 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602-6); SM-729-65 to SecDef, 5 Aug 65; JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65) sec 2.

18. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-643-65 to SecDef, 23 Aug 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-2), JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 2.

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On 1 September, the Secretary of Defense requested the President to approve an additional increment of forces for the RVN, raising the total figure to 210,000. The Secretary of Defense subsequently explained to the President that the increase was attributable to the need for additional in-country airlift, artillery and air defense support for combat operations, strike aircraft and associated support, and air base construction. There is no evidence in the record to indicate that overall approval for the entire 210,000 program, as submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 August, was ever given, but the Secretary of Defense did authorize, on an individual basis, the movement of specific units within that program.¹⁹

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The August planning conference and the resulting refined program did not resolve Phase I requirements, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff found it necessary in late September to convene another deployment planning conference to amend the Phase I program in the light of recommended additions and deletions. The participants of the August conference again met in Honolulu during the period 27 September through 1 October and produced another refined program for Phase I deployments. This program was merely an updating of the August program, reflecting 9,089 add-on spaces in the RVN, bringing the total Phase I figure to 219,619, and 3,445 add-on spaces for other areas in WESTPAC and Southeast Asia. Phase I deployments as now scheduled would not be completed until April 1966. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this refined program on 22 October and directed the Services to prepare to satisfy the requirements for Phase I add-on deployments. Forwarding this refined program to the Secretary of Defense on 23 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained that the add-ons were needed to strengthen the Phase I force structure and to provide the essential combat and combat service support, the necessary command and control elements, and the required increase to offshore base capability to support adequately the combat operations in RVN.²⁰

19. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 1 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-5, 2 Sep 65; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 22 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-1, 23 Sep 65; JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 2. For examples of SecDef approval of individual units within the 23 Aug 65 program see (C-GP 4) Memos, DepSecDef to CJCS, 29 and 30 Sep 65, Encls to JCS 2343/655-10 and -11, 29 Sep and 1 Oct 65, same file.

20. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-779-65 to SecDef, 23 Oct 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-17), same file, secs 3 and 4.

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On 10 November 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense with their recommendations for Phase II operations and deployments. To accomplish the Phase II objective, "to start winning the war," the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a concept of operations calling for US and allied forces to continue the establishment and expansion of secure bases and key LOCs in the coastal area and elsewhere as necessary. From these and other bases, US and allied forces would launch stepped-up offensive operations to assist the GVN in expanding its control over the militarily and economically important areas of Saigon, the Mekong Delta, the coastal plain, and the central highlands. The concept also provided for intensified air operations against NVN, including attacks on POL and electric power installation targets, and continued assistance to friendly forces in Laos.

Additional forces would be required to achieve these tasks, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a Phase II deployment of approximately 113,000 men (28 maneuver battalions and supporting units). Added to their final Phase I deployment recommendation of 219,600, total deployment requirements for the RVN now amounted to approximately 333,000. The Phase II program included two Army Infantry divisions (the 25th and the 4th), the remainder of the 1st Marine Division, and an armored cavalry regiment plus four tactical fighter squadrons. The program also included 27,000 men for use outside the RVN. In order to meet the deployment dates desired by CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the call-up of selected reserve units and individuals, the activation of new units, and the extension of terms of service.²¹

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed the impact of both Phase I and II deployments on US strategic military posture world-wide. They had already warned the Secretary of Defense on 24 September that planned deployments to Southeast Asia were endangering the US strategic military posture in other parts of the world. They had also pointed out that increases in force levels were required to 1) meet the operational requirements of the Vietnam war as well as to maintain forward deployments in Europe and the Western Pacific; 2) supply an adequate training and rotation base to support US military operations and forces in Southeast Asia and world-wide; and 3) provide a military

²¹. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-811-65 to SecDef, 10 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-26), same file, sec 6.

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capability to conduct other contingency operations. They informed the Secretary of Defense now that either completion of Phase I deployments alone or the completion of Phase I and the implementation of Phase II would reduce US strategic posture to a degree where, unless reconstituted on a timely basis, it could not support operations in Southeast Asia and other worldwide commitments. To correct this situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority to acquire, equip, and support seven Army aviation units, one CVS, four tactical fighter squadrons and three tactical reconnaissance squadrons, and one Marine expeditionary brigade. If Phase II deployments were approved, they requested similar authority for two infantry divisions, 18 additional Army aviation units, four tactical fighter squadrons, and 6/9 MEF (-). They also requested authority for selective reserve call-ups to provide essential forces that could not be obtained on a timely basis through other means.²²

The JCS submission of Phase II requirements elicited no immediate response from the Secretary of Defense. He had scheduled another trip to the RVN in late November, and planned to review force requirements with General Westmoreland at that time. Although the Secretary of Defense did not give blanket approval to either of the refined Phase I programs or the Phase II requirements, he continued to approve the movement of separate units within the Phase I program on an individual basis. As a result, by 15 November, total authorization for US forces in the RVN stood at 188,930, and by the end of 1965 it had risen to 206,220.²³

pp During the Secretary of Defense's 28-29 November Saigon visit, General Westmoreland informed him that the North Vietnamese were increasing their forces in the RVN at a rate more than double that of previous estimates. To meet this expanded threat, General Westmoreland asked for 52,000 additional US forces, designating this increase Phase IIA forces. On his departure from the RVN, Mr. McNamara stated that the acceleration

22. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-721-65 to SecDef, 24 Sep 65 (derived from JCS 2343/640-1), JMF 9155.3 (23 Jul 65). (TS-GP 3) JCSM-814-65 to SecDef, 10 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/640-2), same file, sec 2.

23. (C-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Nov 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-30, 17 Nov 65, JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 6. (C-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 24 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-44, same file.

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of NVA infiltration required US and RVN counteraction. Upon his return, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were directed to convene a planning conference to develop a program of deployment schedules for Phase II and IIA forces, including appropriate support forces.²⁴

In connection with a supplemental appropriation request for FY 1966 to support the expanded US military effort in Southeast Asia, the Secretary of Defense requested the President on 11 December to approve for planning purposes a program of deployments and augmentation modifying the July Presidential program. On 13 December the Deputy Secretary of Defense authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to use this program for planning purposes. The program did not break deployments down in terms of phases, but rather provided strength in six-month increments. It still called for 34 US maneuver battalions in the RVN by the end of 1965, but raised the total US force figure from the 186,700 of the July program to 194,900. The new program provided for 277,100 US troops and 46 maneuver battalions by June 1966. By December 1966 these figures would rise to 367,500 troops and 75 maneuver battalions. US combat support battalions would be increased to 38 by mid-1966 and to 59 by the end of that year. The new program projected the number of "attack capable" aircraft in RVN by the end of 1966 at 929, approximately 150 more than the July program.²⁵

While deployment planning was undergoing constant revision and refinement in the latter half of 1965, actual troop movements to South Vietnam continued unabated. The 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) arrived during September and the 1st Infantry Division closed in October, completing the deployment of major combat units in 1965. This raised the total US forces in the RVN at the end of October to 153,505.

The deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) is illustrative of many of the actions involved in sending a major Army unit to Vietnam. On 15 June the Secretary of Defense authorized the Army to activate the division by reorganizing the 11th Air Assault Division and applying other assets. Additional equipment procurements in excess of \$28 million were needed to completely outfit the new division. On the same day that the

24. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 44. NY Times, 29 Nov 65, 1. (TS-GP 3) Memo, ASD (M) to JCS et al., 1 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2343/724, 1 Dec 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Dec 65).

25. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 11 Dec 65; Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., 13 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2458/42-12, 16 Dec 65; JMF 7000 (24 Nov 64) sec 2.

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President authorized deployment, 28 July, the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) began its overseas movement, with six passenger vessels, 11 cargo ships and four aircraft carriers being used to move men and equipment. The division disembarked over the beach at Qui Nhon, with cargo lightered ashore from two to five miles at sea. The actual debarkation of the division and the 40 mile move inland to the division's base at An Khe took only 15 days. A total of 15,000 men, 3,100 vehicles, 470 aircraft and 19,000 tons of cargo were involved in the movement. Bad weather and VC attacks on access roads near An Khe hampered the movement somewhat. On 18 September, only 95 days after the reorganization of the division had been approved, the first elements of the division were engaged in combat with the VC. Army

By 31 December 1965, the addition of assorted support units increased the total strength of US forces in Vietnam to 184,314. During the nine month period from March through December, the United States had deployed approximately 150,000 troops to South Vietnam. This tremendous buildup had not been achieved without cost to US military posture in other parts of the world. NATO reinforcements had been drawn down to a point where flexibility was impaired by a lack of readily deployable general purpose forces; there were substantial inadequacies in the US training and rotation base; and there were short-falls and draw-downs in supply stock, and equipment that left some forces in the RVN and elsewhere with less than the required rates of supply support.²⁶

Command Arrangements

In his recommendations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff following the deployment conference of 8-10 April, Admiral Sharp had set forth his views on the optimum national command arrangements for operations in Vietnam. The organizational integrity of the Service components would be retained to the extent possible, and military command would remain in Service channels. Administrative and logistic support of all units would be in accordance with established procedures. CINCPAC was to have overall operational control of all land, sea and air forces and would exercise this through his major subordinate

26. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 44, 259. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 255-65 (Supp.), 1 Nov 65, p. 8 (TS) Talking Paper for CJCS, "Draft Memorandum for the President on Recommended FY 1966 Southeast Asia Supplemental Appropriation (U)," 9 Dec 65, JMF 7000 (24 Nov 65) sec 2. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) CSA Report, 1968, pp. 27-28.

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commanders, CINCUSARPAC, CINCPACFLT, CINCPACAF and COMUSMACV. COMUSMACV was designated the operational joint commander for operations in the RVN. As the senior US Army commander in the area, he would also have responsibility for US Army component functions. He could exercise this responsibility, if he wished, through appropriate subordinate Army commanders.²⁷

USAF functions in RVN would be controlled by the Commander, 2d Air Division, who would report in this capacity to COMUSMACV. For operations against NVN, operational control of US Air Forces in Southeast Asia would be exercised by CINCPACAF through the Commander 13th Air Force and the Commander 2d Air Division, when directed by CINCPAC. CINCPACAF would operate in support of COMUSMACV when so directed.

CG III MEB would assume command functions over the naval component command in RVN and would, in this capacity, report to COMUSMACV. Other offensive naval operations would be conducted under operational control of CINCPACFLT who would operate forces in support of COMUSMACV when directed.²⁸

Following clearance for entry of the MEB into RVN, General Westmoreland furnished CINCPAC his concept of the command relationships for Marines and the concept for their employment in counterinsurgency operations. COMUSMACV had secured the agreement of the RVNAF High Command to an enlarged mission for the Marines and for command relationships with the RVNAF commander in the Da Nang Area, CG I Corps. In his letter of instructions to the CG 9th MEB, COMUSMACV had instructed him, in coordination with the CG I Corps, to "continue to occupy defensive positions and key terrain at Da Nang to secure the airfield, communications facilities, US supporting installations, port facilities and landing beaches against attack. Undertake offensive action as necessary to support I Corps RVNAF in the conduct of the defense of the area of Da Nang and critical contiguous areas against VC or PAVN units."²⁹

27. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia--Deployment Planning Conference, Hq, PACOM, 8-10 April 1965, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

28. Ibid.

29. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 11535 to CINCPAC, 13 Apr 65, JCS IN 11504.

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General Westmoreland set no time for the beginning of Phase II "offensive action as a mobile reaction force" within a 50 mile radius of Da Nang. The same was true of Phase III, in which the Marines would take offensive action, if necessary, in the whole of the I CTZ.

Admiral Sharp, on seeing General Westmoreland's letter of instructions, advised him that he had placed too much emphasis on the defensive aspects of the Marine mission. "As I understand the JCS directive," he said, "the Marines are to engage in offensive counterinsurgency operations earliest." Westmoreland's instructions to the Marine commander indicated to Sharp that the Marines would not start offensive operations against the VC for several weeks. "If I read the messages properly, this is not what our superiors intend. Recommend you revise your concept accordingly."³⁰

Admiral Sharp apparently had interpreted the JCS directives correctly. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff agree with you that the active employment of US Marine Forces now in RVN in counterinsurgency combat operations should be accelerated in order to establish procedures and basis for similar operations," the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Sharp upon seeing his message to General Westmoreland.³¹

Command and Control-US/RVN/Allied Forces

The decision to commit US forces in a combat role, as well as the growing enemy capabilities marked by the identification of a NVA division in RVN, intensified the need to resolve the question of how operations of the US, Allied, and RVN forces would be controlled and coordinated. General Westmoreland had, on 22 March, given his views on the broad aspects of command and control. On 7 April, General Wheeler passed on to Admiral Sharp his own views on command and coordination of US/RVN/Allied forces in the northern CTZs, I and II Corps areas, and on control of US and RVNAF aircraft both in RVN and in NVN.³²

30. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 140831Z Apr 65, JCS IN 14777.

31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9063 to CINCPAC, 14 Apr 65.

32. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 1566 to CINCPAC, 22 Mar 65; JCS 1223-65 to CINCPAC, 7 Apr 65; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65.

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The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, did not believe that coordination/cooperation could be handled from Saigon. COMUSMACV and his staff were already overextended trying to handle responsibilities in RVN and in NVN. He warned that, even if three divisions, US and Allied, were in position in the I and II CTZs, no adequate system existed to direct their operations effectively in the event of a major attack by the NVA in those areas. The ARVN I and II Corps headquarters were static territorial headquarters, not mobile tactical headquarters such as would be needed. As one solution General Wheeler suggested that General Westmoreland might establish in the Pleiku area a combined field force headquarters, perhaps headed by General Throckmorton, which would include both US and RVN staff officers. This headquarters would, in effect, be a corps headquarters, although not so named, and would have a broad mission, including coordination of US/Allied/ARVN operations in the north and the preparation of plans to counter any NVA attack. In this connection General Wheeler expressed concern at General Westmoreland's reports of the VC buildup in the northern provinces, at the movement of the 325th NVA Division headquarters into RVN, and at ominous signs of enemy preparations near Kontum and west of Da Nang. The Chairman informed Admiral Sharp that the Secretary of Defense shared this concern and that was one reason why he was so anxious to push ahead rapidly with creating logistic facilities to support the introduction of additional forces.³³

The CINCPAC plan developed at Honolulu on 8-10 April reflected most of General Wheeler's ideas for command and control of the US/RVN/Allied forces when operating in the same areas. A US Army Corps Headquarters would be established upon deployment of the remainder of the MEF and an additional US division. The CG, US Army Corps, would report to COMUSMACV, assuming operational control of the US divisions and, if deployed, of the ROK division. (If establishment of the corps headquarters were delayed, COMUSMACV would retain direct operational control.) COMUSMACV would plan and conduct operations on a "coordinate/cooperative" basis with CINCRVNAF. During these operations he would exercise operational control of US and allied troops, while the US corps commander and the division commanders would ensure coordination with the commanders of ARVN units in and adjacent to their operating areas. COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF would form a small combined staff to correlate activities and perform liaison at their levels of command on these combat operations in which forces under COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF would participate. This staff would serve both major commanders, who

33. Ibid.

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would supervise its activities and approve or disapprove its actions. Directive powers and command authority in matters acted upon by this combined staff would be vested solely in COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF respectively. Directives to their respective subordinate forces would be sent only through their national operational control channels. Subordinate commanders in the COMUSMACV chain of operational control would accomplish coordination with ARVN commanders at their levels of command in accordance with these principles and procedures.³⁴

On 11 April General Westmoreland again raised the question of command and control over US/Allied/GVN forces. Addressing the problems which would be raised by the arrival of three division forces, he strongly recommended a Corps Headquarters be furnished him, suggesting that HQ III US Corps be considered for deployment to RVN concurrently with the second of the divisions. The HQ III Corps would not need to be at full TO&E strength but could be tailored to its mission, with COMUSMACV's own headquarters furnishing the manning necessary for a provisional field headquarters for a temporary period.³⁵

"In order to forestall certain political and psychological problems within South Vietnam and the world at large associated with the deployment of US combat forces, the formation in due course, on a test basis of an International Military Security Task Force (IMSTAF) in the Da Nang area built around the 9th MEB is recommended," General Westmoreland said. He was not proposing that the direct chain of command of US military units be confused or complicated by intricate international machinery. Rather, he wanted third country forces, Korean, Australian, New Zealand and Filipino, along with RVN units, to be attached to the US brigade to make up a combined force. If larger deployments occurred the IMSTAF could phase into a larger international force. If the IMSTAF at Da Nang proved successful it would be possible to form a similar IMSTAF at Bien Hoa as well.

He believed that the time was ripe to form "a mechanism at the national level to control international forces." His concept involved the joint exercise of authority by CINCRVNAF and COMUSMACV, the formation of a small single combined staff headed by a US general officer, a Vietnamese Deputy Chief of the Combined Staff, and a multinational staff. This staff would, subject to the approval of the combined commanders,

34. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia-Deployment Planning Conference HQ PACOM, 8-10 April 1965, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

35. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 11682 to CINCPAC, 11 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 65.

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develop strategic guidance, rules of engagement, command relations and such other matters as might be directed. Informally, RVNAF officials had indicated that they would go along with such an arrangement. "However," he concluded, "it should be introduced on a low-key basis."³⁶

The wisdom of not publicizing plans for forming a joint command was confirmed later in the month when General Ky expressed publicly the view that a joint command was not necessary. On 3 May, in commenting on Ky's attitude, Ambassador Taylor warned Washington that Hanoi had called reports that the United States and the GVN were planning a joint command proof that the RVN was a "lackey" of US imperialism.³⁷

One of the principal objectives of General Wheeler's visit to Honolulu on 19-20 April was to discuss and make firm arrangements for optimum command arrangements in Southeast Asia. He informed Admiral Sharp of this on 16 April and told him that he saw three military situations for which advance agreement on arrangements must be reached. The first was the present situation wherein US and allied combat forces were being sent into RVN to conduct counterinsurgency operations against the VC. The second, was a "near-term" contingency wherein troops from NVN either overtly or covertly entered the RVN on the side of the VC, perhaps in an effort to cut the country in two. The most drastic situation would, of course, be one in which Chinese Communist forces would intervene in great numbers on a broad front in RVN and perhaps in Thailand and Burma. "I desire on the first day of the conference," the Chairman informed CINCPAC, "to finalize our thoughts and establish an agreed organizational pattern toward which we can build in the coming months." He believed that sending a US Corps headquarters with signal and supporting units to RVN as a base for establishing a combined field force command in the northern war zone should be seriously considered.³⁸

HP General Westmoreland sent to Admiral Sharp on 8 May the general concept for command and control of US/Allied ground combat forces that had developed at the Honolulu Conference on 19-20 April. The assumptions were that national forces would retain their command identity. The United States would not place its forces under the operational control of RVNAF or

36. Ibid.

37. (C) Msg, Saigon 3622 to State, 3 May 65, JCS IN 41715.

38. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9222 to CINCPAC, 16 Apr 65.

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PP allied commanders (except temporarily in emergency), but the United States might in special cases assume operational control or temporary "tactical direction" over the forces of the RVNAF. The United States would assume operational control over allied forces usually at brigade or higher level.

His concepts for the IMSTAF, earlier recommended, were that allied forces would normally be brigaded with US forces under a US commander with a combined staff. The nucleus of the IMSTAF would be a US brigade with some allied representation on the staff. An IMSTAF would have complete tactical integrity and would be employed in a manner similar to a US brigade. Any ARVN unit associated with the IMSTAF would be under operational control of the US commander.³⁹

On 10 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that a combined field force headquarters be organized under the Deputy COMUSMACV to exercise operational control over US, Allied, and assigned ARVN ground forces deployed in the northern combat zone. Operations in the southern part of RVN would continue under existing arrangements. They also noted that the small combined coordinating staff, to be headed jointly by COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF, would suffice for the present. However, a larger, more formal combined command authority should be established when more US forces arrived. Secretary McNamara approved their recommendations and expressed agreement with their views on the same day.⁴⁰

On 14 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC of the approval of their recommendations. The Secretary, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved a US deputy field force commander, authorized to take over from the field force commander in case the latter was required to move up to the position of COMUSMACV in the event General Westmoreland assumed command of United States Forces, Southeast Asia (USFSEASIA), or of the Central Region, SEATO Field Forces (COMCRSFP). The Field Force headquarters would be established under the present Deputy COMUSMACV, General Throckmorton, at such a time as the US IX Corps Headquarters was deployed to RVN. There would be no requirement

39. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 080700Z May 65, JCS IN 50558.

40. (S-GP 4) JCSM-345-65 to SecDef, 10 May 65 (derived from JCS 2343/550-2); (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 May 65; JCS 2343/550-3; JMF 9155.3 (24 Mar 65).

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for an additional officer to be assigned as Deputy COMUSMACV when and if, as was contemplated, General Throckmorton assumed command of Headquarters, Field Forces, South Vietnam.⁴¹

Secretary McNamara had also approved upgrading the "two-hatted" position of Deputy COMUSMACV for Air Operations and Commander, 2d Air Division, to Lieutenant General. A USAF Major General would be named Deputy Commander, 2d Air Division, with additional Air Force general officers as appropriate. "Recognizing the supervisory problems generated by the geographic separation of air units functioning under the operational control and/or coordinating authority of the Commander, 2d Air Division, an appropriate number of wing organizations should be established under his cognizance." The Deputy Chief of Staff, Headquarters, MACV, would be a USAF Brigadier General. "In view of the heavily increased air activity in Southeast Asia," the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, "and the probability of additional commitment of US air forces, additional key staff billets should be identified and subsequently filled by air officers."

CINCPAC was told to plan for this and additionally to plan for a combined field force headquarters in the I CTZ.⁴²

Admiral Sharp asked General Westmoreland on 22 May to submit to him plans for: 1) the establishment of a small, combined coordinating staff under COMUSMACV/CINCRVNAF; 2) a more formal combined authority; and 3) activation of a field force headquarters in the northern combat zone in either a combined or unilateral US situation.⁴³

General Westmoreland had earlier discussed with top RVNAF officials the matter of setting up a combined command authority of some type and had found them receptive because of the obvious military advantages. Subsequently, however, RVN military leaders had gradually cooled toward the idea of a "combined" headquarters. On 24 May, COMUSMACV cited to CINCPAC the several statements by Ky and General Thieu on the undesirability of joint command. "In the light of these attitudes," he told Admiral Sharp, "it is clearly premature at this time to propose the establishment of a combined coordinating staff to the GVN."⁴⁴

41. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2159 to CINCPAC, 14 May 65.

42. Ibid.

43. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 220400Z May 65, JCS IN 72070.

44. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 17292 to CINCPAC, 24 May 65, JCS IN 73940.

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As a stop-gap measure, General Westmoreland had appointed and accredited one of his general officers as a representative on the RVNAF Joint General Staff to "coordinate the overall MACV advisory effort vis-a-vis the Joint General Staff, in critical cases affecting several functional areas." Because of General Westmoreland's statement that a combined command authority would not be feasible politically at this time, Admiral Sharp recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the activation of a combined US/GVN coordinating staff be deferred indefinitely.⁴⁵

Subsequently, on 28 May, CINCPAC was directed, in a joint State/Defense message, to plan for the combined Field Force headquarters "on a unilateral basis." He had already instructed COMUSMACV to plan in detail for the activation of a Field Force Headquarters in the northern combat zone in either a US unilateral or a combined basis. Admiral Sharp's view had been that a US Field Force should be built around the nucleus of a tailored US Army Corps Headquarters, to be activated when two or more US divisions had been deployed to South Vietnam. The headquarters would assume command of US Army and US Marine Corps forces in the northern combat zone. The headquarters cadre would be filled out from in-country resources as much as possible. In view of the joint nature of the ground operations and the need for close air support, Admiral Sharp had counted on not only US Army, but Marine Corps and US Air Force representation on the staff. On 16 June he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had learned that they had directed the Chief of Staff, Army, to plan for the organization, activation and deployment of a US Army Field Force headquarters. He immediately asked for clarification as to the relationship between what he had been directed to do on 14 May and what, apparently, the Chief of Staff, Army, had now been directed to do. "If the proposed Field Forces command is to embrace both Army and Marine Corps ground forces," CINCPAC told the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "there is a concomitant need to tailor the headquarters in such a manner as to include adequate Marine Corps representation and to provide necessary air expertise. In this case the title of the Field Force should reflect its joint composition."⁴⁶

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that they would take his views into consideration when they addressed the subject of the Field Force Headquarters definitively. They pointed

⁴⁵. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 260332Z May 65, JCS IN 76889.

⁴⁶. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160250Z Jun 65, JCS IN 14248.

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out that they had recommended to the Secretary of Defense that one US Army Corps headquarters be deployed to RVN. Subsequently "higher authority" had directed that the Corps Headquarters be referred to as a US Army Field Force Headquarters to avoid using the term "corps headquarters". While it was true that they had asked the Department of Army to plan the organization of the US Army Field Force Headquarters, Vietnam, because of the issues now raised by CINCPAC, they believed that a joint US Field Force Headquarters in the RVN would provide for better operational control of US forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thereupon rescinded their instructions to the Chief of Staff, Army, and instructed Admiral Sharp to plan for a joint US Field Force Headquarters, RVN. They directed him also to continue his planning in preparation for activation of a combined field force headquarters.⁴⁷

Command Arrangements - SE Asia

5706
The top US commander in Vietnam served not only as COMUSMACV but also as COMUSMACTHAI, commander of US forces in Thailand, an arrangement made in 1962 at the time of the temporary deployment of US forces to that country. The Thai Government had not been consulted on establishment of COMUSMACTHAI. With the withdrawal of US forces the United States did not disestablish USMACTHAI and the Thai Government did not force the issue. However, Thai officials expressed resentment over the fact that the dual command tended to make Thailand an appendage of the US command in Vietnam, bringing propaganda charges from communist nations that Thailand was a puppet of the United States.⁴⁸

In addition to these commands, General Westmoreland, senior US officer in Southeast Asia was, in emergency, to be designated Commander, US Forces Southeast Asia (COMUSSEASIA), and Commander, Central Region, SEATO Field Forces (COMCRSFF).

5706
At the Manila Conference in late 1964 the Thai Foreign Minister had asked Secretary of State Rusk to have US command arrangements in Southeast Asia modified. The visit of a GVN delegation to Thailand in late 1964 had given rise to Chinese Communist charges that the Vietnamese were conveying to the Thai Government demands of their joint US overlords. This increased Thai irritability over US command arrangements which, in their eyes, associated Thailand directly with US military actions in RVN.

47. (TS) Msg, JCS 4561 to CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65.

48. (S) Msg, Bangkok 120 to State, 2 Aug 64. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 30 Apr 65, JMF 9150 (28 Apr 65).

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The Prime Minister of Thailand informed US Ambassador Martin that he realized that in event of a major escalation General Westmoreland would have to assume overall command in Southeast Asia. But he pointed out that things had not yet reached that stage and he was unable to understand why the United States persisted in keeping Westmoreland as COMUSMACTHAI since his duties obviously required his presence in Saigon. If the United States wished to continue maintaining USMACTHAI, his government was amenable, but definitely wanted the command separated from the Vietnam command.⁴⁹

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CINCPAC had anticipated these objections in mid-1964 and had suggested that a separate COMUSMACTHAI, resident in Bangkok, be established with a Lieutenant General holding the post. At that time General Westmoreland had concurred in this recommendation. But with the upsurge in enemy activity in RVN and the consequent intensification of US actions in the entire Southeast Asian area, General Westmoreland changed his view. Because he felt that any major reorganization of the US command structure would be disruptive at this time, COMUSMACV recommended on 31 March 1965 that there be no change in command arrangements that would divide responsibility for operations in Southeast Asia. He wanted no action taken to establish a separate COMUSMACTHAI. He recommended also that the post of CHJUSMAG Thailand be retained in status quo with a USAF or USA Major General holding that post, assisted by a Brigadier General of the "opposite service" as his deputy.⁵⁰

In anticipation of Secretary Rusk's attendance at the May 1965 meeting of SEATO, Secretary McNamara asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to furnish him their views on the existing command relationships in the Southeast Asian area.⁵¹

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 28 April that because of the long-standing sensitivity of the Thai Government to the "double-hat COMUSMACV/COMUSMACTHAI arrangement", and in order to promote efficiency by letting COMUSMACV concentrate on his immediate task of defeating the VC, they believed it was now time to separate MACV and MACTHAI into two separate commands. As for COMUSMACV's planning responsibilities as COMUSSEASIA (designate) and as

49. Ibid.

50. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 10021 to CINCPAC, 31 May 65, JCS IN 84276.

51. (TS) CM-565-65 to the JCS, 26 Apr 65; (TS) JCSM-319-65 to SecDef, 28 Apr 65; JMF 9150 (28 Apr 65).

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COMCRSFF (designate), the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that he should be in a position to exercise direct policy control over the SEASIA and SEATO planning activities of COMUSMACTHAI. Therefore a direct US channel should be kept open between COMUSMACTHAI and General Westmoreland in his roles as COMUSSEASIA and COMCRSFF. Staff support to accomplish this would require augmentation of the small COMUSMACTHAI planning group in Bangkok and development of a communications/operations facility in Korat to permit later expansion into a headquarters for COMUSSEASIA and COMCRSFF.⁵²

Third Country Forces - 1965

At the 1 April 1965 NSC meeting, where the President approved the first US combat deployments, he also directed the "urgent exploration" with the Governments of the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand of the possibility of rapid deployments of significant combat elements. In implementation of the President's directive, the United States invited Australia and New Zealand to participate in military staff talks with CINCPAC. During the talks, in early April 1965, the Australians indicated that they were prepared to send a combat battalion to Vietnam. New Zealand, on the other hand, was less receptive to US overtures for combat forces. The New Zealand representative thought that his Government might furnish a 105mm howitzer battery and, possibly, a tank troop, but he added that such a deployment would require considerable political ground work with the New Zealand public.⁵³⁻

True to its word, Australia committed a combat battalion to the RVN. After the requisite formalities of a GVN request had been accomplished, a joint GVN-Australian communique of 29 April 1965 announced that Australia would deploy an infantry battalion to the RVN, marking the first formal commitment of a combat unit by a third country.⁵⁴

52. Ibid.

53. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 328, 6 Apr 65, Encl to JCS 2343/566, 7 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (6 Apr 65). (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 130011Z Apr 65, JCS IN 15890.

54. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 300325Z Apr 65, JCS IN 37045.

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In anticipation of the arrival of the Australian troops in the RVN, the United States and Australia signed on 5 May 1965 a Military Working Arrangement. This Arrangement provided for the overall command of the Australian forces to be vested in the Commander, Australian Army Force, Republic of Vietnam (COMAAAFV), who would in turn be under the operational control of COMUSMACV. The Arrangement specified that the Australian battalion would be "brigaded" with "an appropriate US brigade echelon" and stated that COMUSMACV would supply all administrative and logistical support for the Australian forces. Subsequently, in a financial working arrangement, Australia agreed to reimburse the United States for this support.⁵⁵

The advance party of the Australian battalion arrived in the RVN on 26 May 1965. The remainder of the battalion together with a logistic support company closed between 29 May and 11 June and was attached to the US 173d Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa. (This was in accordance with a "Concept of Command and Operations" that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, had given the Australian Military Attache in Washington, as well as the US-Australian Military Working Arrangement.) In late September, Australia augmented its force with a 105mm howitzer battery, a field engineer troop, an APC troop, a signal unit, and filler personnel. At year-end, Australian strength in the RVN stood at 1,557.⁵⁶

The US sent Ambassador-at-Large Henry Cabot Lodge to New Zealand in early May to solicit a definite commitment, and late in the month Prime Minister Holyoake announced that New Zealand would send a 105mm battery to the RVN. This deployment would be executed concurrent with the withdrawal of the New Zealand engineer team sent to the RVN in 1964.⁵⁷

Despite some unfavorable reaction to the deployment by the New Zealand public, the battery arrived in the RVN on 21 July 1965. It was placed under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade with a primary mission of support for the

55. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) MIL Working Arrangement between COMAAAFV & COMUSMACV, 5 May 65; (C-NOFORN) Financial Working Arrangement between MACV & AFV, 7 Sep 65; JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65).

56. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 71, 359-361. (TS) Ltr, CJCS to MGEN Charles E. Long, 10 May 65, OCJCS File 091 091 Vietnam May 1965.

57. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 362. (S) Memo, COL Gibbons to Dir, J-3, "Trip Report," 6 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 1965.

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Australian battalion. This was in accordance with a Military Working Arrangement signed on 9 June 1965 by New Zealand and the United States, placing command of the New Zealand troops under the Commander, New Zealand Army Force, Republic of Vietnam (COMNZAFV), who would be under the operational control of COMUSMACV. Again, the US agreed to furnish logistical and administrative support for the New Zealand troops, and although it was never set forth in a formal agreement, New Zealand reimbursed the United States for this support.⁵⁸

The Free World nation, outside of the United States, that furnished the largest amount of military assistance to the RVN in 1965 was the Republic of Korea. In March 1965, the ROK sent to the RVN a task force composed of an army engineer battalion with associated support and self-defense troops. This task force, called the "Dove unit," totalled 1,927 men.⁵⁹

Through the early summer of 1965, the United States conducted diplomatic discussions with the ROK concerning the provision of combat elements in the RVN. These discussions culminated on 12 August when the ROK agreed to contribute a combat division composed of a headquarters, one marine regiment, two infantry regiments, and a field support command.⁶⁰

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, optimistic that the ROK would approve the deployment of this division, had already included it in the force figures given to the Secretary of Defense with their deployment recommendations of 2 July 1965.

As had been the case with both Australia and New Zealand, the United States negotiated a Military Working Arrangement with the ROK. This arrangement, signed on 6 September 1965, provided for US logistical and administrative support of the ROK troops and vested command of the ROK forces in the Commander, Republic of Korea Forces, Vietnam (COMROKRV). Unlike the arrangements with Australia and New Zealand, the US-ROK Arrangement made no provision for the operational control of COMUSMACV over the Korean commander. Throughout the fall, COMUSMACV attempted, without success, to reach a formal agreement with COMROKRV on command and control. He reported to CINCPAC in early December that a formal arrangement could be politically embarrassing to the ROKs, since it might

58. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 72, 362. (C-NOFORN-GP 4) Military Working Agreement between COMNZAFV & COMUSMACV, 9 Jun 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65).

59. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 363.

60. Ibid, p. 364.

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connote that they were subordinate to, and acting as mercenaries for, the United States. General Westmoreland felt a formal arrangement was no longer necessary since COMROKRV had agreed verbally to de facto operational control by US commanders.⁶¹

The advance party of the ROK division arrived in Saigon on 15 September 1965. The main body of the division landed on 8 October and the deployment was completed on 8 November, bringing the total ROK forces in the RVN to 20,620. The ROK division was stationed in II CTZ, the Marine regiment at Cam Ranh Bay and the rest of the division at Qui Nhon, with a mission of protecting logistic bases and keeping vital Route 19 open to traffic.⁶²

Two other Free World nations, the Philippines and the Republic of China, increased their military assistance to the RVN, but this aid continued to be in the form of noncombatant personnel. The United States attempted to persuade the Philippines to supplement its representation in South Vietnam with a civic action group of about 2,000 men. Both President Macapagal and President-elect Marcos favored this proposal, but the Philippine Congress refused to approve it in 1965, and it was not until mid-1966 that the deployment of the civic action group was finally authorized. The United States also considered approaching the Philippine Government with a request for combat troops for South Vietnam. CHUSMAGPHIL, however, advised against such a move, stating that the Filipino armed forces were in no condition to supply any combat troops, and the United States dropped the matter. The Filipinos did augment their medical and civic action teams that had been sent to Vietnam in 1964, raising the number of Filipinos in Vietnam from 32 to 72 men by the end of 1965.⁶³

At the beginning of 1965, the Government of the Republic of China (GRC) had 14 political warfare advisors in Vietnam. During the year the GRC furnished the RVN two C-46s and crews, raising the GRC strength in SVN to 20. This was an extremely small force, but the presence of any GRC military personnel in Vietnam presented a delicate foreign relations problem. The introduction of GRC troops into Vietnam could furnish Communist China with an excuse for direct intervention. At the time of the Nationalist Chinese offer of political warfare advisors in 1964, the Secretary of

61. (C-NOFORN-GP 4) Military Working Arrangement between COMROKRV and COMUSMACV, 6 Sep 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65). (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 070531Z Dec 65, JCS IN 84558.

62. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 73, 365-366.

63. Ibid., p. 369. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/515-7, 11 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (14 Jan 65).

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State had instructed the US Ambassador in Taipei that great care must be taken not to export the Chinese civil war to SVN and that the Chinese advisors in Vietnam should not wear their uniforms. The Secretary had also instructed the Ambassador to discourage offers of noncombatant troops, such as engineers, entirely, urging instead that the GRC continue economic and technical assistance to the RVN. The question of employing GRC troops in the RVN would be raised again in 1966 by the Commandant of the US Marine Corps.⁶⁴

Thailand, the only other Free World nation that had military forces in the RVN at the beginning of 1965, made no additions to its small force during the year. Late in 1965, however, the United States received feelers indicative that Thailand was disposed to provide cargo aircraft and shallow draft shipping to the RVN, but nothing had come of this by the year's end.⁶⁵

The year 1965 saw the introduction of the first third-country combat forces into the RVN and the increase of third-country strength from 388 at the beginning of the year to 22,404 by the end of December. 1966 was to bring a further expansion of the war and a doubling of US forces in Vietnam. Accompanying this vast increase would be a requirement for larger numbers of third-country combat troops to assist and support US forces. US military planning in late 1965 was already calling for the deployment of 23,500 additional third-country personnel to the RVN in 1966.⁶⁶

The RVNAF

A basic principle of US policy in Vietnam was support of the indigenous military forces, with the objective of strengthening these forces so that they could take over successfully the defense of their own country. In 1963, the Secretary of Defense had directed acceleration of a buildup of the RVNAF in the hope that the GVN would, within a reasonable time, be able to carry on counterinsurgency operations without the advice and assistance of substantial numbers of US military personnel. Preparations had been made to withdraw US advisors and units, but owing to the serious deterioration in the political and military situations in late 1963 and in 1964, the United States had chosen to increase rather than decrease its own military involvement.

64. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 370-371.

65. Ibid., p. 73.

66. Ibid., p. 273. (TS) Hqs. CINCPAC, Reprogrammed Phased Force Requirements for CY 66, 16 Dec 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Dec 65) sec 1A.

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In late 1964 and during 1965 the United States took measures to strengthen both the regular and paramilitary forces of the RVN. Improvement of these forces was greatly complicated by abnormally high desertion rates and inadequate enlistment and recruitment.

The Joint Survey Requirements

In late autumn of 1964, General Westmoreland, working with the RVNAF High Command, had conducted a survey of the structures of the RVNAF, the RF, and the PF. The survey was intended to determine what additional strength was needed in these forces so that they could simultaneously maintain search and destroy operations, protect key installations and cities, and support national and provincial pacification plans. This survey resulted in recommendations for additional forces which General Westmoreland sent to CINCPAC on 24 November 1964.⁶⁷

General Westmoreland set forth two alternatives for these force increases. Under Alternative One, the RVNAF would be increased by 30,000 men (mostly for the ARVN). Paramilitary forces would receive 110,000 additional men, raising the number of RF companies by 105 immediately and by 234 at the end of 1965. The PF would be increased by 64,000 men as soon as possible, with a total increase, at the end of 1965, of 79,000. These increases would, it was hoped, provide for progress in the Priority One Hop Tac area, arrest VC gains in certain other critical areas, and provide enough impetus to keep pacification machinery operating in the remaining areas of the RVN.

Under Alternative Two, paramilitary forces would not increase beyond Alternative One strength, but regular forces would be increased by 17,000 above Alternative One. Under this Alternative Two more progress would be achieved in pacification.

General Westmoreland pointed out that to support Alternative One increases the RVNAF must take into its ranks an average of 7,000 recruits per month. Alternative Two would require 8,000 per month. "It is not certain at this time," General Westmoreland told Admiral Sharp, "whether either of these figures can be supported. However, the lower figure is more reasonable estimate of manpower availability." Alternative One could, in view of training and equipment lead time requirements, be achieved

⁶⁷. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 14864 to CINCPAC, 24 Nov 64.

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by the end of 1965, while Alternative Two would take until about mid-1966. From the standpoint of the inflationary impact upon the nation's economy the lower costs of Alternative One would be less damaging.

General Westmoreland believed that sufficient men could be acquired to support Alternative One and that all of the new units, except for armored units, could be trained by the end of 1965. Training of all personnel, except for NCOs, would also be accomplished by that time. The requirement for critical items of supply and equipment could be met by priority supply and shipment from the United States or by diversion from US Army stocks.

To support increased force levels, 446 additional US advisors would be needed under Alternative One, 606 under Alternative Two.

General Westmoreland stated that he intended to tell GVN military officials that, as a condition to US support of any strength increases, the GVN must agree to enforce its draft laws, actively carry out its population and resources control programs, and adopt certain improved personnel policies for the RVNAF. Some of its elite, but expensive, military units must also be disbanded.

COMUSMACV recommended that Alternative One be adopted. Ambassador Taylor concurred in this recommendation.⁶⁸

CINCPAC forwarded General Westmoreland's recommendation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff with his approval, during the important policy meetings that took place in late November and early December.⁶⁹

68. Ibid. (S-GP 3) Encls A and B to JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2.

69. (S-GP 3) Encls A and B to JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2.

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RVNAF FORCES

11 December 1964

<u>Regular</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>New Totals</u>	
		<u>Alt 1</u>	<u>Alt 2</u>
Army	217,300	240,953	258,200
Navy	8,162	14,476	14,476
Marines	6,555	6,555	6,555
Air Force	11,582	11,924	11,924
Total	243,599	273,908	291,155

<u>Paramilitary</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>New Total</u>
		<u>End 65</u>
Regional Force	97,615	133,002
Popular Force	109,991	189,185
Coastal Force	4,640	no change
Total	212,246	322,189

Information derived from App to Encl A to JCS 2343/500-1,
11 Dec 64.

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On 17 December 1964, in line with the other important actions being taken and considered to improve the situation in the RVN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve Alternative One, as a basis for discussion with the GVN, and the detailed MAP programming actions required. They asked also that he approve the US advisors for the new units, and that action be taken to obtain the additional funds in the FY 1965 and FY 1966 MAP to support the Alternative One program.⁷⁰

On 13 January 1965, in a memorandum to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense approved "in principle" the Alternative One increase and the associated US advisor increases. In the matter of funding he directed that \$35.9 million be funded from FY 1965 MAP and the remainder from FY 1966 MAP. "I shall coordinate with the Department of State on the matter of final approval . . . " the Secretary said.⁷¹

On 15 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that the US advisors had been finally approved. In the meantime the Services had already taken preliminary actions to move these advisors to the RVN.⁷²

In the face of the worsening military situation in the RVN, General Westmoreland, on 20 March, asked that he be authorized to accelerate the activation of 16 ARVN infantry battalions authorized under Alternative One. He asked also that, upon completion of Alternative One, he be given authority to put Alternative Two into effect. The 17,000 additional spaces under this latter alternative would allow the formation of 15 additional infantry battalions, four engineer battalions, one 155mm artillery battalion, and three M-113 troops long with additional administrative and logistic forces. He would be able to complete the training of the total 31 battalions provided in both alternatives by March 1966, as opposed to July 1966, but to do so certain conditions would have to be met. These included: 1) the GVN must be strong and take interest in conscription and recruiting to achieve a sustained 8,000 man per month input; 2) construction funds must be

70. (S-GP 3) JCSM-1074-64 to SecDef, 17 Dec 64 (derived from JCS 2343/500-1, 17 Dec 64), JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64), sec 2.

71. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-2, 14 Jan 65, same file.

72. (S-GP 3) Encl B to JCS 2343/500-4, 2 Apr 65, same file.

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provided speedily; 3) the GVN must agree to an increase in training facilities; 4) the GVN must agree to redistribution of equipment temporarily; 5) Washington authorities must take extraordinary MAP programming and supply actions; 6) approval of Alternative Two must be received by 1 April 1965.⁷³ General Westmoreland recognized that the GVN might not be able to support the manpower requirement and that there might be some slippage in the quality of training and equipment.⁷⁴

In spite of some concern that the Alternative One increases might not be achieved as readily as COMUSMACV was predicting, Admiral Sharp considered the need for a stronger RVNAF overriding. He recommended approval of General Westmoreland's latest recommendations.⁷⁵

In forwarding their recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on 8 April 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that they considered it "essential at this critical period to take maximum advantage of GVN capabilities to recruit and field the necessary military forces to support pacification operations." They believed that higher strength goals would act as an incentive to the GVN to set up an adequate recruiting program. Consequently they recommended that the Secretary authorize the Alternative Two program and the necessary advisor spaces, that he approve acceleration of the total force increase, subject to CINCPAC review of FY 1965 funding requirements, and that funds for the force increase be obtained from sources outside the world-wide MAP.⁷⁶

On 12 April the Secretary of Defense approved the additional RVNAF force increase.⁷⁷

On 5 May, COMUSMACV proposed that a tenth ARVN division be formed from three existing separate regiments. In order to do this he would need 2,369 additional spaces to form two

73. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 86874 to CINCPAC, 20 Mar 65, JCS IN 71332.

74. Ibid.

75. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 250102Z Mar 65, JCS IN 77121.

76. (S-GP 3) JCSM-265-65 to SecDef, 8 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/500-4, 2 Apr 65), JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64), sec 2.

77. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-5, 14 Apr 65, same file.

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artillery battalions and some support units. He felt that this new division would be valuable in shoring up the weak east flank of the Hop Tac zone.⁷⁸ CINCPAC recommended approval of this request. On 27 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve the necessary actions to form the new division. Secretary McNamara approved the request on 4 June, thus raising the authorized strength of the ARVN to 261,155.⁷⁹

As US forces became increasingly engaged in the RVN, General Westmoreland, in June, carried out another review of the force requirements of the RVNAF. The intensification of the fighting had caused battle losses of the RVNAF higher than had been anticipated. Equally serious, from the manpower standpoint, RVNAF desertion rates were soaring to inordinate heights. These factors had caused a shrinking in ARVN battle-field strength. General Westmoreland had decided, therefore, that he should concentrate on keeping existing units filled rather than on creating the new units authorized. He proposed a temporary moratorium on activation of new battalions and the diversion of fillers to units already in being. Admiral Sharp agreed. On 15 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed COMUSMACV temporarily to defer activation of 11 battalions scheduled for the next several months.⁸⁰

By 27 October, with US forces assuming a greater role in the combat, prospects for the RVNAF improved. General Westmoreland reported on that date that the buildup of the RVNAF was making better progress than had been anticipated. The desertion rate, for example, was declining and as a result the fighting strength of ARVN battalions had been raised to combat-effective levels. Fifteen new battalions were being trained. He had also been able to form the tenth ARVN division which was now operational. General Westmoreland said that he believed the manpower available in the RVN could support an input of 10,000 men monthly into the RVNAF for the remainder of FY 1966. On 2 November, COMUSMACV asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve a new strength level for the RVNAF, raising it to

78. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 14734, 5 May 65, JCS IN 47391.

79. (S-GP 4) JCSM-417-65 to SecDef (derived from JCS 2343/500-6, 25 May 65); JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 Jun 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-7, same file.

80. (S-GP 4) Encl C to JCS 2343/801, 28 Mar 66, JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65).

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311,500. Such an increase would avoid a forced reduction in current levels of conscription and recruiting and prevent a loss of momentum in the buildup which would take months to regain.⁸¹

General Westmoreland, in these recommendations, proposed to organize a Coastal Military Command. During JCS consideration of his overall recommendations, the Commandant, Marine Corps, stated that such a command would duplicate the functions of the Vietnamese Marine Corps and refused to concur in its establishment. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 April 1966 sent a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense asking that he approve continuance of recruiting and conscription for the RVNAF during FY 1966 and that he approve an end-FY 1966 RVNAF force level of 311,458 men, the Commandant, Marine Corps, concurred in the provisions of the memorandum except that calling for creation of the Coastal Force Command.⁸²

The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendations, including that for establishment of the Coastal Military Command, on 25 April 1966.⁸³

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 27 April 1966, authorized CINCPAC to continue procurement of manpower for the RVNAF for the remainder of FY 1966 to attain the following strengths: ARVN - 274,769, VNN - 15,491, VNAF - 14,658, VNMC - 6,540, RF - 133,002, and PF - 189,195. With respect to the paramilitary forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the buildup of the RVNAF would affect the RF and the PF. "In view of the critical role of Regional Forces and Popular Forces in the Rural Construction Program," they said, "request you give an appropriate priority to the recruiting, training and equipping of such forces."⁸⁴

81. (S-GP 4) JCS 2343/801, 28 Mar 66, JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65). (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 39875 to CINCPAC, 9 Nov 65, JCS IN 47121; CINCPAC to JCS, 112213Z Nov 65, JCS IN 47482.

82. (S-GP 4) JCSM-227-66 to SecDef, 13 Apr 66 (derived from JCS 2343/801, 13 Apr 66), JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65).

83. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 25 Apr 66, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/801, 13 Apr 66, same file.

84. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9439 to CINCPAC, 27 Apr 66.

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