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REPORT-185

**THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE WITH
PACIFICATION IN VIETNAM (U)**

**VOLUME II
ELEMENTS OF PACIFICATION (U)**


Chester L. Cooper, *Project Leader*
Judith E. Corson
Laurence J. Legere
David E. Lockwood
Donald M. Weller

March 1972

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES
INTERNATIONAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES DIVISION



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PREFACE

On 16 September 1970, the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) requested that the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) undertake a comprehensive study of pacification in Vietnam, the main objective of which would be to derive doctrinal and operational lessons from the US experience in Vietnam that might be used by the Department of Defense and other US Government agencies in providing technical assistance and advice to other friendly governments facing internal security problems. The specific requirements of the study included the following:

- Explore the evolution of pacification in Vietnam from 1954 to the present.
- Identify and assess the doctrines that US and Vietnamese personnel have been directed to follow regarding pacification.
- Describe and analyze the implementation of pacification, including organizational arrangements and procedures followed by the French, US, and Vietnamese Governments, selecting for special attention four to six Vietnamese provinces and within each province one or two districts.
- Identify any significant similarities and differences between pacification doctrines and operational methods used in Vietnam and those that were applied during the 1950s in the Philippine and Malayan insurgencies.
- Describe the elements of the Vietnam experience (both positive and negative) that appear most likely to be of value in meeting future internal security problems elsewhere and those that appear applicable only to Vietnam.

The project leader for the study was Dr. Chester L. Cooper, Director of the International and Social Studies Division (ISSD). Other members of the ISSD study team were Mrs. Judith E. Corson,

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Dr. Laurence J. Legere, Dr. David E. Lockwood, and Gen. Donald M. Weller, USMC (Ret.). Dr. Rolf R. Piekarz of IDA's Program Analysis Division, Sir Robert Thompson, and Gen. Edward G. Lansdale also contributed individual chapters. The entire study was edited by Mrs. Jean M. Shirhall.

The study team has relied on an extensive examination of written material and on interviews with many individuals from the United States, Vietnam, France, and other parts of the world who have had extended contact with Vietnam and the special problems associated with the pacification effort. Much of the public literature (US, French, and Vietnamese) on Vietnam was consulted, as well as official sources of information within the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Service Historique de l'Armée outside Paris.

A field trip to Vietnam during May-June 1971 provided project members with access to sources of information not otherwise available. The most valuable aspect of the trip was an intensive round of interviews with civilian and military members of the US mission and with Vietnamese, both inside Saigon and throughout the country. The list of those who provided the IDA group with valuable information and insights on Vietnam through interviews and by reviewing drafts of the study is too long to include here and has been attached as an annex to this volume.

As part of its special interest in pacification at the local level, IDA held two seminars in September 1971 at which pacification in Quang Nam and Long An Provinces was examined in detail by civilian and military personnel who had served in those provinces in various capacities and at various times in the course of the US involvement.

Structurally, the study has been divided into three volumes, the first of which presents a synthesis of the study findings, the major lessons learned, and some recommendations for early consideration by policymakers concerned with possible future contingencies in the area of counterinsurgency. Volume II focuses in detail on

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the functional elements of pacification: security, development, organization, reporting and evaluation, and some special problem areas. Volume III puts the pacification experience into historical perspective, beginning with an examination of the Philippine and Malayan pacification experiences, then proceeding with a close look at the main evolutionary threads in Vietnam, starting from the post-World War II French period and concluding with the 1971 plans and programs.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AID	Agency for International Development
AFAK	Armed Forces Assistance to Korea
APA	Advance Political Action
APC	Accelerated Pacification Campaign
APT	Armed Propaganda Team
ARDEMS	Analysis of Revolutionary Development Evaluation and Measurement System
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BRIAM	British Advisory Mission
BUDC	Barrio United Defense Corps
CAC	Combined Action Company
CAP	Combined Action Platoon
CG	Civil Guard
CGLD	Commissariat General for Land Development
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Criminal Investigation Department (Malaya)
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
CIP	Commercial Import Program
COPROR	Interagency Committee for Province Rehabilitation
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COSVN	Central Office, South Vietnam
CPDC	Central Pacification and Development Council
CRC	Central Recovery Committee
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency

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DIOCC	District Intelligence and Operations Coordination Center
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
DSA	District Senior Adviser
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
FLN	Force de la Liberation Nationale
F.T.S.V.	Forces Terrestres Sud-Vietnam
GAMO	Groupe Administratif Mobile Operationnel
GVN	Government of Vietnam
HES	Hamlet Evaluation System
HEW	Hamlet Evaluation Worksheet
ICEX	Intelligence, Coordination and Exploitation
IRWG	Information and Reports Working Group (MACV)
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JGS	Joint General Staff (RVNA)
JUSMAG	Joint United States Military Advisory Group
JUSPAO	Joint United States Public Affairs Office
KMT	Koumintang
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MAT	Mobile Advisory Team
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MORD	Ministry of Rural Development
MR	Military Region
MSS	Malayan Security Service
MIT	Mobile Training Team
NLF	National Liberation Front
NLH	New Life Hamlet
NP	National Police
NPFF	National Police Field Forces
NRM	National Revolutionary Movement
NSC	National Security Council
NVA	North Vietnam Army

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OCB	Operations Coordinating Board
OCO	Office of Civil Operations
OSD/ISA	Office of the Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs
PAAS	Pacification Attitude Analysis System
PAT	People's Action Team
PAVN	People's Army of North Vietnam
PICA	Pacification Intensification Capital Area
PIOCC	Province Intelligence Operations Coordinating Center
PDP	Pacification and Development Plan
PF	Popular Forces
PFF	Police Field Forces
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government
PROVN	Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of South Vietnam
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit
PSDF	People's Self-Defense Force
PSG	Pacification Studies Group
RAD	Reports and Analysis Division (CORDS)
RCC	Rural Construction Cadre
RDC	Revolutionary Development Cadre
RDSD	Revolutionary Development and Support Directorate (MACV)
RF	Regional Force
ROK	Republic of Korea
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SACSA	Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities
SCAG	Saigon Civil Assistance Group
SDC	Self-Defense Corps
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel
TRIM	Training Relations Instruction Mission
UMNO	United Malay National Organization

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U.M.D.C.'s	Mobile Units for the Defense of Christendom
USDO	United States Disbursing Officer
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service
USOM	United States Operations Mission
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
VIS	Vietnamese Information Service
VSD	Village Self-Development

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PART ONE

THE NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY

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THE NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY

A. THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR INHERITANCE

(U) The formulation of the principles for revolutionary war as practiced by the North Vietnamese Communists and their indigenous allies in South Vietnam was rooted in the Maoist strategy developed between 1921 and 1949. The Maoist approach featured a high degree of political activity, with the military struggle occupying an important, but nevertheless subordinate, role. Contrary to Leninist doctrine, and to that of the Chinese Communist Party as well, Mao had reached the conclusion that the Chinese peasant--not the worker--was the base on which to build revolution. With the successful example of the Chinese revolution before them, the Vietnamese Communists also assigned the leading revolutionary role to the peasantry.

(U) As early as 1928 Mao had set forth clearly the dominant role of political, as opposed to military, strategy: "When the Red Army fights, it fights not merely for the sake of fighting but in order to agitate the masses, to organize them, to arm them, and to help them to establish revolutionary political power; apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army the reason for its existence."¹ General Giap, commander-in-chief of North Vietnam's People's Army, echoed Mao's views: "Political activities are more important than military activities, and fighting less important than propaganda.... The People's Army is the instrument of the Party and of the revolutionary State for the accomplishment, in armed form, of

1. (U) Mao Tse-tung Selected Works, 5 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1954), I:106.

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the tasks of the revolution ... therefore, the political work ... is the soul of the army."²

(U) The emphasis on political training for the rank and file of the North Vietnamese army also had its genesis in Mao's experience. In November 1928, in a report to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao noted that his tiny army was composed mostly of captured soldiers and newly recruited peasants who lacked the motivation of earlier recruits: "In these circumstances the only solution is to intensify political training." The role of political training was assigned to the Communist party representatives within the Red Army at the company, battalion, regimental, and divisional levels; Mao credited the company-level party organization with being an "important reason why the Red Army has been able to undertake such severe struggle without falling apart,"³ and he noted that while 25 percent of the Red Army belonged to the Communist party, the goal to be achieved was 50 percent.

(U) Giap again echoed Mao's sentiments: "Political work in the ranks is of the first importance.... During the liberation war, this work imbued the army with the policy of long-drawn-out resistance.... In the new stage entered upon since the restoration of peace, political work centres on the line of socialist revolution in the North and of struggle for reunification of the country."⁴ Giap supported Mao's thesis regarding the role of the Communist party in political organization, noting that, "the most fundamental principle in the building of our army is to put it under the Party's leadership, to ceaselessly strengthen the Party's leadership of the army."⁵ While Giap did not prescribe the percentage of army membership in the party, he estimated

2. (U) Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War People's Army (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1962), pp. 55 and 79. This work analyzes the strategy of the Viet Minh employed against the French from 1945 to 1954.

3. (U) Selected Works, I:80.

4. (U) People's War People's Army, p. 55.

5. (U) Ibid., p. 120.

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that rank-and-file membership was about 40 percent, while that of the officers approached 90 percent.

(U) One of Mao's most important contributions to revolutionary war doctrine was his recognition of the necessity of changing the peasant's image of armies. Over the centuries, the soldiers of bandit and warlord armies had preyed on the peasantry. Beginning as early as 1929, Mao had insisted on the "correct" conduct of the army; he required that the peasants be paid for their resources, prohibited impressment, and forbade maltreatment. General Giap wrote, "The Viet Nam People's Army has always seen to establishing and maintaining good relations with the people.... The people are to the army what water is to fish, as the saying goes.... The Vietnamese fighter has always taken care to observe point 9 of its Oath of Honour: to respect the people, to help the people, to defend the people.... It [the army] has never done injury to their property, not even a needle or a bit of thread."⁶

(U) The Chinese Communists had employed the united front strategy to absorb potential opposition. The Viet Minh also emphasized the front technique. Giap described the National United Front as "a vast assembly of all the forces capable of being united, neutralising all those which could be neutralised, dividing all those it was possible to divide in order to direct the spearhead at the chief enemy of the revolution, invading imperialism."⁷

(U) While the emphasis of Chinese strategy was primarily political, military power was not overlooked. Mao underlined the importance of military power in his statement that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Mao visualized three distinct military phases: 1) the strategic defensive, 2) a strategic stalemate, and 3) the strategic counteroffensive.

(U) The role of the strategic defensive was to pave the way for the counteroffensive by creating conditions favorable to the growth of

6. (U) Ibid., pp. 56-57.

7. (U) Ibid., p. 33.

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the Red Army and unfavorable to its opponents. To minimize casualties, positional warfare was to be avoided, except when necessary to cover the retreat or withdrawal of main forces. On the other hand, mobile warfare was to be employed to achieve local superiority over inferior elements of enemy forces. Guerrilla bases in the enemy's rear were to be developed and strengthened, and guerrilla forces would contribute to the attrition of enemy forces.

(U) Mao estimated that a strategic stalemate would result from the attrition tactics of the defensive phase, combined with the enemy's growing inability to spare the necessary forces both for offensive operations and the maintenance of control over extensive land areas and lines of communication. The enemy would then be forced into a defensive posture in the cities and along main lines of communication. At this point the main thrust of the Red Army's strategy would be to shift the bulk of its regular forces to the enemy's rear area. There, in coordination with the developing guerrilla forces, the army would wage mobile warfare against the enemy's lines of communication. In the meantime, the regular forces would continue their buildup.

(U) The final phase, that of the strategic counteroffensive, would be launched when the Red Chinese Army had gained sufficient strength to seize and maintain the strategic initiative. Guerrilla warfare would then revert to a supplementary role, and the main strategy would shift to mobile warfare by regular forces. Mao recognized, however, that positional warfare would also be required to destroy enemy forces in some cities.

(U) As in the case of political strategy, the Chinese model of military operations was adopted by the Viet Minh. The similarity is emphasized in Giap's description of the strategy employed against the French: "The conduct of war must maintain a correct ratio between the fighting forms. At the beginning we had to stick to guerrilla warfare and extend it. Passing to a new stage as mobile warfare made its appearance, we had to hold firm the coordination between both forms, the chief one being guerrilla warfare; mobile warfare was of less importance but was on the upgrade. Then came a higher stage,

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mobile warfare moved to the main position, at first on only one battlefield--counteroffensives then came into being. During this time guerrilla warfare continued but moved back from the main position to a lesser, but important, one."⁸

(U) The successful application of the Chinese revolutionary model against the French is a matter of history. The Viet Minh moved successively through the three stages of revolutionary war, beginning with guerrilla operations, then shifting to mobile warfare, and finally to the counteroffensive, which culminated in a military victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu. Political activities went hand in hand with the military struggle, with the objective of weakening the will of the French to continue.

B. COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS

(U) The Communist formula for seizing power in South Vietnam and reunifying the two Vietnams is embodied in the term "struggle"--a combination of political and military elements, of which the political aspect is the more significant. The aims of the political struggle are three:

- Gain support among rural people.
- Establish "liberated areas" as bases of operation.
- Weaken the GVN by subverting civil servants and the military.

"The three action programs taken together formed the political struggle, one edge of the NLF's double-edged sword; the other edge was the armed struggle, not simply guerrilla military attacks but kidnappings, assassinations, executions, sabotage, or what is termed collectively here the 'violence program.'"⁹

8. (U) Ibid., p. 170.

9. (U) Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 86.

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(U) The organs of the struggle movement consist of the Communist party organization, the united front, and the military forces.¹⁰ Of these elements, the party organization is of overriding importance since it directs the activities of the united front and the military forces in consonance with directives and resolutions of the Lao Dong Party of North Vietnam. Party elements are organized at all levels, extending from the interzones down through provinces, districts, villages, hamlets, and finally to the three-man cells within the hamlets (see Figure 1). The district party organization is responsible for overseeing all activities and in the process is allowed considerable initiative and latitude. The village is the lowest element with some decision-making authority. In the villages, the party apparatus usually consists of three to twelve branches under an executive committee headed by a party member. The basic party unit is the hamlet branch group of one to seven three-man cells. The party cell and the party propagandist are the "link with the masses" and are charged with the responsibility of broadening and extending party influence with the people, either individually or through mass organizations.

(U) The struggle movement is supported by functional mass associations composed of farmers, women, workers, youth, students, and intellectuals. Each functional group is organized along Communist lines, with the basic unit, the cell, containing from three to fifteen individuals. Each cell member is expected to maintain close contact with three or four sympathizers, relatives, or friends, thus broadening the sphere of influence of the association.¹¹

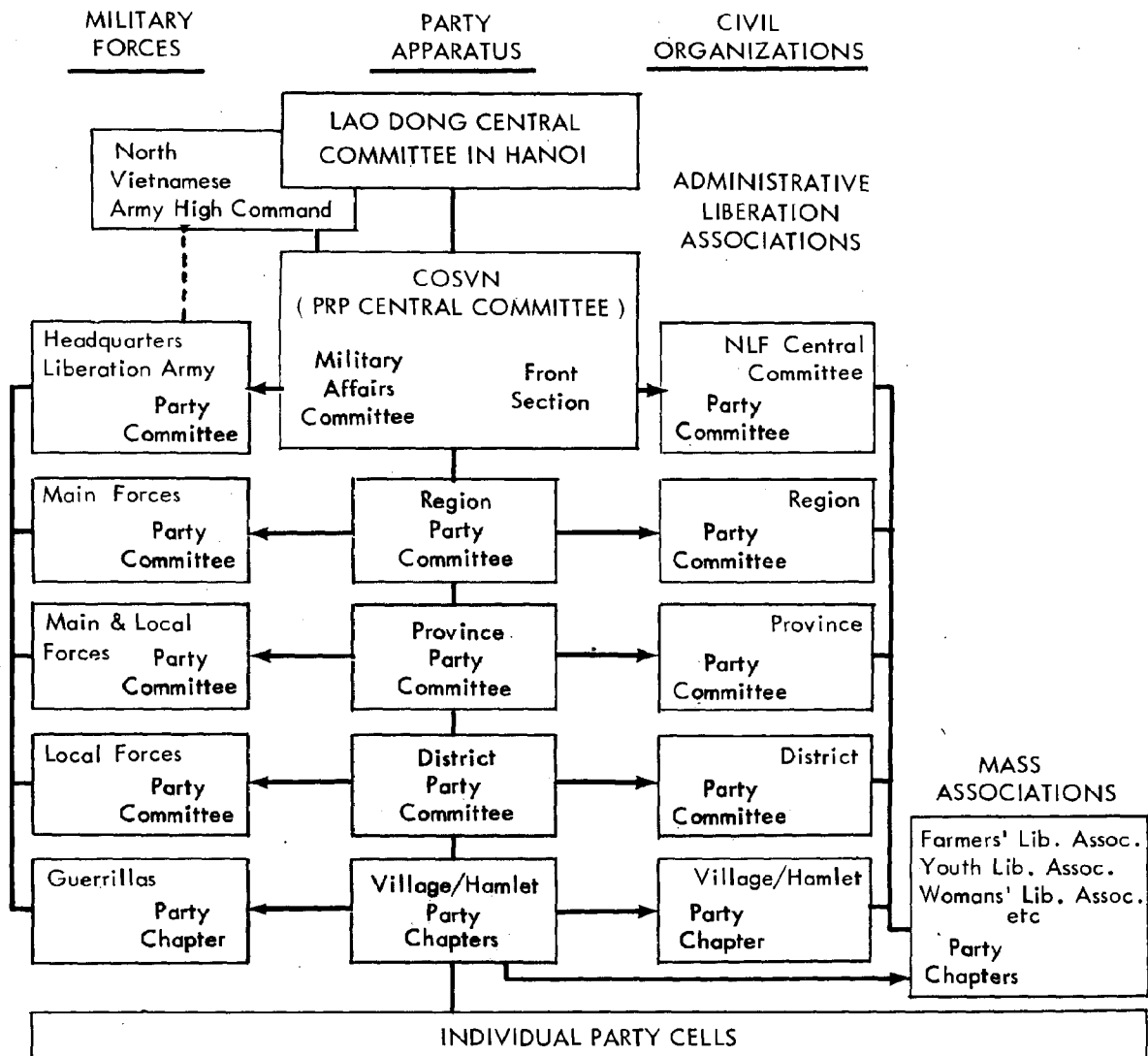
(U) The political front is also represented by formal organizations at each political level from the region down to the villages. In order to assure firm party control, party committees are formed for each organizational element of the front and the military.

10. (U) The names of the Communist party and the front organizations were to change as the insurgency continued, but the organizational structure and functions remained constant.

11. (U) Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 170-71.

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This chart shows the relationship between the major elements of the enemy organization. Although the military and civilian elements are portrayed as separate entities - with the military and civilian headquarters controlling each echelon of their organization directly - their real organizational substance comes from, and is irrevocably tied to, the party. The arrows leading left and right from each level of the party apparatus indicate the true lines of control.

Source: Commander in Chief Pacific and Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Report on the War in Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 205.

Figure 1 (U). COMMUNIST PARTY DOMINANCE IN ENEMY ORGANIZATION (U)

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(U) The military forces consist of the South Vietnam Liberation Army and the People's Army of North Vietnam (PAVN). The Liberation Army is divided into paramilitary units known as the Popular Army (or local forces), which are part-time forces with limited training and arms, and the Main Force, whose members serve full time and receive more training and superior armament. Main Force units are subordinate to the region and to the provinces, while local forces are assigned primarily to the district. Popular Army elements at the village level are the traditional part-time guerrillas (farmers by day, and fighters by night) grouped in cells, half-squads, or squads of three, six, or twelve men.

(U) The North Vietnamese Communists recognized from the beginning that revolutionary war, unlike conventional war, is a contest between the indigenous government and the insurgents for the support of the population. Once the willing, tacit, or forced support of the population is acquired, the requisite manpower and material resources for support of the insurgency are forthcoming, while at the same time the indigenous government is denied those resources.

(U) The techniques used to acquire popular support feature the employment of highly trained agit-propaganda cadres using emulation campaigns,¹² and face-to-face or mass propaganda to motivate individuals and the members of the mass organizations. The activities of the mass organizations are controlled and manipulated by the agit-propaganda cadres with the objective of indoctrinating the people with the "proper" values and beliefs as the first step in forging them into an organizational weapon. The propagandist, then, is a key figure in the Communist organization, since he must explain Communist policies and programs in a way that the peasants can understand and accept. Propaganda themes are based on whatever arguments seem most likely to strike a responsive chord among the pragmatic peasantry, for example,

12. (U) Emulation campaigns were a device to mobilize individuals and groups for a specific purpose, e.g., increased agricultural production among farmers. Incentives such as public recognition and material rewards were used to spur performance.

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land reform, reduced taxes for the farmer, and equal rights for women. While the propaganda minimized the Marxist nature of the liberation movement, the united front concept, class consciousness, and the inevitability of success were woven into the appeals.

(U) One technique of the propagandist is to arouse the emotions of the villagers by generating hatred against landlords, rich peasants, government officials, and the military. Mass psychological techniques such as rallies, demonstrations, parades, group criticisms, and individual denunciation campaigns are all employed. In essence, the propagandists strive to attain a commitment from individuals, no matter how insignificant, to the Communist movement. Once involved, the individual can be led into taking a more active role.

(U) The violence program, while subordinate to the political thrust of the struggle movement, is a powerful reinforcement tool. It features assaults against defended villages, ambushes, sabotage, and terrorist acts against individuals such as kidnappings, assassinations, and other forms of intimidation. Of these, terrorism against individuals is the most powerful lever in forcing support when propaganda and persuasion fail.

C. EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL-MILITARY STRUGGLE

1. The Building of the Infrastructure, 1954-59

(U) After the Geneva Accords were signed in 1954, Hanoi pinned its hopes for the reunification of the two Vietnams on the elections prescribed by those Accords and on the fragility of the Diem regime. By 1956, however, Diem had made known his refusal to conduct a plebiscite and his regime was showing signs of increasing durability. Hanoi then adopted a new and more aggressive strategy--building a political and military base in the south as a prelude to achieving reunification by force. (Cadres, the so-called regroupes, who had gone north during repatriation in 1954, returned to the south to assist in the struggle movement.) Initially, the struggle movement was primarily political and covert, aimed at recruiting, indoctrinating, and

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mobilizing the population. By 1957, the violence program, which featured assassinations and armed attacks, began to supplement the political struggle. The GVN's attempts to counter the growth of the infrastructure were generally ineffectual; by 1959 the Communist political and military organization had been established as a base for more ambitious maneuvers against the GVN.

2. The Shift to the Armed Struggle, 1959-63

(C) In January 1959, the Lao Dong Central Committee passed Resolution 15, a basic policy document which formally approved a report by the party's First Secretary Le Duan. The essence of this report was that the time had come to move rapidly into the military phase of the insurgency. General Giap, Hanoi's minister of defense, followed with the announcement that North Vietnam had become the revolutionary base for all Vietnam.¹³ Later in May the Central Committee reaffirmed the resolution, stating that "the time had come to struggle heroically and perseveringly to smash the puppet regime of South Vietnam."¹⁴

(U) By December 1960, the Communist political infrastructure was considered to be far enough advanced to create a united front.

13. (U) Resolution 15 was the first of a series of documents setting forth the strategy to be pursued in achieving the reunification of Vietnam. These resolutions were promulgated either by the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi or by the party's Central Office, South Vietnam (COSVN).

(U) Following the passage of Resolution 15, the Lao Dong Party began a new numbering series for its resolutions. The chronological gaps in the numbering of Lao Dong and COSVN resolutions are due to one of two factors: 1) in some instances the Communists appear to skip or even invert numbers deliberately, and 2) it is also possible that not all past Communist resolutions have been revealed to Allied intelligence through captured documents or PW interrogations. Headquarters, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, "Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong Party and COSVN Resolutions" (U), SRAP 1569 (1967).
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14. (U) Pike, Viet Cong, p. 78.

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A memorandum circulated among the Central Committee membership outlined the rationale behind the National Liberation Front (NLF).

The National Liberation Front has been established to unite closely various classes of the South Vietnamese patriotic population in the struggle against the Americans and Diem in accordance with the wishes of the South Vietnamese. This [move] securely guarantees that the Revolution in South Vietnam will quickly and successfully restore peace and carry out the unification of our Fatherland.¹⁵

(C) Later, in February 1961, the military arm of the NLF, the People's Liberation Army, was established. This was followed by the establishment of the Central Office, South Vietnam (COSVN) in October 1961, first as the central organ for the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party, and then shortly after (January 1962) as the Central Committee of the newly formed People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) of South Vietnam.

Establishment of the PRP was a tactical maneuver prompted by Hanoi's strategy of portraying the revolution as being purely indigenous to the South. However, through a series of interlocking directorates, Hanoi has maintained overall control of the revolution in the RVN. Most of the senior members of COSVN have been members of the Central Committee of the North's Lao Dong Party, and most senior military officers at COSVN and SVNLA HQ are also members of the high command of the Army of NVN. Although fundamental PRP policy is dictated by Hanoi, it should be noted that the infrastructure of Communist cadre in the RVN is composed largely of indigenous Southerners.¹⁶

(U) The PRP's stated role in the NLF was somewhat limited. Initially, PRP spokesmen maintained that the party had no official ties with any Communist party beyond the "fraternal ties of communism."

15. (U) From memorandum dated 30 December 1960, signed by the chairman of the Lao Dong Party provincial committee, Ba Ria (Phuoc Tuy) Province, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 81.

16. (U) "Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong Party and COSVN Resolutions," p. 2.

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By 1965, however, the PRP leadership not only admitted but boasted of its Communist nature and its direction of the NLF.¹⁷

(U) The Communist grand strategy for seizing power through a struggle movement which would lead to a general uprising was based on the belief that the NLF could develop the revolutionary consciousness of the villagers to such a pitch that a spontaneous uprising and seizure of power would result. Key policy documents asserted: "The Vietnamese Revolution in the South marches forward toward the General Uprising.... To seize power through the General Uprising means utilizing the strength of the people of South Vietnam as a principal medium to overthrow the imperialist and feudal ruling clique and set up a people's revolutionary government."¹⁸

(U) In 1963 the increasing US involvement in South Vietnam forced the Communists to reassess their strategy. Three broad alternative strategies were debated:

- Continuation of the general uprising
- Escalation to a counteroffensive
- A negotiated political settlement.

The original NLF leaders and the indigenous southern members supported a continuation of the general uprising strategy, while the regular cadres, regroupees, and the military leadership from the north favored Giap's third stage of revolutionary warfare: escalation to the counteroffensive. In the end, the northern faction won the debate and opted for escalation with all its implications for an increase in military operations at the expense of the political struggle. In December 1963, this decision was promulgated in a resolution which called for preparations for all-out attack in the south, coupled with a continuation of the general uprising. The shift in strategy was accompanied by a change in the power structure of the PRP and the NLF; regroupees increasingly occupied key positions at

17. (U) Douglas Pike, War, Peace, and the Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 11-13.

18. (U) Pike, Viet Cong, p. 77.

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the expense of the southerners. This change was accompanied by a weakening of the NLF through massive desertions of the rank and file who had joined the NLF because of their opposition to Diem. As it became more and more evident in 1963 that the Diem regime was doomed, this rationale no longer was relevant. By August 1963 the NLF had lost about one-third of its 300,000 members.¹⁹

3. The Counterattack, 1964-69

(U) The Communists moved to the counterattack by speeding up the organization of Main Force military units from the combat guerrilla elements of the Popular Army. By the end of 1964, a number of regimental units and one divisional unit had been formed. At the same time, the infiltration of the People's Army of North Vietnam commenced in the Central Highlands. From the evidence now available, the two major goals appear to have been to sever South Vietnam by carving out a Communist enclave extending from the Laotian border across the Central Highlands to the coastal province of Binh Dinh and to capture Saigon.²⁰

(U) To carry out this strategy, Communist operations against border posts in the Central Highlands were intensified in midsummer with increasing effectiveness. Later in the fall, while pressure was being maintained in the Central Highlands, the densely populated coastal province of Binh Dinh was targeted by two regimental-size VC units. In a series of attacks and ambushes, government forces were either overrun, destroyed, or driven into fortified enclaves. Control of the countryside passed to the insurgents. By the end of November, government control of Binh Dinh, the second largest province, was limited to a few towns and the capital city of Qui Nhon.

19. (U) For a discussion of this doctrinal debate and its aftermath see Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 104-108, 115-17, and 160-61, and War, Peace, and the Viet Cong, pp. 161-65 and 213.

20. (U) Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 83-96.

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The Communists seemed well on their way to gaining control of a swath across South Vietnam.²¹

(U) Similar gains were made in the encirclement of Saigon. In December 1964 the VC's 9th Division attacked the Catholic village of Binh Ghia, 40 miles east of Saigon. In the ensuing battle the insurgents ambushed and destroyed elite units of the Marine Corps and Rangers in a four-day battle. It was painfully obvious that the disorganized forces of South Vietnam were no match for the Communist forces. By the spring of 1965 the Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) was losing a district capital a week and the equivalent of about one battalion.²² Disaster was averted by the introduction of US forces in the spring of 1965.

(C) Hanoi reacted to the introduction of US forces by issuing Resolution 12, in December 1965, which set forth a strategy which was to continue through the Tet offensive of 1968. This resolution emphasized a continuing counteroffensive with the mission of defeating the United States "under any circumstances." "Even if the US should increase its troop strength from 200,000 to 400,000, the Communists would kill 60,000 US troops, 20,000 ARVN troops and down 1,000 aircraft." The resolution went on to predict that the US aggression would be defeated in two years and that the United States would be compelled to withdraw. The resolution also included the possibility of ending the war through a negotiated settlement but only on the condition that the Communists would attain "complete victory."²³

(C) During 1966 some of the Communist military leadership began to question a continued offensive strategy in the face of allied superiority in firepower and mobility and the serious casualties inflicted on Communist units. A more cautious strategy was suggested

21. (U) Ibid.

22. (U) Ibid.

23. (U) "Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong Party and COSVN Resolutions," p. 3.

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in which offensive operations would be limited to lines of communication and logistic bases, while combat with regular allied forces would be avoided. However, the leadership rejected this recommendation and chose to continue a vigorous counteroffensive which was reflected in Resolution 13, issued in the fall of 1966.

(C) In the meantime, infiltration from the north was increased to 58,000 in 1966 and the activation of Main Force units continued, reaching a total of about 100 PAVN battalions and 98 PLA-VC battalions. In spite of a relatively favorable balance of forces (one Communist battalion to two allied battalions), US spoiling attacks forced the Communists to confine their operations to the border areas, heavy jungle and mountains, and to the DMZ area.

(U) The inability of the Communist main forces to bring pressure to bear on the heavily populated areas forced the Communists to open a new theater of operations in the vicinity of the DMZ with the objective of forcing redeployment of allied forces. The buildup of PAVN forces in the DMZ area initiated in 1966 continued to increase during 1967, reaching a total of six divisions by 1968. This strategy was successful in forcing redeployments of allied forces from Military Regions II and III to the DMZ and in so doing had the effect of weakening the security of areas undergoing pacification.²⁴

(U) While the party resolution ordering the winter-spring offensive of 1967-68 and the so-called Tet offensive was never captured, First Secretary Le Duan is known to be its principal architect. He continued to believe that victory could be realized by a coordinated offensive against the cities, which in turn would spark a "general uprising," leading to massive desertions by the rank and file of the army, collapse of the GVN, and a US withdrawal. A number of new political organs and fronts were created to support the intensified military struggle, including one with the objective of subverting the ARVN, another of serving as the nucleus for urban-based communes in the cities, and a third of taking advantage of the possibility of

24. (U) Report on the War in Vietnam, pp. 131-56.

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peace negotiations. The Communist military organization was strengthened by drawing heavily on the local guerrilla forces in the III and IV Corps military regions.

(U) Stage I of the campaign was conducted in November-December of 1967 as a prelude to Stage II, the main Tet offensive during January-March 1968. On 30 January the Communist main attack against Saigon was launched, followed by assaults against thirty-six of the forty-four provincial capitals, five of the six autonomous cities, and sixty-three of the 242 district capitals.

(U) The spearhead of the assaults was composed primarily of local units; Main Force VC and PAVN units were held in reserve to exploit the local units' successes. In most cases the ARVN, augmented by territorial forces and the police, repulsed the enemy attacks in a few days; however, heavy fighting continued in Kon Tum and Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands and in Can Tho and Ben Tre in the delta. Protracted fighting featuring substantial US reinforcements was required before the Communists could be evicted from Saigon and Hue. An attempt to recreate a "Dien Bien Phu" at Khe Sanh was defeated by the application of massive firepower over a period of seventy-seven days. Physical destruction was widespread but more importantly ARVN units and, in some cases, the territorial forces were withdrawn from protecting pacified areas to defend government installations, thus denuding the countryside of security forces.

(U) Nevertheless, the Tet offensives failed to achieve the majority of the Communists' objectives; the ARVN did not desert, general uprisings did not occur in the cities, and the government did not collapse. On the other hand, Communist losses were severe, amounting to about 38,000 of the 84,000 committed to combat. The preponderance of the Communist losses occurred among local forces, which resulted in the stripping of much of the low-level military muscle from Regions III and IV. Political infrastructure which surfaced in the target cities to orchestrate the "general uprising" was severely eroded. However, the psychological impact on the US establishment and the American public tended to compensate for the failure to

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achieve the military objectives, since it set in motion a US withdrawal--a major Communist objective.

(U) In spite of the failures of the Tet offensive, the Communist leadership did not abandon its counteroffensive strategy. At the same time, though, the political struggle was intensified in order to compensate for the erosion of control of the rural population occasioned by emphasis on military activities.

4. De-escalation, 1969-71

(U) Aggressive allied offensive operations broke up the Communist offensives in August-September 1968, leading the Communists to reappraise their strategy once again. COSVN Resolution 8 of late 1968 noted that the Communist offensives had broken US will, placed America on the defensive, and forced President Johnson to find a way of extricating the United States from the war. Although the resolution called for complete victory, the emphasis on speed which had been featured in all previous resolutions was now tempered by a recognition of the need to recreate conditions favorable to the insurgents through political and military activity.

(U) This strategy also failed. While Saigon was placed under heavy rocket attack during early 1969, offensive operations kept the enemy off balance. Caches of Communist arms were uncovered, which deprived enemy forces of the required supplies for continued operations and caused the Communists to modify their strategy.

(C) A new thrust was reflected in Lao Dong Party Resolution C and COSVN Directives 81 and 88, promulgated in April 1969. For the first time there was no reference to total victory in a relatively short time. The resolution set forth a new strategy: "a course of action through which we repulse the enemy one step at a time and attain a piecemeal victory. Why is this so? This is because the enemy still has more than 1,000,000 troops and it is just impossible to destroy or wipe out 1,000,000 men."²⁵ The new directives put the

25. (U) "Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong and COSVN Resolutions," p. 8.

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major emphasis on the political objective of capitalizing on antiwar sentiment in the United States, rather than on military operations. The directives called for more small-unit operations and attacks by fire designed to minimize Communist losses and increase US casualties. The emphasis on the political strategy was reflected in the 10-point peace proposal advanced in early May in Paris.

(U) Coincident with the initial withdrawal of 25,000 US personnel in mid-1969, the Communists reorganized their political apparatus: a Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) was established to push the claim of a shadow government, while renewed emphasis was given to the establishment of Revolutionary Committees in order to regain control of the rural population.

(U) COSVN Resolution 9, issued in July 1969, was a comprehensive summary of previous documents which outlined the more cautious strategy--the aim set forth was to obtain a limited victory by defeating the Vietnamization process and compelling the United States to withdraw and accept a coalition government.

(U) The Communist objective of forcing a more rapid US withdrawal and GVN-US acceptance of a coalition government was probably dashed by the ARVN-US cross-border operations into Cambodia, beginning in May 1970. Main Force units which had furnished much of the military muscle for anti-pacification activities in the III and IV Military Regions were confined to Cambodia. The effect on pacification in Region III and in the delta was dramatic.

(C) COSVN Resolution 14, issued in October 1970, showed the effect of the GVN-US offensives. It stated that guerrilla warfare was "the only way to cope with an enemy who has a large number of troops and war facilities.... Only by generating a guerrilla warfare movement ... will we have a fundamental basis to win success...." Intensified guerrilla warfare is required to defeat the GVN-US pacification efforts "by eliminating the administrative personnel of the puppet government at the lowest levels." To avoid casualties, all forces were to be broken down into small units. Guidelines for guerrilla units were prescribed as follows:

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First, a guerrilla unit should consist of three to five man cells;
Second, these cells should be able to live legally among the population--they should be secret;
Third, guerrillas should be armed with grenades, mines, explosives, and rudimentary weapons--though rifles should be used where conditions permit;
Fourth, guerrillas should be self-sufficient with respect to obtaining ammunition, either capturing ammunition from allied forces or producing it in the cities;
Finally, the primary mission is to attack PSDP and PF forces, local police, GVN village officials, and pacification cadres....²⁶

(U) Resolution 14 was followed by a series of COSVN directives which spelled out special anti-pacification measures. Four programs were given special emphasis.

- Population Control: The Communists recognized that population shifts to resettlement centers and urban areas had reinforced GVN pacification efforts both by increasing the security of the population and by denying the insurgents access for recruitment and tax collection. Cadres were directed to counter this shift through propaganda and pressure urging the peasantry to relocate in VC-controlled areas.
- Sapper Activities: The use of sapper techniques and operations was encouraged as an "economy-of-force" measure and as an efficient method of attacking the machinery of the pacification effort--the GVN administration and security forces.
- Legal Cadres: The use of legal cadre as penetration agents in ARVN units, paramilitary units, and especially in local GVN administrative offices was emphasized in those areas where the GVN pacification programs were especially active. Once the cadre have penetrated, they can provide the Viet Cong with intelligence, sabotage targets, and support VC policies in the event of a cease-fire or the establishment of a coalition government. For the same reasons, the Viet Cong also

26. (U) Headquarters, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, "COSVN Resolution 14 and Its Implications" (U), SRAP 1470 (1971), pp. 1-3.
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attempted to penetrate the numerous non-Communist urban organizations. Directive 18 ordered cadres to penetrate the movements in the cities, especially those of the students, disabled veterans, laborers, and Buddhists.

- Military and Civilian Proselyting: Military and civilian proselyting, in conjunction with legal cadre and penetration activities, received considerable emphasis. Proselyting is utilized to recruit agents, to keep morale and revolutionary spirit at a high level, and to spread the political struggle throughout the population.

(U) During 1970 and continuing into 1971, it became apparent that the Communists in Military Regions III and IV were suffering from severe logistic deficiencies stemming from the GVN-US cross-border operations, as well as air interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh trail. As a result, the Communists in the southern regions have been forced to depend on local resources obtained by a "shadow supply system," and by the capture of arms and ammunition. They have also been attempting to revive a sea-infiltration supply system.

(C) The GVN pacification strategy featuring improved rural security through a heavy density of paramilitary forces, combined with a high level of offensive operations by regular and paramilitary forces, has caused serious attrition of the political and military structure and, more importantly, has reduced Communist recruiting of southerners for the political and military infrastructure, particularly in Military Regions III and IV. The Communist Main Forces carried in the MACV "Order of Battle" are estimated at about 130,000, of which about 77,000 are North Vietnamese, nearly 60 percent. Local VC forces, estimated at 56,000, have about 20,000 northerners in their complement, or about 35 percent. Only the village guerrilla forces are southerners.²⁷ The attrition of the political infrastructure has not been as significant, having declined from a peak figure of about 85,000 in July 1969 to about 69,700 in

27. (U) Headquarters, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Order of Battle Summary, vol. I (March 1971). CONFIDENTIAL

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January 1971, a reduction of about 20 percent. Furthermore, MACV estimates that the Communist recruiting potential decreased from 7000 monthly at the beginning of 1970 to about 2700 at the end of the year. Since an insurgency is a contest on the part of the government and the insurgents for the same manpower, the diminution of the Communist capability to recruit from the local population for the political and military structure indicates a serious weakness.

(U) These constraints have caused the Communists to make further modifications in the strategy and tactics expressed in COSVN Resolution 14 and subsequent directives. It appears that this thrust has been expressed in a new resolution, COSVN 10, which emphasizes the importance of a US withdrawal and predicts that the revolution will win through superior tenacity, durability, and continued emphasis on "protracted war." The tactical objectives outlined in the resolution continued to emphasize the three points of previous policy directives:

- Sapper attacks (combined with an occasional "high point" of military activity.
- Establishment of a "shadow government" and penetration of the GVN administration by legal cadre.
- Civilian and military proselyting.

Emphasis is also placed on "self-sufficiency" through the establishment of a "shadow supply system" featuring the use of local resources funded by increased taxation, propaganda against the South Vietnam national elections in October 1971, the retention of base areas, and increased infiltration to make good manpower shortages. It also appears that the new directive has recognized the failure of the Communists to exploit the urban population by moving responsibility for the direction of urban subversive activities from the district to the regional level. In short, the Communists appear to be gearing for the long pull in which protracted warfare will be featured in the belief that their tenacity and will to continue will be superior to that of the GVN. This remains to be seen.

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PART TWO

SECURITY

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INTRODUCTION

(U) From the very beginning of our involvement in Vietnam, security for the rural population has been regarded as the basic underpinning of pacification. How best to provide that security, however, has been a central issue in the debates on strategy and tactics among both American and Vietnamese officials. Our lack of understanding of the methods of Communist subversion and of the operational experience of those who fought Communist insurgency in Indochina, Malaya, Algeria, and the Philippines led to serious disagreement and long delays in the formulation of an agreed concept of the roles and missions of security forces--the regulars, territorials,¹ local militia, and police. These debates were also complicated by disagreements on just what the actual nature of the Communist threat to South Vietnam was at any given time. Although the Communist forces were increasing in strength until the late 1960s, the threat they posed in the provinces changed as their tactics and deployments were modified in reaction to the Vietnamese and American force dispositions and actions.

(U) After fifteen years of traumatic experience, there is now considerable understanding of Communist political and military strategy as the balance of forces shifted at various times, but even now there is still not complete agreement on the best means of providing population security. The understanding that we have gained, however, does permit us to be categorical about the precise role of security. We know that the basic aims of pacification are to involve

1. (U) As used throughout this study, the term "territorials" refers to the Regional Forces, the Popular Forces, and their respective predecessors, the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps.

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the people with the government, while at one and the same time breaking their connection and identification with the insurgents. We also know now that the insurgents require access to the population in order to utilize their propaganda techniques for generating support through mass organizations and to build a political and military infrastructure. When such techniques fail to gain tacit or willing support, the violence program, featuring armed attacks, kidnappings, and assassinations, is brought into play to force the support of the population. Effective security can deny the enemy access to the population and in so doing can prevent the growth of a political and military infrastructure so essential to his success.

(U) We now realize that in the Vietnamese society security has had extremely important psychological side effects as well, at least in the earlier days of the insurgency. While the tendency to back a winner is a universal characteristic, it was particularly important to the Vietnamese peasant with his deeply rooted Confucian beliefs and values. The Vietnamese villager tended to view the struggle between the government and the Communists as one between outside forces, with the winner being decided by a supernatural verdict. This belief led the peasant to stand aside, to be a bystander in the struggle rather than an active participant, while he waited for a sign that one side or another had gained the ascendancy and received the Mandate of Heaven. Thus the ability of the government to provide security was a most important indicator--evidence that the government had gained the Mandate of Heaven.²

(U) It is probable that this Confucian outlook has been eroded under the impact of the continuing conflict, which has done so much to tear down the traditional fabric of Vietnamese culture. In the earlier days of the insurgency, say from 1959 to 1965, before Vietnamese society was so seriously disrupted by military operations, this outlook toward security as an indicator of the success of the government

2. (U) John T. McAlister and Paul Mus, The Vietnamese and Their Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 114-15.

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in attaining the Mandate of Heaven would have been an important psychological factor. It may still be so today in some areas.

(U) The task of security is fourfold:

- (1) deprive the insurgents of the opportunity to gain popular support through propaganda or violence by denying them access to the people;
- (2) establish a secure climate and atmosphere of "law and order" in rural and urban areas so that political, social, and economic programs (i.e., pacification) can be initiated in order to involve the people with the government;
- (3) whittle down the subversive political and military apparatus by a combination of proselytizing, apprehension, and elimination;
- (4) if the insurgents are dependent on external support, restrict critically or eliminate that support.

(U) The following discussion of security as an element of pacification focuses on the problems and constraints that hindered GVN-US efforts to evolve the appropriate security concepts and forces for countering the insurgency in order to derive the lessons learned from that experience. Some of the broad issues in question were the following:

- The conceptual approach to security: resettlement or security in-place?
- The strategic alternatives of the regular forces: offensive, defensive, or some combination of both?
- Strength, leadership, and training of security forces: how can combat performance be improved?
- The role of a grass roots militia: when should the people be armed?
- The force for law and order in the countryside: a national police force or a constabulary?
- The appropriate force for attack of the infrastructure: the military, the territorial forces, the RD cadre, or the police?

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I

EVOLUTION OF SECURITY CONCEPTS AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

A. THE CONCEPTUAL LEGACY

(U) The Communist challenge to South Vietnam was not a unique historical event; rather it was contemporary with, or an aftermath of, a series of insurgencies that began at the conclusion of World War II and utilized Communist-dominated elements of the indigenous resistance movements. In the Philippines the Huks (originally Huk labang sa Hapon--Army against Japan) launched an insurgency in 1948 which offered considerable promise of success until the charismatic Magsaysay reversed the trend and defeated the movement in 1953. Similarly, in Malaya in 1948 the predominantly Chinese elements of the Japanese resistance movement shifted their target to the British colonial administration and in so doing severely taxed the government until the insurgency was defeated in 1960. In North Africa the loosening of the French hold on Algeria during World War II paved the way for a successful revolt by the Communist-dominated National Liberation Front. Finally, there was the Viet Minh insurgency against the French in Indochina from 1948 to 1954.

(U) The records of these insurgencies were available to South Vietnamese officials and US advisers as a basis for deriving principles and programs for the conduct of a successful counterinsurgency against a Communist-led movement. As a lead-in to our analysis of the evolution of GVN-US security concepts, a brief recapitulation of the fundamentals of security that could have been derived from some of those earlier insurgencies seems useful.¹

1. (U) For a more detailed discussion, see the chapters "The Philippine Experience," "The Malayan Experience," and "Pacification Lessons Learned by the French in Indochina, 1945-1954" in Volume III of this study.

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UNCLASSIFIED1. Malaya

(U) The Malayan counterinsurgency was waged in a favorable political and administrative environment as compared with that of South Vietnam. First, the Government of Malaya at the federal and state levels was under firm British control, and a well-trained British-Malayan civil service provided an effective administrative apparatus. An efficient police force was already organized and was capable of expanding to meet the demands of the counterinsurgency. Military forces were in-being, under firm political control, and capable of absorbing the lessons of guerrilla war and adjusting their tactics and techniques so as to maximize the effectiveness of their operations. In addition, the indigenous Malays, constituting half the population, were not only impervious to Communist propaganda but actively resisted the insurgents. Finally, the geographical isolation of Malaya all but eliminated external support on the one hand and sanctuaries on the other.

(U) The concept for pacification evolved during the Malayan insurgency was based on providing population security and isolating the Chinese minority from the guerrillas through population relocation in resettlement villages. This move was acceptable to the Chinese, since they exchanged their dubious claim to land on the jungle fringe for more suitable land to which they were given title; they were also given adequate housing and subsistence payments until they could bring the land into cultivation. Concurrently, the Communist infrastructure was attacked by the Police Special Branch through an effective psychological program aimed at producing ralliers and through the neutralization of the hard-core infrastructure by meticulous intelligence-and-targeting operations. As history records, the effective implementation of this concept and its supporting programs defeated the insurgent movement.

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UNCLASSIFIED2. Indochina

(U) By 1957 the French army had completed an extensive study of its "revolutionary" war experience in Indochina and had codified the lessons. The central idea emerging from this analysis was that the major objective of both insurgents and counterinsurgents was to gain support of the population. Therefore, military and paramilitary operations, coupled with political, economic, and social programs, were to be judged solely on their effectiveness in promoting this goal. In essence, the French experience was synthesized into a recognition of three general security concepts to be applied in accordance with the environment and situation then obtaining.

- The evacuation of the population from sparsely settled areas.
- The regrouping of the population in more densely settled areas.
- The provision of security in-place and subsequent expansion to insecure areas (the spreading oil-spot concept).

(U) An essential element of these security concepts was the recruitment and arming of regular, regional, and local self-defense forces. In addition, the political-military structure of the insurgents was attacked by a combination of programs designed to rally the disaffected to the government side, on the one hand, and to lead to the identification and arrest of those members of the infrastructure who failed to respond to psychological warfare inducements, on the other.

3. Algeria

(U) In Algeria, as in South Vietnam, the insurgency took place in an unfavorable political and administrative environment--the government's presence and control was limited to the cities and towns of the littoral. In 1955, a year after the outbreak of revolt, the French High Command increased its military forces and moved to implement a concept and supporting programs incorporating the lessons of Indochina. This approach aimed at isolating the guerrillas from

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external political and military support and winning the support of the population by providing security and improved economic, political, and social conditions. To this end, military barriers were constructed along the Tunisian and Moroccan borders to isolate the guerrillas from external sources of arms, and populated areas were garrisoned--down to the individual village and hamlet--in order to isolate and protect the population from the guerrillas. Local militia forces were raised to assist in the defense of the populated areas. In areas where control of the villages by the guerrillas was difficult to counter, the population was resettled into new defendable villages.

(U) Military operations were successful in cutting off the insurgents from external support in Morocco and Tunisia and in reducing the guerrilla forces to small ineffective bands, but the buildup of local self-defense forces never became a satisfactory substitute for French units. Unfortunately, while the security concepts and programs proved valid, lack of political support both in Paris and Algeria for the continued association of Algeria with France was the rock on which the counterinsurgency foundered.

B. SOUTH VIETNAM**1. Experiments with a Resettlement Concept of Security, 1956-60**

(U) In 1956, as noted in Part One, the Communists began the buildup of their political and military organizational base in South Vietnam as a prelude to a forcible takeover. Initially their activities were primarily covert and featured the "political struggle," but, as the infrastructure grew, evidence of the "military struggle" began to surface, for example, there was a greater incidence of assassinations and kidnappings. In 1959 the Communists concluded that their organization was far enough advanced to begin the effort to smash "the puppet Diem regime," and the military struggle was intensified.

(U) In response to the Communist initiative, the GVN attempted to eliminate the Communist influence over large areas of the countryside and to establish its own control there. The GVN approach to security was to regroup populations for protection--under various schemes of

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land resettlement, agglomeration centers, and the agrovilles--and to conduct limited offensive operations with the regular and territorial forces. There was also some recognition of the need for arresting the growth of the Communist organizational structure. Special "counter-terror" units, formed from elements of the existing paramilitary and police forces, were empowered to make arrests and to imprison or eliminate Communist suspects without legal niceties. While the quantitative balance of military forces during this period favored the GVN, none of these security measures was effective in protecting the population. Growth of the infrastructure was not arrested and Communist control of the population expanded. In essence, the concept of regrouping the population failed because of the opposition of the villagers to forced relocation and because the GVN was not able to protect the villagers in their new settlements.²

(U) The US contribution to security during this period had little relevance to the problem of countering a low-level insurgency, in spite of the fact that the US appraisal of the threat during 1954-60 was surprisingly accurate. In 1954 the threat was considered to stem from three elements: the armies of religious sects like the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, who were a continuing but low-level insurgent threat within the overall internal security problem; the Communist cadres in South Vietnam; and, to a lesser extent, the People's Army of North Vietnam (PAVN). Of these elements, the cadres, under the control of the Communist party in North Vietnam, were regarded throughout the late 1950s as the instrument with which the Communists would pursue their objective of securing control of all Indochina.³ While the

2. (U) For additional discussion of pacification during this period, see "Early Pacification Efforts, 1959-1960" in Volume III of this study.

3. (U) United States-South Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, study prepared by the Department of Defense in twelve books (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), Book 2, IV.A.4, p. 7 of section entitled "U.S. Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959" (hereafter referred to as US-Vietnam Relations).

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potential threat of the PAVN was serious,⁴ US estimates continued to hold that an invasion by those forces was unlikely. The Joint Chiefs had noted, however, that the threat posed by the PAVN had put psychological pressure on the GVN, particularly on President Diem, who believed that a conventional invasion was likely.⁵ Nonetheless, as events were to prove, the accuracy of the threat appraisal was negated by a number of other factors and considerations, including US military policy in the mid-1950s, our commitments to SEATO and other regional defense treaties, the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps from Vietnam, pressures applied by the Diem government, and the background and experience of the US military, particularly in the Korean conflict.

(U) American military strategy in the mid-1950s was based on the doctrine of massive retaliation. At the same time, the US policy of containment, as reflected in the many US regional treaties, including SEATO, called for the development of indigenous forces to deter Communist aggression. After the French defeat in 1954, the Joint Chiefs took the position that ground defense against aggression from the north would require South Vietnamese forces to hold the line until the United States could intervene with ground forces and tactical nuclear weapons. As a consequence, the role of the Army of Vietnam (ARVN), in the JCS view, was not only to maintain internal security but also to deter Communist aggression by a limited defense of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). This view of the deterrent role of the ARVN was reinforced by the withdrawal of the last of the French Expeditionary Forces in April 1956, which left South Vietnam without regular force protection other than the ARVN. Emphasis on conventional defense was also supported by President Diem, who felt strongly about the necessity of holding the DMZ and urged the buildup of the ARVN to embrace

4. (U) By 1955 the PAVN had increased to about 250,000 men organized into 10 infantry divisions and 25 independent regiments.

5. (U) US-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.4, p. 9 of section entitled "U.S. Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959."

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this mission. American military thinking, strongly influenced by the North Korean invasion, added to the general pressures which led to a concentration on training the ARVN to meet external invasion, in spite of the assessment which continued to maintain that the internal threat was the only significant one.⁶

(U) There is no indication that the concentration on training the regular forces for a conventional role and the disregard of the more relevant police and militia forces were questioned by the MAAG in the early 1950s. Yet, Gen. John W. O'Daniel, MAAG chief from 1953 to 1956, had earlier reported to the JCS on French military operations in Indochina and made recommendations for future French operations that incorporated a remarkably comprehensive concept of pacification.⁷ Significantly, this report emphasized the need for creating an effective militia to bring security to areas undergoing pacification; the organization of a counterintelligence force for detecting Communist agents was another recommendation. One of General O'Daniel's key staff members, in commenting on the military thought of the period, noted that "we should have recognized the guerrilla threat since guerrilla assets were in place and operations were on the increase."⁸ The tendency to underrate the insurgent threat may have been reinforced by the US appraisal of the French military effort. According to another member of General O'Daniel's staff, the US military mission tended to denigrate the French competency in military operations against the Viet Minh and in so doing underestimated the Communist capabilities.⁹

6. (U) Ibid., pp. 10-15.

7. (U) The O'Daniel mission to Indochina was initiated by the JCS in 1953 for the purpose of reporting on the French counterinsurgency operations.

8. (U) Interview with a former member of General O'Daniel's mission staff, July 1971.

9. (U) Interview with a former member of General O'Daniel's staff currently serving as a province senior adviser, An Giang Province, Vietnam, June 1971.

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(U) Similarly, Lt. General Williams, MAAG chief from 1956 to 1960, apparently saw no reason to shift the ARVN training emphasis. As the Communists moved to the armed struggle during 1959, Ambassador Durbrow pressed General Williams to reorient ARVN tactics to small-unit operations aimed at combating the guerrillas. General Williams refused. Later, as security in the countryside deteriorated further, President Diem and the Ambassador recommended to General Williams that the MAAG take on the responsibility for supporting and training the Civil Guard, with equally negative results. Then in 1960, President Diem directed the formation of two specialized anti-guerrilla units composed of 75 commando companies and six separate infantry battalions. This initiative was opposed by the MAAG because it feared the ARVN would be weakened by personnel withdrawals.¹⁰

(U) Meanwhile, in the late 1950s the policy of concentrating on the regular forces was also being questioned by a sizable number of middle-level officials in DoD, the Services, State, CIA and ICA (predecessor of AID).

It was their consensus that in practically all cases the underdeveloped and developing nations had an international security problem--not a military problem. What they needed was not big armies and air forces but strong effective local and national police forces backed up by small tough professionally competent, highly mobile, lightly armed units. In some countries a local militia type force would be useful and desirable.... This viewpoint coalesced on SVN in late 1958 and early 1959 as a prime example of where our policies were counterproductive. Through the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) mechanism attempts were made to drastically curtail the MAP program in Vietnam and switch the money to organizing and equipping police/gendarmerie forces and local militia.... [However,] the status quo held firm against this assault on

10. (U) Military Assistance Vietnam, US Army Command and General Staff School (Fort Leavenworth), September 1960, SECRET; and interview with Maj. General Ruggles, Deputy for Training, MAAG (1958-60), September 1971.

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orthodoxy and prevailed, of course, with disastrous results for the US and SVN.¹¹

(U) The principal factor leading to the insistence on a conventional role for the ARVN and the neglect of the paramilitary forces was the failure to study the enemy and to analyze operational experiences in other counterinsurgencies. None of the US bureaucracies involved in advising the South Vietnamese Government (with the possible exception of the Central Intelligence Agency), including Defense, the Services, USOM (and its Public Safety Division) or State, had studied, codified, and promulgated the record of revolutionary war as demonstrated in the Philippines, Algeria, Malaya, and more importantly in Indochina. As a result there was no body of concepts, doctrines, strategy, or tactics to serve as guidance for the US advisory community in evolving appropriate roles, missions, and strategies for the regular and paramilitary forces--to the serious detriment of the development of appropriate forces to counter the growing insurgency in the late 1950s. The problem was further exacerbated during the early period by the firm views of President Diem himself.

(U) Unfortunately, a correlated US position on a concept of pacification and the appropriate forces and agencies to support that concept was not developed until the establishment of CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) in 1967--some eleven years after the initiation of the insurgency. This led to critical delays in the creation and development of indigenous forces to cope with the increasing tempo of the insurgency and ultimately led to the massive intervention of US forces. This was the major roadblock in the timely evolution of a viable security strategy and supporting forces.

11. (U) Brig. Gen. F. P. Henderson, USMC (Ret.), member OCB (1958-59), "Some US Policy Actions Concerning Vietnam in the 1950s," 26 August 1971.

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UNCLASSIFIED**2. Security In-place--The Strategic Hamlet Approach, 1961-63**

(U) The success of the Communist buildup, politically and militarily, the consequent intensification of the "military struggle," and the failure of the resettlement-regroupment security concepts forced the GVN and the United States to recognize the primacy of the Communist internal threat. The GVN, on its own, adopted a concept of security built around strategic hamlets--in essence the abandonment of the population regroupment and resettlement concept for one of bringing security to the population of the hamlet.¹²

(U) The implementation of the strategic hamlet concept, like its predecessors, took little account of the need for fitting ends to means; countrywide implementation was visualized irrespective of resources in manpower, materiel, and money. However, under the pressure of US and UK advisers, the scope of the Strategic Hamlet program was limited to several key provinces in Military Region III. While this system of priorities was abandoned later in favor of countrywide expansion, the need for establishing geographic priorities had been noted for the first time.

(U) By this time, both the GVN and the United States had come to recognize that militia-type forces would have to be increased and upgraded in order to contribute effectively to the security of the population. Accordingly, in December 1960 the territorial forces (Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps) were transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defense, and the US advisory responsibility was moved from USOM to the MAAG. In addition, Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's brother and the mastermind behind the Strategic Hamlet program, backed a local hamlet militia called the Combat Youth. By 1962, as a further step in increasing the security forces, the Public Safety Division of USOM was able to persuade Diem to group the Municipal Police and the Sûreté into a national police organization.

12. (U) Regroupment of some of the population in a central and more defensible location took place during the implementation of the Strategic Hamlet program. See the chapter "The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961-1963" in Volume III of this study.

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(U) During this period there was also increasing recognition of the need to attrite the Communist political and military organization through some means other than "counter-terror" and military operations. In 1962 the GVN, supported by the United States, began a program to attract members of the infrastructure, the so-called Chieu Hoi ("Rallier") program, patterned after the Malayan model. While the GVN continued to mount "counter-terror" operations against the infrastructure, the United States gave this program minimal support.

3. The Oil-Spot Concept of Security, 1964-65

(U) By the end of 1963 the deteriorating political and military situation in South Vietnam, coupled with the rising level of US materiel and advisory support, had led the Communists to abandon the strategy of a general uprising in favor of a military counteroffensive to achieve victory. To implement this strategy, additional Main Force units were created from the guerrilla arm, and infiltration of units of the North Vietnamese Army commenced in the Central Highlands. In the meantime, both the GVN and the United States had evolved a somewhat more sophisticated approach to security, which was incorporated in the Chien Thang-Hop Tac pacification plans for 1964-65. Fundamental to these plans was the French oil-spot concept of security--the provision of security in-place (first used by the GVN during the strategic hamlet period) and the gradual expansion of control from secure to insecure areas, a new feature. Vietnamese officials described this concept as follows:

At first, the secure, populous areas in which the economy is prosperous must be consolidated to serve as springboards to pacify the areas which are insecure, sparsely populated and have poor economy. Security must be restored in one area prior to going to another.¹³

13. (U) "Technique of Pacification Operations," Annex E to the Chien Thang Plan, 22 February 1964, p. 2-E. CONFIDENTIAL See also "The Chien Thang-Hop Tac Pacification Plans, 1964-1965" in Volume III of this study.

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(U) The pacification plans also clarified the roles and missions of the various security forces for the first time. The regular forces were charged with "clearing" the Communist forces from the environs of the selected oil spot and, after the elimination of Communist forces, to remain in the vicinity of the oil spot to prevent their return. The territorial forces (now entitled Regional and Popular Forces) were to "secure," that is, provide close-in defense of the oil-spot areas.¹⁴ The plan also codified responsibilities for attacking the Communist infrastructure by continuing the Chieu Hoi program and targeting operations aimed at identifying and apprehending the insurgents. The Revolutionary Development cadres, successors to the armed political action teams, were also introduced for the first time. These 59-man cadre teams had a 35-man security element (the role of the RD cadres is discussed in Part Four).

(U) Fundamental to the implementation of the Chien Thang plan was the development of "New Life Hamlets." The distinctive features of this program included (a) an emphasis on quality rather than quantity, (b) resettlement of populations in accordance with local desires, (c) consultations with hamlet residents on development projects to be undertaken, and (d) advance planning for all population regroupments.

(U) The need for balancing ends to means first noted in the strategic hamlet period was also acknowledged in the Chien Thang-Hop Tac plans by the designation of national priorities for pacification. First priority was assigned to the provinces immediately surrounding Saigon (Region III--the Hop Tac area); second priority to the delta area (Region IV); and third priority to the I and II Military Regions. The provinces of Tay Ninh, Dinh Tuong, Vinh Long, Go Cong, and a portion of Kien Hoa were given top priority within Regions III and IV.

(U) Steps taken by the GVN and the United States in 1964-65 to improve the quantity and quality of the security forces so that they could discharge their clearing and securing missions proved inadequate

14. (U) For the evolution of the Regional and Popular Forces, see Part Two, Volume III of this study.

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in the face of the Communist counteroffensive. Pacification plans had to be abandoned because of the lack of security in the countryside, and the Communist objective of a military victory and GVN political collapse was only averted by the introduction of US forces.

4. Refinement of Security Concepts and Programs, 1966-71

(U) The Communists reacted to the US military intervention by issuing a resolution which emphasized "a continued counteroffensive which would defeat the United States under any circumstances." Their basic strategy of seeking a military victory was to remain in force until the spring of 1969.

(U) In spite of Communist military successes in 1965, GVN and US officials agreed that the oil-spot security concept and the assignment of the territorials to the "securing" mission were correct, and they incorporated this approach in all subsequent plans. On the other hand, increasing US military force strengths raised the issue of the appropriate military strategy for US-GVN regular forces (to be discussed in the next chapter).

(U) The GVN and the United States soon found themselves faced with a new problem, that of the refugees who fled from their villages to avoid the dangers inherent in military operations. Periodic massive flooding of the coastal lowlands in Military Regions I and II contributed to the influx of refugees; by 1971 the number of refugees had reached a total of about 5 million.

(U) Since the oil-spot concept of security was only relevant to providing security to a population in-place, the GVN and the United States devised a pacification concept known as "Return to Village,"¹⁵ the essential features of which were similar to those of the oil-spot approach. Abandoned villages adjacent to a secure area were selected as resettlement sites for refugee and other relocated populations. Regular and Regional Forces (RF) first cleared the enemy from the

15. (U) For a discussion of pacification during the 1966-71 period, see Part Two of Volume III.

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area; a road to the village site was then opened, after which Popular Forces (PF) were moved in to provide close-in security of the resettled village. Simple relief, e.g., housing materials and subsistence payments, was then provided to the resettled villagers. This pacification concept and its associated security approach are still in effect.¹⁶

(U) Disagreements among the US advisory community, MACV's pre-occupation with offensive operations, and administrative and bureaucratic constraints on the GVN side continued to hamper the development of territorial forces, the police, and the hamlet militia during 1966-67. MACV tended to favor a constabulary in lieu of a national police force, but the ARVN opposed expanding the police because of the potential for competition for military manpower. The assignment of the mission of attacking the infrastructure to the Special Branch of the National Police, favored by some of the US bureaucracies, was not backed by others. Finally, the National Police Field Force was added to the inventory of forces and given the mission of patrolling between hamlets--in direct competition with the RF-PF. These disagreements were finally settled once and for all with the establishment of a single civil-military manager for US pacification support, CORDS, under the vigorous leadership of Ambassador Komer.

(U) Drawing on rather comprehensive studies typified by MACV's Inter-Agency Roles and Missions Study Group and CORDS assessment programs under Project TAKEOFF, eight action programs were selected for concentrated attention. In addition to improving the quantity and quality of the regular and territorial forces, Ambassador Komer decided to support an intensified attack on the Communist organization using the National Police Field Forces and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units. He also chose the Chieu Hoi program for increased support.

16. (U) An exception to the oil-spot security concept was demonstrated in the Central Highlands, where the GVN had adopted a policy of resettlement, ostensibly for purposes of security. However, some observers hold that this security policy was invoked to facilitate a Vietnamese takeover of Montagnard ancestral lands rather than a concern for Montagnard security.

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Finally, Komer scotched any further debate about a constabulary by concentrating on police improvement. The basic rationale behind these action programs was that improving forces in-being would yield a payoff faster than the time-consuming process of creating new organizations.

(U) After the Tet 1968 offensive, both President Thieu and the Commander, MACV, threw their personal support behind the territorial forces, the National Police, the attack of the infrastructure, and the notion of a hamlet militia. At long last, some twelve years after the initiation of the insurgency, the GVN and the US advisory community had a coordinated approach to security. In subsequent years, both the United States and the GVN have continued to back the oil-spot concept of security and its supporting programs and forces, although the emphasis and priorities have shifted somewhat from year to year in accordance with the situation.

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II

STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES OF THE REGULAR FORCES

A. BACKGROUND

(U) The search for an appropriate military strategy for the regular forces in support of the pacification effort gave rise to considerable debate between civilians and the military and among the military themselves. In essence, this debate boiled down to the question of whether to adopt a defensive strategy directly tied to the pacification "oil spots," or an offensive strategy targeted against the Communist Main Forces.

(U) The debate over an appropriate strategy for regular forces was not unique to South Vietnam--it had arisen in the French-Indochina war, as well as in the Philippines, Malaya, and Algeria. In each of these insurgencies the problem stemmed from a shortage of paramilitary and police-type forces that could provide population security as well as protect important government facilities and lines of communication. In Algeria the problem of providing border security to prevent infiltration from Morocco and Tunisia added to the demands for security forces. In each situation, the government in question had to decide whether to deploy the regular forces to protect the population and important installations--in effect, a defensive strategy--or to deploy them in an offensive strategy first to arrest the growth of the insurgent military structure and then to fragment and attrite the insurgent forces so as to reduce and ultimately eliminate the threat to the people.

(U) In Malaya, between 1948 and 1950, the Communist military structure had reached a strength of about 12,000, brigaded in company-size units. The Malayan police, the only paramilitary force in existence, had insufficient strength to defend the populated areas.

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and the villages from company-size guerrilla forays. Nevertheless, the British-controlled government resisted the pressure to divide its troops into penny packets for defense of the villages; instead, the regular military forces contested the guerrillas for the initiative by launching offensive operations against them. Initially, these operations took the form of large sweeps involving one or more battalions, but lack of success soon led to the employment of company-size, or smaller, units. The guerrillas suffered severe losses that could not be replaced by recruiting from the indigenous population, nor was there a source of external manpower readily available (as in Vietnam). The guerrillas were forced to break down their company-size units into platoons, to abandon their bases along the jungle fringe, and to move deeper into the jungle. This defensive move cost the guerrillas the initiative and marked the turning point of the insurgency; they were no longer able to concentrate sufficient forces to overrun the resettled villages, which had been slowly acquiring additional police and home guards for security. As a consequence the guerrillas were cut off from their sources of food and manpower and the insurgency gradually died.

(U) A similar military strategy was adopted by Ramon Magsaysay during the Philippine insurgency. When Magsaysay assumed the powers and authority of Secretary of Defense in 1950, some four years after the outbreak of the insurgency, the Philippine military and paramilitary forces were deployed in static defense of the populated areas (and the dispersed holdings of influential politicians and landholders). "Aside from a few sporadic efforts, the Constabulary and the Army units ... were sitting out the war."¹

(U) Magsaysay took steps to constitute sufficient forces for offensive operations by withdrawing units from static defense of the population. Through sheer force of personality and dynamic

1. (U) Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. R. Bohannon, Counter-guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962), p. 83.

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leadership, he was able to inculcate a spirit of the offensive in the demoralized paramilitary and military units. Offensive tactics designed to fragment and attrite the insurgents forces through combat patrols and ambushes, coupled with equally effective and dynamic civil measures and programs, reaped the same success as in Malaya. By September 1953, three years after Magsaysay's assumption of command, the guerrillas had completely lost the initiative and were finally eliminated by continued military pressure.

(U) The French experience in the Algerian insurgency is of even more interest since the Algerian situation more nearly resembles that of South Vietnam than either Malaya or the Philippines. As in South Vietnam, the insurgents were provided with external support. Both Tunisia and Morocco supported the insurgents by furnishing sanctuaries for the armed forces along the Algerian borders and bases for training and for the infiltration of trained manpower, supplies, and equipment. The French effectively cut off external support through a system of barriers along the borders. As the insurgency wore on, the guerrillas were no longer able to infiltrate significant numbers of personnel.

(U) The assignment of French regular forces to the defense of the national boundaries with Tunisia and Morocco, coupled with the garrisoning of the populated area to provide security, however, seriously reduced the offensive posture of the regulars and gave the guerrillas an opportunity to expand their forces. They grew from 500 in 1954 to about 40,000 in 1957, with an equivalent number of part-time local guerrillas. Increased military strength led the insurgents to move to the second stage of mobile warfare which featured the employment of regular units of battalion size. These escalatory tactics, however, were countered by French superiority in firepower.

(U) In 1958 the French High Command moved to implement an offensive military strategy by constituting a general reserve of three divisions, backed by tactical air support and airlift forces. These forces, in conjunction with regional reserves, then undertook a series of offensive operations against the insurgent units. By 1960 this

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offensive strategy had reduced the insurgent military strength from 40,000 to about 10,000, now operating in small units of 10 to 20 guerrillas. Thus the effectiveness of the border barriers and the seizure of the initiative through offensive operations attrited the guerrilla strength. Ironically, this military success was vitiated by the popular reaction in France against the war and the lack of appeal for the Algerians of continued association with France.

(U) These three insurgencies, then, demonstrated the validity of an offensive military strategy aimed first at arresting the growth of the guerrilla military structure and then gradually reducing it through attrition. In each case, this strategy forced the insurgents to lose the initiative, to concentrate on their own defense, rather than on the offensive, and to break down their forces into smaller and smaller units, thus reducing their pressure on the paramilitary forces and the population.

B. THE DEFENSIVE VERSUS THE OFFENSIVE

(U) We have already noted that the strategy adopted in South Vietnam during the late 1950s was a defensive one aimed at meeting a PAVN invasion across the DMZ until US reinforcements could arrive. We also have seen that this strategy was inappropriate in view of the internal threat and that it led to costly delay while the strategy and supporting forces were gradually reoriented to meet the internal threat.

(C) In 1960, belated recognition of the true nature of the threat led the MAAG, under General McGarr, to evolve an offensive strategy known as the Net and the Spear. This concept featured the employment of the ARVN in extensive patrolling ("netting" operations) with prompt reaction to the intelligence in offensive "spearing" operations. This was the first comprehensive effort to develop a relevant strategy and tactics for the regular forces. Unfortunately, the ARVN proved to be an uncertain instrument for the execution of this strategy. The MAAG chief at the time reported that

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conventional multi-battalion formations seldom produced worthwhile results except in those rare instances when intelligence accurately pinpointed a sizable Viet Cong troop concentration or base area. A much more successful tactic ... was that of saturating an area with daylight patrols and night ambushes, usually of platoon size.²

Even when intelligence did locate sizable VC forces, success was by no means assured. In early 1963, at Ap Bac in the delta, a superior ARVN force was defeated decisively by VC Main Force units and suffered heavy equipment and personnel losses (five helicopters were lost and eight damaged).

(U) In 1964 in the Chien Thang plan, the strategy of the regular forces was shifted from the offensive back to the defensive. Instead of searching out Communist Main Force units wherever they might be found, the ARVN was assigned the mission of clearing Communist units from the immediate vicinity of the selected pacification oil spots, while the territorials were required to secure, that is, to provide, close-in security. In the event that there were insufficient territorials to discharge this mission, the ARVN was required to assume this role, as well.

(S) The defensive strategy inherent in the Chien Thang plan was based on a MACV intelligence estimate which concluded that the Communists would continue in the guerrilla warfare stage and operations against regular forces would be avoided.³ Instead, the

2. (U) Letter, Headquarters, Department of Army, Subject: "Debriefing of Senior and Designated Key Officers Returning from Field Assignments," 22 July 1964. SECRET

3. (S) "Although their (VC) strategic doctrine holds that all guerrilla wars must ultimately progress to mobile warfare and the counteroffensive stage, there is some reason to believe that they have reservations as to the complete applicability of the doctrine ... to the situation in South Vietnam today. The conclusion is that the military campaign will not regress into the background, but will continue at or slightly above its present level of activity.... Specific tactics will emphasize continued guerrilla warfare as the principal form of military activity with occasional use of main force units in battalion or larger strength.... The VC probably will (1) Continue to expand their military and paramilitary organizations ... (5) Intensify and increase their guerrilla type activities in essentially the same pattern as currently conducted." (USMACV, J-2, VC Strategy and Tactics, 1964. SECRET)

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Communists moved to the counteroffensive and operations were directed against regular and paramilitary forces with the objective of causing the military and political collapse of South Vietnam. Thus the defensive strategy of the GVN collided with the Communist offensive strategy of seeking combat with the regular forces. Since the regular forces were tied down to clearing operations on the periphery of the oil spots, the Communists had the initiative and were able to concentrate superior forces against the ARVN at will. The quantitative superiority at the point of contact was matched with qualitative superiority as well, and the government forces suffered severe losses. By the spring of 1965, pacification plans had to be abandoned under Communist military pressure.

(U) The introduction of US forces in 1965 led once again to a reappraisal of strategy for the regular forces. The governing factors bearing on this reappraisal were the political constraints on the operations of the US forces, the geographical characteristics of South Vietnam, and the balance of military forces. Political constraints imposed by the US administration confined US ground operations to South Vietnam, while the country's extensive border areas prevented the establishment of effective barriers against the infiltration of external support. The only offensive operation against the North Vietnamese-Laotian sanctuaries permitted by the political ground rules was that of aerial bombing, the initial objectives of which were bolstering South Vietnam's morale and breaking the Communist will to continue operations in the south.⁴ These constraints limited the choice of strategies to the following:

4. (U) Later in 1968, when it became apparent that instead of breaking the will of the North Vietnamese the bombing had only stiffened their determination, the industrial potential of NVN, including POL unloading and storage, was targeted. However, it soon became apparent that this, too, had little measurable effect on either the will or the capabilities of the Communist war effort in the south. Accordingly, the weight of aerial attack was shifted to interdicting the lines of communication through Laos, but the Communists were able to continue the infiltration of men and supplies. Attack of the lines of communication from the Cambodian ports to the South Vietnamese delta boundaries remained out of bounds until mid-1970.

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- A defensive-enclave strategy in which forces would be confined to the protection of important population centers, ports, airfields, and logistic installations.
- A defensive strategy, similar to that employed under the Chien Thang plan, in which regular forces would be tied to "clearing" operations, that is, the elimination of Communist forces in the immediate environs of the pacification oil spots.
- A limited offensive strategy aimed at attriting the Communist forces and protecting the population by isolating the remaining Communist Main Forces from the population.
- A maximum offensive strategy aimed at destroying the Communist Main Forces.
- A combination of the limited offensive and defensive strategies.

(U) The mission prescribed for US forces immediately following their deployment in 1965 was the defense of ports and airfields--an enclave strategy. However, the deteriorating security situation rapidly dictated that the US forces take a more active role in order to avert a military defeat.

(U) While the enclave strategy was generally agreed to be irrelevant to the situation (although it was to surface later as the war wound on), a lively debate on the relative merits of an offensive versus a defensive strategy took place. A defensive strategy on the Chien Thang model, which tied the regular forces to the pacification oil spots, was backed by a substantial group, composed principally of civilians. Their thesis was that since the success of the pacification effort was dependent on protecting the people, all GVN-US military resources, including the regular forces, should be assigned to the task of providing close-in security for the rural population. The adherents of this school of thought held that offensive search-and-destroy attacks aimed at attriting Communist Main Forces and isolating them from the populated areas did not contribute significantly to the pacification process. At the other end of the spectrum, there were some adherents, principally military, who held that pacification could best be supported by concentrating on military offensive operations leading to the destruction of Communist Main Forces, with minimal attention to population security and development activities.

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(U) As we have seen, some glaring deficiencies in the defensive school of strategy had become apparent during the Chien Thang-Hop Tac period of 1964-65. With the regular forces assigned to the immediate vicinity of the areas undergoing pacification, the Communists were free to continue their force buildup without interference and to concentrate superior forces against the ARVN and territorials. As a consequence, these forces were defeated in detail and pacification was brought to a standstill.

C. THE LIMITED OFFENSIVE

(U) General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, recognized that seizing the initiative from the Communists was the best assurance of ultimately providing population security. Rejecting both the defensive and maximum offensive strategies, he opted for a limited offensive strategy for the US forces. Implicit in this strategy was the buildup of the Regional and Popular Forces to provide close-in security for the population against Communist regional and local forces.⁵

5. (U) In his Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968), General Westmoreland explained his strategy and the rationale for it:

The first phase involved arresting the losing trend, stifling the enemy initiative, protecting the deployment of our forces, and providing security to populated areas to the extent possible. I estimated that this phase would carry through to the end of 1965. In the second phase, U.S. and allied forces would mount major offensive actions to seize the initiative in order to destroy both the guerrilla and organized enemy forces, thus improving the security of the population. This phase would be concluded when the enemy had been worn down, thrown on the defensive, and driven well back from the major populated areas. The third phase would involve the final destruction of the enemy's guerrilla structure and main force units remaining in remote base areas.

A basic objective in each of the three phases was to cut off the enemy from his sources of supply--food, manpower, and munitions. Simultaneously, pressure would have to be maintained against all echelons of the enemy's organization--main forces, local forces, guerrillas, terrorist organizations, and political infrastructure.

USMACV (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), p. 100.

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Westmoreland estimated that the US buildup would permit limited offensive operations by late 1965.⁶

(U) The strategy adopted by General Westmoreland was implemented during 1966 even though the balance of forces actually shifted more in favor of the Communists as a result of continued infiltration from the north and the upgrading of local units. In 1966 the Communists had 197 Main Force VC and PAVN battalions to 281 allied battalions, a ratio of 1:1.4, as compared with 1:2 in late 1965. However, the superior aerial mobility of the allied forces, coupled with the gradual expansion of the Regional and Popular Forces to about 300,000 men, compensated in part for the Communists' achieving a tactically favorable balance of forces. By mutual agreement, US forces, with their superior aerial mobility, conducted the bulk of the spoiling attacks against the PAVN units, while the ARVN concentrated their attacks against regional and district units. However, requirements for the protection of Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue, and of important air and logistics bases and key lines of communication, inevitably drained off some regular force resources and limited the scope of offensive operations.

(U) By 1967 the growing strength of the allied forces permitted an intensification of offensive operations.⁷ At the same time about 50 percent of the ARVN forces could now be assigned to defensive clearing operations on the periphery of the pacification areas--this in spite of the fact that the Communists opened a new front along the DMZ which forced redeployment of additional US forces to Military Region I. In essence, the strategy shift from primarily the offensive to a combination of the offensive and defensive was made possible by the more favorable balance of forces and improved combat effectiveness.

6. (U) Operations by the Marines in Region I against a Communist regiment in southern Quang Nam and by the Air Cavalry Division against a PAVN division in the Central Highlands border area were launched in August and December of 1965, respectively.

7. (U) Seventeen major offensive operations (i.e., those with 500 or more enemy casualties) were conducted in 1966.

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The net result was the creation of a more favorable climate for pacification by confining Communist Main Force units largely to the unpopulated areas, thus reducing the Communist pressure on the territorial forces.⁸

(U) The lifting of the political constraints on operations against Communist Main Forces in Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries (April 1970) permitted a dramatic stepup in offensive operations. Since then, offensive cross-border operations have for the most part prevented Communist Main Force units from reentering MR III and IV. In those regions, this strategy has taken the initiative from the Communists, denied them access to much of the populated areas, fragmented their forces, and created a situation in which the territorial forces can provide security for the villagers. In MR I and II, PAVN and VC Main Forces continue to block pacification in some areas, particularly in northern Binh Dinh and southern Quang Nam. Aggressive offensive operations against these forces are still required.

(C) It is important to recognize that this strategy of the limited offensive is not necessarily a "winner"--final success or failure is in the hands of the enemy. As long as the Communist will and capability to replace battle losses continue, the United States and South Vietnam face an open-ended game. As it happened, in spite of an aerial campaign launched in 1965 to break the Communists' will and later an air attack of logistic installations and lines of communication to reduce their capabilities, the insurgents continued to demonstrate both their will and capabilities by stepping up the infiltration of manpower to replace battle losses. Confirmed infiltration figures rose from 11,000 in 1965 to over 58,000 in 1967. If "probable" and "possible" figures are accepted, actual infiltration is twice as great as the "confirmed" figures. In spite of heavy reverses the Communists still pinned their hopes on a military defeat of the United States by the Tet offensive of 1968. That campaign cost the Communists about 38,000 casualties and prisoners

8. (U) Pacification was also significantly assisted by the growing political stability in South Vietnam.

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out of a committed force of 85,000. Nevertheless, they introduced another 86,000 reinforcements into South Vietnam to make up these losses (157,000, if "possibles" and "probables" are added to the "confirmed"). By April 1969 the Communists were forced to recognize the bankrupt nature of their strategy of seeking an early military victory; in its place they adopted one "in which the enemy is repulsed one step at a time ... because the enemy still has more than 1,000,000 troops and it is just impossible to destroy or wipe out 1,000,000 men."⁹

(U) It seems reasonable to conclude that the success of the allied offensive strategy probably caused Hanoi to abandon the objective of military victory so long as US forces remain in Vietnam. At the same time, the Communists, with their sensitive political antennae, also perceived the political possibilities opening up with the growing US antiwar sentiment, not only among the US public but among some of the key members of the administration. After the traumatic shock of the Tet offensive, many US policymakers came to view the war as an open-ended game with a continuing rise in the stakes and no end in sight. Had the Communists not seen this political opening and moved to take advantage of it, it is possible that they might have made a supreme effort to raise the ante once again by scraping the bottom of their manpower barrel.

(U) In sum, the lessons emerging from the experiments with the strategy for the regular forces over the first decade of the US involvement in Vietnam confirm the experience from other insurgencies, that is, the regular forces must employ an offensive strategy

9. (U) Headquarters, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, "Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong Party and COSVN Resolutions" (U), SRAP 1569 (1967). CONFIDENTIAL

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against the insurgents.¹⁰ If this strategy is employed early (and the regular forces have the necessary quantitative and qualitative capabilities), the growth of the insurgent military structure can be checked and reversed; if the enemy is allowed to build his military structure by regularizing guerrilla units, then the problem becomes more difficult but the strategy should be the same--the offensive.¹¹

(U) Vietnam also illustrates another lesson. If an insurgency is receiving substantial external military support and the insurgents have the advantage of sanctuaries, and if political constraints are imposed which severely limit the efficacy of an offensive strategy, the contest is likely to be long and drawn out. Thus, unless the outcome is truly vital to US interests and can be so accepted by the US public, the United States should avoid the commitment of military forces when similar political and geographic constraints obtain.

10. (S) This conclusion was supported by an Army study which stated, among other things, that support of US operations should provide for the "deployment of US and Free World Forces ... to destroy PAVN and Main Force VC units and base areas and to reduce external support below the sustaining level. Rural Construction (pacification) can progress significantly only in conjunction with the effective neutralization of major enemy forces." Department of the Army, A Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN), 2 vols., March 1966, 1:5. SECRET

11. (U) This conclusion is equally applicable to the regular units assigned in direct support of the pacification effort and to the Regional and Popular Forces. These forces must employ offensive tactics against the insurgents' regional and local forces. Unfortunately, all too often ARVN units in direct support of pacification and Regional and Popular Forces have tended to "hole up" in a defensive posture rather than seek out the enemy aggressively through vigorous patrol and ambush tactics.

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III

SECURITY FORCE CONSTRAINTS--STRENGTH, LEADERSHIP, AND TRAINING

(U) Of all the problems and constraints faced by the US military advisory community, that of raising the caliber and level of the combat performance of the GVN forces has been the most difficult. Time and again both the regular and the territorial forces have fallen far short of the qualitative performance of the Communists in spite of massive US materiel assistance. At least until 1970, both were an uncertain instrument in providing security for the population. Operations of the ARVN have been characterized by a lack of initiative and aggressiveness and an overdependence on air and artillery support. The territorials have been plagued by a "fortress" mentality, a carry-over from the French period, which seriously interferes with aggressive operations. By and large, both the ARVN and the territorials have failed to carry out effective small-unit tactics of patrol and ambush. When executed at all, patrols and ambushes have been characterized by routines and patterns that have permitted the enemy to avoid encounter readily. There has been one redeeming factor, however--the inherent bravery of the Vietnamese peasant. He has demonstrated that with good leadership he can be a first-class soldier.

(U) Contributing factors to this generally ineffective performance have been both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, the security forces have suffered from a lack of balance between territorial and regular forces and from serious personnel shortages due to combat attrition, desertion, and, until after Tet 1968, an ineffective draft system. Qualitative problems have stemmed primarily from poor leadership and training methods, which in turn have led to poor motivation and combat performances, and, of equal importance, an "incorrect" attitude toward the population--the target of pacification.

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UNCLASSIFIED**A. QUANTITATIVE CONSTRAINTS--FORCE BALANCE, STRENGTH, AND EQUIPMENT**

(U) Both MAAG and its successor, MACV, made strenuous efforts to alleviate the quantitative deficiencies of the ARVN through the provision of funds, allowances, equipment, and weapons so that force levels could be increased. Continuous prodding by MACV and, more importantly, the shock of Tet 1968 finally forced the GVN to draft eighteen-year-olds and to enforce the draft more effectively. After Tet, MACV took steps to upgrade the armament of the ARVN by providing more effective weapons, including the M-16 rifle. These measures have assisted the ARVN in increasing its strength from 200,000 in 1964 to over 400,000 in June 1971--a level which MACV believes will enable the ARVN to take over the full combat role inherent in our Vietnamization policy.

(U) While the requirement for increasing the strength of the regular forces was clearly recognized by the United States from the beginning of its involvement in South Vietnam, the necessity of striking an appropriate balance between the regulars and the territorials was only gradually accepted under the pressure of events.¹ As we have seen, it was not until 1960 that the MAAG assumed advisory responsibility for the territorials (then the Civil Guard (CG) and the Self-Defense Corps (SDC), with 68,000 and 60,000 men, respectively). As the tempo of the Communist "military struggle" rose, the territorials suffered serious casualties. (In the first half of 1962 these forces absorbed 80 percent of the total casualties.) Threatened with a virtual collapse of the territorial forces, MACV took the lead in recommending a series of reforms in organization, strength, and training.

(U) In 1964, the 44 Civil Guard battalions (a carryover from the Diem period when the CG was looked on primarily as an adjunct to the ARVN) were deactivated and 132-man Regional Force companies were formed in their place. Authorized strengths were raised to 130,000

1. (U) The evolution of the territorial forces is discussed fully in Part Two of Volume III.

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for 1964 and 135,000 for 1965. Recruit and refresher training was also instituted. The Popular Forces (to which the hamlet militia--the SDC and the Combat Youth--had now been assigned) were limited to a strength of 185,000 for 1964 on MACV's recommendation. While these changes did help to improve the performance of the territorials, personnel shortages and endemic leadership problems plagued these forces through 1964-65. They continued, as in the past, to suffer the major share of the casualties, although with favorable kill ratios.

(U) The establishment of CORDS under MACV in 1967 was to have a significant impact on the improvement of the territorial forces. A comprehensive RF/PF improvement program was initiated which provided for major increases in the US advisory effort, personnel strengths, administrative and logistic support forces, and weapons upgrading. Regional Force recruiting was placed under the national induction system, additional small arms were provided pending the shift to the M-16 rifle, and group headquarters were authorized to control RF companies.

(S) Further improvements in organization, strength, and equipment have been instituted as a part of the RVNAF Improvement and Consolidation Program arising out of the Nixon policy of Vietnamization. Twenty regional battalions, consisting of a headquarters and four RF companies, have been formed to fit the Regional Forces for a mobile-reaction role in order to release the ARVN for offensive operations against PAVN units. Similarly, the number of group headquarters for control of more than one RF company has been increased to 266. Regional Force artillery units, numbering 100 platoons of two howitzers each, had been activated by mid-1971 to relieve ARVN artillery. Finally, the reequipping of the Regional Force with the more effective M-16 has been completed, and the Popular Forces have received 90 percent of their complement of weapons. The RF strength has been increased from 68,000 in 1960 to 295,000 in July 1971, while the PF strength has been increased from 160,000 to 247,000 during the same period. In addition, the armed element of the People's Self-Defense Force has provided an additional local security force of nearly 600,000.

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In sum, the United States, after neglecting the territorial forces during the late 1950s and early 1960s, has provided the monetary and materiel support required to create a balanced force of regulars, territorials, and hamlet militia with a strength of over 1.6 million (see Table 1). From the quantitative point of view, these forces should be capable of coping with the Communists.

B. QUALITATIVE CONSTRAINTS--LEADERSHIP, MORALE, AND MOTIVATION

(U) Qualitative constraints within the ARVN and territorial forces have been far less amenable to solution than the quantitative ones. Administrative procedures for personnel and supply management have shared the common characteristics of the Vietnamese bureaucracy in that they are slow, cumbersome, and unresponsive. Because of the regional, rather than national, orientation of the regular forces (they have been tied to military regions), the tactical flexibility necessary to maximize effectiveness has been lacking (with the exception of the limited forces of the General Reserve). Command interest in the mundane but nevertheless vital problem of maintenance has been cursory, and coordination of the pacification effort by the military commanders and provincial and district officials has been hampered by unclear command lines. But these qualitative problems pale to insignificance when compared with the twin constraints of inferior leadership, on the one hand, and the "incorrect" attitude and relationship of the forces themselves with the rural population, on the other.

(U) The Military Assistance Command has helped relieve those aspects of low morale that stem from inadequate material incentives. Since the United States has borne the costs for the ARVN and the territorials, including pay and allowances, pay scales have been equalized and brought more into line with the cost of living, while the GVN has been persuaded to adopt a commissary system (initially funded by the United States) which brings a wider variety of food, less expensively, to some of the ARVN units. An enlisted mess system was also substituted for the cost-of-living allowance paid to the soldier, and the GVN has constructed some dependent housing with US

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Table 1 (S)

VIETNAMESE MILITARY AND PARAMILITARY FORCE STRENGTHS (U)

FORCES	ACTUAL				Current as of 31 Oct 71	PROGRAM	
	End June 68	End June 69	End June 70	End June 71		FY 72 Approved ^a	FY 73 Approved for Planning
<u>RVNAF</u>							
ARVN	357,959	392,686	418,833	411,693	401,526	444,237	445,981
VNN	16,952	24,635	38,155	40,808	43,236	40,681	40,681
VNMC	10,922	9,314	12,471	13,422	13,761	14,072	14,072
VNAF	17,240	24,527	38,541	50,925	49,888	46,998	52,171
Regional Forces	197,917	249,553	275,785	295,744	288,313 ^h	295,985	295,985
Popular Forces	164,284	175,118	234,598	247,537	247,865 ^h	258,027	251,110
SUBTOTALS	765,274	875,833	1,018,383	1,060,129	1,044,589	1,100,000	1,100,000
<u>PARAMILITARY</u>							
CIDG ^b	40,435	41,454	21,007	0	0	0	0
Rural Develop- ment Cadre	45,600	44,809	43,990	30,302	28,578	32,000	23,000
Son Thon RD Cadre ^c	7,000	7,229	6,962	5,388	4,987	3,900	1,300
Armed Propaganda Teams	3,316	4,246	5,441	5,029	4,172	4,660	2,660
National Police	79,729	76,819	88,397	116,369	114,344	122,200	122,200
Field Police ^{d,e}	(11,862)	(14,227)	(14,859)	(16,300) ^f	-- ⁱ		
Special Police ^d		(15,400)	(14,900)	(14,300) ^f	-- ⁱ		
Provincial Recon- naissance Units	4,420	4,502	4,412	4,412	4,282	0	0
Kit Carson Scouts	749	1,970	2,543	958	635	525	0
People's Self-Defense Forces	N/A	1,480,934	4,690,874	4,405,133	4,406,654 ^g	4,000,000	4,000,000
SUBTOTALS	181,249	1,661,963	4,863,626	4,567,591	4,563,652	4,163,285	4,149,160
GRAND TOTALS	946,523	2,537,796	5,882,009	5,627,720	5,608,241	5,263,285	5,249,160

^aFY 72 has been approved subject to further review in light of US budget and GVN economic restraints.

^bProgram of conversion of CIDG to Border Defense and ARVN completed December 1970.

^cPreviously Truong Son.

^dIncluded in National Police totals.

^ePreviously National Police Field Force (NPF).

^fAs of 30 September 1970.

^gPeople's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) are not considered paramilitary forces. However, they are civilian forces organized into two groups--combat and support forces--for local defense and to supplement the RF and PF. The Combat PSDF strength is 1,381,606 and the Support PSDF is 3,025,048 as of 30 September 1971.

^hPer Territorial Forces Evaluation Systems, September 1971.

ⁱData not available.

Source: Office of the Chief of Staff, US Army, Army Activities Report: SE Asia (U), as of 5 January 1972, p. 47. SECRET

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financial support. Improved personnel management systems have been instituted, promotion systems have been overhauled, and the terms of service for the ARVN and territorial forces have been equalized. Medical support and death benefits had also been improved with US help. However, improvements in leadership have been and remain basically a Vietnamese problem that has to be faced and solved by the Vietnamese themselves; at best, US influence can only be marginal.

(U) Unfortunately, the brand of leadership demonstrated by Magsaysay in the Philippine counterinsurgency has not been duplicated in Vietnam.² While President Thieu seems to have demonstrated some degree of leadership, his influence with the ARVN and territorials appears to be limited. Unfortunately, the leadership gap has extended to the ARVN High Command--there has not been a general officer capable of motivating the force as a whole. While Major General Thang, the Minister of Revolutionary Development in the critical years of 1965-67, demonstrated a high degree of leadership, he did not survive the political in-fighting and now occupies an unimportant post in the Joint General Staff and is sitting out the war. Colonel Be, one of the originators of the RD cadre concept, with his keen understanding of the culture of the villager, was able to lead and galvanize literally thousands of RD cadremen and village officials who fell under his influence at the Vung Tau training center. Fear that Be might pose a political threat to the regime by capitalizing on his grassroots support has probably cost him a top post where his inspiring leadership might have been brought to bear on the ARVN or the territorials.

2. (U) "To the troops, and to the nation, Magsaysay soon became the personification of leadership. He had outstanding ability to inspire effective action by small units, to rally to his support leaders at all echelons; and he had an equally uncanny gift for identifying inadequate action and causing regrets among those who were responsible for it. Most important, he had the knack of inspiring emulation of the example he set." (Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. R. Bohannon, Counter-guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962), p. 139.)

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(U) The deficiency in leadership extends to the subordinate echelons of the ARVN and territorials, as well. This is not to say that effective leadership in the corps, divisions, and subordinate elements or in the provinces and districts has been totally absent. Anyone who has served in Vietnam can testify to the presence of some first-rate leadership³ and to the dramatic improvement in performance that such leaders generate. However, the problem has been and is that leadership talent is spread too thin. As one observer has put it:

The problem is one of a lack of trained and experienced leaders at all echelons of command and of instilling in all ARVN officers the necessity for supervising execution of all orders to ensure compliance. Lack of motivation--apathy--detracts from all endeavors other than survival.... Initiative and supervision are apparently so foreign to Vietnam's culture that it is difficult to instill it in the military.⁴

(U) One suspects that the elitism of the officer corps lies at the root of the problem. The Vietnamese elite, heavily influenced by French culture, are alienated from the traditional Vietnamese background and culture, which furnishes the rank and file of the military. The officer class seems to retain the authoritarian approach of the Mandarin governing class, while discarding the concern for the rank and file which characterized this class in the past.

(U) While various attempts have been made to improve leadership capabilities through Vietnamese mobile training teams and formal

3. (U) Colonel Tu, who took over the provincial leadership of Kien Hoa in 1968; Colonel Thi, who has led the provincial pacification in Quang Tin since the Tet 1968 days; Lt. Colonel Dang, district chief of Ly Tin, Quang Tin; Colonel Ho of An Giang; General Hon of the 21st Division, who developed an effective pacification plan in 1964; the late General Do Cao Tri, who headed the III Corps cross-border operations; Lt. General Truong of the 1st ARVN Division; and Colonel Thang of Thua Thien Province are some examples of effective Vietnamese leaders.

4. (U) Brig. Gen. G. J. Duquemin, adviser in Vietnam Central Training Center, commenting on recruit and advanced individual training of the ARVN, June 1971.

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courses at the various training centers, the effort does not seem to have produced significant results. This failure is in sharp contrast with the Communists' success in motivating their forces. They emphasize political training in order to achieve a high standard of motivation and dedication, which probably accounts for the durability of the Communist forces in the face of superior strength and firepower.

(U) The consequences of cultural alienation of the military elite go deeper than just ineffective combat operations--they impact on the relations of the military with the people, the target of the GVN pacification effort. A common observation concerns the counterproductive nature of the ARVN's treatment of, and attitude toward, the people. General Thang put his finger on the problem after an inspection trip in early 1966.

The Vietnamese military must be made to understand, through indoctrination and discipline, that the highest duty of any Vietnamese military man is to protect the people. This is not so today. Yet, it must be made to come true. It is the real first priority for all troop units in preparing areas for pacification and in backing up pacification work. When troops steal chickens and otherwise misbehave with the people, they made the people wish to help the enemy, not us. As a start, we should make this high duty the prime rule for all Vietnamese military in the national priority areas; with a thorough indoctrination program for the troops, followed up by strict discipline. It is shameful that the people in Binh Dinh prefer US and ROK troops to ARVN's 22nd Division.⁵

Unfortunately, the GVN and ARVN leadership have failed to initiate "a thorough indoctrination program" backed by strict discipline, and an "incorrect" attitude toward the people has persisted to this day, although MACV reports that there was some improvement in ARVN conduct in this regard during 1970. Nevertheless, considering the objective of pacification--to involve the people with the GVN--this negative influence must be viewed as a serious constraint. A comparison of the

5. (U) Lansdale report to Department of State, March 1966.

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Communist successes in gaining the support of the people is indeed striking--both the Chinese and North Vietnamese were able to alter the peasant's image of armies as plunderers of the people by establishing a rigid set of regulations and then enforcing them through a program of indoctrination backed by rigid discipline.

(U) Another damaging offshoot of the elitism of the officer corps is the undue emphasis on the baccalaureate as a prerequisite for entry into the officer corps and the consequent failure to capitalize on latent leadership and initiative among the rank and file. In spite of continual recommendations by US advisers, the Vietnamese High Command never really bought an officer candidate program that would take advantage of natural leaders without regard for formal educational credentials. As late as April 1971, MACV noted that in spite of severe shortages--40 percent in the captain rank and 10 percent in the lieutenant--unrealistically high academic requirements were limiting inputs into the junior officer ranks. It is possible that the failure to tap this potential contributed to the Communist cause, since the more ambitious members of the peasant class could perceive opportunities for advancement within the Communist ranks which were not open in the GVN system.⁶ One of the principal methods used by the Communists in strengthening their political and military infrastructure, for example, was to open the way to "promotion and pay" to the young, intelligent, ambitious members of the rank and file.

(C) The lack of strong leadership, with its deleterious impact on morale and motivation, and the still inadequate benefits and incentives continue to be the dominant constraints on the effectiveness of the regular and territorial forces. In the ARVN, attrition through desertions exceeds combat casualties. The ARVN's maneuver battalion desertion rates have risen to 30 percent since 1968; they reached a

6. (U) Percentage of officer candidates from the ranks, Ministry of Defense, GVN:

1966	-	25.0 percent
1967	-	0
1968	-	9.1
1969	-	8.5

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high of 40 percent during the cross-border operations in Cambodia during the summer of 1970 and have remained above 30 percent through September 1971. As a consequence, maneuver battalion strengths have declined steadily during 1969 and 1970. By the end of 1970 the average battalion could count about 500 personnel out of an authorized strength of about 750. (During April 1971, while the 40th and 41st Regiments of the 22nd ARVN Division were operating in northern Binh Dinh, an area under severe Communist challenge, the 40th Regiment could only muster 1678 out of 2222 assigned and 3000 authorized, a shortfall of nearly 50 percent, while the 41st Regiment had a shortfall of over 60 percent.⁷)

(C) On the other hand, RF and PF desertion rates are considerably lower than those of the ARVN, for the most part because of the regional and local nature of these forces. The RF desertion rate decreased by 30 percent from May 1969 through October 1970, for an average of about 10 percent, and has held near this figure through September 1971. The Military Assistance Command attributes this improvement to lessened military pressure from PAVN units and to a gradual improvement in leadership. At the same time, PF desertion rates, amounting to a little under 10 percent, have risen since 1969, which is attributed to the increasing combat role of the PF and to inflationary pressures. Nevertheless, MACV advisers report a slow but steady improvement in the caliber of PF leadership.

C. QUALITATIVE CONSTRAINTS--TRAINING

(U) The Military Assistance Command concentrated much of its effort on raising the combat performance of the security forces through various training assistance techniques, four of which will be discussed below:

7. (U) US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, CORDS, "Binh Dinh Province: The Challenge, 1971," 12 June 1971. CONFIDENTIAL

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- Supporting the development of an extensive system of armed forces schools and training centers
- Brigading US and ARVN regular and territorial units in combined operations
- Assigning Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) to ARVN units and Mobile Advisory Teams (MATs) to territorial forces
- Furnishing military advisers to the ARVN and to provincial and district officials

1. Schools and Training Centers

(U) Under US urging, the GVN established schools for the various combat arms, an NCO academy, and a number of national and regional training centers, all under a Central Training Command. Unfortunately, a number of constraints typical of the Vietnam milieu have limited the effectiveness of the training provided. The infantry and NCO training schools suffer from overcrowding and inadequate training areas and facilities; only the artillery and armored schools are considered adequate by US observers. The curriculums suffer from excessive theory, the lecture method predominates at the expense of sufficient field training, and night field exercises and combat marksmanship training continue to be the exception rather than the rule.

(U) The constraints on training are compounded by a lack of effective instructors--an understandable problem in face of the universal demands for competent officers. Nevertheless, the instructor corps is generally characterized by inexperience in combat and a lack of interest, initiative, and motivation. The system does not encourage the development of first-class instructors since a training assignment is looked upon as outside the main stream of promotional opportunity. Many of the instructors, the so-called "homesteaders," have held their training assignment for as long as five years, a problem that is exacerbated by lax supervision.

(U) By 1970 US observers with more than one tour with the training establishment were able to report some improvement in the training effort since the mid-1960s. However, the training emphasis on small-unit operations of patrol and ambush, and effective combat marksmanship

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still falls far short of that required.⁸ Examination of the 1970 training syllabus for basic and advanced infantry training for both ARVN and RF recruits shows minimal attention to these basic fundamentals; in fact, the syllabuses seem to be copied from standard US training manuals for conventional operations. Whether the US advisory effort was sufficiently convinced of the importance of this type of training is not clear from the record, although improved marksmanship is now incorporated into MACV training objectives for the ARVN. Nevertheless, many of the American, Australian, and New Zealand training advisers certainly appreciated the importance of this practical training, but their efforts were never sufficient to bring a reorientation of training from the theoretical to the practical, except in isolated cases.

2. "Brigading" Techniques

(U) American combat units also had a hand in upgrading ARVN and territorial unit performance. Observers agree that the "buddy" or combined system of operations, first employed in 1965, in which ARVN and US units were brigaded in actual operations, produced "the most

8. (U) Experience in the Malayan counterinsurgency demonstrates the key contribution of effective individual and small-unit training in patrolling, ambushes, and combat marksmanship, both by day and night. The British training syllabus emphasized day and night patrols, ambush techniques, and combat marksmanship of a killing shot in 2 to 3 seconds. These training techniques enabled the British and Malayan units to defeat the insurgents in the vast majority of encounters and were a key factor in the success of the counterinsurgency efforts. (See Volume III of Donald M. Weller, et al., Counterinsurgency in Thailand (U), 4 vols., IDA Report R-146 (WSEG Report 133), Institute for Defense Analyses (Arlington, Virginia, June 1968). This lesson was also borne out in the Indochina war. The O'Daniel report of 1953, mentioned earlier, noted that mastery of woodcraft, scouting, and patrolling techniques and, above all, expert marksmanship were essential to successful small-unit operations. The report also pointed out that the best instructors were ex-Viet Minh officers and NCOs.

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effective ARVN units--showing the ARVN that they could stand up to the NVA."⁹

(U) This technique was also effective when US forces, usually an infantry battalion, operated in combination with local RF/PF units under various groupment schemes. The 101st Airborne Division, for example, assigned an infantry battalion to the northern coastal Quang Dien district in April 1968. At the time, the district was almost entirely under control of the NVA/VC forces, and GVN control was limited to only three key towns. The battalion established its headquarters in the district compound with the district chief and his staff, together with the MACV advisory staff, where all intelligence was available and planning operations could be readily coordinated. As a result, "a frame of mind eventually evolved in which the staffs seemed to be members of the same group and US and RF/PF forces came to be regarded as a single force."¹⁰

9. (U) See Colonel Carrington, Deputy Senior Advisor, II Corps, "December 66-July 67 After Action Report"; General Eckhart, Senior Advisor, IV Corps (later Special Assistant, DepCORDS), "Report on Training, 1971"; Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 214.

10. (C) The effectiveness of the RF/PF in this period of combined operations is clearly reflected in the results achieved by district forces. During the period 1 June to 1 November, these forces killed 215 NVA/VC, captured 102, and received 167 Hoi Chanhhs ... at a cost of four RF/PF soldiers killed. An even more eloquent testimony of the success of these combined operations is provided by the VC.... A staff member of the Thua Thien-Hue military region operating in Quang Dien advises his superiors by letter of his bleak evaluation of the situation confronting the VC throughout the district. His assessment that "... this is the most critical, bitter, and difficult stage we ever had in Quang Dien" became truly prophetic for the author when he was killed in a night ambush on 12 October 1968.

By the end of October, US/RF/PF combat operations in Quang Dien had clearly provided the environment in which the development of pacification could be undertaken in earnest ... with the RF/PF concurrently assuming primary responsibility for (continued)

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(U) A basically similar technique was adopted by the 173rd Airborne Division in northern Binh Dinh during 1969. The four maneuver battalions of the 173rd and two ARVN regiments divided the northern four districts of Binh Dinh into six subsectors. As in the case of the 101st Airborne Division, the battalion commander and his staff were collocated with district advisers and the MACV advisory staff in district compounds, which facilitated coordinated operations. Initially, US elements were brigaded down to squad level, but as the territorial forces achieved a higher degree of expertise the US units were progressively withdrawn. Under US guidance the territorial forces gradually acquired a high degree of competence and eventually were conducting heli-borne operations without US participation.¹¹ Unfortunately, after the withdrawal of the brigade from the pacification mission, the 3rd NVA Division, based in the mountains to the west, regained the initiative and undid much of the pacification gains achieved by the 173rd operations. This however does not negate the validity of the combined training method--the territorials cannot be expected to stand up to Main Force NVA units on a continuing basis. Regression must be attributed to the failure of the 22nd ARVN Division to isolate the territorials from Main Force units.

(U) The Third Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) introduced its own system of brigading as a consequence of the tactical situation. After a brief period in 1965, the Marines were ordered to abandon an enclave strategy for a more offensive one aimed at bringing US combat power to bear in support of the ARVN. As a consequence, their areas of responsibility in the Da Nang, Chu Lai (Quang Tin), and Phu Bai (Thua Thien) enclaves were expanded to areas which included thousands

maintaining requisite security and remaining alert for the return of VC influence.

US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Combat Experiences (U), January 1970, pp. 9 and 14. CONFIDENTIAL

11. (U) A similar system was used by the First Marine Division in Quang Nam with equivalent results.

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of VC-dominated villagers. As the III MAF Commander, General Walt, put it, "as we expanded our areas of operations we needed more and more troops to keep the areas secure--so we hit on the idea for a security force of a few marines and about twice as many villagers. We called these elements Combined Action Platoons (CAPs)."¹²

(U) The genesis of the idea came from an experiment in security in the Phu Bai enclave, where a Marine infantry battalion found itself responsible for an expanded area of operations, which included 16 hamlets with a population in excess of 40,000. It was readily apparent that a single battalion could not prevent the Viet Cong from exercising a dominant influence. Faced with this dilemma, the battalion worked out a plan which would combine a Marine rifle squad with a PF platoon at the village level. The Marine component was specially selected and trained for this assignment. In early August 1965 the first Combined Action Company (CAC) of four rifle squads, reinforced with navy hospital corpsmen, was deployed to four villages. The success of this brigading technique in providing improved security led to its expansion.

(U) By the close of 1966, 57 CAP units, consisting of about 760 Marines and 1500 PF, had been formed; the peak was reached in the spring of 1970 when 114 CAP units were in place--about 15 percent of the PF units in MR I. The primary task of the CAP was to upgrade the performance of the Popular Forces. The evidence shows that training to achieve this objective was practical in nature with little or no attention to formal classroom-type training, in spite of the fact that such training was prescribed in many cases. However, the record shows that real training did take place:

By accompanying the Marines in daily operations and activities, the PF picks up military knowledge by observation and repetition; patrol and ambush tactics become habitual--the more mechanical aspects such as the care of weapons and use of equipment is taught to the PF on an individual informal basis not because the Marines

12. (U) Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt, Address to Third Marine Division Association, 22 July 1967.

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are ordered to conduct such training, but because they recognize it is in their own interest--a PF with a jammed weapon is no help in a fire fight.¹³

(U) In the final analysis, the best indication of the success of the program is shown by the record. For example, Da Nang, covered by a CAP unit, was one of the few municipal areas not overrun by the Communists during the Tet offensive of 1968. Further, a comparison of CAP-PF unit performance with that of the regular PF units revealed that

during the first six months of 1969, the Combined Action Program, working with 111 of the 780 PF platoons in ICTZ (14.3% of the total), suffered 30.1% of the casualties, accounted for 54.8% of the enemy killed, and for 55.7% of the weapons captured:

	669 Independent PF Platoons	111 CAPs
Friendly KIA	369 (69%)	164 (31%)
Enemy KIA	1,079 (45%)	1,306 (55%)
Weapons captured	427 (44%)	536 (56%)
Kill ratio	2.7:1	8.0:1 ¹⁴

Some evidence of the continued durability of the CAP training is illustrated by the following:

On the morning of 2 May 1971, a 200-man enemy force comprised of Q83rd VC Battalion and 38th NVA Regiment elements conducted coordinated mortar/ground attacks throughout Dai Loc district--recently an area of CAP concern. At the time of the attack, there was no CAP elements on hand, although virtually every PF platoon in the district had received CAP training. The RF/PFs stood their ground and fought the enemy to a standstill. During the battle, 95 NVA/VC were killed or captured, and 33 AK-47 rifles and 10 crew-served weapons were seized. RF/PF casualties were 15 killed and 43 wounded.¹⁵

13. (U) Bruce C. Allnutt, Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience, Human Sciences Research, Inc. (McLean, Virginia, December 1969), p. 40.

14. (U) Ibid., p. 38.

15. (U) Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, "Operations of US Marine Forces Vietnam," p. 39.

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(U) While kill ratios are an important measurement of success in reducing the Communist guerrilla capabilities and in improving physical security, the CAP program had important psychological effects on the villagers, as well. "All Vietnamese officials interviewed believed that the psychological impact of American troops working side by side at the village level with the Popular Force Platoon is the greatest asset of the program."¹⁶

(U) On balance, the use of the buddy system with ARVN units was a most effective training technique, since ARVN units had the same general level of supporting arms and services as US units. However, in the case of brigading US units with the territorials, performance was undoubtedly improved, but a part of the increase in effectiveness can be attributed to external US support, that is, air, artillery, heli-lift, medical evacuation, and the backup afforded by US forces. While the US example should have tended to improve external support by the ARVN and the Vietnamese Air Force, a lack of resources, on the one hand, and a reluctance or unwillingness to furnish support when the resources are available, on the other, could limit the future effectiveness of brigading. For example, one of the recurring reports from Vietnam is that medical evacuation by the VNAF is difficult to arrange during daylight hours and almost impossible at night. Similarly, the availability of helicopters for airlift operations is constrained by a lack of resources and something less than full cooperation of the VNAF with the ARVN and territorial forces. It may well be that the combat performance of the territorial forces, which have become accustomed to a high level of US support (particularly helicopters), may be degraded when forced to operate with the more limited Vietnamese external support resources.

3. Mobile Advisory Teams

(U) The technique of brigading US forces with the ARVN and the territorials could not be extended to the great majority of the

16. (U) Allnutt, Marine Combined Action Capabilities, Appendix G, p. G-1.

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territorial forces. To fill this advisory gap, the United States employed teams of advisers to rotate among units. This training technique had been initiated as early as 1957, when US Special Force teams were introduced into Vietnam to provide training in "unconventional warfare." Their initial assignment was training duty at the Commando Training Center in Nha Trang. In 1960 this small group was supplemented by additional teams deployed to Da Nang and Song Mao. In 1961 the Special Forces role was expanded first to the training of villagers recruited as special reaction forces in the Central Highlands and then later to the support of MAAG training as a whole.¹⁷

(U) After the introduction of US forces in 1965, some US units formed Mobile Training Teams from their own resources to assist ARVN units in upgrading their performance. However, the major thrust of the advisory effort concentrated on training assistance to RF and PF units using a training model originating in the II US Field Forces (MR II) in 1967. These so-called Mobile Advisory Teams were made up of two officers, three senior enlisted men, and an interpreter. Initially personnel were drawn from combat units, but later they were assigned directly to the program and trained in-country. Teams were assigned to the provinces and districts where, under the control and direction of MACV advisers, they operated in the field with RF and PF units, supervised small-unit training, and developed training programs to fit the specific needs of the units they advised. Further, in order to upgrade the administrative and logistic support of the territorials, administrative and logistic teams were formed to advise their Vietnamese counterparts on support matters. At the peak of the advisory effort in 1970 nearly 500 Mobile Advisory Teams were deployed in the field.¹⁸

17. (U) Center For Research in Social Systems, "Experiences of US Army Special Forces in South Vietnam Applicable to Thailand," CIN FAC S 1004 (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1967). SECRET

18. (U) Report on the War in Vietnam, p. 215.

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UNCLASSIFIED**4. US Advisory Effort**

(U) The system of providing advisers to ARVN combat units was initiated in the late 1950s under the MAAG chief, Lt. General Williams. As more advisory personnel became available in the early 1960s, the system was expanded to the battalion level. This technique for improving ARVN performance has continued until the present, although a gradual reduction of the advisory effort is scheduled as Vietnamization progresses. This training effort has contributed materially to improving performance of the ARVN, particularly in helping to eliminate weaknesses in staff functioning, coordination, employment of supporting arms, and logistic support.

(U) The advisory system, however, has suffered under several constraints, the elimination of which would have improved performance. A major constraint was the short tour of the adviser, on average about five months; MACV records show that the military adviser was usually realizing his full potential just as his tour came to an end. Later the short tour factor was partially compensated for by the return of many former advisers to a second, or even a third, tour in Vietnam during which they, at times, again were assigned as military advisers and could bring their prior experience to bear. Another constraint stemmed from the fact that, on the average, the length of service and the combat experience of the US adviser were significantly less than those of his ARVN counterpart; the average US adviser had about six years of service up to mid-1970, when it rose to about seven years, while his Vietnamese counterpart had about 12 years of service. This relative lack of experience on the adviser's part may well have led to some natural resentment on the part of the Vietnamese commanders concerned. With regard to the role of the advisers, some military observers have observed that "the term adviser is a misnomer," since the major duty of most advisers was to arrange for US artillery, air, heli-lift, medi-evacuation, and logistic support rather than advising on tactics.¹⁹ The designation of US advisers as "combat assistance teams" was adopted in 1970.

19. (U) Brig. Gen. G. J. Duquemin, Adviser in Vietnam Central Training Center, commenting on ARVN training, 1971.

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(U) A third constraint noted by some military observers is that the US advisory effort was continued too long--the US support supplied through the advisers should have been cut off so as to force the ARVN to develop their own support capabilities earlier. The performance of ARVN divisions in Region IV tends to bear this out. One senior military officer commenting on the early withdrawal of US advisers from MR IV noted that the ARVN divisions in that region were better led and trained because they had no US crutch to lean on.²⁰

(U) Because of the importance of security as a basis for pacification (and because of the shortage of qualified civilians from the various US agencies involved in Vietnam), the military has shouldered much of the advisory effort in the provinces and districts since 1963. Once US forces were introduced in 1965, the military officer understandably desired service with combat units, rather than service as an adviser, because of his background and training and the perceived advantage to his career. Then, too, demands placed on the army by the large US buildup limited the number of first-class officers that could be assigned to the pacification advisory effort. As in the case of the US advisers to military units, the problem was compounded by the short tour which brought the officer to full effectiveness just as his tour was ending. There were, of course, a number of highly intelligent, innovative, and capable officers who acquired a high degree of expertise in pacification. These officers on their own initiative sought additional tours in Vietnam, which made their services as provincial senior advisers and the senior echelons of the CORDS structure even more valuable.

(U) Finally, the bulk of the military, like the civilian advisers, had no clear idea of the appropriate concept and approach to pacification--nor was this gap filled by an effective training program, at least until 1967 when a training course was instituted for provincial senior advisers at the newly established Vietnam Training Center

20. (U) Maj. General Eckhart, Assistant Deputy, CORDS, USMACV, commenting on ARVN training.

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in Washington. It was not until 1970 that a program for the selection and training of all military personnel for assignment to districts and provinces was initiated. This program, with its career incentives, liberal leave policy, and an eighteen-month tour, paralleled by language and pacification training at the Vietnam Training Center, has brought a very high caliber of motivated and dedicated officers into the advisory pacification effort.

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IV

THE ROLE OF A GRASS ROOTS MILITIA--WHEN SHOULD THE PEOPLE BE ARMED?

(U) The pros and cons of a hamlet militia were debated at high levels among and within government circles and the US advisory community. In essence, the issue centered first on whether the people could be trusted with arms for their own defense, and, if so, what prerequisites would have to be satisfied before arms were distributed.

(U) A volunteer hamlet defense force, the Combat Youth, was part of the Strategic Hamlet program in the early 1960s. The concept was developed by Ngo Dinh Nhu as a part of his ideology of self-sufficiency--motivation of the villagers would lead to the organization of volunteer forces serving without pay. However, once organized it was soon discovered that these forces, like the territorials, could not withstand Communist military pressure. In 1964 the Combat Youth were consolidated into the Popular Forces, although MACV and some elements of the GVN proposed to retain this defensive element as the primary defense of the hamlet, with the PF responsible for overall village defense. However, Washington authorities concerned with what they believed to be undue proliferation of paramilitary forces did not support the Saigon position.

(U) In 1966, General Thang, then Minister of Revolutionary Development, revived the hamlet militia idea as the central way to involve the people with the GVN. An Inter-Agency Task Group of the US advisory community cautiously supported the program on the condition that it be instituted in a few pilot areas. Fear of arming the people remained a major roadblock, and the program never got off the ground, in spite of the fact that organization of the hamlet militia was one of the objectives of the RD cadres in 1966.

(U) Two years later, the Tet offensive acted as the catalyst for the formation of a hamlet militia. In Saigon, in reaction to the Communist invasion, some of the people requested arms from the military

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and the police, saying "we know where the VC are hiding. Give us weapons and we will go in and get them without the destruction of our homes." This request was turned down, but in many of the delta provinces similar requests resulted in the distribution of some arms. The most dramatic example occurred in Hue, where the population, before the Tet offensive, had tended to be "fence sitters." With the occupation of Hue and the assassination of thousands of civilians, the people were galvanized into action and demanded arms for their future protection, which were issued. As a result, the hamlet militia concept was revived by local initiative.¹

(U) The formal decision to revive the hamlet militia was made by President Thieu and strongly supported by CORDS. Thieu's desire to build up his political support in the rural areas probably played a major role in his decision. Thieu shrewdly highlighted and publicized his trust of the people in a series of ceremonies in which the villagers were presented with arms.

(U) The hamlet militia concept, in the form of the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF), was written into law in June 1968. The basic idea was to incorporate all the hamlet population, including women, into either a combat or support component. The combat component, made up of young men below draft age and older men beyond the draft age, was given limited military duties, including patrolling the hamlet periphery, giving warning of impending attack, and, in conjunction with the PF, putting up a limited defense. The support component was to participate in noncombat assistance, such as first aid, fire fighting, and the like. All were to assist in uncovering the Communist infrastructure.

(U) By 1970 the success of the PSDF program led the GVN, on its own initiative, to increase the military competence of some elements of the combat component, the key inter-teams, and to expand their combat role to one of gradually replacing PF units in the more secure hamlets. The implementing order noted that "the key inter-teams will gradually replace the PF in the conduct of limited security operations, reconnaissance, ambush, and patrol, thus permitting the RF and PF, while

1. (U) Interview in Saigon with official in PSDF Advisory Section, CORDS, June 1971.

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in direct support of the PSDF, to operate in inter-village and inter-district areas."² (The expansion of the roles and missions of the RF, PF, and PSDF is a part of the Vietnamization program which aims ultimately at freeing the ARVN from direct support of population security so as to facilitate offensive operations against PAVN units.)

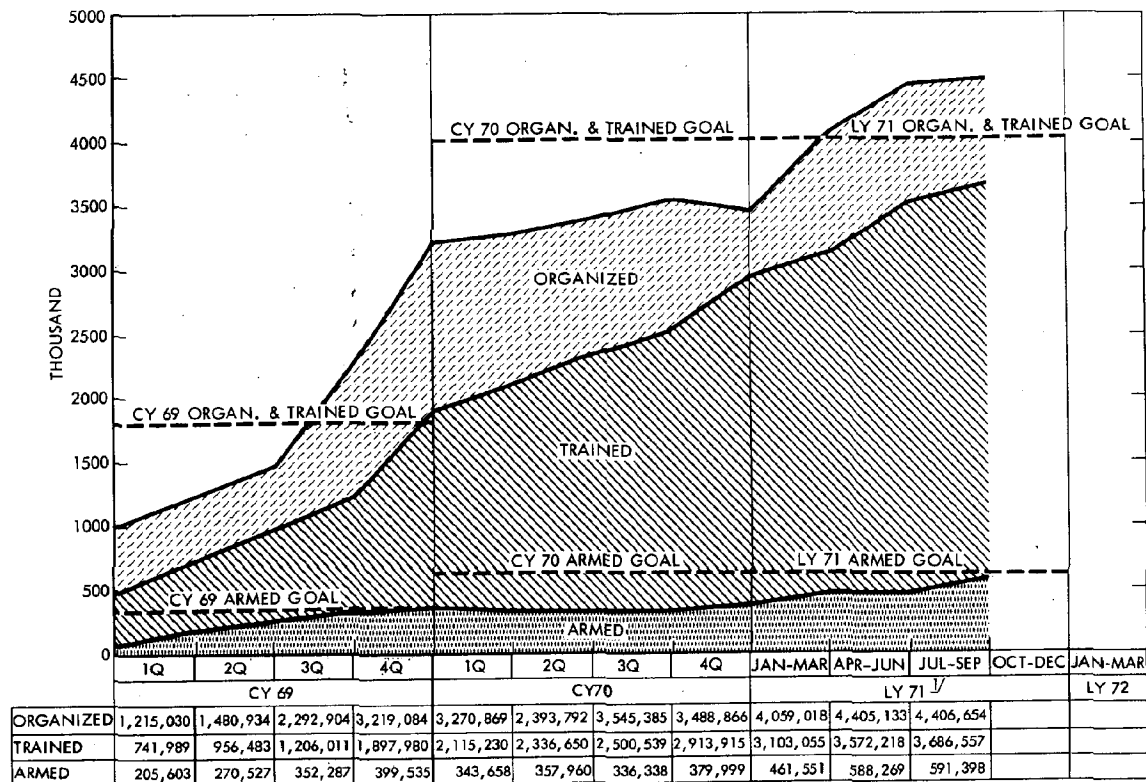
(U) It is worth noting that the American involvement in this program has been minimal--the PSDF is more Vietnamese in concept and operation than any other security program. In spite of some pressure from within CORDS for more US involvement, the CORDS leadership favored a "hands off" attitude. American advisers in Region I point out that US advisers "are not sufficiently people-oriented, and massive outside assistance would usurp the self-development nature of the program.... GVN and US officials and advisors proudly point out that the people themselves are doing something about their own security without outside assistance--that the PSDFs have performed well often against superior forces."³

(U) The People's Self-Defense Program now involves over 4.4 million people and must be considered one of the most important pacification programs in effect (see Figure 1). Not only has it made a significant contribution to security by relieving the PF from the responsibility for security in 38 percent of the hamlets, but it has also contributed to extending GVN control and to gaining the support of the people for the GVN. Through participation in the village and hamlet administration and in the performance of paramilitary and social tasks, the people have become involved with the hamlet and village administration, and in so doing have made it more difficult for the Viet Cong to acquire recruits. Since the essence of a counterinsurgency effort is to deprive the subversive side of recruits, while at one and the same time gaining the involvement of

2. (U) Training of Hard-Core PSDF Inter-Teams, General Directorate of People's Self-Defense Forces, Ministry of Interior, Republic of Vietnam, 1970.

3. (U) Memo from Commanding General, Third Marine Amphibious Force to Deputy, CORDS, "People's Self-Defense Training," 21 May 1969.

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1/ Commencing with the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan, the reporting period will be the Lunar Year (LY) extending from 1 Mar thru 28 Feb of the following year (12 months).

Source: Army Activities Report: SE Asia (U), January 1972, p. 52. SECRET

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Figure I (C). PEOPLE'S SELF-DEFENSE FORCE STRENGTHS (U)

the people and ultimately their support for the government, the political-social elements of this program are more important than the military aspects. The threat to the Communist recruiting potential has not gone unnoticed by the Viet Cong--PSDF units are a prime Communist target.

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V

**THE FORCE FOR LAW AND ORDER IN THE COUNTRYSIDE--
A NATIONAL POLICE FORCE OR A CONSTABULARY?**

(U) The place of a law-and-order force in the counterinsurgency effort was another problem which plagued the US advisory community for over a decade. Several key questions arose in this regard. What should be the role of a police force in the various phases of an insurgency? Should an existing organization be developed as the law-and-order force in the countryside, or should a new force be created? If the former, should the Municipal Police (a small force in the late 1950s whose jurisdiction was limited to the cities) be used as the basis for a national police force, or should the existing Civil Guard be trained for the rural law-and-order role? Or should still another alternative--turning the Regional and Popular Forces into a constabulary, for example--be pursued?

(U) During the late 1950s, a Michigan State advisory unit working as police advisers in Saigon recommended that the Civil Guard be turned into a rural police force. Diem (with the MAAG's concurrence) rejected the recommendation, however, because he considered the Civil Guard a paramilitary force (and a counterweight to the ARVN). Consequently, during the late 1950s, when the Communists were building up their political and military structure in the countryside, there was no attempt to create a GVN counterweight.

(U) As the insurgency was stepped up in the early 1960s, the grass roots police proved unable to survive in the increasingly insecure rural environment. Consequently, the requirement for police forces, the appropriate arm to combat the buildup of the insurgent strength, was superseded by the pressing requirement for paramilitary and regular forces to combat "the military struggle." The development of a police force as the ultimate arm for maintaining rural security was

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given a low priority under the press of events, although a police role in the urban areas was still relevant.

(U) In 1962, Diem was persuaded to group the various police-type forces--the Saigon Municipal Police, the Gendarmerie, the Sûreté, and the provincial police forces--into a national organization. This temporary gain was almost completely negated by the virtual disintegration of the police following Diem's assassination. Fearing retribution for counter-terror police tactics employed during Diem's regime, large segments of the police melted into the population.

(U) American differences of view on the appropriate force to execute the police mission continued until 1967. Elements of the advisory community, including MACV, favored a constabulary formed from territorial forces in lieu of a continued development of the National Police, in spite of the fact that considerable resources in advisory personnel and monetary support had already been devoted to the buildup of the National Police by the Public Safety Division of AID. Compounding the debate was the confusion over the proper role for the Police Field Forces (PFF), a component of the National Police, the first units of which were deployed by the GVN in 1966. Modeled after the Malayan Police Field Forces, the PFF had been conceived of as the combat arm of the NP Special Police in eliminating the VC infrastructure. Instead, the GVN assigned the PFF the mission of patrolling between hamlets--in direct competition with the Regional and Popular Forces, who had a similar mission. The police debate was terminated in 1967 by Ambassador Komer's decision to support the buildup of the existing National Police components rather than theorize further on the relative merits of the police and a constabulary. Full support for the National Police was achieved when MACV also swung behind the effort. At the same time, a decision was taken to employ the Police Field Forces as an action arm of the NP Special Police to apprehend the Communist infrastructure, rather than continue in a competitive role with the Regional and Popular Forces.¹ Thus the eleven-year debate among the American advisory community was ended.

1. (U) Interview with senior CORDS official, 20 February 1972.

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(U) Of course, there was some justification for the US ambivalence toward the police. Like all elements of the GVN security forces, the police had serious problems of leadership and consequently low morale and motivation. The regular forces and the RD cadres received the best of the Vietnamese leaders, and the police had to take what was left. This problem was compounded by the fact that the police did not (and still do not) have a firm basis in law in the form of a national statute and must make do with a large number of personnel in a "temporary" status without an assured professional future. Competition for funds, which the regular forces inevitably won, led to inadequate budgetary support. The police have also had their share of the corruption so endemic to Vietnamese society. It is also certain that the police advisory effort suffered from the same constraints as the US advisory community in general. The police adviser had to go through an expensive and time-consuming learning curve before he evolved the appropriate approach to the insurgency in terms relevant to a law-and-order force. The principal result of all these constraints has been that the expansion of the police has been held down; now that the Communists are reverting to protracted warfare--a phase in which the police again assume an increasingly important role as security in the countryside improves--the police are in short supply.

(U) In spite of these many constraints, some progress is evident. President Thieu has thrown his support behind a police buildup which will provide the majority, if not all, of the forces required to complete the extension of a police presence to the countryside. There are signs of movement toward a much needed national police statute that will provide the required legislative backup and, when implemented, should improve the status of the policeman and open up opportunities for a continuing rather than a temporary career. The organization and management of the Police Directorate have been improved, and some steps have been and are being taken to punish those guilty of corruption. High-level direction has also been improved, but a lack of capable middle-level leaders, typical of all GVN security organizations, remains a significant constraint.

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(U) In the urban areas the performance of the National Police has been relatively effective. They are now entirely responsible for the security of Saigon and are assuming similar responsibility in many other urban areas. Their effectiveness in preventing the growth of the VC infrastructure in the metropolitan areas is a significant accomplishment in view of the burgeoning population and the opportunities for Communist exploitation of workers, veterans, and other segments of the population with actual or potential grievances against the government.²

(U) Police performance in the rural areas is more difficult to evaluate. There are reports that the police image in the MR III and IV is improving. Nevertheless, the opportunities for corruption in the villages are there, and if the police go beyond the level of corruption that is acceptable to the Vietnamese villager then the whole thrust of the expansion can become counterproductive. Efforts to eliminate the flow of resources to the enemy through the use of mobile check points under provincial control offers a chance for rake-offs that may be of such a scale that the VC objective of creating a shadow supply system to alleviate their logistics problems in the two southern military regions may be facilitated. The National Identity Program, while lagging behind its objectives, has moved forward and when completed will provide the GVN with a system of identification equal, if not superior, to any in the world. The United States, after a bad start, has provided effective advice and technical assistance to the National Police. In the final analysis, the performance of the police, like that of the other GVN security elements, will depend on the caliber of leadership brought to bear on the program.

2. (U) Interview with CORDS official, June 1971.

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VI

THE APPROPRIATE FORCE FOR ATTACK OF THE INSURGENT INFRASTRUCTURE--
THE MILITARY, THE TERRITORIALS, RD CADRE, OR THE NATIONAL POLICE?

(U) One of the most vexing problems which faced the US advisory community was first determining the relative importance of attacking the Communist infrastructure as compared with other security programs and then, after the urgency of this action came to be recognized, determining which security arm should be assigned the mission--the military, the territorials, the RD cadre, or the Special Police component of the National Police.

(U) The Diem government had inherited a French-trained counter-intelligence organization, the Sûreté, whose key members were Eurasians and Vietnamese who held dual citizenship. However effective this organization might have become, Diem's suspicion that it was an arm of the French Government rather than loyal to South Vietnam was a serious if not crippling constraint on its operations.¹

(U) As the Communists intensified their operations in 1959, one of the GVN responses was to mount a "counter-terror" program. In April 1959, President Diem instructed the director of the GVN Intelligence Service to work out details for organizing mobile teams to eliminate Viet Cong terrorists who, for lack of concrete proof, could not be dealt with through normal judicial procedures. These teams, composed of members of the Civil Guard, Municipal Police, Sûreté, and ARVN elements, were organized and controlled by the province chiefs, in coordination with the regional military commanders. Threats, kidnappings, and assassinations were used to accomplish their goal. "In late April 1959 ... the Sûreté Internal Security Action groups were notified that restrictions had been eased regarding the powers

1. (U) Interview with Dennis J. Duncanson, member of the UK Police Advisory Mission (1959-61), April 1971.

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of arrest, that clearance from higher authorities need not be obtained before making arrests, and suspects could be arrested for interrogation, investigation, and exploitation ... this directive resulted in increased arrests in mid-May...."²

(U) In the early 1960s the counter-terror effort was intensified.³ The methods used were not discriminate and had the effect of driving Diem's political opponents, as well as individuals pressed into the service of the Viet Cong, into the arms of the National Liberation Front. Nevertheless, in many provinces, such as Long An, the Communist political and military infrastructure was nearly destroyed. In 1962 the Sûreté was incorporated into the newly formed National Police Force and became known as the Special Police.

(U) As mentioned earlier, after Diem's assassination in 1963, many members of the Special Police, which had furnished the trained police for the attack of the Communist organization, went into hiding to avoid reprisals for their indiscriminate and arbitrary actions during the counter-terror program. As a consequence, the nucleus required to organize and direct an effective program against the VC infrastructure ceased to exist. In the meantime, through the initiative of USOM and CIA advisory personnel, province special units (forerunners of the Provincial Reconnaissance Units) were recruited and trained to ferret out members of the Communist organization. In 1964, in a further attempt to coordinate all intelligence operations, both District and Province Intelligence Coordination Centers, on the Malayan model, were authorized to improve the intelligence effort both for military operations and for the identification of the members of the Communist infrastructure.

2. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, "Summary of Internal Security Situation in Vietnam, Jan-Apr 1959, No. 16," Desp. No. 42, 30 July 1959.

3. (U) See Chapter II, Part Two, Volume III of this study for more information on Diem's counter-terror program.

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A. VCI NEUTRALIZATION EFFORTS

(U) In 1964 the attack on the infrastructure was codified in the Chien Thang-Hop Tac pacification plans, and responsibility for its execution was assigned to the ARVN and the territorial forces. Ironically, the only agency involved in pacification not tasked with this responsibility was the National Police, an indication of the minimal impact that the formation of the Special Police had had on the GVN leadership, and of the military orientation of the planning during the period. As might have been predicted, neither the territorials nor the ARVN contributed intelligence of any significance on the composition of the infrastructure and, lacking such vital information, attrition of the insurgents was incidental and accidental--a byproduct of military operations.

(S) An Inter-Agency Task Force put its finger on the problem in a 1966 report:

What is required altogether is a professional intelligence and exploitation effort, and specifically "police-type" intelligence, i.e., aimed at compiling dossiers on the identities, whereabouts, organizational role and party history of individuals, rather than at unit order of battle....

The basic fact is that the Communist Party apparatus in South Vietnam is not going to be destroyed by amateurs at the task--and that includes soldiers, S/2s focused on order of battle and tactical intelligence, RD cadre, "the people themselves," or vigilantes.

The Special Branch of the National Police, alone, was created for such tasks as collecting and analyzing intelligence on, and acting to apprehend, individuals engaged in a political conspiracy against the State; and Special Branch Policemen remain the only element trained and organized for this task.

They are, to be sure, still poorly trained and organized for it ... in a search for adequate performance or capability in the short-run, there is simply nowhere to turn. The issue for policy is, rather, where to invest major attention and resources to creating an adequate capability; here the choice is clearer. The Special Branch offers by far the most advanced and logically appropriate foundation on which to build. Recognizing the primacy of its responsibility for the destruction of the Communist Party

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apparatus and associated VC infrastructure is an essential first step.⁴ (Emphasis in original)

(U) In 1966, the CIA organized Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs), modeled after the earlier experiments with province special units, on a nation-wide basis. A short time later, CORDS was able to persuade the GVN to alter the mission of the newly deployed Police Field Forces from that of patrolling between hamlets to one of serving as an action arm to apprehend members of the Communist infrastructure. Thus two forces existed for the same mission: The PRUs and the PFFs.

(C) One of the priority action programs selected by CORDS for particular emphasis was a vigorous attack on the VC infrastructure. To this end CORDS elaborated a series of principles as follows:

- Basic responsibility for elimination of the VC infrastructure was to be assigned to the National Police, using Provincial Reconnaissance Units and the Police Field Forces as the action arms.
- A clear-cut system of coordination of intelligence at all levels from Saigon to the district was to be established in order to exploit existing intelligence resources and to focus on exploitation; initially the US organization ICEX (Intelligence, Coordination and Exploitation), involving the Agency and MACV, was to be established first in order to catalyze similar GVN development.⁵

(U) During the remainder of 1967, the establishment and manning of the US organization (ICEX) was completed at the regional, provincial, and district levels. Sector Operation and Intelligence Centers were established in the districts, and Province Interrogation Centers and Province Intelligence Operations Coordinating Centers were also established.⁶ These organizations began to break down the reluctance

4. (U) Report of Inter-Agency Roles and Missions Study Group, Part II, US Mission Vietnam, 24 August 1966, pp. 19-20. SECRET

5. (U) Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, CORDS, "Briefing 1967," undated, p. 5. CONFIDENTIAL

6. (U) The Third Marine Amphibious Force had organized the first Intelligence Operations Coordination Center in Dien Ban district, Quang Nam, in 1966.

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of the various intelligence agencies to pool their information, with the result that some effective attacks were launched on the infrastructure. But it was not until the end of the year that the GVN saw fit to adopt the program; one of the major factors in the decision was the development of an effective Vietnamese intelligence organization in Quang Ngai Province under CIA guidance.⁷

(U) In December 1967, the GVN assigned the principal responsibility for attack of the VC infrastructure to the National Police and established a structure paralleling that of the United States, which was given the code name Phung Hoang. Of equal importance was General Westmoreland's decision to throw the weight of MACV behind the attack of the infrastructure--a missing element up to this time because of a concentration on military-type intelligence to the exclusion of that intelligence which would develop individual infrastructure targets.

(U) In July 1968 a presidential decree formalizing the new Phung Hoang program and a Standing Operation Procedure describing the organization were issued to the field. By the end of 1968 Intelligence Operations Coordinating Centers had been established in all provinces and in about 80 percent of the districts. In 1969, the GVN threw more weight behind the program. Monetary support of the program was transferred from the Agency to CORDS, but the Agency continued its high-level advisory effort in Saigon, while US military intelligence advisers were assigned to the provinces and districts.

(U) The 1970 national pacification plan established the attack of the infrastructure as one of the GVN's eight major objectives and in this connection emphasis was placed on establishing village and hamlet intelligence and operating committees. A new set of instructions (SOP #3) was issued which updated the operational responsibilities of each element of the organization. In July 1970 the Phung Hoang Directorate was removed from the direct cognizance of the Ministry of Interior and assigned to the Police Directorate. Later in 1970 VCI elimination was raised to one of the two main tasks faced by the GVN.

7. (U) Interview with CORDS official, September 1971.

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(U) The key objective of CORDS, which was reflected in the GVN Phung Hoang program, was to centralize all intelligence-gathering agencies in one location at each governmental level. Thus there are national, regional, provincial, district, and village intelligence centers made up of representatives from the National Police and its Special Police and Police Field Forces components; G-2, G-3, and military counterintelligence; Chieu Hoi; information services; the Provincial Reconnaissance Units; and the Rural Development cadre. The national and regional offices are primarily supervisory agencies, while the operating sections consist of the Province and District Intelligence Operations Coordinating Centers (PIOCCs and DIOCCs). The village centers are primarily sources of grass roots intelligence.

(U) The district is the main operations center; here information on individual VCI is collected and collated from intelligence gathered from the DIOCC, agent reports, captured documents, prisoner-of-war reports, and Hoi Chanh (ralliers) testimony. The object is to develop sufficient information so that a specific targeting operation can be launched to apprehend the suspect. About 25 percent of the DIOCCs are headed by the NP Special Police, and the remainder are coordinated by district military S-2 officers. The GVN prescribes specific goals for the neutralization of the VCI in each province, a term embracing ralliers, prisoners apprehended and sentenced by military courts, and those killed in military or specific targeting operations.

(C) On the face of it, the program appears to be achieving impressive results. The official neutralization claim from January 1969 to the end of 1970 totals about 47,000, of which over 26,000 were claimed in 1970 against a prescribed goal of 25,200. Since MACV estimates that there are about 69,700 VCI countrywide (as of early 1971), this would mean that about one-third of the Viet Cong had been put out of business during 1970, of which 20 percent were district-level cadre or higher. Furthermore, MACV estimates that VCI strength declined by slightly over 9000 from December 1969 to October 1970, indicating that the Viet Cong were unable to replace their

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losses through recruiting. As an indication of further deterioration in capability, MACV estimates that the VC recruiting potential had decreased by over 50 percent at the end of 1970, that is, from 7000 per month at the beginning of 1970 to about 2700 at the end of the year. (Figure 2 shows monthly statistics on VCI neutralizations.)

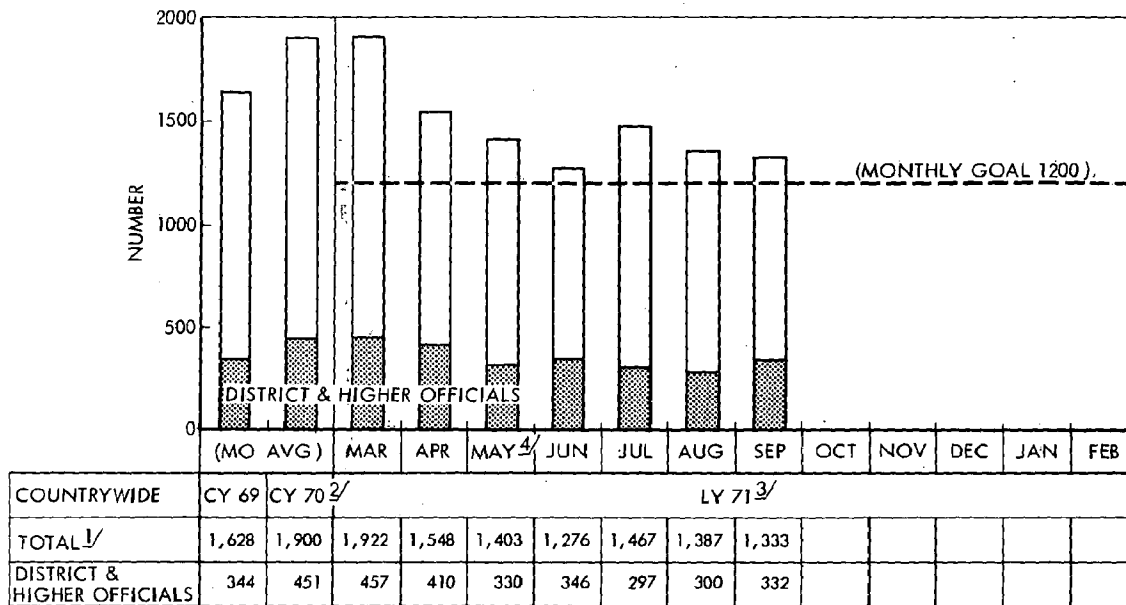
(U) Many US advisory personnel in the districts question the accuracy of the neutralization claims, pointing out that it is quite an easy matter to claim that individuals killed in the course of military action are members of the VCI when in fact they may well be simply local guerrillas without rank or responsibility. They go on to point out that the quota system is counterproductive, to the point that in some areas any quota would be met. Further, the quota system discourages recruiting of members of the infrastructure who remain in-place, thereby furnishing information of continuing value, because such an individual cannot be counted as a neutralization.

(U) Some US advisers have also pointed out that the majority of the neutralizations occur not as the result of specific targeting of individuals, but simply as a byproduct of military operations--and that targeting of individuals is seldom carried out. However, other knowledgeable observers point out that the majority of the VC infrastructure, particularly district and higher level officials, cannot live in the populated areas controlled by the GVN but must hide out in Communist base areas where they can be protected by their military cadre. Under these circumstances, the National Police Field Force units do not have the military muscle to move into the Communist base areas (although the PRUs do move into Communist-held territory on occasion); the only way these cadres can be apprehended is in conjunction with a military operation of sufficient strength to overcome the Communist military forces.⁸

(U) A number of military operations have been mounted with the specific objective of attacking not just individuals in the Communist

8. (U) Based on interviews with Phung Hoang advisers in twenty districts in Quang Nam, Quang Tin, Binh Dinh, Darlac, An Giang, Kien Hoa, and Chuong Thien.

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NOTE: Neutralization of the VCI is the prime object of the Phung Hoang effort.

1/ Commencing Jan 70, VC cadre are counted as neutralized only when killed, rallied, or sentenced to meaningful jail term. Captured personnel awaiting judicial processing are not considered neutralized.

2/ The CY 70 year includes the period from 1 Jan 70 thru 28 Feb 71.

3/ Commencing with the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan, the reporting period will be the Lunar Year (LY) extending from 1 Mar thru 28 Feb of the following year (12 months).

4/ May total and neutralized figures were readjusted. Corrected data by MR are not available.

RECAPITULATION

	CY 69 (AS OF 31 DEC 69)	CY 70 (AS OF 28 FEB 71)	LY 71
ESTIMATED STR	80-100,000 ^{1/}	63,100 ^{2/}	69,700 ^{4/}
GOAL	21,600	25,200 ^{3/}	14,400 ^{5/}
NEUTRALIZED	19,534	26,843	10,336 ^{6/}

1/ As of 30 Sep 69, DIA estimate.

2/ As of 15 Nov 70. Figures include 34,864 identified as VCI cadre of which 2,300 were identified as COSVN personnel.

3/ Goal for 1970, 1 Jan 70 to 28 Feb 71.

4/ Includes 2,300 COSVN personnel.

5/ Goal for LY 71, 1 Mar 71 to 28 Feb 72.

6/ As of 30 Sep 71.

Source: Army Activities Report: SE Asia (U), January 1972, p. 55. SECRET

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Figure 2 (C). VC INFRASTRUCTURE NEUTRALIZATIONS (U)

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infrastructure but the system itself. In 1968, for example, intelligence operatives reported to the III MAF commander that intelligence obtained from captured personnel indicated that 144 high-level members of the infrastructure were located in an extensive Communist base area complete with military forces and fortifications. The commanding general agreed to commit the sizable forces required to enter the area, equivalent to about a division, for the main purpose of supporting this neutralization effort. The result of the operation was that 83 of the 144 members reported to be in the base area were killed or captured. While this operation was not a specific individual targeting operation, it was nevertheless a targeting operation of an entire Communist organization and achieved outstanding results.⁹ The success of this type of mass targeting is of course dependent upon the willingness of the military officials to cooperate. In many districts the S-2 PH coordinators have been willing and able to marshall the district military resources in support of such mass targeting with effective results; in others they or their superiors have shown no interest in such activities.

(U) There are, however, some optimistic trends in individual targeting operations in those districts where the military strength of the Viet Cong has been significantly attrited. In such an environment the Police Field Forces have the capability (although many observers doubt that this potential will be realized) inherent in their own organization to mount individual targeting operations. For example, in Tan Tru district of Long An Province, where one can see a microcosm of successful pacification, there are reported to be only twenty-nine VCI in the entire district and no guerrilla forces whatsoever. As a consequence, emphasis has been placed on developing the pattern of operation of the twenty-nine VCI and, since the beginning of 1971, seven of these individuals have been captured by specific targeting operations laid on as a result of intelligence from a variety of sources.

9. (U) Interview with CORDS official, September 1971.

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In this case the Police Field Forces have been, in fact, the action arm of the targeting operation.¹⁰

(U) In addition, the Special Police have demonstrated a high degree of proficiency in preventing the growth of the infrastructure in the urban areas, in spite of the intensified attempts by the Communists to exploit the disaffected--veterans, students, laborers, and displaced persons.¹¹

(U) Of course, the same constraints that hamper the effective operation of the police in carrying out their law-and-order mission in the rural areas also hamper their efforts to neutralize the VC infrastructure. The lack of effective middle-level management is particularly serious in the NP Special Police. As one observer has put it, the Special Police, the principal police arm for the attack of the VC infrastructure, and one that will assume more importance as security is extended in the countryside, is on the lowest rung of the GVN prestige ladder.¹²

(U) Some US observers are convinced that the attack of the VCI will cease once US influence and backing are removed. They hold that, because of the many families who have some members in the VCI, the system of neutralization goes against the Vietnamese grain. Others feel that the system is too complicated; that the sophisticated computer systems instituted by the United States as part of the neutralization program are beyond the GVN capabilities to support. Others hold that the Special Police and Police Field Forces will never achieve the qualitative standards required. Still others are convinced that the responsibility for the effort must be assigned to the Special Police if effectiveness is to be realized.

(U) In spite of these constraints, the improved targeting operations, as demonstrated in the Tan Tru district of Long An, and the success of the Special Police in combating the insurgent buildup in

10. (U) Interview with district adviser, Tan Tru district, Long An Province, June 1971.

11. (U) Interview with a CORDS official, June 1971.

12. (U) Interview with a CORDS official, September 1971.

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the urban areas tend to justify some optimism. At least the United States has provided the GVN with technical know-how and methods which have enabled it to build the elements of a reasonably solid organization. While the operation may become more Vietnamese in character, there is evidence¹³ that the effort will be continued at a reasonably effective level, particularly in the relatively secure areas of MR III and IV, where the infrastructure has already been seriously weakened. In the northern regions, particularly in southern Quang Nam and northern Binh Dinh, it is probable that individual targeting operations, if they are to be effective, will have to wait for a more secure environment.

B. THE CHIEU HOI PROGRAM

(U) Unlike many other pacification programs, the Chieu Hoi program has been characterized by considerable unanimity on the US side. The principal problems have been operational in nature rather than conceptual--how to bring about rehabilitation, resettlement, and social integration of the ralliers (Hoi Chanh). These problems have placed enormous demands on the GVN administrators and, as in the case of other programs, administration has not been the GVN's strong suit. Nevertheless, the program must be viewed as one of the most important pacification programs.

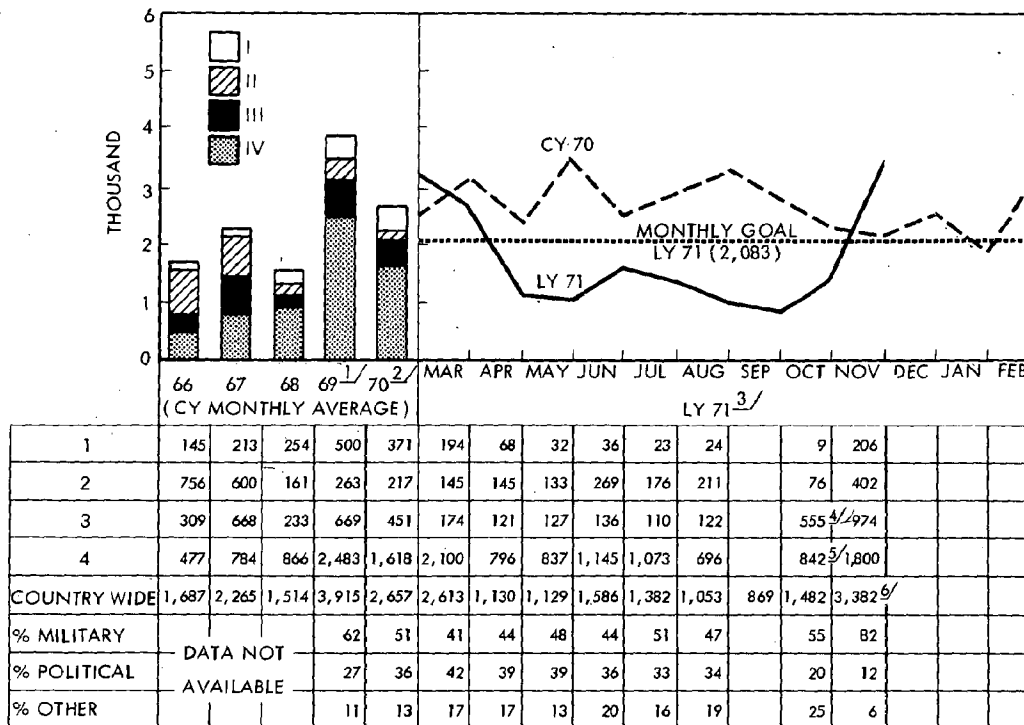
(C) Since the inception of the program in 1963, about 194,000 individuals have rallied to the GVN (see Figure 3). The program has forced the Communists to take major steps to prevent defection and to attack Chieu Hoi centers, vocational training areas, and hamlets settled by Hoi Chanh. Their attempts to infiltrate the program and to cast suspicion on the motives of the Hoi Chanh have been only minimally effective.

(U) The major lesson from this program parallels that for the police, that is to say, the program should have been initiated at the

13. (U) Interview with CORDS official, January 1972.

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TOTAL HOI CHANHS

1963 - 1965	27,789
CY 66	20,242
CY 67	27,178
CY 68	18,171
CY 69	47,023
CY 70 2/	37,178
SUB TOTAL	177,581
LY 71 (AS OF 31 DEC 71) (GOAL 25,000) *16,635	
TOTAL	*194,226

1/ The number of Hoi Chanhs in Jul 69 (5,091) was the highest since the program began in Feb 63.

2/ The CY 70 year includes the period from 1 Jan 70 thru 28 Feb 71.

3/ Commencing with the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan, the reporting period will be the Lunar Year (LY) extending from 1 Mar thru 28 Feb of the following year (12 months).

4/ Includes 444 prisoners of war who had been granted returnee status early in the year but who had not been officially documented until now.

5/ Includes 270 Hoa Hao dissidents who mass-rallied in Chau Doc Province.

6/ Includes 2,297 prisoners of war who have been granted amnesty and entered Chieu Hoi Program (MR 1-197, MR 2-256, MR 3-873, and MR 4-971).

*NOTE: During the period 12-18 Dec, provinces reporting the greatest number of ralliers, both in MR 4 were: An Xuyen (36) and Phong Dinh (19). The number of Hoi Chanhs reported during the periods:

- 19-25 Dec, was the lowest since the week of 3-9 Oct (98).
- 26-31 Dec, increased 18% from the previous week's total of 151--well below the CY 71 weekly average of 391.

Source: Army Activities Report: SE Asia (U), January 1972, p. 54. SECRET

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Figure 3 (FOUO). CHIEU HOI PROGRAM (U)

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earliest stage of the insurgency in order to weaken the subversive structure. Diem's counter-terror program, which made no provisions for voluntary rallying to the government side, served to drive many fence sitters and those who were minimally involved with the Communists firmly into the Communist camp. Subsidiary lessons include the importance of using ralliers in government security programs--in the ARVN, territorial forces, or in special units that operated with US forces. Using ralliers as members of armed propaganda teams to attract members of the subversive armed forces would also have been a useful technique in the counterinsurgency effort.

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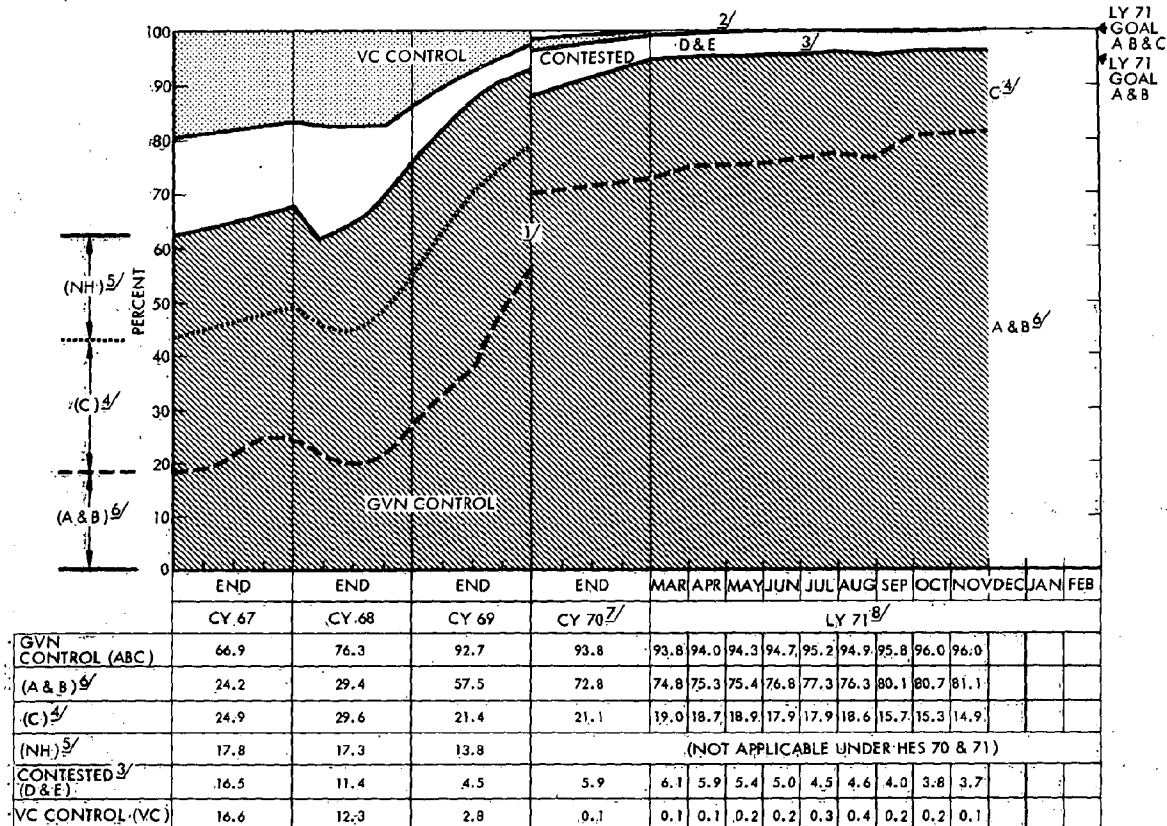
OVERALL APPRAISAL OF THE SECURITY SITUATION

(U) In the final analysis, the success of security concepts, programs, and forces must be measured by their impact on the enemy's strategy and forces rather than against a theoretical model of perfection which is rarely, if ever, achieved in the real world. As we have learned, the role of security in a counterinsurgency is to deprive the insurgents of access to the population, so that they cannot recruit supporters through propaganda and violence, and to establish a climate of physical and psychological security as a prerequisite for political, economic, and social development activities.

(U) One of the most difficult problems which has faced the US advisory community has been how to measure the status of security at any given time. This problem is, of course, central to the policy-makers and planners, both military and civilian, in order that appropriate action can be taken both in the organization and utilization of the security forces. (Since the description of the time-consuming learning curve in arriving at a system of measuring security is described in detail in Part Four of this volume, it will not be duplicated here. However, the latest reported summary of population security (as of November 1971) is included for illustrative purposes (see Figure 4), as well as to indicate the latest official assessment of the Hamlet Evaluation System.)

(U) The question, then, is how successful have the regular and territorial forces been in achieving the GVN-US security objectives? The record shows that the ARVN and territorial forces, in combination, have been successful in large areas of Military Regions III and IV, and in some portions of MR I and II, in providing improved security for the population, and they have established a climate of law and order in which development can proceed.

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Source: Army Activities Report: SE Asia (U), January 1972, p. 60. SECRET

- 1/ Based on MACV Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) results through Dec 69; beginning with Jan 70, based on HES 70 data as computed using criteria adopted in CY 71; beginning with Jan 71 based on HES 71. This change of evaluation criteria accounts for the apparent break of continuity.
- 2/ 0.0 not evaluated (N).
- 3/ In the "D" and "E" hamlets VC activities have been reduced but still remain an effective internal threat. VC infrastructure, taxation, and terrorism are evident and government programs are just beginning or non-existent.
- 4/ In the "C" hamlet, military control of the VC has been broken and external VC units have been reduced up to 50%. The population in a "C" hamlet is little more secure than that of contested areas.
- 5/ Non-hamlet (NH) contains population living outside recognized hamlets: refugees and Hoi Chanh (returnees) who have not been included in hamlet population figures, municipal populations which have not been reported by hamlet, and some ARVN forces (NH population is included in all categories: "within GVN Security," "contested," and "VC control"). The (NH) category has been discontinued with HES 70.
- 6/ In the "A" and "B" hamlets VC remnants have been driven out and external VC forces are ineffective, or the VC is capable of only desperation raids. The population is relatively secure. The population of Saigon is included in HES 70.
- 7/ The CY 70 year includes the period from 1 Jan 70 thru 28 Feb 71.
- 8/ Commencing with the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan, the reporting period will be the Lunar Year (LY) extending from 1 Mar thru 28 Feb of the following year (12 months).
- 9/ Total may not add due to rounding.

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Figure 4 (C). POPULATION SUMMARY, HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM (HES) (U)

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(U) For the most part, the ARVN has been a match for PAVN units in Cambodia, albeit with generous US air support. In so doing it has prevented the reentry of most PAVN units into MR III and IV. The confinement of Communist Main Forces to Cambodia has deprived the local Communist forces of the military muscle required to interfere seriously with security and has accounted in large measure for the major gains in pacification in the south. The ARVN has also prevented penetration of PAVN units across the DMZ and into the Central Highlands, although Communist forces in MR I and II are far stronger than those in the south and still pose a serious threat to security, particularly in southern Quang Nam and northern Binh Dinh. In these areas, the ARVN still faces the task of fragmenting, attriting, and isolating the Communist forces from the population in order that pacification can go forward. By and large, it is probable that the ARVN, in conjunction with the territorial forces, can ultimately cope with Communist forces in MR I and II, provided that top-level and middle-level leadership is improved.

(U) In spite of many constraints, the territorials, backed by the PSDF, are of such strength and ubiquity in the south that the dwindling local guerrillas have been rarely able to threaten seriously the security of the mass of the population, although individual kidnappings or assassinations still occur. In the north, the territorials have not been able to ensure the security of the population in some portions of MR I and II. Attrition of the Communist political and military structures has, through a combination of military operations and the Chieu Hoi and Phung Hoang programs, seriously reduced local Communist capabilities. In the south, targeting of individuals through Phung Hoang operations is on the rise, but in the north individual targeting operations must await a more secure environment. The net result of the attrition program has been a reduction in the political and military apparatus and indigenous membership of the regional Communist forces, and, as a consequence, the local forces are more and more made up of North Vietnamese--clear evidence that the Communist recruiting potential in the south is being eroded.

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(U) As we have seen, however, the Communists have not thrown in the towel; they are now convinced that their durability and tenacity is superior to that of the South Vietnamese and will bring them to victory. The brand of leadership that President Thieu and his principal subordinates can bring to the security forces will be critical to the final outcome. In the view of the writer, there is room for guarded optimism.

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VIII

LESSONS LEARNED

A. GENERAL

1. Know the Enemy

(U) The tortured evolution of security concepts and programs in Vietnam during the first decade of our involvement highlights one lesson of overriding importance, that is, the necessity of "knowing the enemy"--his strategy, tactics, techniques, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Communist strategy for a rural-based insurgency was clearly revealed in Malaya, the Philippines, Algeria, and particularly during the French-Indochina war. A body of operational analysis reflecting the lessons learned in those insurgencies was available in the record by 1956. Nevertheless, none of the US bureaucracies responsible for advising the Government of Vietnam on security concepts and programs had studied, codified, adapted, or promulgated those operational lessons. As a result there was no body of basic concepts and doctrine to serve as guidance for the US advisory community in evolving the roles and missions and supporting strategies and tactics for the regular, paramilitary, and police forces. This was the major roadblock in the timely evolution of a viable security strategy. Furthermore, it caused proliferation and duplication, as well as damaging delay, in the development of appropriate forces to cope with the increasing tempo of the insurgency, and it ultimately led to the massive intervention of US forces.

(U) One note of caution is in order. It would be a mistake to assume that future insurgencies will necessarily follow the Chinese-Vietnamese model of a rural-based insurgency. It is more than likely that the next major insurgency will be an urban-based one because many of the nations that might be considered "insurgency prone" are either already urban or rapidly becoming so.

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(U) It would also be a mistake to assume that other insurgents will match the tenacity, durability, and discipline of the Vietnamese Communists. Latin American and Palestinian guerrillas, for example, have shown that they lack a strict sense of discipline and amenity to "democratic centralism," and as a result these insurgent movements have tended to fracture and splinter into competing groups.

2. Know Your Ally

(U) Another important lesson we have learned in Vietnam is the necessity of understanding both the background and culture of a potential ally and the capabilities of the elite and rank and file to cope with the strain of an insurgency. Of these characteristics and qualifications, the leadership capabilities of the elite, both political and military, are the most important, since a superior level of leadership is essential to motivate the security forces in the face of the demanding requirements of effective counterinsurgency. Unfortunately, we now know that the South Vietnamese military elite, by and large, lack this essential ingredient. Heavily influenced by French culture, the military elite are, for the most part, alienated from the traditional Vietnamese background and culture, and the officer class retains the authoritarian attitude of the traditional Mandarin class without the saving grace of a concern for the rank and file which was a characteristic of the Mandarin system. The consequences of this cultural alienation cut deeper than the military itself; they affect the relationship of the military forces with the people--the target of the pacification effort.

(U) Another damaging offshoot of the elitism of the officer corps has been the insistence on the baccalaureate as a prerequisite for entry into the officer corps. As a consequence, the military has closed the door on latent leadership and initiative among the rank and file. The Communists have actively sought and rewarded talent among the peasant class, and the GVN's failure to tap this potential has undoubtedly contributed to the Communist cause. Finally, the leadership gap has forced the United States to support the creation

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of an enormous security apparatus in order to compensate by sheer numbers for lack of quality.

(U) Other attributes of the Vietnamese elite have also constrained the development of effective security forces. Administrative procedures for handling personnel and logistics support have shared the common characteristic of the Vietnamese bureaucracy in that they are unresponsive and cumbersome. And command interest in maintenance of equipment has been for the most part cursory. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese peasant, the backbone of all the security forces, has shown that even with minimum leadership he can and will fight.

(U) The important lesson here is that the United States should be aware, at least in the large, of the strengths and weaknesses of its ally and their potential influence on the conduct of combat operations. Such knowledge, for example, could have been an important factor in the US decision to join with the South Vietnamese in a counterinsurgent effort. At the least, such knowledge would have been useful as a background for making decisions on the types of security forces to be organized, the arms and equipment that could be effectively utilized and maintained by the security forces, and the training techniques best suited to overcoming major operational constraints.

B. CONCEPTUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL

(U) The delay in developing a concept and set of supporting security programs for Vietnam highlights for the future the necessity for the timely development of a coordinated approach to granting assistance to a friendly country. Since the object of US assistance in a future insurgency should be that of developing the indigenous country's capability to deal with the problems it confronts, the host country should be encouraged to take the initiative in formulating a security concept, strategy, and forces in accordance with traditional patterns, cultural characteristics, and indigenous capabilities. Once such a concept and programs have been developed, the results should be promulgated as operating guidance to all host country and US operating agencies.

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(U) Another important lesson emerging from our Vietnam experience is the necessity for designating a single manager to organize and supervise the multiplicity of US programs supporting the counterinsurgency effort. The key role played by CORDS in focusing attention and emphasis on priority security programs could lead to the conclusion that this is the way to go, in an organizational sense, in another insurgency in which the United States might become involved. It is doubtful, however, that the US involvement will ever again reach the level of that in Vietnam, and hence a large coordinating bureaucracy such as CORDS would not be warranted. The aspect of CORDS that does appear to be transferable to a future insurgency is that coordination and direction of the US advisory effort should be vested in one individual who has sufficient rank, experience, and toughness, and who has the dedicated support of both the president and the US ambassador in-country. Without such leadership the US advisory effort is likely to be at sixes and sevens, to the detriment of the security effort and programs.

C. STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL

(U) The lessons emerging from experiments with the strategy of the regular forces over the first decade of our involvement in Vietnam confirm the experience from other insurgencies, that is, the regular forces must employ an offensive strategy against the insurgents. This conclusion is equally applicable to the regular units assigned in direct support of the pacification effort and to the paramilitary forces. These forces must take the offensive against the insurgents' regional and local units. If an offensive strategy is employed early (and the security forces have the quantitative and qualitative capabilities), the growth of the insurgent military structure can be checked and reversed. If the enemy is allowed to build his military structure by regularizing guerrilla units, then the problem becomes more difficult but the strategy is the same--the offensive.

(U) When an insurgency is receiving substantial external military support, and when the insurgents have the advantage of sanctuaries,

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political constraints may be imposed which severely limit the efficacy of an offensive strategy. Under such conditions the contest is likely to be long and drawn out. Unless the outcome is truly vital to US interests and can be so accepted by the US public, the United States should avoid the commitment of military forces when similar political and geographic constraints obtain.

(U) Regular and paramilitary forces should also adopt aggressive tactics of patrol and ambush, rather than "holing up" in a defensive posture. However, experience in Vietnam, as in other insurgencies, highlights the problem of appropriate supervision of small-unit operations of patrol and ambush. The supervision of division, regimental, and battalion commanders cannot be exercised directly as in conventional operations, since these commanders can rarely inspect small units so engaged. Similar difficulties arise in the supervision of paramilitary forces. As a consequence, small-unit effectiveness is critically dependent on the leadership and professional competence of company and platoon commanders and their key non-commissioned officers. Unfortunately in Vietnam these key personnel were in short supply--and are likely to be so in other countries that are faced with an insurgency in the future. Shortages in company-grade officers can be at least partially overcome by tapping talent in the enlisted ranks through an officer candidate program--a program the US military advisory effort was never able to persuade the South Vietnamese military to fully exploit.

(U) The quality of small-unit performance can also be raised by inspirational leadership from the top and middle-level officers. By and large this characteristic was lacking among the GVN military. The US attempts to improve the morale and motivation of the South Vietnamese armed forces by improving their material benefits, while of some assistance, could not compensate for the leadership gap.

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UNCLASSIFIED**D. PRIORITIES FOR, AND TYPES OF, SECURITY FORCES****1. Importance of Intelligence Network and Police Forces**

(U) South Vietnam lacked an effective intelligence organization during the period of the Communist political and military buildup in the 1950s and early 1960s, and the United States was forced to make critical decisions without the benefit of accurate intelligence. It seems clear that first priority in this regard should be given to improving or creating a national intelligence network.

(U) Analysis of information derived from an effective intelligence network should indicate the underlying strategy of the insurgents--whether the road to revolution is to be a Communist-type, rural-based insurgency--the surrounding of the cities from the countryside--or the direct seizure of power in the urban areas. A common feature of both strategies is an organizational phase in which the insurgents concentrate on recruiting a political and paramilitary apparatus.

(U) Obviously, this is the most critical period for the indigenous government; if the insurgent leadership can be identified and apprehended, then the stimulus behind the expansion of the apparatus will be destroyed. This consideration dictates the improvement of capabilities for identifying and arresting the subversives. This being so, the question of the proper type of intelligence organization arises--should an existing counterintelligence-type organization be improved, or will it be necessary to create a new organization to discharge the intelligence mission? Duncanson sheds light on this question. He holds that it is a police function "to carry the legal authority of the government into the peripheral regions where the subversives are attempting to implant their own dominion and to prevent Communist abuse of any temporary vacuum of governmental authority for the establishment of revolutionary bases by guile and terror."¹

1. (U) Dennis J. Duncanson, "The Police Function and Its Problems," paper prepared for the National Strategy Information Center Conference, 11-14 March 1971, Warrenton, Virginia.

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He notes that the subversion of officials and soldiers through back-mail or intimidation--typical Communist tactics--are crimes in most countries and the detection and apprehension of the subversives is normally a police function.

(U) Duncanson's analysis seems correct; if a government is to distinguish itself from the subversives, it must operate under a rule of law, and in most countries the police force is the executive arm for law enforcement. This point is underlined by the impact of Diem's counter-terror program, during which the law was abrogated in favor of arbitrary and indiscriminate tactics of arrest, imprisonment, and assassination--all without legal niceties. Had these tactics actually discriminated between hard-core Communists and those who were forced to join the Communists to ensure their own safety, and had they been carried out with due regard to the law, then the impact of the counter-terror program might have been less damaging. As it was, the program drove many non-Communists into the arms of the National Liberation Front and contributed to the buildup of the very structure that the Diem regime was attempting to destroy.

(U) Using the existing police force has another advantage. Because of the familiarity of the "man on the beat" with the behavior patterns of the local hamlet or city precinct population, he can serve as an effective source of grass roots intelligence.

(U) The ready exchange of basic intelligence will be facilitated if both the law-and-order force and the primary counterintelligence arm are drawn from the same organization. Second priority then should be assigned to developing a national police force, operating under a framework of law, with police powers for law enforcement, and supplemented with a counterintelligence component.

(U) The counterproductive tactics of Diem's counter-terror program leads to another lesson--the subversive apparatus should be attacked not only through identification and arrest, but also through simple procedures that will exonerate members of the population who have been forced to associate themselves with the subversives. In addition, generous conditions of amnesty and reassociation with the government

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should also be offered to induce defection from the subversive apparatus. Such a program should be backstopped with effective psychological warfare techniques. (It should be noted that the "Rallier" program was not instituted in South Vietnam until 1963, long after the period of intensive Communist buildup.)

2. Roles and Missions of the Security Forces

(U) Urban and rural law-and-order forces, together with a counter-intelligence arm, may fail to arrest the growth of the subversive apparatus. Under these conditions, it is probable that the subversives will use their paramilitary assets in a program of violence in the countryside, in the cities, or both. Existing government security forces, including the regular forces, should take the initiative against the guerrillas through aggressive small-unit tactics of patrol and ambush. Counterintelligence activities leading to the identification and apprehension of the subversives should also be intensified.

(U) Additional security forces may be required to cope with the rising level of violence. These may take the form of a combat police modeled after the Malayan-South Vietnamese Police Field Forces or gendarme-type units using traditional methods. If the subversives are concentrating their attack in the urban areas, a combat police backup for the urban police is the preferable force because of the potential for coordination with an urban police.

(U) The organization and equipment of these additional forces should be as simple and unsophisticated as possible; essentially they should be very light infantry forces equipped with automatic weapons, light mortars, grenade launchers, and rugged but light communication equipment. Administrative and logistic support, including transportation, should be centralized in a support-type organization at the highest practical level.

(U) The decision as to which of the two units to use--a combat police or a newly created paramilitary force--should reflect the realities of the political environment. In many countries of the underdeveloped world the military will normally occupy positions

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of considerable political power. Under such conditions the formation of combat police may be opposed or frustrated by military opposition, even if it is theoretically advantageous. Here again "knowing your ally" is of great importance in reaching decisions on the type of paramilitary forces to be organized.

(U) Consideration should also be given to the organization of local hamlet-type forces, if indeed they do not exist. In most peasant societies lack of organized governmental security forces in the countryside has forced the population to organize "home guard" units for their own protection against bandits and criminals. Experience with home guards in Vietnam (the People's Self-Defense Force) has demonstrated that the involvement of the people with the government through a hamlet militia--in essence a Communist technique--is of at least equal importance as the security aspects of the program, since it tends to deprive the insurgents of potential supporters and contributes to the association and identification of the people with the government.

(U) However, we also know from our experience in Vietnam that a hamlet militia does not have the military muscle to stand up to heavy military pressure. Accordingly, a prerequisite for organization of a hamlet militia is a low level of insurgent military activity targeted against the hamlets; a hamlet militia can be effective in the very early stages of an insurgency, or later when the paramilitary and regular forces are of such strength that they can act as a shield against "main force" insurgent units. Applying this criteria to Vietnam, a hamlet militia would have been an appropriate security force between 1956 and 1959, when the Communists were in an organizational stage and had minimal guerrilla strength. But, as we have seen, a hamlet militia was not organized until the Strategic Hamlet program was initiated in 1962, when the Communist had already built up significant military muscle. It was not until 1967 that an appropriate military shield had been created by expansion of the regular and paramilitary forces so that a hamlet militia could have been activated in the more secure areas of South Vietnam.

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(U) If additional security forces fail to arrest the growth of an insurgency, then the insurgency will move to a higher level in which the insurgents will continue the political struggle, but will shift their emphasis even more to the armed struggle. Increased recruiting through political activities and the upgrading of guerrilla units into regular conventional units will continue and lead ultimately to the formation of companies, battalions, and even larger units. As this regularization continues, guerrilla operations will gradually assume a supporting role and regular force operations will predominate. As this process evolves, additional government regular forces may be required to blunt the insurgent "main force" operations, while paramilitary and police-type forces will have to be increased to counter the smaller insurgent main force units and the local guerrilla formations. While the attack of the insurgent infrastructure should be continued, individual targeting operations will become more difficult, due to the security situation.

(U) If the insurgents are successful in seizing the initiative through a combination of effective tactics and a favorable balance of forces attained through continual expansion of regular units, the insurgency will move to the third stage, the counteroffensive, in which a military decision is sought. This will require the counter-insurgents to further expand both their paramilitary forces and their regular forces to prevent the insurgents from achieving a military victory.

E. THE TRAINING AND ADVISORY EFFORT

(U) The combat performance of the regular and paramilitary forces can be improved by rigorous practical field training in patrol and ambush tactics and combat marksmanship. Unfortunately, MACV was unable to convince the GVN of the value of this training.

(U) The US advisory community also attempted to improve the combat performance of the GVN forces by furnishing advisers and mobile training teams to GVN units, and by brigading US units with both the regular and the territorial forces. The Public Safety Division of

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AID also furnished advisers to the National Police, and the CIA advised the NP Special Police branch.

(U) In general, individual US advisers with military units were handicapped by a short tour of duty (the average was about six months) which often led to the adviser's transfer just as he was reaching his maximum effectiveness. Similarly, the effectiveness of province and district advisers was limited by tour length and inadequate preparation. These constraints were not fully removed until 1970. On the other hand, the overall military advisory program and the mobile assistance team effort were continued for too long and thus tended to deprive the Vietnamese of the incentive to take a greater role in their own training and delayed the process of Vietnamization.

(U) Two applicable lessons emerge from this experience.

- The host country should be encouraged to adopt realistic training methods to achieve small-unit effectiveness in patrol, ambush, and combat marksmanship. In addition, the US advisory training effort should be limited to training the "trainers" in order to encourage the indigenous forces to develop their own training capability at the earliest possible time.

- Direct involvement of US military advisers with combat units and territorial forces should be limited in duration, except in extreme circumstances, in order to develop indigenous force initiative and capability.

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PART THREE

DEVELOPMENT

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I

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

It is now over eighteen years since the United States became involved in granting economic aid directly to the Republic of Vietnam. During the course of this involvement, the basic objectives of the Agency for International Development (AID)¹ have remained relatively constant, but the strategies adopted to promote them have been shifted occasionally in adjustment to Vietnam's changing environment.

Looking back over our programs concerned with the civilian aspects of pacification, it is now possible to single out a few major development issues that emerged over the years.² Some have become clear only in retrospect; others were recognized as major issues at the time. Some were unique to Vietnam; others may arise in other countries. All had to be addressed in a rapidly changing environment that required great flexibility of response. Four of these major issues are identified below and elaborated in the chapters that follow.

1. Did the United States or the GVN ever develop an agreed conceptual basis for the development programs pursued in South Vietnam?

1. For clarity and consistency, the acronym "AID" will be used throughout this paper to refer not only to the Agency for International Development but also its predecessor agencies. These included the Mutual Security Agency, the Foreign Operations Administration, the International Cooperation Administration, and the Development Loan Fund.

2. The focus of this paper is on the "civilian" as opposed to the "military" aspects of pacification, that is, on the nonsecurity-oriented components of pacification. The security programs and other programs with a military focus have been dealt with in the previous section. Primary attention here will be devoted to the "other half" of the "other war," on those kinds of GVN activities that focus on "winning the hearts and minds" of the people of South Vietnam.

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It now appears that neither the United States nor the GVN developed a well-thought-out basis for the various civilian development programs undertaken in South Vietnam. This seems to have been true in the pre-insurgency (1954-1960) period when the United States was engaged in the support of traditional economic development activities, as well as after the insurgency was in progress. Our ideas on development in South Vietnam, such as they were, were largely devised on the spot as the situation evolved. The lack of a sound conceptual basis for our subsequent efforts at political, economic, and social development in Vietnam was reflected in several programs that seem now to have been of questionable relevance to pacification.

The absence of a conceptual framework created other problems as well, among them the conflict between the US military and civilian bureaucracies over the basic role development programs should play in a counterinsurgency. A related problem of significant consequence was the debate within the civilian community itself over the kinds of development programs to be sponsored.

Initially, AID naturally focused on the kinds of programs it knew best how to run and felt comfortable running, such as refugee relief and road building. The fact that valid requirements for such programs existed merely reinforced the inclinations of the AID staff in Saigon to concentrate on them. When the insurgency was finally recognized for what it was, US assistance was partly "reprogrammed" toward the rural population, i.e., geared to improving the Vietnamese peasants' standard of living. It was assumed that the peasants would then support the GVN instead of the Viet Cong. However, just what "supporting the GVN" entailed was never precisely defined; the peasants could accept the aid and continue to act exactly the same as before, for no conditions were attached to accepting it.

2. Were the respective roles of security and development in the field of pacification understood and agreed?

An important conflict between the military and the civilians stemmed from how they viewed the roles of security and development

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in Vietnam. Military men naturally tended to view the situation in military terms; to them pacification meant security, which must precede any developmental efforts. Civilian officials tended to see the problem as a political one, and so believed in emphasizing political, economic, and social development activities to win the population away from the Viet Cong. This dichotomy of view persisted throughout most of our involvement in Vietnam. It was especially pronounced during the immediate post-Geneva period, when military demands on the aid program were heavy. It resurfaced in the wake of the anti-Diem coup, and again during the planning of the revolutionary development program in 1966. Many experienced observers now agree that security must precede development in a counterinsurgency that reaches the level of military hostilities attained in Vietnam, but no firm consensus has been reached.

The issue of the relative importance of security and development also raised operational questions. As the United States became more and more directly involved in South Vietnam, there was considerable discussion over whether to concentrate civil programs in relatively secure or relatively insecure areas. Although the proponents of the two operational approaches are difficult to identify (no one agency, for example, favored one or the other position), there was lively debate on this subject during the days of the Strategic Hamlet program, again during the 1964 interregnum, and later following the Tet offensive in 1968. Generally speaking, the consensus now is that development efforts should be encouraged only in those areas clearly under government control.

3. What kinds of development programs were relevant in the counterinsurgency? Should development efforts have been concentrated on traditional long-term programs or on short-term counterinsurgency programs?

In addition to the conflict between the military and the civilians over the relative importance of security and development programs, there was a wide divergence of opinion within the civilian community

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concerning the type of development programs to pursue. This difference centered around the issue of long-term versus short-term development, or between the traditional AID approach and the new counterinsurgency techniques. Except for some initial "emergency" programs, the types of US aid programs pursued in Vietnam were generally the long-term development activities traditionally undertaken and supported by AID. Counterinsurgency-type programs received increasing emphasis beginning in the early 1960s, when the security situation in South Vietnam began deteriorating rapidly. The new counterinsurgency support programs were generally short-term, high-impact activities having an immediate effect on the rural population --for example, rural health stations, schools, and the distribution of commodities.

The dispute between the "traditionalists" and the "counterinsurgents" was especially heated during the year immediately following the death of President Diem, when a change in USOM leadership provided an opportunity for the debate to surface.³ It came to the fore again with the establishment of CORDS in 1967, although it was apparently less open than previously. The subsequent pacification and development plans formulated within CORDS appear to have satisfied both the traditionalists and the counterinsurgents in that both long-term and short-term programs were included, since then almost every political, economic, and social problem in South Vietnam appeared somehow related to the insurgency. The inclusion of such a wide variety of programs, however, does not mean that the basic issue was ever settled.

The supporters of the new counterinsurgency approach were by and large those bright young "generalists" who had had an opportunity to observe at close hand the life styles of the Vietnamese people in the rural areas. The traditional AID approach to economic development was supported largely by career AID technical staff members, who

3. The United States Operating Mission (USOM), was the overseas operating agency of AID, and is now referred to as USAID.

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viewed the role of their agency in South Vietnam as "nation building" --i.e., assistance to the country's normal modernization process that had been underway before hostilities broke out. The differences between the traditionalists and the counterinsurgents were reflected not only in the design of programs and projects but in other areas as well. As will be discussed later, other aspects of the organization and management of the pacification program--for example, staffing and control of resources--were also affected by this controversy.

4. Did the lack of a relevant doctrine for dealing with the civilian aspects of pacification produce a proliferation of development programs and of advisers to monitor them?

Because the conceptual conflicts between the military and the civilians and among the civilians were never really resolved, there was a tendency for everyone to "do his own thing." As a result, there was a vast proliferation of US programs and personnel and a tendency to force American ideas and values on the Vietnamese people without taking basic Vietnamese cultural characteristics into account. Many of our development programs were designed and planned to fit American conceptions of what the Vietnamese needed rather than what the Vietnamese desired, as, for example, in the programs promoting local "democracy" through the electoral process.

The proliferation of programs promoted by the United States also placed a severe strain on the Vietnamese ability to absorb and implement them. Consequently, when the Vietnamese bureaucracy could not handle an important program effectively, Americans often assumed direct operational control, thereby stifling latent Vietnamese administrative potential. American-designed and operated programs also tended to increase wide-ranging Vietnamese dependence on the United States, and the combination of our "big brother knows best" attitude and our frequently excessive generosity must have had a demoralizing effect on Vietnamese society. As a side effect, the lavishness of our aid and its application on a seemingly indiscriminate basis undoubtedly

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contributed to an increase in corruption on the part of many Vietnamese at the same time that we were urging the GVN to take measures to control it.

Finally, an important included question concerns the effectiveness of our multi-billion-dollar aid effort. Because we have supported so many different kinds of development programs, it is extremely difficult to determine with any precision or even reliability which of them have been effective in contributing to the counterinsurgency effort. Perhaps the ultimate measure of effectiveness will be the extent to which the Vietnamese support these programs with their own resources after the United States has withdrawn from the country.

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II

VILLAGE AND HAMLET ADMINISTRATION

One of the central prerequisites for implementing developmental pacification programs in South Vietnam has been the establishment of a framework for government administration in the villages and hamlets. Subsumed in this overall problem are a number of subsidiary ones. The relative merits of the hamlet and village as the basic political unit had to be decided. There were questions of whether officials should be appointed or elected, and of the degree of authority and responsibility that should be delegated to them. There was also the question of what techniques should be adopted for establishing grass roots administration, specifically whether some sort of organizational catalyst was required to get the administration functioning at the earliest possible time. Then, too, it was important to give adequate consideration to the traditional pattern of political administration.

The Vietnamese village, with its included smaller hamlets, has had a long history of self-government in which administrative authority was exercised by the village chief and a Council of Elders, who were advised by the traditional Cult Committee. There was no formal election process for selecting these elders. Rather an informal consensus was reached by the villagers; age, literary accomplishments, and correctness of deportment were prime considerations. Prior to the period of French colonial rule, the Mandarin government of Vietnam limited its contacts with the villages to the Council of Elders. Quotas for taxes, for laborers in public works, and for soldiers were levied on the villages on the basis of population, and the Council of Elders apportioned these requirements among the village families. Such services as the villager might receive stemmed entirely from the resources of the village itself; the central government provided no

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services for the people within the villages--the government mandate stopped at the village gate.

Under French rule, the authority and autonomy of the Council of Elders were eroded. The wall between the central government and the village was broken by direct tax levies on individuals, rather than on the village community as a whole, and by a formal legal code that provided for punishment of individuals guilty of crime, in contrast with the former system of punishments imposed by the Council of Elders. Nevertheless, the traditional limit on services to the village population remained in force, and the villages continued to be left largely to their own resources.

During the Indochina war, the Viet Minh radically altered this traditional arrangement and its French "overlay" in the areas they controlled. The Council of Elders was replaced by a tightly controlled Communist hierarchy; some services were provided to the peasants--land reform, reduction of rents, and the like--in order to attract their support. By the time of the partition of Vietnam in 1954, the traditional political organization had thus been altered by French colonial administrative techniques and, in some areas, by the substitution of Communist hierarchical control. The problem for President Diem was to establish some sort of grass-roots political administration on the limited foundation that existed.

A. THE EARLY CONTEST FOR CONTROL AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Communists were well aware of the importance of establishing a viable political and military apparatus in the hamlets and villages as a basis for subversion. As discussed in Part One, their techniques of persuasion and intimidation for achieving their objective were highly sophisticated. Propaganda themes were based on whatever arguments seemed most likely to strike a responsive chord among the pragmatic peasantry. For the farmer there were land reform and reduced taxes; for the women, improved status and equal rights. The imperialism of the foreign-supported Diem regime and the inevitability of

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Communist success were woven into all appeals, and the violence program, while initially subordinate to persuasion, was a powerful reinforcement.

In late 1956 Diem took the first organizational step to tighten government control in the rural areas when he abolished the traditional practice of electing the village chief and the Council of Elders. An ordinance was issued which required that these officials be appointed by the province chief, who was in turn appointed by Diem. Borrowing from the Viet Minh, Diem organized the hamlet into groups of five families (approximately 25 to 35 members). The head of each family group was given specific duties and was responsible to the Council of Elders for the collection of taxes, organization of security, and other group activities.

Diem's hope was of course to strengthen GVN control through this system of appointed rather than elected officials. However, the change flew in the face of tradition and opened the way for abuse. Many of the appointed officials were not from the villages or hamlets in which they served and were often appointed to their positions because of their loyalty to the Diem regime rather than for their ability. Under the previous arrangement, the chiefs and councils, though selected by a consensus rather than formal elections, were nevertheless representatives of the people. Many of Diem's appointees were seen as interlopers and lackeys of the central government and as such were not given the prestige and respect previously accorded to local dignitaries. Many took advantage of their positions by extracting bribes. The overall situation gave the insurgents an opening which they were able to exploit to full advantage.

The Communists thereupon capitalized on their growing political and military organization by launching an intensive campaign against village officials. The worst and the best were often marked for assassination, while those of indifferent capability were permitted to remain in office provided they collaborated with the Communists. In the first six months of 1961, more than 500 officials were assassinated and over 1000 were kidnapped. Given the shortage of competent

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leadership, this attrition was a severe blow to Diem's attempt to establish a strong GVN presence in the countryside.

As security in the countryside deteriorated, Diem launched a system of "agrovilles" in mid-1959.¹ The agrovilles provided essentially for a protective regrouping of the rural population, but there was little change in the structure of local administration. By the end of 1961 it was obvious that the government's early attempts to establish an effective political apparatus had failed to get off the ground. The GVN then introduced the Strategic Hamlet program, an important aspect of which was that the hamlet replaced the village as the basic unit of administration.

During the Strategic Hamlet period (1961-63), the village continued to be a link in the administrative chain, but it was the hamlet that received main attention. The hamlet, which had enjoyed no previous civil status, was now to have an Administrative Council headed by a hamlet chief who would be assisted by councilors for political, youth, security, economic, and financial matters. In secure areas, secret ballots were used for directly electing the members of the council, which in turn elected its leader, or chief. In insecure areas, a temporary officer was appointed by the district chief. The combined memberships of the hamlet councils within a village were responsible for electing the Village Council. All of these elections were closely supervised by the district chief. Even after local officials had been elected or appointed, the district chief still continued to have considerable influence over the actions and activities of the hamlet administration.

The structure of local administration established by Diem has been faulted on several counts. First, it undermined long-standing customs --the shift of emphasis from the village to the hamlet broke with tradition and disoriented many peasants. Further, while the Strategic Hamlet program may have theoretically vested new powers and

1. See Part Two of Volume III for a comprehensive chronological exposition of GVN-US pacification programs from 1954 through 1971.

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responsibilities at the local level, it brought with it increased pressure and interference by district, province, and central authorities, so that the people actually found themselves more caught up in a network of bureaucratic control than ever before. By stressing the hamlets and thus expanding the number of basic local administrations, the program also sharply increased the demand for qualified leaders when they were already in increasingly short supply. The meaninglessness of the hamlet's new-found prominence was underlined by compulsory hamlet relocations, lack of security, and coercive restrictions, all of which served to discredit any idea that the people were able to play a larger role than before in structuring their day-to-day lives. Above all, these efforts by the Diem regime once again failed to establish an effective government presence at the grass roots.

B. "NEW LIFE HAMLETS" YIELD TO REEMPHASIS ON THE VILLAGES

After the overthrow of President Diem in late 1963, the discredited Strategic Hamlet program gave way to the New Life Hamlet program in 1964, and steps were taken to correct certain of the more obvious failings of the past effort. However, the hamlet, rather than the traditional village, continued as the basic unit of local administration. The new Vietnamese leaders hoped that the hamlet could achieve the autonomy previously exercised by the village. Consequently, while the hamlet was provided the constitutional framework for a greater voice in its own affairs, the village was brought more tightly under the rein of the province chief, and the Village Council, its membership comprising one elected member from each hamlet, was restricted to an advisory role. In addition to the Village Council, there was a Village Administrative Committee appointed by the province chief and composed of a chairman, a vice chairman, and from one to four commissioners responsible for police, finance and economy, information, youth, and civil defense affairs.

By December 1966 the terms of the hamlet and village officials elected or appointed under the 1964 arrangements were due to expire, and the GVN, aware of some of the drawbacks to hamlet administration

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pointed out above, decided to institute a reorganization of local administration. Accordingly, President Ky issued two local administration decrees on 24 December 1966 in conjunction with the 1967 Revolutionary Development Plan. The most notable feature of the decrees was the return to the village as the basic administrative unit. They also provided that the peasants in both villages and hamlets were to elect their own administrative bodies for the conduct of local affairs. Thus, there was to be, as before, an elected Village Council, but this time the chairman of the Village Administrative Committee was to be elected from among the council's members. This chairman, who also served as the village chief, would then appoint five other members of the Administrative Committee, with the approval of the council. In areas where security conditions were precarious, the province chief would appoint the members of a provisional Administrative Committee, which would have the collective powers of both the Village Council and the Administrative Committee. In the hamlets, depending on security conditions, elections or appointments of hamlet chiefs and deputy hamlet chiefs were to be carried out according to the practices established in 1964.

As a result of these decrees, the village not only regained its former position of prominence in the structure of local administration, but it wielded more power and authority than ever before. This expansion covered functions involving the budget, levy and collection of taxes, transfer of land, public services, and internal legal matters. Since then, only the central government, the province, and the village have had authority to levy taxes, and only the village collects taxes, turning over to the central government and the province their shares.

Even with these changes, a substantial amount of power was still retained by the province chief and the various ministries of the central government. Results of elections within the Village Council had to be submitted through the district chief to the province chief for his approval. Elected officials were protected from arbitrary removal by the province chief, but the latter could dismiss any Village Council

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member for fraudulent activities during an election, for prolonged unauthorized absence from council meetings, or, with two-thirds of the council concurring, for incompetence. Village budgets had to be ratified by the province chief, and his approval was required for most council decisions, particularly any involving the expenditure of more than VN\$50,000. The GVN ministries, of course, continued to exercise considerable influence over decisions of the village leaders in matters falling within their purview.

C. PRESIDENT THIEU'S STRESS ON LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

In 1967 the GVN took steps to organize a widespread government presence in the countryside in order to link the rural population with the government. After his inauguration in October 1967, President Thieu continued to emphasize the importance of elections in the villages and to bolster the prestige of elected officials by allocating to them considerable authority, responsibility, and, more importantly, material resources to implement programs selected at the local level. Focusing strongly on village administration, finally, he set out to establish personal rapport with the elected officials.

The program for village elections encompassed two phases: In Phase I, elections would be held in secure areas; Phase II elections were staggered to parallel improved security in other areas. High voter participation (78 percent) was recorded in these elections for a number of reasons. First, the voters seemed to feel a sense of responsibility toward the village communities on which they were dependent for their security and economic well-being. Second, the voters knew the candidates because they were required to have lived in the village for one year before the election. Third, the elections were scheduled on days that encouraged widespread participation --for example, on Sundays following the harvest season.

One purpose of the elections was to provide the rural areas with new blood to replace Communist or pro-Communist and corrupt or ineffective officials in order to strengthen the village and hamlet structure which, in turn, would support the GVN's program of

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pacification and revolutionary development. In the Phase I elections, 1182 former village or hamlet officials were reelected, while 7782 were newly introduced to office. By the end of 1967 it was estimated that combined Phase I and II elections had been held in approximately one-half of the villages and had involved about three-fifths of the rural population. (This figure did not include the 3 million people in the six autonomous cities, which had elected municipal councils.)

President Thieu's emphasis on the election process was matched by an intensive effort to improve the performance of the new officials. Training programs for them were initiated at the National Training Center at Vung Tau and in the provinces. The instruction covered the role of the village in local administration, the objectives of the reorganized village and hamlet administration, the policies of the GVN, the meaning of democracy and what local leaders must do to make it a reality, how to motivate and train people, and ways of making decisions, conciliating disputes, and organizing village and hamlet offices, as well as a host of other matters.

The spring 1968 Tet offensive temporarily disrupted the program of Phase II elections. Then, in November 1968 the GVN launched its 90-day Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) to extend security and government administration to more than 1100 priority hamlets. By the end of the 90 days, it was estimated that nearly 90 percent of the Vietnamese people lived under a substantial degree of security and had elected their own representatives to local office.

The new system of local administration was not an unqualified success. Reports from the provinces revealed a number of serious drawbacks to the growth of responsive village government. Village leaders were still hemmed in by restrictions, particularly in financial matters; able leaders were in short supply; salaries were inadequate; and district and province officials continued to interfere in village affairs. Also, the district and province still controlled the security forces, and so had significant leverage with the village leaders.

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To help remedy these drawbacks, the GVN, in April 1969, made the Village Council responsible not only for civil matters, but also for control of the local Popular Forces (PF) platoons, which had formerly come under the district chief. In May 1969, salaries were generally increased, and the village chief was given greater authority over the hamlets of his village. Thus, by 1969, major steps had been taken toward the establishment of viable and autonomous rural government.

The GVN's goal was to hold elections by the end of 1969 in all villages and hamlets not controlled by the Viet Cong. Three more election rounds took place between March and September 1969, thanks to the dramatic gains in security achieved in the wake of the Tet offensive. By the end of 1969, 94 percent of the villages and 93.4 percent of the hamlets had elected local governments. No sooner had these elections been conducted in newly secured areas than the GVN was faced with holding new elections for those villages and hamlets in which officials had been elected to a three-year term of office in 1967. In these new elections of 1970, voter participation increased from the 78 percent of the 1967 elections to 90 percent. The dominant influence of the district government was still much in evidence, since the district chief played a significant role in selecting candidates and, after the voting, in influencing the choice of village chiefs. This continuing habit of high-level interference in village affairs was due to district and province control of security elements (the ARVN and the Regional Forces) and to the tradition of village subservience.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT

If one believes that the objective of village elections is to establish a democratic system at the grass roots on a theoretical model of Western democracy, then it is obvious that the objective has not been achieved. Some village administrators are still subject to undue influence from the district and province, and in general the autonomy sought for the village through increased authority, responsibility, and resources is not universal. In some areas where the

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VC threat is still significant, there is a reluctance to seek village office because of fear of assassination, and pressure is required to get individuals to run for office, to the extent that in some cases the district authorities have had to dictate a slate of candidates. There are even some reports that the villagers look on the election process as simply a way of legitimizing government control through the election of pre-selected candidates.

On the other hand, if one sees the objective of village elections as increasing the involvement of the people with the GVN while lessening or eliminating involvement with the Communists, the appraisal is more favorable. There are signs that the villagers are beginning to believe that their own concerns are reflected in the local elections. Observers reported significantly increased interest in the elections of 1970, apparently because the peasants saw in them an opportunity to replace corrupt or domineering officials with others more responsive to their needs and aspirations, and because they felt that the authority of village officials in administering the Village Self-Development (VSD) programs and in expending other local resources gave them an opportunity to influence those programs through the election process. Finally, there is evidence that the electoral process has caused the village officials themselves to become more responsive to the peasants' concerns. This does not mean that all peasants have become unqualified supporters of the GVN or of GVN officials in the districts and provinces. But it does seem clear that the involvement achieved has constituted a necessary step in arresting and reversing the buildup of the insurgents.

A solid framework of rural administration is fundamental to pacification programs involving both security and development since village authorities must control and direct the local security forces and must organize and administer development programs, such as the VSD and land reform. The GVN's initiatives in establishing grass roots political administration based on popular choice have in fact substantially succeeded in providing the administrative framework for

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pacification in the rural areas. It has involved the people with the GVN, and in so doing has tended to cut off involvement with the Communists.

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III

THE EVOLUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

A. EARLY CONCEPTS AND PROBLEMS

Following the Geneva Conference in mid-1954, the United States embarked on what was to become its largest foreign aid program.¹ Having invested more than \$4.2 billion,² primarily in military aid, during the French-Viet Minh war to prevent the fall of Indochina to the Communists, the nation was apparently determined to recoup at least part of that investment. American foreign assistance to the new Republic of Vietnam generally focused on short-term emergency programs rather than on long-term national development. In fact, when President Diem assumed power in July 1954, the political, economic, and social situations he confronted were such that a massive US relief operation was necessary just to ensure the survival of his government.

The political situation in Saigon was extremely unstable. Socially, too, the country was fragmented, in part because so many

1. By 1961, for example, South Vietnam was the fifth ranking recipient of total US economic and military aid (behind India, Korea, Brazil, and Turkey). For the decade 1956-65, Vietnam was the fourth ranking recipient of economic assistance both in terms of total aid expenditures and on a per capita basis. (Kenneth M. Kauffman and Helena Stalson, "US Assistance to Less Developed Countries, 1956-1965," Foreign Affairs, vol. 45, no. 4 (July 1967), p. 721.) By 1966, Vietnam had become the highest ranking recipient of US foreign aid.

2. Wesley Fishel, "American Aid to Vietnam," Current History, vol. 49 (November 1965), p. 296. This figure appears to be rather high. It probably represents military assistance to France and the economic and military assistance to the Associated States. In addition to such assistance, the United States established a program of direct economic assistance to Vietnam in 1950 when a Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM) was established to administer aid to the Associated States of Indochina.

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peasant farmers had abandoned their fields for the relative security of the urban areas. The economic infrastructure had suffered from eight years of war, though largely from neglect and disuse; there was little cash reserve in the banks (which were controlled by the French); tax collections had almost ceased; war profiteering imposed an added strain on the economy; and inflation was spreading. Complicating these conditions were two other pressing problems:

(1) 900,000 refugees had come into South Vietnam, mostly into the cities, from the north in the first year after the Geneva Conference; and (2) the military-security problems associated with the regroupment and relocation of Viet Minh forces, and with the US assumption of responsibility for training and equipping the ARVN. In 1954-56, these latter two problems received the highest attention by the Diem government and the United States. A US MAAG was established to oversee the military training program, and a division of USOM, as the overseas arm of AID was known, assisted the GVN with the refugees. Both of these activities fell within the traditional purview of US competence.

Under the Commercial Import Program (CIP), which generated piasters in the form of counterpart funds, the United States was able to underwrite much of the GVN's budgetary expenditures, including those for the military. Between 1955 and 1959, the United States supported approximately 80 percent of the GVN's budget under this program, which accounted for almost 75 percent of all US economic aid to South Vietnam.³ Although initially designed as a temporary measure to stave off economic collapse, when conditions improved, the composition of the CIP remained about the same.⁴ Heavily oriented toward consumer rather than capital imports, this program tended to reinforce the already artificially high standard of living in the urban

3. Milton C. Taylor, "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," Pacific Affairs, vol. XXXIV, no. 3 (Fall 1961), p. 246.

4. For a more detailed analysis of the CIP, see "Economic Aid Problems in South Vietnam, 1963-1969," in Part Five of this volume.

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areas. Even more disconcerting, while the United States was underwriting such a large portion of the GVN's budget, South Vietnam's foreign exchange holdings rose from \$125 million in 1955 to \$216.4 million by December 1960.⁵ Unwittingly, perhaps, the United States was weakening the GVN by increasing its dependence on foreign aid.

In addition to financing the basic costs of the ARVN, the United States also supported approximately 97 percent of the costs of the refugee relief program.⁶ However, the short-term costs and problems associated with the 900,000 or so refugees were far outweighed by the potential long-term economic advantages. The refugees furnished a much needed source of manpower for South Vietnam's idle rice fields, and the white-collar workers among them helped staff the Diem administration at the national and local levels.

By mid-1955, when it looked as though Diem was coming to grips with the more acute problems facing South Vietnam, the United States had come out in full support of his government. South Vietnam was seen as the place to stop the advance of communism in Asia, and propping up the South Vietnamese armed forces seemed the way to do it. So from the beginning military considerations weighed heavily on the substance and form of US foreign assistance.

In September 1956, the Eisenhower administration outlined its basic policy on Southeast Asia in an agreed National Security Council paper that included the following definition of the US political role there:

The underlying purpose of US assistance in the area is to help the non-Communist countries develop more effective political organizations, strengthen their

5. Taylor, "Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," p. 248. By 1963 GVN dollar reserves rose to approximately \$300 million (Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 286).

6. Bui Van Long, "The Refugee Problem: The Role of Friendly Nations," in Viet-Nam: The First Five Years, ed. Richard W. Lindholm (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p. 50. See also Msgr. Joseph J. Harnett, "A Critique of the Program for the Economic Integration of Refugees," in *ibid.*, p. 84.

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internal administration and enlist greater allegiance in both urban and rural districts. In part this purpose will be served by programs for military and economic aid dealt with below. In part it will require an intensification of present programs for training competent Asian managerial and technical personnel. And in part new approaches, both governmental and private, will be needed. These should not concentrate exclusively at the national level, but should include activities designed to strengthen and vitalize indigenous traditions and institutions and to have an impact on village life, rural society, and educational systems.

This statement of policy also contained a brief description of objectives for each of the countries of Southeast Asia included in the policy statement. It is interesting to note the specific emphasis on military objectives for South Vietnam:

Assist Free Viet Nam to build up indigenous armed forces, including independent logistical and administrative services, which will be capable of assuring internal security and of providing limited initial resistance to attack by the Viet Minh.

Encourage Vietnamese military planning for defense against external aggression along lines consistent with US planning concepts based upon approved US policy and discreetly manifest in other ways US interest in assisting Free Viet Nam, in accordance with the SEATO Treaty, to defend itself against external aggression.⁷

Once Diem had overcome the crises he had faced, American assistance took on less the appearance of massive relief and more that of traditional economic development. The question was where the emphasis should be. As early as October 1955, Senator Mansfield called for

7. NSC 5612/1, September 5, 1956. Quoted in full in United States-South Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, study prepared by the Department of Defense in twelve books (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), Book 10, pp. 1084-85 and 1093. (Hereinafter referred to as US-Vietnam Relations.) The statement covered the following Southeast Asian countries: Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaya, and Singapore. However, Vietnam appears to have been of greater importance judging from the amount of aid obligated during FY 1956 and from the size of the "American mission" in-country.

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redesigning US foreign assistance "with a view to creating over a set period of time a self-sustaining Viet Nam free from further direct reliance on United States assistance."⁸ Mansfield also recognized the need not only to maintain stability in Vietnam, but also to proceed with an integrated national development program to offer a better life for the people, particularly the rural population:

It is in the rural areas that the Diem government will face its major test.... For the past decade the loyalties of the rural population have been sought or demanded by the Vietminh and the sects. With the Diem government legally responsible in South Viet Nam the farmers will in all probability look increasingly to Saigon for assistance, leadership, and protection. It would be dangerous if the opportunity to gain the support of this group were lost.⁹

Despite the urgings of Senator Mansfield and others, the US economic aid program during the pre-insurgency period continued to be dominated by military considerations. Only about 17 percent of the FY 1957 economic assistance program was specifically earmarked for project aid, and of that the agricultural sector received less than 10 percent. Table 1 summarizes the breakdown of US economic aid to South Vietnam from 1955 to 1961.

As the table indicates, the largest share of US economic aid to the GVN was composed of nonproject aid, i.e., funds for the Commercial Import Program, which were used primarily to support the GVN's military expenditures. For the years 1955 to 1961, it has been estimated that approximately 94 percent of US economic aid expenditures was transformed into counterpart funds, of which about 77 percent went to the GVN defense budget.¹⁰ Allocations for social development were conspicuously frugal; the combined expenditures for labor, health and

8. US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, Report by Senator Mike Mansfield, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 8 October 1955, p. 14.

9. Ibid., p. 11.

10. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, p. 40 of section entitled "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960."

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Table 1
US ECONOMIC AID TO VIETNAM, 1955-1961
(in thousands of dollars or dollar equivalents)

Fiscal Year Obligations	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961
Project Aid							
Food and Agriculture	1,168	1,964	4,814	2,204	2,498	2,276	1,698
Industry and Mining	631	534	8,880	466	2,042	1,844	1,123
Transportation	1,896	6,083	18,804	16,029	21,335	11,034	740
Labor	5	58			7	1	5
Health and Sanitation	927	1,138	4,469	1,795	1,936	2,640	3,181
Education	169	330	1,963	1,120	1,443	2,490	1,781
Public Administration and Safety	1,048	2,566	7,313	4,031	3,983	5,867	1,629
Community Development, Social Welfare, and Housing	166	8,468				7	
Technical Support			1,430	3,143	2,704	2,417	2,556
General and Miscellaneous	1,191	1,580	1,265	545	486	344	634
Total Project Aid	7,201	22,721	48,938	29,333	36,434	28,920	13,357
Nonproject Aid	312,995	172,966	210,499	150,089	144,994	131,878	114,491
Total ICA Obligations	320,196	195,687	259,437	179,422	181,428	160,798	127,848
Development Loan Fund					19,500	9,700	10,700
PL 480, Titles II and III	2,223	14,323	22,780	5,151	6,500	6,257	4,528
Total Dollar Aid, Economic	322,419	210,010	282,217	184,573	207,428	176,755	143,076
Local Currency Grants and Loans				4,500		5,200	7,500
Total Economic Aid	322,419	210,010	282,217	189,073	207,428	181,955	150,576

Source: John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 289.

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sanitation, education, community development, and social welfare and housing during this period were less than the cost of the 20-mile stretch of highway from Saigon to Bien Hoa.¹¹ Some economic development projects fared better, but this whole program area continued to lag far behind progress in military development. Above all, it appears that during this period little attention was devoted to the design of an integrated program of economic and military aid for South Vietnam targeted against well-formulated goals and objectives.

The primacy of military considerations was not surprising. On the US side, the influence of the MAAG within the US mission was paramount, while on the GVN side, President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu needed the political support of the army and were reluctant to let other centers of power (economic or otherwise) emerge.¹² In short, economic and social development never figured much in Diem's thinking. His basic strategy rested to a considerable extent on maintaining power by defeating the country's external and domestic enemies by military means rather than by developing positive support among the population--for example, by attempting to ameliorate the conditions contributing to the insurgency.

Pacification activities in South Vietnam during this early period consisted for the most part of various military or security-oriented programs. The population relocation schemes sponsored by President Diem during the late 1950s did have a degree of political, economic and social content, at least in theory, but the promises of improved living conditions failed to materialize. Of greater interest was the civic action effort, which blazed the trail for the later extensive cadre programs.

Compared to the massive efforts of later years to promote economic and social development, the early Civic Action program was almost insignificant. Its main objective was to help restore a link between

11. Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 115.

12. Interview with former USOM official, 13 February 1969.

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Saigon and the rural population.¹³ To generate popular sympathy and support, the program called for the establishment of dispensaries, agricultural advisers, lectures and plays to promote national unity, and so on. The GVN's whole approach, however, was flavored by the Mandarin tradition of elitism. It was the duty of the country's leaders to make some sort of gesture toward their "subjects." That the peasantry might have been looking for genuine sensitivity and responsiveness from the government does not seem to have been understood adequately. That the government's future survival rested on a less condescending approach to the peasantry seems to have been even less well understood.

The ordinary villagers were far from receptive to the proffered hand of the Civic Action cadre. The cadre, who were more often than not northerners unfamiliar with local conditions and customs, found it difficult to bridge the "we-they" gap. The Diem government's use of the cadre as political agents further undermined its efforts to promote economic and social development. In fact, in many villages and hamlets the cadre became identified with the return of repression, for along with the Civic Action team came wealthy and influential landlords demanding retroactive rents and the return of land abandoned during the war with the French. On the whole, therefore, even within its limited expectations, the Civic Action program failed to achieve significant progress in the area of economic and social development.

Yet another program which held great promise was President Diem's 1956 land reform program. While modest efforts were gradually made to implement this initiative, the benefits of land redistribution accrued to only an estimated 10 percent of all tenant farmers. Despite the frequent urgings of various working-level American officials, no one at the higher levels within either USOM or the GVN was ready at the time to come to grips with such a potentially explosive political issue as truly fundamental as land reform. The reasons for Diem's

13. For additional coverage of the Civic Action program, see Chapter IV below, "Development of Cadre Techniques."

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disinterest are not difficult to identify, for he was opposed to any measure that would antagonize the landowners, on whose support he depended while trying to unite and strengthen the country. On the US side, it was felt that expropriation of private property did not accord with American principles.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the opportunity to preempt the enemy on this important issue was lost.

While the record of American aid in South Vietnam from 1955 to 1960 was probably no better or no worse than in other underdeveloped countries, there were warnings at the time that a more effective aid program was needed. In July 1956 a "Progress Report" published by the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) of the National Security Council noted that increased attention should be devoted to assisting the GVN with its civic action programs. In May 1958, the OCB again reported on the progress of US programs in South Vietnam, noting that "in spite of some evidence of greater economic stability, Viet Nam continues to depend on foreign aid, the largest part of which goes to support the military establishment. U.S. aid still accounts for approximately 85 percent of imports and two-thirds of the budgetary revenues." In January 1959 the OCB emphasized that the prosecution of desirable economic programs was being preempted by the GVN's preoccupation with internal security measures, and in August of that year the OCB flatly stated that "in spite of substantial U.S. assistance, economic development though progressing, is below that which is politically desirable."¹⁵

A 1960 Senate report that reviewed the US aid program in South Vietnam summarized the situation as follows:

The fact remains, nevertheless, that 4 or more years ago, the design of the non-military aid program was that of a holding action, a "crash program" to prevent

14. For additional coverage of the land reform issue, see Part Five of this volume.

15. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, pp. 27,^o 29 and 32 of section entitled "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency"; full text of the report is given in Book 10, pp. 1236-41.

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a total collapse in South Vietnam. In the immediate chaotic aftermath of the war in Indochina, perhaps, no other type of program was possible. But there has not been a single change in directives for this program of which the Ambassador was aware, since it was first established on a "crash" basis.... It is still administered preponderantly as a holding action. Those responsible for directing the program--in Washington no less than in Saigon--find substantially the same reasons for justifying it today that were advanced 4 years ago when the situation in Vietnam was very different.¹⁶

B. "COUNTERINSURGENCY" AND THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM

In March 1960 the US embassy in Saigon sent to Washington a special report on the internal security situation. This assessment noted, among other things, the "growth of apathy and considerable dissatisfaction among the rural populace," which it said stemmed from control by corrupt and incompetent provincial and district authorities, abuses of police powers, and poorly conceived and executed economic and social development programs. On this latter point, the country team noted that "the situation may be summed up in the fact that the government has tended to treat the population with suspicion or to coerce it and has been rewarded with an attitude of apathy or resentment."¹⁷ Similar warnings issued during 1960 from many sources, including embassy officials, the CIA national estimates staff, scholars, and journalists. What was needed, it was thought, was a new focus and some new ideas.

What emerged after months of discussion was a first cut at a plan for "counterinsurgency," an increasingly fashionable subject among a wide variety of self-styled experts. It was again the country team in Saigon that prepared this Counter-insurgency Plan for Vietnam, which was intended to serve as the basis for increased military and

16. US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Aid Program in Vietnam, Report, 86th Cong., 2d sess., 26 February 1960, p. 9.

17. US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. No. 278, 7 March 1960.

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economic assistance. Available information suggests that the newly inaugurated President Kennedy in late January routinely approved the plan, which, in addition to its heavy emphasis on military programs, called for civic action to win the hearts, minds, and loyalty of the peasants. The modest nonmilitary programs envisaged were in such fields as continued technical assistance, village elections in some areas, expansion of agricultural development and crop diversification (especially in the Mekong Delta), and limited subsidies for agrovillage inhabitants.

As part of preparing to negotiate the plan with the GVN, an Inter-departmental Task Force for Vietnam was established in Washington to formulate a detailed program. The Task Force report, approved by the President on 11 May 1961, stated that the overall objective was "to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam and to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society." Military programs were to be "accompanied and supplemented by a strong, positive political-economic program," and the report specifically recommended that Diem's government improve its rapport with the population so as to produce active public cooperation against the Viet Cong. Another specific recommendation called for a civic action program to press forward with "a broad range of community development activities both in the political and economic field ... geared to bring the rural people of Vietnam into the body politic." Annex 4 to the report was more specific on programs of economic development for both the long run and the short run. Among the goals set for long-range development were improvements in the areas of agriculture, health services, education, fishing, roads, public administration, and industrial development; many of them merely encouraged increased emphasis on existing USOM technical assistance efforts. Proposed short-run programs included such projects as well digging and the construction of schools, markets, medical dispensaries, irrigation ditches, and local roads. Interestingly, the report reflected a belief that these quick-fix projects should be concentrated "in those rural areas currently subject to intensive Viet Cong activities." This may have marked the

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opening of the debate over whether to concentrate short-run development in insecure or secure areas, a debate that was to become more open as time passed and the situation worsened.¹⁸

With the major thrust of US strategy for the insurgency having been approved at high levels of the US Government, the next step was to coordinate it with the GVN. Vice President Johnson's trip to Saigon in May 1961 provided the first opportunity. Though the record is not entirely clear as to just what Johnson and Diem discussed, the joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit affords some insights. In addition to the usual stress on military support, "it was agreed that the United States and the Republic of Vietnam would discuss new economic and social measures to be undertaken in rural areas, to accompany the anti-guerrilla effort, in order that the people of Vietnam should benefit promptly from the restoration of law and order in their villages and provinces." The long-range economic development program was also an area on which the two governments pledged to work together. The communiqué also announced that "a group of highly qualified economic and fiscal experts would meet in Vietnam to work out a financial plan on which joint efforts should be based."¹⁹

The US team of experts, headed by Eugene Staley, president of the Stanford Research Institute, arrived in Saigon in June 1961. Because the issue of Vietnamese military force increases was clearly paramount, the group spent most of its time and effort on that question. However, it did devote some attention to "crash" economic and social programs, curiously recommending (among other things) that one hundred new agrovilles be built, although President Diem had experienced great difficulty establishing the 20-odd existing agrovilles and had informed Ambassador Durbrow over a year earlier of his intention to cut short the whole program. The group also recommended that high priority be given to other economic and social action programs such as:

18. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 11, pp. 70-72, 77, 111, and 117-18 of section entitled "A Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam."

19. US Department of State Bulletin, 19 June 1961, pp. 956-57.

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(1) expansion of communication and information facilities, including the provision of transistor radios in the rural areas and the expansion of the inter-village communications system; (2) a rural medical program, especially for war casualties; (3) training of low-level and middle-level civilian administrators, especially in the rural areas; and (4) training of the Youth Corps.

Despite, or perhaps as a result of, all the deep-draft studies of 1960-61, the basic problem, as seen on the US side, was still how to integrate the various military and economic-social counterinsurgency measures into an effective plan. Fortunately, there appeared to be just such a plan waiting off stage--Ngo Dinh Nhu's Strategic Hamlet program. The main objective of the program, formally launched in April 1962, was to assure security and viable government at the hamlet level.²⁰ The economic and social development content of the Strategic Hamlet program was almost an afterthought. The GVN was expected to help with building schools, digging wells, and introducing new strains of rice, but only after the construction of fortifications by the peasants and the election or appointment of local officials. The hitch, however, was that the government rarely seemed to get beyond the latter two objectives, and whenever it did turn to economic and social projects there were major difficulties of implementation.

One of the most serious defects of the program was Ngo Dinh Nhu's excessive emphasis on quantitative indicators of progress, none of which involved economic or social development criteria. The district chief and his Hamlet Construction cadre would therefore proceed to fortify a hamlet, establish a local administrative committee, credit themselves with having completed one more strategic hamlet, and move on to another area without particular concern for the follow-up activities, most of which were economic and social. With the pressure to meet Nhu's quotas, there was little or no incentive to proceed any further.

20. For a detailed account of the Strategic Hamlet program, see Part Two of Volume III.

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The seemingly low priority attached by the GVN to developmental activities reflected Nhu's strong views on self-reliance, a motivating factor in his political philosophy known as personalism. The Strategic Hamlet program, in Nhu's view, would succeed because of the spontaneous support of the people concerned. A major theme of the Strategic Hamlet program was the need for the rural people themselves to assume the responsibility for improving their own welfare. Most Americans, however, saw the Strategic Hamlet program as an example of positive action on the part of the GVN toward its citizens. Self-reliance to the American advisers was generally thought of in terms of short-term self-help projects. The primary importance of the program, to them, was that the government would actually be doing something for its people. There were practical reasons, too, for Nhu's insistence on self-reliance, since the cost to the GVN in material, money, and manpower would otherwise have been overwhelming. Although the United States indicated its readiness to assist the GVN in the field of economic and social development in the hamlets, Nhu and his brother Diem were wary of increasing the American presence in the countryside.

Given the GVN's interest in promoting self-reliance, the heart of the development effort in the Strategic Hamlet program was the community self-help program. The GVN promised to provide 20 to 50 thousand piasters, mostly in the form of materials, to each completed strategic hamlet. The self-help projects were supposed to reflect the desires of the hamlet people and most often involved building a school, bridge, road, or something else useful to the community as a whole. Proposals for such projects were forwarded for the approval of higher authorities in the districts and provinces.

Whatever modest success was achieved in the field of economic and social development during the Strategic Hamlet period can be attributed to US pressure on the Diem administration. For example, in the early stages of the program, GVN efforts to provide material assistance to the newly formed strategic hamlets were almost completely ignored under the press of military clearing and securing operations. Under

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American prodding, however, in later operations, e.g., in Phu Yen Province, more attention was paid to helping the residents of strategic hamlets adjust to their new surroundings. The cost of these economic and social development activities was largely borne by the United States, and it was in connection with this increased American role during the Strategic Hamlet period that US advisers on development were assigned to the provinces for the first time.

Many difficulties arose in the effort to implement the development side of the Strategic Hamlet program, and several of them were to surface repeatedly over the next decade. The main problem was, once again, that the Diem administration simply did not view economic and social development as a major priority. In the absence of strong central guidance in the development field, many officials in the provinces and districts proved ineffective, corrupt, or both. Another common grievance was that the GVN failed to carry out its commitments. These shortcomings were compounded by the lack of bureaucratic cooperation among the different agencies having responsibilities for the implementation of programs--a common failing that would continue to plague all aspects of the pacification effort well into the future.

The assassination of Diem and Nhu on 1 November 1963 dealt the Strategic Hamlet program its final blow. While it lasted, a significant part of USOM's effort was channeled toward its direct support. Plasters and commodities, such as fertilizer and cement, were furnished to local authorities for distribution to hamlet inhabitants, and technical assistance was provided on health and construction projects. Other elements of USOM continued to deal with the more traditional economic development programs such as education and training, public administration, and transportation. By 1963 the overall level of US economic aid to South Vietnam had increased to more than \$400 million annually, and the next few years were to see this amount nearly double.

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The overthrow of Diem in late 1963 was followed by a period of great political and administrative upheaval and by widespread loss of territory to the aggressive enemy. If economic and social development had received insufficient support and direction from the Diem government, the situation became even worse with the frequent turnover of leaders during 1964 and 1965. All aspects of the pacification effort suffered, but the GVN initiative in the development field disappeared almost altogether. It was only through increased US interest and a sharp expansion of the US role in the countryside that any kind of momentum was regained at all.

In an effort to salvage part of what was left of the Strategic Hamlet program, the United States pressured the Vietnamese to pick up where Diem and Nhu had left off and, especially, to address the social and economic development so lacking in the previous regime's approach. The follow-on effort undertaken in January 1964 by the government of Nguyen Khanh, the New Life Hamlet program, was intended to demonstrate to the rural population that the GVN, assisted by MACV and USOM, could do something for the peasants, rather than the other way around. The security situation had deteriorated so seriously, however, that the countryside was in danger of being completely controlled by the Viet Cong. Consequently, GVN-US emphasis was necessarily on clearing the enemy from specific priority areas and then following up, if possible, with permanent security and, eventually, with the development activities supposedly associated with the New Life program. When it could, USAID tried to stress such projects as well-digging, elementary school construction, distribution of cooking oil and bulgar wheat, and the "pig-corn" program. Some construction projects were initiated on a self-help basis, with USOM supplying commodities, such as cement and tin roofing, while the inhabitants provided the labor; other projects were undertaken completely by various US agencies. One of the unfortunate aspects of this period was that considerable time, effort, and resources went into hundreds of hamlets only to have them fall under the control of the insurgents.

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It underlined the importance of security as a prerequisite for economic and social development activity.

The major concern of Vietnamese provincial and district officials in 1964-65 was political survival. To the extent that they thought about their duties as local administrators, they worried about stemming the VC tide in the countryside. This chaotic and insecure state of affairs encouraged corruption on a wider scale than ever before. A province chief, for example, might be inclined to concentrate on making as much personal profit as possible before he was replaced by a new man. Then, too, coordination among the local branches of the GVN ministries--poor in the best of times--became even worse.

Because political instabilities within the GVN were so predominant during this period, added emphasis during the New Life Hamlet program was placed on training various cadre to make up for the lack not only of governmental authority but also of administrative talent in the countryside. By the end of 1965, the problems caused by the proliferation of the various kinds of cadre with which various US and GVN agencies had been experimenting were somewhat ameliorated by the integration of their functions into a single program--Rural Construction cadres, later named Revolutionary Development cadres. Since the cadres were a key element in implementing this and subsequent pacification strategies, they are discussed separately in Chapter IV.

The political instability of 1964 and early 1965, along with the simultaneously deteriorating security situation, gradually focused attention on a fundamental problem that was often debated within USAID. Although the problem and the debate were probably both magnified by a change in USOM's top command that occurred at this time, there did exist sharp differences of view among the staff concerning the proper role of AID in a counterinsurgency. This conflict, one of the major issues highlighted in Chapter I, was between the "traditionalists," who thought economic assistance should be primarily directed toward long-range development, and, for lack of a better term, the "counter-insurgents," who believed that AID should sponsor short-term, high-impact projects capable of registering immediate and visible benefits

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for the rural population. The traditionalists argued that pacification basically meant security and thus should be left to the military. Meanwhile, AID should devote its main effort to developing the economic institutions of the country so that when the military had defeated the insurgents the government would have an infrastructure in place on which to build. The counterinsurgents argued that it was unsound to wait for the security situation to improve before pursuing development activities; they saw the war as a contest for the loyalty of the peasants and therefore recommended pursuing programs that would prove to them that the central government also had something going for it.

The debate between these two schools was especially lively during late 1964 and 1965, but it was never really resolved, and to some extent is still continuing beneath the surface. However, by the end of 1965 USOM was committed to full support of the GVN's "rural construction" program and had assumed a direct role in and responsibility for short-term, high-impact counterinsurgency programs. The Provincial Operations Office of USOM became responsible for administering an extremely wide range of such programs, of which the following are examples:

Self-Help: Support approximately 28,000 projects with construction materials--primarily cement, tin roofing, and hand tools.

Supplementing Provincial Development: Support almost 400 small-scale construction projects affecting more than one hamlet by providing technical assistance, cement, roofing, and small agricultural and industrial machinery.

Chieu Hoi: Provide vehicles, vocational training equipment, surplus food, and construction materials for defector rehabilitation activities.

Montagnard Development: Support GVN efforts in a program of social welfare to the Montagnards, including construction of 12 boarding schools and 42 guest houses and expansion of two technical training centers.

Youth Program: Conduct an experimental program to provide support for 12,000 students in an attempt to channel their energies into constructive outlets by financing 800 work camps to carry out small construction or repair projects

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on schools, roads, bridges, latrines, wells, marketplaces, and refugee centers.

In addition to these programs supported by the Provincial Operations Office, USOM also supported intensified programs in the fields of education, health, refugee relief, public safety (police), and public works (primarily roads and waterways).

With these ambitious goals, the United States seemed to be bringing to bear on the Vietnamese countryside the entire weight of its experience in foreign aid since the end of World War II. Even with the help of American advisers, the scope of these development activities was so vast that it placed a heavy burden on the limited technical manpower of the GVN, which meant that in many cases there was inadequate direction of programs from the province down to the district, village, and hamlet. This led, among others, to further corruption; funds and material not only found their way into the hands of GVN officials, but were often diverted to the Viet Cong. In addition, the relevance of some of the programs to establishing a GVN link with the rural people came into question. There seemed to be little effort to eliminate marginal programs (e.g., the "pig-corn" and bulgar wheat programs and building latrines and athletic fields); the USOM effort was rather like that of a physician who has decided to play it "safe" with his ailing patient by prescribing virtually every drug on the market.

A side effect of USOM's overprescribing was that it inevitably encouraged inflation of the local currency. As the American-sponsored-and-financed projects increased the demand for scarce labor and merchandise, the cost of goods and services for the average Vietnamese citizen rose higher and higher. Although he might not understand the role of supply and demand in causing the value of his piaster to diminish, he did realize that the United States and the GVN were somehow responsible for his predicament, and he was ready to blame them for it.

To help relieve the problems these programs created for the already overloaded local GVN administrators, increasing numbers of US

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advisers were dispatched to the provinces of South Vietnam, but these Americans only created new problems. While some were sensitive and able men, others were totally unfamiliar with rural conditions and Vietnamese culture. Besides, this massive American involvement in the countryside tended to stifle local initiative. Compared to the American adviser, the Vietnamese official felt small (literally and figuratively) and defensive. His reaction, if not one of outright defiance and obstructiveness, was simply to allow the American to have his own way. Finally, the presence of large numbers of Americans in the countryside served to highlight the picture the Viet Cong painted of the Americans as "neo-colonialists" and the Saigon regime as the disreputable pawn of Washington. The Viet Cong has always strongly stressed this propaganda theme, and we can assume that it struck a responsive chord among the peasantry.

Toward the end of this deeply discouraging 1964-65 period, on 9 November 1965, the deputy director of USAID in Vietnam wrote outside official channels to a senior AID official in Washington. Although it is not possible here to make due allowance for whatever bureaucratic and personality factors may have been involved, this remarkable letter merits full quotation because it sums up the view of a knowledgeable man on the spot concerning how things then stood in the development field in Vietnam:

Mr. Rutherford M. Poats, Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Far East, Agency for International Development, Washington, D. C., November 9, 1965:

Dear Rud: At least once a week I have written to you a long diatribe on the problems created by the hasty and emotional approach to assistance to Vietnam. Fortunately so far I have recovered enough self-control to destroy these prior to mailing. Suffice it to say that I don't like, nor approve, what we are doing here. It is at the same time both unconscious and unconscionable. Let me only make these comments without the lyrics:

1. The 1966 program represents the unfettered dreams of each division chief without later meaningful and tailored review.
2. This program was dreamed up under the illusion that all Government agencies in Washington are committed to massive expenditures without any restraint or accountability.
3. There is no mechanism for control, audit, or analysis of costs, input, or utilization.
4. Attempts to instill discipline into the U.S. efforts are not tolerated or yet entertained.
5. There is widespread rumor and hint of diversion and corruption with no recognition of its possible presence.
6. Everyone is agreed that the effort is excessive and thus prone to widescale mishandling, but everyone reacts to even hints of need by all-out requests for more resources.
7. Specific programs are vastly overfunded; i.e., PSD, PHD, CIP, Refugee Co-ordination, Prov Ops but the excuse is AID/W wants it this way.
8. Inflation continues and the economy weakens, and the complaints mount publicly while our answer is to import more commodities to sop up extra money.
9. There is no restraint on the money supply.

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10. There is no restraint on the tremendous budget deficit.
11. There is no effective collection of duties, taxes, or other GVN revenues.
12. The exchange rate allowing imports at 60 to 73 piasters to \$1 encourages both imports and diversion of supplies.

Rud, I could go on for days with the absence of reasonable economic planning and implementation in this activity.

What is needed--

1. A hard-nosed AID/W approach to determine that we assist instead of abetting.
2. Procedures and systems to insure our commodities arrive here and are used properly.
3. Sound fiscal advice to the GVN and not pap.
4. A realistic exchange rate and control of the U.S. military to prevent U.S. smuggling and financial finagling.
5. A reduction of both personnel and program content to realistic and attainable levels. Recent State, DOD, AID message hints and nudges at this but no forceful measure.
6. A carefully devised and executed plan to combat profiteering and reexport of supplies.
7. Insistence on and guidance to prevent internal budget deficits.
8. Some control over the GVN use of foreign exchange.
9. Strong measures to add quality to our present activities and reduce quantity of men, money, and materials.
10. Reexamine some present misguided programs to get them on the track.

*** I think more effective personnel, AID/W support, and mature programming is an urgent necessity. This is written without clearance and without knowledge of other mission management. I believe it represents, however, the views of a substantial number of our people. I call this to your attention for whatever reaction you think is warranted. My intent is to help the situation and not further complicate issues. This situation is too vital to U.S. affairs to afford anything less than our best effort. Regret my inability to be more useful to this type of U.S. assistance program.

Sincerely,

J. H. Edwards, Deputy Director
U.S. AID Mission/Saigon

(As cited in US House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, An Investigation of the U.S. Economic and Military Assistance Programs in Vietnam, 42nd Report, 89th Cong., 2d sess., 12 October 1966, pp. 101-102.)

D. REEMPHASIS ON PACIFICATION

Several developments in the latter half of 1965 directed increased attention to the civilian aspects of pacification. First, the assumption of power by Nguyen Cao Ky in June 1965 and his success in consolidating that power soon produced a degree of stability in Vietnam unknown to many who were then serving there. Second, the appointment of Henry Cabot Lodge as US Ambassador to Saigon in July and the assignment of General Edward Lansdale as his special assistant for pacification (his title was actually chairman of the US Mission Liaison Group) appeared to give an added lift to pacification, for both these men were known to favor activities for "winning hearts and minds." Third, the introduction of more US combat troops also tended, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, to boost pacification. Although the troops were of course generally assigned a combat role,

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engaging the enemy was not necessarily a 24-hour-a-day job. Frequently they were either called upon or volunteered to help with civic action projects in their "off-duty" time, and these activities often received widespread publicity. Fourth, the bombing campaign in both the north and south raised a public outcry in the United States, and to downplay the bombing and fighting, the administration in Washington sought to emphasize the "good works" the US forces were performing for the Vietnamese people; also, the tactical bombing in the south and the creation of more and more free-fire zones vastly increased the number of refugees, who in themselves dramatized the need for social and economic programs. Lastly, the Johnson administration's emphasis on building a Great Society at home tended to spill over into Vietnam.

All of these threads were pulled together at the Honolulu Conference of top-level US and Vietnamese policymakers in February 1966, when both the United States and the GVN agreed to consider the civilian aspects of the war as being almost as important as the military effort. By this time, too, the GVN had drawn up an ambitious national pacification plan--the Revolutionary Development program--for execution under the energetic and able direction of Major-General Nguyen Duc Thang, who headed the newly created Ministry of Rural Construction (Revolutionary Development).²¹ Development activities of various types were to take place during the securing as well as development stages of pacification; these activities were generally described under the rubric of "new life development," which was designed to

21. The name given the 1966 pacification plan by the Vietnamese was "Rural Construction" (Xay Dung Nong Thon). But following the Honolulu Conference with its attention to social revolution, the Americans wanted a title with more "pizzazz," and the phrase "revolutionary development" was chosen. Premier Ky, however, said that the term revolutionary development was untranslatable. Shortly thereafter, when the Vietnamese dropped the word "rural" from the Ministry of Rural Construction, thereby further confusing the situation, a compromise was reached. The new program would be referred to in English as the Revolutionary Development (RD) program--under the direction of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development (MORD). The Vietnamese continued to call it the Construction Program (Xay Dung), under the supervision of the Ministry of Construction (Bo Xay Dung).

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meet the legitimate aspirations of the people in the economic, political, and social fields. The Rural Construction (now renamed Revolutionary Development or RD) cadres were to be the "cutting edge" of pacification in the countryside.

Although the Revolutionary Development program received a great deal of public attention after its organization had jelled in 1966, progress in pacification continued to lag. There was a tendency to attribute this lag to the lack of a tightly organized effort to administer the various programs; little attention was paid to the larger problem of thinking through just what it was we wanted to accomplish and how we expected to accomplish it. Organization was seen almost as a panacea, and much of the US effort during 1966-67 was focused on devising various organizational schemes to administer pacification more effectively.

Meanwhile, the US-financed Commodity Import Program more than doubled, from approximately \$150 million in FY 1965 to almost \$400 million for FY 1966, and so did the GVN's dollar balances. We were still supplying aid faster than Vietnam could absorb it, and this continued to have a debilitating effect on the Vietnamese. The increased US assistance pledged at the Honolulu Conference was predicated on the GVN's undertaking certain economic and administrative reforms, but, as in earlier years, the aid was delivered without many of the conditions having been met.

The question of reforms by the GVN came up again at the Manila Conference in October 1966. In Manila, as in Honolulu, the GVN mostly paid lip-service to the question of reforms, though some, of course, were instituted--especially those dealing with a new constitution and presidential elections. Instilled with renewed vigor as a result of the Manila Conference, both Washington and Saigon continued to push for positive progress in pacification. Saigon agreed to commit approximately one-half of the ARVN to security duties associated with the pursuit of the Revolutionary Development program. For its part, Washington, in the late autumn of 1966, created the US Office of Civil Operations (OCO) in Vietnam, which brought the various civilian

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pacification programs under one roof and tended to foster a dialogue between the many thousands of US civilian advisers serving in the field. When the 1966 revolutionary development efforts generally fell short of their inflated goals, an attempt was made to conform to the realities of the situation by decreasing the goals for 1967. The emphasis in 1967, it was reported, was to be on quality rather than quantity.

In the early spring of 1967, a decision to bring all the various components--civilian and military--of the American pacification effort under a single manager led to the replacement of OCO by CORDS, the umbrella US organization for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. Although this arrangement did not lead to a dramatic scaling-down of development activities, it did result in a more careful weighing of the utility of each program in the struggle against the Viet Cong. Those with the greatest potential for strengthening the GVN's link with the rural population were emphasized in the annual plans that became a regular feature of the new organizational arrangement, and the provincial adviser, the senior US CORDS official at that level, was given wide-ranging control over the province's pacification effort in all its variety. Although parochial interests could not be eliminated entirely--for example, there was a tendency for AID officials assigned to CORDS still to look toward Saigon's AID leadership for direction--great improvement was registered under the dynamic leadership of Robert Komer, who had formerly served as pacification "back-up" man in the White House.²²

The GVN established a parallel structure for conducting the pacification effort by activating a Central Pacification and Development Council in Saigon supported by similar councils in the provinces. The province chief, as head of the provincial council, theoretically provided single-manager leadership for pacification activities in the province. His problems, however, were probably greater than those

22. For more information on the US-GVN organizations for pacification see Chapter III of Part V.

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of his US counterpart, for he had to compete not only with the self-interest of ARVN commanders but also with the more pronounced vertical orientation of local officials representing the different Saigon ministries. Nevertheless, despite these drawbacks, CORDS and CPDC did streamline the implementation of an increasingly complex and multi-faceted pacification effort.

While statistics on the amount of US aid pumped into the Revolutionary Development program vary widely from source to source, direct USAID project aid during FY 1967 was approximately 30 percent of total project aid, or about \$72 million. Over half this amount was programmed for technical support and the Air America contract; of the remainder, only about \$3.9 million, or 1 percent of all project aid, was earmarked for new life development activities carried out by the RD cadre.²³ For FY 1968, project aid, as well as the overall aid effort, was reduced, although the amount allocated to "Revolutionary Development and Saigon" was increased to \$11.6 million, or 5 percent of total project aid. Part of this reduction reflected an over-due cutback on the largesse of the preceding two fiscal years, which resulted in GVN dollar balances of over \$300 million by 1966.²⁴

Although the 1968 pacification plans drawn up during 1967 generally called for an expansion of the 1967 goals, the Tet offensive initially diverted the attention of CORDS away from revolutionary development. On the civilian side, the most pressing need was to care for the tens of thousands of refugees. After the bulk of those refugees had been either resettled or lodged in refugee camps, CORDS once again focused its attention on the rural areas.

The Tet offensive revealed how fragile the advances in pacification had been, and spurred both the United States and the GVN to deviate from the previously agreed 1968 plan. For a variety of reasons,

23. USAID, Saigon, Report to the Ambassador, 1967, p. 81.

24. US House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1968, Hearings, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, Part 2, pp. 989-91.

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among which was the recognition of the GVN's need to establish quickly a physical presence in as much of the countryside as possible in the event a sudden cease-fire was decided upon at the Paris talks, a 90-day Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) was launched in November 1968. While the APC devoted little attention to the civilian aspects of pacification, it did definitively shift the primary locus of development from the hamlet back to the village. This was especially significant because at about this same time President Thieu began to stress political decentralization to local governments. This involved not only local elections, but also the main development program of the years since then, the so-called Village Self-Development (VSD) program, which has concentrated first on the secure, then on the insecure, areas.²⁵

The VSD program, as its name suggests, repeats the Strategic Hamlet program's emphasis on self-reliance, but it does include some features that differ markedly from elements of that earlier program. The most important of these bears on the GVN's attitude toward the people. The Diem administration's view was that self-help projects should reflect Saigon's judgment of what would be good for the local communities in the way of schools, dispensaries, bridges, and so on, whereas the Thieu government has been willing to let the local people exert predominant influence over the selection of projects. Introduced in 1969, VSD granted each village with an elected government a development fund of 1 million piasters. The fund came under the control of the elected Village Council, thus enhancing the prestige of the council and stimulating the participation of the people in matters affecting it. The GVN allocated nearly 2 billion piasters, or about \$17 million, to the villages in this way in 1969, an average of \$8100 per village. In 1970 the allocations were made on the basis of

25. Another dramatic action by President Thieu in the area of economic and social development has been the new land reform laws, which are part of the pattern of decentralization established by village elections and the VSD program. See Chapter II in Part Five of this volume.

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population and amounted to about 2.5 billion piasters, or over \$20 million. One of the provisions concerning the use of the funds has been that the people themselves must contribute either labor or money to the projects they select. Besides the benefits that accrue from the projects themselves, the VSD program encourages a political transformation of the people into active participants in a process that not only binds them together but links them to the central government as never before. It is not a link that rests necessarily on admiration for President Thieu or on strong emotional attachment to the concept of participatory government, but on practical perceptions of personal and mutual advantage.

Along lines similar to the VSD program, the GVN initiated a 1 billion piaster Province Council Development program in the wake of the election of new provincial councils in 1970. Council members solicit proposals from among their constituents and hold open meetings to reach decisions on projects to be undertaken. Once selected, projects are turned over to the Province Pacification and Development Council for implementation. As with the VSD program, the primary significance of this program is political in that it strengthens the power of the newly elected councils and enhances their prestige among the people. It also attracts more capable candidates into running for council seats.

Besides village self-government and self-development programs, other projects supported by CORDS and CPDC today include refugee resettlement, urban development, and veterans affairs. In addition, USAID's technical divisions currently support a wide variety of programs in land reform and in more traditional development fields as public health, public works, education, and public administration. It sometimes seems as though any shortcoming of the GVN is seen as detrimental to the war, and therefore eligible for some degree of attention and financial support by CORDS or USAID. One may surely question whether veterans affairs should fall under "pacification," and whether such activities now described in the 1971 community defense and local development plan as land reform, agricultural

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production, public works, health, and education are not in reality long-term development problems inherent in the process of modernization anywhere. The 1971 pacification plan thus raises once again the question of the proper role of AID in an insurgency environment.

In spite of the many problems encountered along the way, the US-GVN economic and social development activities seem to be making strides in involving the rural people with the government and in weakening the hold of the Viet Cong. The pragmatic Vietnamese villager has always been influenced by self-interest, and there have been times in the past when conditions in the countryside provided him with no alternative but to support the Viet Cong. Those conditions have changed drastically in recent years, especially in the delta provinces. Increased security and the opening of roads have provided access to markets long shut off. New agricultural techniques, the introduction of improved strains of rice, and access to modern equipment such as water pumps and tractors have helped to raise the standard of living for most rural Vietnamese. Also, the implementation of the 1970 land reform legislation has reduced, if not yet eliminated, one of the most serious causes of disgruntlement among the peasants.

A persuasive argument could be made that these conditions might have been achieved without the massive US-GVN effort in the development field, that a more discriminating and selective approach would have done the job just as well and at considerably less cost in terms of human and material resources.²⁶ Nevertheless, regardless of

26. Pacification funding rose from a US-GVN total of \$581.9 million in 1966 to \$1.3 billion in 1969, and the 1970 plan was funded at a level of \$1.5 billion, 51 percent of which was supported in one form or another by the United States. For the 1970 program, however, the greatest part of the US contribution was made by the Department of Defense (\$729 million); AID contributed \$48 million in project assistance and \$114 million in counterpart. The remaining \$627 million was provided by the GVN, although it is important to remember that much GVN revenue is indirectly provided by the United States. (Funding figures from US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970, Hearings, 91st Cong., 2d sess., February and March 1970, p. 708.)

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efficiencies or inefficiencies, the peasant has been increasingly drawn into a mutually advantageous relationship with the government and has begun to recognize and appreciate the benefits attached to the present political arrangement. He must be aware that a resurgence of VC activity and the accompanying deterioration of security in the countryside would only destroy whatever gains he has made in recent years. This is the problem the VC leadership faces; what can it now offer the peasant as an incentive to support the Communist guerrilla movement? For most rural Vietnamese, today the answer is "very little." The only part of the country where life remains economically and socially depressed is in the provinces of central Vietnam, and it is here that the US-GVN continue to face a major challenge in this as well as in other aspects of pacification.

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IV

DEVELOPMENT OF CADRE TECHNIQUES

A. CIVIC ACTION PERIOD

As an instrument for establishing the government's control in the countryside, the cadre concept came into being early in the Diem administration under the name of "Civic Action." The sources of inspiration were many, including the Viet Minh cadre who had proven so successful against the French, the French Government's own experiment during the early 1950s with cadre known as Groupes Administratifs Mobiles Operationnels (GAMOS), and the civic action teams the Philippine Government used in its struggle against the Huks. The latter experience registered in South Vietnam through the efforts of General Edward Lansdale, who had been chief US adviser to Ramon Magsaysay.

According to Lansdale's own account, the early use of Civic Action cadre was necessitated by the administrative vacuum that was being created in the countryside as both Viet Minh and French administrators withdrew after the 1954 Geneva Accords.¹ The new government of Ngo Dinh Diem did not have the manpower to assign to these remote areas, so the cadres were sent to the villages as a stop-gap measure. At the outset, insecurity and competitive activity by the insurgents, or what remained of them, were relatively minor considerations.

A Directorate of Civic Action was formed under the chairmanship of Qui Cong Cung, a former Viet Minh, to implement the program. The original idea was to staff the ranks of the cadre with temporarily assigned government workers drawn from the ministries and other agencies. The assignments were to be for six months, after which the workers would return to their regular posts. This scheme never got

1. Interview with General Edward Lansdale, 12 April 1971.

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off the ground, however, because of the reluctance of the ministries to release their personnel and the even greater reluctance of the government workers themselves to be sent out into the boondocks. A solution to this problem was discovered in the large number of refugees from the north, many of whom had had civil service experience. It turned out that most of the refugees hired as civic action workers were Catholics, and many of these became cadre team leaders.

The Civic Action cadre, clad in the traditional black pajamas of the Vietnamese farmer, were motivated by the "three withs"--eat, sleep, and work with the people. They took surveys of the needs and aspirations of the people, planned schools and hospitals, repaired roads and irrigation canals, introduced new agricultural methods, and trained self-defense militia for the village. They also conducted political meetings to teach the people how to hold elections. Towards the end of the program, they also held political indoctrination sessions and helped conduct Diem's Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign.

The Catholic predominance in the cadre program caused a flavor of special interest to be attached to it. In addition, Ngo Dinh Nhu, the brother and principal adviser of President Diem, gained control of the teams and used them to further his own ambitions and those of his family. Regardless of these considerations of intrigue, by 1956 the Civic Action program had in any event outlived its early responsibilities. The Diem government appeared to have established its administrative control throughout the country, except in a few isolated areas, and there was as yet little awareness of the problems that the growth of a rural-based insurgency could pose for the fragile administrative structure in the villages and hamlets. In 1956 the possibility of a conventional attack by North Vietnamese troops across the DMZ was thought to be the greatest threat to the country's administrative stability.

B. STRATEGIC HAMLET PERIOD

The need for cadre of the true "civic action" mold arose again in the late 1950s, this time not to fill an administrative vacuum but to

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reassert the Diem government's control over areas that had by then fallen under the influence of Communists. This time, instead of the uniform and centralized approach adopted during the earlier civic action days, a variety of forms and techniques were instituted. This multi-cadre approach reflected the growing divisions within the Diem regime rather than any conscious decision based on practical considerations of what would work best. As a result, by the time of the adoption of the Strategic Hamlet program in late 1961, there were several kinds of cadre groups operating in the rural areas.

1. Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs)

The CIDG was the only cadre program of the Diem years that openly involved direct and substantial US participation. Because of Diem's sensitivity to foreign influence, the CIDGs operated almost exclusively in the remote highlands of central Vietnam, far from the major centers of population. Beginning with the Rhade tribe around Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province in early 1961, teams of US and Vietnamese Special Forces undertook to train and equip young men from the tribal villages. After six weeks of instructions, these men were returned to defend their hamlets and report insurgent movements.

Unlike all other cadre programs initiated during the Diem period, the CIDGs survived the 1 November 1963 coup d'etat, in large part because of their isolation from the mainstream of political activity. By 1964 CIDG operations had been extended to other parts of the country, especially some of the areas of the Mekong Delta most difficult to pacify. The civic action work in the hamlets included medical care, construction projects, and education programs. Although more than 25,000 highlanders were armed under the program by 1965, the vastness of the Central Highlands area and the presence there of large units of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops limited their effectiveness.

2. Force Populaire

This cadre group was the creation of Ngo Dinh Can, youngest brother of President Diem and nominal "ruler" of the provinces of central Vietnam.

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Can is said to have been able to identify more closely with the peasants than either of his brothers. He fashioned the Force Populaire into well-trained and highly motivated teams, organized on the Communist prototype, that moved unobtrusively about the countryside living and working with the people. The selection process required all members to be volunteers and from modest peasant backgrounds; the training program was a rigorous one that emphasized the inculcation of esprit. Although armed while moving from village to village, the cadre did not use their weapons unless they were directly threatened by the enemy.

The success of the Force Populaire in the seventeen central provinces under Can's control encouraged Diem to expand the program to the delta provinces. Actually, Can had hoped for much more, convinced as he was that his was a far better strategy for regaining influence in the countryside than the Strategic Hamlet program favored by Ngo Dinh Nhu. The Strategic Hamlet program prevailed, but this did not amount to a rejection of the cadre technique, for cadre groups figured in its implementation. The cadre's role, however, was subordinated to the larger conceptual framework.

3. Hamlet Construction Cadre

The first step the province chiefs took to implement President Diem's directive on strategic hamlets was to recruit Hamlet Construction cadre teams. The responsibility for these teams was assigned to the Ministry of Civic Action, which had been upgraded from a directorate in 1957. Unfortunately, this Ministry continued to be dominated by its narrow political allegiance to Ngo Dinh Nhu.

Cadre team leaders were selected from among the young men in the provincial offices of the Ministry of Civic Action, and most team members were drawn from the districts in which they were expected to operate. After an intensive training program, an 11-man team would visit a hamlet, generally for three to eight weeks, depending on the attitude of the population, the extent of enemy subversion, and other factors. Its tasks covered a wide range of security, intelligence,

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administrative, political, and economic activities, of which the construction of fortifications received the most attention by far.

The quality of the cadre varied greatly from province to province and district to district, depending on the leadership demonstrated at those levels. The district chief was the key man, because he was directly responsible for the cadre program's operational success. Adroit helmsmanship, however, could not compensate entirely for the problem of quality caused by Nhu's timetables and quotas which called for too many cadre too soon. Another problem was the bare subsistence salary of 900 piasters (US\$12.37) per month, and still another was the emphasis exerted at the national level on evidence of progress through identifiable physical indicators. The consequences of this latter insistence were twofold. First, the more intangible but highly critical task of gaining the involvement of the people tended to get sidetracked in the rush to accomplish "things." Second, when goals and quotas could not be met, there was a strong temptation to distort facts in order to escape a reprimand from on high. As a result, a badly misleading picture of what was happening in the countryside emerged during the period from 1961 to 1963.²

The Hamlet Construction cadre were a far cry from the tough, tightly knit, dedicated cadre represented by the Force Populaire. It is not surprising, therefore, that several of the more dynamic province chiefs continued to experiment with more elite cadres. Although it is difficult to pinpoint its exact role, the CIA appears to have been instrumental in encouraging some of these local ad hoc arrangements.

4. Advance Political Action Teams

The most important single center of experimentation with cadre techniques was Kien Hoa Province, where the province chief, Lt. Colonel Tran Ngoc Chau, was a dynamic leader with excellent political instincts.

2. See the discussion of "Reporting and Evaluation" in Part Four of this volume.

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Following his assignment to Kien Hoa in 1962, he had organized on his own the nucleus of the first census-grievance program, the basic aim of which was to identify, through the recruitment of resident under-cover agents, members of the VC infrastructure in the villages and hamlets. With the aid of US advisers, Chau then developed a mechanism, the Advance Political Action (APA) team, to negate the influence of the the enemy agit-prop apparatus. Initially numbering seven to ten men, the team acted as an advance presence of the GVN in carrying out basic propaganda, civic action, and intelligence missions. It was lightly armed, dressed in the black pajamas of the peasant, and completely mobile.

After several months of experimentation in Kien Hoa, variations of the APA concept were attempted elsewhere during 1962 and 1963--in Kien Phong, Phuoc Long, Long Khanh, and Phuoc Tuy. These trial-and-error operations were sponsored by the CIA in the search for more effective ways of extending GVN control into areas where regular cadre were unequal to the task.

C. POST-DIEM PERIOD

President Diem's assassination in late 1963 had a devastating impact on all cadre programs, except the CIDGs. Successor regimes removed the vast majority of province chiefs and replaced them with personal followers who were often unfamiliar with political action concepts and who tended to misuse the cadre teams or to disband them entirely. Although the lower echelons were not as severely affected, the cadre program had generally been closely run by the province chiefs, and their removal crippled its guiding force.

1. Renewal of APA Teams

By the spring of 1964, some US advisers had decided to resurrect the APAs. A training center at Cat Lo was opened, and the first class was processed through the facility in March and April. The size of the classes, which lasted for eight weeks, grew from 43 to 100, and then to 300. Most students were recruited from and returned to the

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provinces in Regions III and IV. The revived APA program was pursued independently of the GVN, although not without its knowledge.

2. People's Action Teams

While the Cat Lo effort was being pushed in the south, a new type of cadre effort emerged in the northern coastal region of Quang Ngai. The People's Action Team (PAT) program, as it was known, was sponsored and financed by the CIA. Its motivational training techniques were similar to those of the Chinese Communists, and the teams it turned out were divided into 3-man cells, used self-criticism methods, and held student participation sessions at night. Due to the greater insecurity in the northern region, the PAT was larger and more heavily armed than the APA teams.

As the APA and PAT programs began to make headway, it was decided to centralize and expand the training of the two groups. This led to the acquisition of land and buildings belonging to a Canadian seminary at Vung Tau, where the first consolidated training class opened in January 1965. Upon graduation the APA-PAT cadre were assigned on a 30-day trial basis to provinces where the chiefs had agreed to accept them.

Toward the end of 1965, a decision was made to transfer all APA-PAT activities to the GVN's newly created Ministry of Rural Construction. (Prior to this the teams had no official status with the GVN.) At the same time, AID assumed the CIA's funding and advisory role. Several factors dictated CIA's relinquishing its control, the most important of which were the increasing visibility of the program as a result of its success and growth and the mounting burden of manning and financing the expanded operations. At the time of transfer, the Vung Tau Center and its related activities were costing the Agency an estimated \$35 million a year. Then, too, the program strained the relationship between MACV and the CIA because it put them in competition for the available manpower. More than one MACV adviser in the provinces was reassigned because of his willingness to cooperate with the cadre's field operations.

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In taking over the APA-PAT programs, the GVN also began to consolidate other cadre groups belonging to various ministries. After a process of screening and selection, those who were qualified underwent retraining and integration into what was called the Revolutionary Development Cadre (RDC) organization.

3. Revolutionary Development Cadre

The newly consolidated cadre organization came into existence in January 1966. Colonel Chau had agreed to leave his post in Kien Hoa to head the RDC Directorate in the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, where he worked under the supervision of the Minister, Gen. Nguyen Duc Thang. A close adviser and major influence on Thang was General Lansdale, the head of the US Mission Liaison Group and an authority on pacification techniques.

a. Organization. It was General Lansdale who persuaded Thang to reorganize and greatly expand the cadre teams. The 59-man team that finally emerged reflected the need for a sizable security element (35 men) and for the integration of specialized components that had formerly operated separately. The team was commanded by a group leader assisted by two deputy group leaders for two inter-teams. The first, called the armed propaganda inter-team, bore the burden of security, although the other cadre members were also given paramilitary training. The second, called the construction inter-team, comprised three units of specialists: the census-grievance unit, the civic action unit, and a third unit, the "institutionalizer," that was responsible for organizing the hamlets, arranging for elections, and setting up a viable local government.

b. Recruitment. If pay is low and prestige is lacking, it is difficult to lure qualified recruits into any program. On the other hand, when a program becomes attractive, corrupt officials may try to exploit it for patronage. The new RD program was attractive, so in late 1966 the RD Ministry issued an order that prohibited province chiefs from replacing cadre without the ministry's clearance. A second way of controlling cadre quality was to weed out undesirable elements during training at Vung Tau.

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The RD program emphasized recruiting in the areas where the cadre were to operate in order to capitalize on the recruit's knowledge of the area and its customs, the receptivity of the villagers to "one of their own," and on the motivation that accompanies having a stake in the operation. However, with the exception of census-grievance, intelligence, and propaganda activities, it was found that "outsiders" were more effective than "insiders" in the specialist roles.

c. Training. Although the training period at Vung Tau lent a degree of national uniformity to the cadre program, not all students followed the same course of instruction there. Everyone underwent the first five weeks of basic paramilitary training. This was followed by five weeks of political and motivational training which included study of the history of Vietnam, the nature of the current struggle, the objectives and techniques of the program, and the tactics of the enemy. This five-week session was followed by a two-week field exercise during which teams went into secure or semi-secure villages near the training center. The "specialists" among the 59-man teams received their training during the second five-week period.

The constant need for qualified leaders soon led to the adoption of a special 12-week course for cadre whose performance in the RD program indicated leadership potential. In another innovation at Vung Tau, local government functionaries and military officers connected with the cadre effort underwent a special course that familiarized them with cadre training and concepts.

d. Objectives and Tasks. In a 1966 directive, the Ministry of Revolutionary Development established a set of eleven broad objectives, with 98 subtasks, for the RD cadre. For example, there were eleven tasks listed under the first objective, twenty-one under the second, and so on.

The eleven objectives were as follows:

1. Eliminate the VC infrastructure
2. Get rid of village "bullies"
3. Instill a new "spirit"

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4. Organize groups and a basic administration
5. Organize a system of defense
6. Eradicate illiteracy
7. Help wipe out disease
8. Implement land reform
9. Develop agriculture and handicrafts
10. Set up a communications network
11. Aid combatants

An RD Ministry guidebook spelled out how the objectives were to be accomplished, but there was no set order for carrying out the tasks nor was there a fixed time period for doing so. In fact, the guidebook enjoined the cadre not to be bound too strictly to the tasks, which, it said, merely provided guidelines to be adapted to local needs and individual requirements. For example, typical activities for achieving the objective of "organized groups and a basic administration" included scheduling collective activities once a month, drafting a hamlet charter, and organizing the election of the hamlet council and of other committees. Even this sampling is enough to illustrate the extent to which RD activities had expanded from the earlier APA-PAT activity. Earlier, the mere presence of the cadre team performing propaganda work and limited civic action activity was considered sufficient. It may be (and this has been a matter of debate) that the RD program expected too much, given the limitations of the cadres.

D. RECENT STATUS OF CADRE PROGRAMS

During 1966, the first year of the RD cadre program, the number of workers grew to approximately 30,000 in the field, with another 8,000 undergoing training at Vung Tau. In addition to the RDC, over 100 Truong Son³ teams were working among the Montagnard tribes in the Central Highlands, because General Thang had approved continuing this

3. Truong Son is a collective term applied to the CIDG and various other political actions programs in the Central Highlands.

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program independently of the main effort after Montagnard cadre began to desert newly integrated RD teams in which ethnic Vietnamese were in command. The Truong Son program, administered by a national Commissariat of Montagnard Affairs, had its own training facility at Pleiku that was especially tailored to the unique requirements of the area. Its teams included heavier security elements than standard RD teams because larger enemy units operated in the highlands. The Truong Son rarely had the mission of eliminating the VC infrastructure because the latter was basically nonexistent in the tribal villages.

The rapid expansion of the RDC program over a short time reflected the improved security situation in South Vietnam. Following the enemy's abortive 1968 Tet offensive, the GVN was able to increase its control over large areas of the countryside, and the RDCs played an important role as "advance men" in this wave of forward progress. By early 1969, with many new villages and hamlets "pacified" and protected by units of local militia and territorial forces, a decision was made to reduce the 59-man teams to 30 members by eliminating the security elements. The responsibility for the safety of the RDCs was thereafter assigned to the RF-PF and the PSDF. While this arrangement worked out satisfactorily in relatively secure areas, serious problems arose in Regions I and II. In Thau Thien, for example, 10 of the 79 RDC teams in the province had no security element whatever assigned to them in April 1969, and they were experiencing inordinately high casualties. This problem was heightened when the GVN, on the basis of progress registered in the southern provinces, decided to reduce the RDC teams everywhere to 10 men. And most recently, with local security established and administrations functioning in most hamlets and villages in the south, the GVN has decided to phase out the RD cadres entirely, although many feel strongly that they are still required in some areas of Regions I and II.

In its period of rapid expansion, the RDC program could not maintain the high quality of recruiting that had characterized the smaller and more select APA and PAT programs. With the introduction of draft deferments, the program tended to become a haven for urban young men

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with political influence whose principal motive was avoidance of military service. Thus, many of the cadre lacked proper motivation or, because of their urban background, were not sensitive enough to problems peculiar to the rural environment; invariably these cadre were criticized for lack of respect toward elders.

These constraints make any categorical appraisal of the overall program difficult. The relative success or failure of the teams varied with the degree of selectivity in recruiting and training of cadres and, most importantly, with the leadership of particular provincial and district officials. Nonetheless, many US district and provincial advisers believe that the cadres have been an essential instrument in developing local security forces and implementing political, economic, and social development programs. Their role in organizing the village elections of 1967, 1969, and 1970 was apparently critical. In many villages they have assumed responsibility for training the PSDF and organizing local security, and they have helped village officials interpret the complex directives on the administration of Village Self-Development programs. Many have demonstrated a degree of motivation, dedication, and incorruptibility that must have made favorable impressions on the villagers. Perhaps the best evidence of their effectiveness has been the reaction of the Communists: from the very beginning of the program the cadres have been a primary target for assassination.

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V

THREE FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT INTEREST

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT¹

When the United States began granting economic and military aid directly to the Republic of Vietnam in 1954, the program was administered through USOM in Saigon by the predecessor agencies to AID. The primary divisions of USOM were concerned with technical assistance programs, and they operated almost exclusively at the Saigon level, although a small Field Service Division was established in 1954 to coordinate refugee relief and rehabilitation assistance.

When the refugee resettlement was completed, the Field Service personnel, some of whom had helped support the GVN's Civic Action program while stationed in the countryside, proposed a reorientation of their role to other broad-gauge community development projects in the rural areas. The objective of this proposal was to "assist peoples in provincial areas in improving their means of making a livelihood ... [and] their general living standards.... Another objective ... is to furnish immediate assistance when and where needed and to give a clear and tangible evidence of national government and US assistance to indigenous populations in the provinces."² The level of funding required for the first year (FY 1959) was estimated at only \$410,714, but the Diem government nevertheless rejected the proposal "on the grounds that province chiefs were too busy to

1. For an assessment of the broad organization and management problems of pacification as a whole, see Part Five, Chapter III, of this volume. This present section concentrates on a few features of special interest to development.

2. USOM, Field Service Division, Project Proposal for Development Services to Provincial Administration (Saigon, 1958), p. 3.

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undertake the new responsibilities involved."³ Diem obviously did not want a lot of Americans running around the provinces. Left with no function but reporting, which became increasingly difficult, the Field Service Division was abolished in September 1958, but USOM continued to administer economic assistance through its technical divisions based in Saigon.

When the Strategic Hamlet program began to take shape in 1962, USOM reactivated the Field Service Division under a new designation, Office of Rural Affairs and Counterinsurgency (later known simply as Rural Affairs). The first head of this office, Rufus Phillips, was responsible for "coordinating the planning and implementation of the USOM counterinsurgency efforts," although the technical divisions of USOM that contributed to the counterinsurgency projects were not under his direct control. Beginning in late 1962, the Office of Rural Affairs posted civilian representatives to selected provinces.

Although Phillips resigned in late 1963, the Office of Rural Affairs continued to exist without a director during the New Life Hamlet program initiated in 1964. It was during this time of chaos and confusion that the conflict between the counterinsurgents and the traditionalists (i.e., between the Office of Rural Affairs and the technical divisions of USOM) came to the fore, and the lack of leadership appears to have helped bring it into the open. In June 1964, George Tanham became USOM's Associate Director for Operations, a position that theoretically included a greater role in the activities of USOM's technical divisions.⁴ Several weeks later, the new Director of USOM, James Killen, changed the name of this division to Office of Provincial Operations, since, with the United States becoming more involved in counterinsurgency programs, provincial representatives

3. John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 180-81.

4. William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 200.

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were to be stationed in each of South Vietnam's forty-three provinces. It was expected that the field staff of Tanham's office would number about 200.

According to Tanham, the mission of the Office of Provincial Operations was to advise and assist the GVN at all levels "on the broad range of counterinsurgency efforts, particularly in connection with economic, political and social development."⁵ His small Saigon staff maintained liaison with the Central Pacification Committee established by General Khanh and with the Ministry of Social Welfare; it also worked at coordinating its efforts with other USOM offices, despite the rather short shrift given Tanham's shop by the USOM director and despite the ongoing argument over counterinsurgency versus traditional development activities. In early 1966 the Office was renamed Office of Field Operations. It continued to be responsible for the administration of US counterinsurgency support until the pacification functions of all US civilian agencies (AID, CIA, and JUSPAO) were united in the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) in late 1966.

On the GVN side, little attention was paid to organization for pacification until the creation of the Ministry of Construction (soon known as Revolutionary Development) in early 1966. The Ministry of Revolutionary Development (MORD) served as the GVN's coordinating arm for pacification until it yielded to President Thieu's Central Pacification and Development Council (CPDC) in late 1968. The CPDC, nominally chaired by President Thieu, is directed day to day by Maj. General Hon, chief of the Pacification Coordination Center. The CPDC and the Coordinating Center are paralleled by corresponding organizations at the regional and provincial levels, which dovetail with CORDS' structure at the same levels. The creation of CORDS and the CPDC has greatly simplified the administration of the total pacification effort, partly because the province chief, always a key man in

5. George Tanham, War Without Guns (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 27.

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development programs, no longer receives competing counsel from many different US advisers.

By the time CORDS was established in 1967, the US civilian effort in South Vietnam had so mushroomed, in so many directions, and with so much duplication that there was probably no alternative but to combine its direction with the direction of the military effort under COMUSMACV. Although CORDS united pacification programs under a single manager, it resulted in an even greater proliferation of programs, including many in new functional areas. Each of the previously independent agencies was reluctant to give up its "pet projects," and, in general, at no point during the transition to CORDS did we ever really evaluate not only the progress but the relevance of various pacification programs. The problem was complicated by the fact that in most cases various agencies of the US Government were making substantial contributions of money that had already been approved by Congress and was available for obligation.

Another management issue concerned the control of resources, especially at the local level where their ultimate disposition and use were clearly under the purview of our advisers in the field. Beginning in 1962, field authority to spend piaster funds and commit commodities was vested in a release agreement signed by the province chief and the MACV and USOM advisers--the troika signoff. In the spring of 1964, a temporary shortage of funds for implementing the New Life Hamlet program led USOM to purchase \$200,000 worth of piasters for allocation to sector (province) advisers for petty-cash type expenditures and the disbursement of these monies also required a troika signoff.

The signoff arrangement gave the United States leverage at the local level to help insure the proper use of USAID-furnished commodities and funds; it also tended to speed up action on urgent projects, since in effect it bypassed the GVN ministries.⁶ By the end of 1964,

6. US-Vietnam Relations, IV.C.9(a), Book 7, pp. 30-31 of section entitled "US-GVN Relations, 1964-June 1965."

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however, this device began to fall into disuse as part of our attempt to get the GVN to do more on its own and to reduce our visible influence in matters which it was believed should be under GVN control. In June 1965 the United States and the GVN agreed that the province chief would thereafter requisition commodities on his own authority, and so the signoff system came to an end.⁷ In October 1965 USOM tried to reinstitute it, but it was overruled by the State Department on the ground that it would undermine our efforts to make the GVN more independent and effective and would interfere with its "sovereignty." Subsequent attempts to revive the system were also unsuccessful.⁸

B. THE MILITARY FORCES IN CIVIC ACTION

One of the early problems facing US planners was how to integrate the military's considerable capability for development with other US developmental programs. The notion of civic action--that is, the participation of military units in economic and social development--was not new. As early as 1958 the Draper Committee, which examined all aspects of US foreign assistance, both economic and military, had recommended that indigenous military forces be employed as an arm of development. In 1960 this concept was recognized in a DoD directive that furnished the basis for the US Army's Civic Action program, one that was modeled after the earlier successful Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK) program. In 1961 this concept was codified in a Congressional Act for International Development, which provided that "to the extent feasible, the use of military forces in

7. Ibid., IV.B.3, Book 3, p. 64 of section entitled "The Advisory Build-Up, 1961-1967."

8. Even under the troika signoff arrangement, the province chief, if he felt strongly on an issue, could "go around" or "get around" his adviser, perhaps taking such steps as recommending to Saigon that the adviser be relieved. This device also has worked the other way around: CORDS' representatives in the field have sometimes recommended the dismissal of a corrupt or inefficient province chief.

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less developed friendly countries in the construction of public works and other activities helpful to economic development shall be encouraged."

As the Vietnam insurgency became more critical during the early 1960s, presidential interest in counterinsurgency led to other more specific civic action developments. In commenting on military civic action, President Kennedy observed that it was indispensable to establishing a link between the military and the people and he encouraged military participation in civic action projects, provided it did not interfere with the primary military mission. In 1962 MAP funds were authorized for the acquisition and maintenance of equipment used by the military in civic action developmental activities. Unfortunately, formal guidance on implementation of civic action was not issued to operating units until late 1966, when a Joint Manual for Civil Affairs was finally published. The last official publications on the subject had been military service publications of 1958 vintage. So the military forces, like the other bureaucracies involved in Vietnam, entered on the development scene with little current guidance on concepts and techniques of civic action. As in other programs, military civic action concepts were evolved by trial and error.

The civic action work of the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) in Region I was carried out in an area of high population and troop density and, thus, afforded a fertile testing ground for civic action concepts and programs. In the first five months, civic action gradually progressed from a spontaneous people-to-people program to one of more integrated and purposeful direction. The Force's medical support capability was linked to a training program for Vietnamese health workers, selective repair of roads facilitated access by the villagers to markets, and some minor new construction was begun. However, before it could proceed much further, III MAF had to develop sources of material outside military supply channels, which made no provision for civic action. The Agency for International Development and certain private relief organizations such as the Catholic Relief

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Services and CARE had material available, but its distribution was dependent on the thin and overworked resources of the Vietnamese. Since the military had an extensive capability for distribution, the obvious solution was to link the materials to the distributor. Materials for civic action were made available by AID, and CARE assumed the responsibility for forwarding from the United States to the port of Da Nang supplies purchased with funds obtained through Marine Corps Reserve units in the United States. Transportation resources of III MAF were then made available for distributing the supplies locally. These arrangements remained in force for the duration.

It was soon recognized that civic action would have to be more closely integrated with the overall development effort promulgated in the GVN-US pacification plans. The result was the establishment, on III MAF initiative, of a Military Region I Coordinating Committee, whose membership was drawn from all major US and GVN agencies in Region I, including representatives from the staffs of the Vietnamese regional military commanders. This organizational step was soon followed by the constitution of subcommittees for public health, education, roads, refugees, agriculture, and commodities distribution. As an outgrowth of the MR I Coordination Committee, provincial coordinating committees were established in the five provinces of Region I. As a further move to upgrade the civic action efforts of III MAF, civic action staff billets were established at each command echelon down through the regiment, and geographical responsibilities for coordinating civic action were assigned to the various Marine tactical units, which had to coordinate their programs with local GVN officials. Boundaries for civic action operations conformed as nearly as possible to the GVN political subdivisions of the district and the village.

In the spring of 1966, III MAF expanded its civic action to include a coordinated overall school building program. In each hamlet that indicated a desire to participate in the program, certain prerequisites were established; for example, there had to be (1) an

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adequate site, furnished by the hamlet officials, (2) an agreement that the people of the hamlet would participate in the construction, and (3) a teacher available and provisions for paying his or her salary. In return, the military unit agreed to provide construction materials, technical advice, and heavy equipment for clearing and grading the site. The application for each project was coordinated with cognizant GVN and AID officials to ensure coordination with overall plans for school construction. Similar procedures for all other construction projects ensured participation by the villagers and appropriate coordination with the US-GVN cognizant authorities. By the end of the first year of operations in Region I, a working formula for effective military civic action had evolved which furnished an example for all subsequent efforts of the same kind.

C. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

Although the overwhelming participation of the United States in the counterinsurgency posed many problems, it seemed in some cases that there was no alternative if anything was to be accomplished. No program reflected this dilemma more clearly than the one that tried to deal with refugees and war victims. The struggle against the Viet Cong has been generating large numbers of refugees ever since it moved into the open-warfare stage. It is estimated that something on the order of 25 to 30 percent of the 19 million population of South Vietnam has at one time or another during the past seven years been in refugee status.

The first flood of war-generated refugees caught the GVN without established procedures for handling the problem,⁹ and naturally weaknesses became manifest and failures ensued. The refugee problem arose at a time when there were many other competing demands on the small Vietnamese leadership corps, and just when a sound refugee program was

9. The influx of refugees, mostly Catholics, who moved from the north to the south after the 1954 Geneva Accords, was handled by the Diem administration with an efficiency not demonstrated thereafter by the GVN in its handling of war-generated refugees.

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finally being mounted with the help of the United States, it was overwhelmed by the refugees generated in the wake of the Communist Tet offensive of 1968. The problems were again aggravated by the influx of over 200,000 repatriates from Cambodia in the spring of 1970 and by the floods in MR I and parts of MR II which left 300,000 people homeless in the fall of 1970.

Although the GVN's handling of the refugees and war victims has been more enlightened and effective in recent years, in the period between 1963 and 1968 the record was not at all good. In trying to explain this failure, it is not enough to point to the GVN's perceived need for channeling its limited human and material resources toward other allegedly higher-priority areas. Also figuring in the picture was the general attitude that refugees were very probably VC sympathizers, and therefore did not deserve a great deal of attention. As a result, the United States was forced to shoulder the major financial burden and to supply a significant share of the manpower required to implement the refugee and war victim relief programs.

In later years, after the Tet offensive and the reestablishment of GVN control over large areas of formerly VC-held territory, great emphasis was placed on resettlement of refugees in the newly liberated areas. Until then, the stress had been on such temporary relief measures as the payment of benefits or allowances and the establishment of schools and dispensaries. The 1969 and 1970 pacification plans included refugee resettlement as one of the eight primary objectives. While much success was registered in the delta provinces, in other areas of the country, most notably in the central coastal provinces, the return-to-village movement, as it was called, encountered a number of problems. There was the old problem of sending people back to areas that were insufficiently protected from enemy attacks and, too often, once the refugees got back to their villages, the GVN failed to follow through with cash allowances, building materials, and food--all of which the GVN had promised them.

Both the United States and the GVN could and should have handled the refugee problem more effectively much earlier in the struggle.

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True, concentrating on the plight of the refugees may have seemed a luxury in the early years of the insurgency when the GVN was facing imminent collapse as a result of political instability and widespread insecurity. There were other more pressing tasks for the Saigon leadership to tackle. But there is less excuse for the United States during this same period, since it had ample resources and manpower available to assign to the task. Here were literally millions of people who, in their dependency on the GVN, were wide open to being influenced positively or negatively by the treatment they received at the hands of the government. From a purely pragmatic perspective, there is no evidence that the GVN made any effort to exploit the refugee manpower pool, despite the severe manpower shortages it encountered.

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VI

LESSONS LEARNED

Perhaps the most fundamental observation to be drawn from our experience with developmental programs in Vietnam is that political, economic, and social reforms in the context of a rural insurgency have a dual purpose--namely, to sever the connection between the rural population and the insurgents and to promote the people's commitment to a continuation of the legitimate government. Securing the admiration of the villagers--often referred to as winning hearts and minds--is an ideal for which one may strive, but it is not essential to the success of pacification. The degree of popular commitment elicited varies directly with the quality of leadership at the top. Unfortunately, the kind of leadership that can inspire and motivate people as Magsaysay did in the Philippines has not often been present in South Vietnam over the years.

The immediate objective of political, economic, and social reform at the grass roots, then, is not to transform the institutions of the country into replicas of some Western theoretical model. This is particularly true in regard to political institutions. Politically, the main purpose should be to prove to the people that their own self-interests are demonstrably satisfied by taking part in the political process, since in this way they are able to control to some extent the decisions bearing on their day-to-day lives.

Since economic and social development activity by the government has the same general end in mind, the object need not be to turn the countryside into a showplace of economic and social reform. What the practical, imaginative, and hardworking peasant wants is a physically secure environment and protection against economic and social exploitation. With these basic but limited conditions satisfied, the villager's

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essentially conservative orientation makes him a poor prospect as a recruit for revolution. He perceives that his self-interest is best served by continued association with the established government, that there is a risk of losing much by joining or cooperating with the insurgents.

Against the background of the foregoing basic observations, several somewhat more specific lessons can be drawn.

Derive development programs from well-formulated counterinsurgency concepts that take into account the nature and stages of the insurgency.

No agreed concept of the role of development programs emerged at any stage of the Vietnam counterinsurgency. During the latter half of the 1950s, almost no effort was made to improve the lot of the individual peasant, though it appears in retrospect that this may have been precisely the time when such efforts could have helped arrest the insurgency or at least ameliorate some of the grievances the enemy was exploiting so intensely. After the insurgency became recognized for what it was, there was a frantic attempt to quickly "do something" for the peasant, but by then it was probably too late for local development programs to have much effect on either the insurgency or on the peasant's attitude toward the government. Then and later, many of those programs appear to have been irrelevant or at least marginal to the real concerns of the peasants and to the job of countering the insurgency. If the United States and the GVN had succeeded in formulating an agreed conceptual role for development, many mistakes and much waste might have been avoided.

If American development assistance is to be granted to arrest a future insurgency, grant it on a highly selective, discriminate basis, taking full account of local needs and capabilities; under no circumstances mount such lavish assistance efforts as those in Vietnam.

Once the United States became involved in granting development assistance in support of counterinsurgency programs, there was a

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growing tendency to assume that every economic, political, and social problem in the country somehow or other contributed to the insurgency. The United States, with its strong sense of social justice and morality, tried not only to solve many of these problems but also to do it in "the American way." This often led to an indiscriminate application and pervasive Americanization of development assistance. The identification of new Vietnamese problems was quickly translated into more American programs, and, to make matters worse, more American programs meant pouring in more American money and advisers, much of this without any particular coordination with Vietnamese needs and capabilities.

In supporting development of a country faced with incipient or actual insurgency, insist from the outset on written agreements that delineate the conditions, requirements, and expectations for American aid, especially its control and distribution.

The lavishness of American aid led not only to an unhealthy Vietnamese dependency on the United States but also contributed to a demoralization of that society by creating tempting occasions for corruption. American advisers were often unwilling or unable to institute tight procedures for controlling resources, and, in general, the Vietnamese considered close American supervision demeaning. As a result, substantial quantities of resources were either diverted to the Viet Cong or sold for profit by corrupt local officials and individuals. Americans frequently tolerated such corruption because it was believed to be part of the "Oriental mind," without adequately considering the effect such corruption was having on the local population. This phenomenon was not confined to the rural areas; high-ranking GVN officials have, from time to time, gone along with a particular American program because of the opportunity it presented for personal gain.

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Recognize the importance of establishing security as a prerequisite for effective political, economic, and social development.

Time and again, events in Vietnam have demonstrated that development activity carried on without adequate security leads not only to the waste of time and resources but can actually backfire against the government in terms of diminished popular confidence. The resettlement of refugees in areas still vulnerable to enemy attack and the withdrawal of an RD team from a village before the local security apparatus is sufficiently developed to prevent the reentry of the Viet Cong are examples of pacification efforts initiated in an insecure environment, frequently with a devastating impact on the people and the program.

Be wary of increasing the scale and size of a program as a result of early success.

Under the pressure to come up with a winning combination or remedy, there is often a temptation to take what has worked well in one part of the country, or on a limited scale, and apply it across the board. This happened, for example, with both the Strategic Hamlet program and the RD cadre program. In the former case, Ngo Dinh Nhu was so anxious to blanket the country with strategic hamlets that he ignored the importance of maintaining a reasonable standard of quality. Many of his subordinates went through the motions of establishing hamlets in order to meet his quotas, but the hamlets quickly collapsed as soon as the Viet Cong applied pressure. The RD cadre program also suffered from overexpansion. In order to find enough recruits for the enlarged program in 1966, the GVN had to draw on many who lacked motivation, sensitivity, or even basic understanding of the country's problem. While many cadre served their country well, there were others who did more harm than good. The success of the VC cadre and of the APA and PAT cadre of the GVN proceeded to a large extent from the care and discrimination with which they were selected and trained.

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Establish and strengthen local administration at the earliest possible time.

It was at the local level that the Viet Cong first revealed their true intentions in South Vietnam. Political cells may germinate and operate under a cloak of secrecy, but it is difficult to disguise the next phase of the insurgency, that which aims at severing the tie between the local people and the central government. As open as this stage of the insurgency may be, it does not necessarily follow that the country's leaders will recognize the signs when they occur. In the early period of his administration, Diem consistently ignored or downplayed solid evidence of the insurgency in the form of assassinations and disappearances of local officials. Two conclusions follow. First, by establishing or maintaining a viable administration at the grass roots a government helps thwart an insurgency at one of its earliest and most vulnerable stages. Second, the enemy attack on the local administrative structure provides a form of "early warning system." Hence this is a key area to monitor, for it provides some of the earliest and surest indicators of growing insurgency.

Emphasize and respect traditional forms of local administration. Decentralize authority and responsibility, giving local administration significant roles in day-to-day affairs.

The Diem administration erred not only in shifting the basic unit of local administration from the village to the hamlet, but also in imposing appointed officials on the peasants. Both these steps ran counter to traditional arrangements and generated tensions that helped weaken the influence of the central government in the countryside. Subsequent administrations restored the village to its former preeminence and also reestablished the customary election of local-level officials. The strengthening of village administration in South Vietnam served a purpose well beyond the purely structural requirements of administration in the countryside--namely, it provided a way for the authorities to build a relationship of mutual advantage with the people, thereby offsetting the appeal of the enemy.

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Although employed in South Vietnam, an election process may not always be necessary or practicable. What is required are able and sensitive local officials, elected or appointed, who can help build bridges between the rural areas and the capital city.

Although popular participation is demonstrated through the election process, it takes on greater meaning if the elected officials, once installed, are endowed with real authority and responsibility. The Thieu government has taken steps to give local governments control over village self-development (VSD) funds, and it is at the village level that title transfers are taking place in connection with the land reform program initiated in 1970. Through the process of decentralization and popular participation, the villagers are acquiring more and more of a stake in the continuation of the established government, as opposed to its overthrow and replacement by a system contrived by the Viet Cong.

Limit local economic and social development projects to those that meet the basic needs of the villagers. Ensure the participation of the villagers in economic and social development activity.

The Vietnamese peasant did not demand a vast array of "goodies" as the price for his support and allegiance. The average villager was, and is, concerned with only a few matters that directly bear on his day-to-day life. Land reform, especially in the delta, was one such matter, and so was ready access to markets where he could sell his produce. The unseemly proliferation of US-sponsored economic and social programs only generated new problems at the local level, or at least accentuated old ones there. Some of the more obvious effects were: overtaxing local administrations, encouraging corruption, and superimposing a stifling expansion of US presence almost everywhere.

As in political affairs, the more people become engaged in the process of shaping their own lives, the more inclined they are to support the government. The Village Self-Development program is in effect the economic counterpart to village elections. Unfortunately, there has been, and still is, a tendency by the district and

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provincial authorities to inhibit this important feature of development policy at the local level.

Provide for effective planning and programming of projects.

One of the most serious deficiencies in the Vietnamese experience with economic and social development has been the failure to follow through with effective planning and programming of projects once they have been authorized. For example, after participating in the building of a school the villagers have often discovered that no provision was made for a teacher. In the same vein, dispensaries have been built without supplies to stock them or midwives to staff them. The adverse psychological impact of the government's performance in such situations is obviously substantial.

Employ cadre teams as a "cutting edge" of pacification in the event effective local administration does not exist. Emphasize the quality of the cadre organization.

There is no doubt that in Vietnam the political action groups, or cadre, filled a very substantial gap, particularly in the earlier stages of the struggle against the insurgency. The GVN had no other plausible way to assert its influence in the rural areas where the administrative apparatus had been undermined and destroyed. Neither the villagers nor the regular bureaucracy, by themselves, could provide the type of leadership able to withstand the challenge posed by the Viet Cong, only the trained cadres could.

At the same time, a government presence in the countryside that generates antagonism and resentment is worse than no presence at all. This points up the importance of able, well-trained, sensitive, and highly dedicated cadre. Naturally, quality is something that one seeks in all aspects of pacification, but it is especially important in the earliest stages of contact between the government and the villagers, for it is then that the latter weigh most carefully the advantages and disadvantages of alternative affiliation--with the government or with the insurgents. One of the shortcomings of the

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GVN's cadre program was simply low quality. Although some smaller cadre efforts, such as the APA and PAT programs, were successful in recruiting and training highly effective team members, the overall record was spotty. Besides such troubles as overly rapid expansion, low pay, and the failure to provide deferments, the GVN tended to treat the cadre as poor country cousins instead of as fully legitimate members of the government family. What was needed was the integration of the cadre into the formal government structure.

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PART FOUR

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

Reporting is an organizational activity that helps to answer two sets of questions that must be asked by any organization expending resources to achieve objectives.

The first set of questions centers on such matters as these: What is really going on? How are we doing, generally? Have our recent activities marked forward, backward, or zero movement toward our objectives? Do the current status and trends have significant implications for our overall policy toward these activities? If so, should we be reassessing that overall policy with a view to possible basic changes in it? This area of organizational interest in the output of reporting can be conceived as one that requires reliable information for the formulation of evaluations that bear on future policy, including policy at the highest levels of the organization. In the Vietnam context, this has tended to mean the President and his principal civilian and military national security advisers in Washington.

The second set of questions centers on such matters as these: How are our various major program activities doing, both absolutely and compared with one another? Which among them seem to be lagging, and why? Would a realignment of resource inputs help correct these shortcomings? If so, how should we go about it? If not, what more fundamental corrective actions are possible? This area of organizational interest in the output of reporting can be conceived as one that requires reliable information for the ongoing, effective management of the operations of the organization at all levels at which operational decisions are made. In the Vietnam context, this has tended to mean the district, province, regional, and national levels in-country.

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It is useful to think of these two overlapping perceptions of reporting as the policy application and the management application. As an abstract differentiation it may lack theoretical rigor, but it does reflect the different ways in which men actually involved in Vietnam pacification matters have acted and reacted with respect to the requirements for and the uses of reporting. Regardless of these divergent perceptions, there is now widespread agreement that, at least until the closing year or two of the 1960s, reporting on pacification in Vietnam was unsatisfactory on both counts: it did not accurately and adequately inform the policymakers in Washington, and it did not accurately and adequately inform the managers in Vietnam.

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I

DEVELOPMENTS PRIOR TO THE ASSASSINATION OF DIEM

A. SEPARATE AGENCY REPORTING

When a substantial US representational presence in South Vietnam began in 1954-55, President Kennedy's strong assertion of the authority of an ambassador over all US agencies and activities in his country lay half a dozen years into the future. It was therefore normal for each US agency on the ground to report through its own channels back to Washington, subject only to such coordination as the ambassador cared or was able to effect through personal inclination and effort. In general, each agency focused its reporting on its designated or perceived mission. For example, the embassy concentrated on reporting the political problems, at first including sheer survival, that were besieging the government of Ngo Dinh Diem, and the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) concentrated on reporting how it was doing in helping the Vietnamese military command to plan, recruit, organize, equip, and train the armed forces of the new republic.

At precisely that time, US military advisers were providing large-scale assistance to the Republic of Korea for the development of its armed forces. The geopolitical configuration of the Korean situation seemed to resemble strongly that of the Vietnamese situation: one people divided into two states (one Communist and one non-Communist) by a parallel of latitude; actual or potential Sino-Soviet support of the Communist state, paralleled by US support of the non-Communist state; and the example of the North Korean cross-border conventional attack of 1950 suggested a like possibility in Vietnam. It is therefore not particularly surprising that the work of the MAAG resulted in progress toward creating in South Vietnam a kind of mirror image of the Korean armed forces (and therefore to a marked extent of their

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American model), and that during the middle and late 1950s the MAAG was primarily reporting on its detailed movement toward that objective. The MAAG was officially charged with training Vietnamese forces to defend against both external attack and internal aggression (i.e., insurgency), but it knew a lot more about the former than the latter, and so focused almost exclusively on it. Furthermore, MAAG-Vietnam, like its counterparts elsewhere in the world, did not consider itself to be in the intelligence business. The thought was that trying to engage in such activities and reporting on them could jeopardize MAAG's relations with the host government, and this sensibility even produced some reluctance by MAAG to advise the Vietnamese intelligence staffs. The embassy did include some military, naval, and air attachés, but they were overshadowed by the numbers, rank, and disposable resources of the MAAG.

The result of all this complexity in a strange environment was, not surprisingly, that reporting in general from Vietnam during the 1950s was unsystematic and full of gaps, and one of the most specifically gap-ridden areas was reporting on the security situation in the South Vietnamese countryside. This shortcoming did not seem to matter much when, in 1956-58, President Diem and the Government of Vietnam (GVN) were riding fairly high and the Viet Minh-Viet Cong insurgent revolutionaries were lying fairly low, but when the situation began to show clear signs of deteriorating badly in 1959-60, and Washington wanted to know what was going on, senior US military and civilian officials in Saigon had to rely largely on field reports from Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sources and on whatever unevaluated information Vietnamese sources were able and willing to provide them, such as it was.¹

1. A country team-study group assessment of March 1960 expressed grave misgivings about the security situation in the countryside, based largely on information from CIA informants. United States-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, study prepared by the Department of Defense in twelve books (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), Book 2, pp. 43-48 of section entitled "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960." The full text of the dispatch containing the study group's assessment is in Book 10, pp. 1254-75. Hereafter this multi-volume publication will be referred to as US-Vietnam Relations.

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One US agency that did engage in some penetration into the countryside during the late 1950s and that reflected that experience in its reporting was the CIA.² Both in the field and in Washington, the CIA made an effort to add critical and interpretive judgments to its factual reporting. The greater realism of the CIA reports, as attested by the actual developments in their wake, generally continued well into the 1960s. This has been attributed to several factors, including the greater intelligence professionalism of CIA's reporters and evaluators compared with the officers who happened to find themselves assigned to military intelligence. None, however, is more persuasive than the relative freedom of those reporters from membership in a hierarchical organization, the mission in life of which is to move toward the achievement of objectives by registering--and reporting--progress toward them. In short, and unlike most other Americans in Vietnam, they generally had no policy axes to grind themselves, and they knew their efficiency or effectiveness or fitness ratings would not be written by superiors who did. In their world, there were no bonuses for good sales reports.

The advent of the Kennedy administration in 1961 had the effect, in Washington and for a while, of opening up some windows on the situation in Vietnam. The eagerness of the new President and some of his advisers to dig into a subject instead of settling for canned briefings served to afford hearings to many points of view. By the first autumn of his administration the President had decided to send his military representative, General Maxwell D. Taylor, to Vietnam for a first-hand reading of the situation and for the formulation of some appropriate recommendations in the light of that reading. One of General Taylor's first impressions from briefings and contacts was that for the most part the US representatives in Vietnam did not know what was really going on there, and that what was being passed along to Washington was coming mostly from a variety of unevaluated Vietnamese

2. For reflections of this reporting in the evaluations contained in the national intelligence estimates on Vietnam of 1956, 1957, and 1959, see *ibid.*, Book 10, pp. 1066-80, 1102, and 1190-95.

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sources, themselves as uncoordinated as those on the US side who were regurgitating the information so provided.

In his reports to the President at the end of his trip to Vietnam, General Taylor strongly stressed the need to improve the nature and quality of the information being reported; in fact, this was one of the principal reasons he explicitly adduced for the very substantial increase in the number of US advisers that he recommended and that was soon effected. He believed that what would result would be "the rapid build-up of an intelligence capability both to identify operational targets for the Vietnamese and to assist Washington in making a sensitive and reliable assessment of the progress of the war."³

Some action directed toward the improvement of reporting did indeed follow in the wake of the president's acceptance of almost all General Taylor's recommendations. The MAAG was transformed into the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The J-2 section of its staff moved quickly into the intelligence business, although the bureaucratic bargaining attending triservice distribution of key posts resulted in the first two J-2's being Air Force officers whose backgrounds in aspects of strategic missile and air warfare had hardly prepared them for the assessment of Asian peasant insurgencies. A Joint Evaluation Center, comprising elements of the embassy, CIA, and MACV's J-2, was established in early 1962 to prepare joint intelligence reports and assessments, as also recommended by General Taylor. Thus some temporary progress was made, but before long it began to deteriorate for many reasons, among them (1) the disinclination of the embassy to play a strong central role, (2) the stubbornness of everyone's orientation to separate agency reporting channels, (3) the rapidly growing strength, and therefore "clout," of MACV, which tended to dominate the scene and which at that early stage had not yet developed much sophistication in addressing factors not strictly military,

3. Excerpts from Taylor's 1 November 1961 cable and 3 November 1961 report to President Kennedy, in The Pentagon Papers, as published by the New York Times (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 144-47; quoted phrase on p. 147 (underlining added). In his book, Swords and Plowshares, to be published by W. W. Norton and Company, Inc. (New York) in early 1972, General Taylor elaborates on the points summarized here.

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and (4) the perennially inscrutable complexities and sensitivities of Vietnamese military and political organizations and functions, and the desire of President Diem that US observers not "pry into political and economic matters in the rural areas."⁴

B. EARLY PACIFICATION REPORTING

The drastic increase in the number of US advisers during 1962, from about 800 to about 10,000, made it possible for the first time to begin the establishment of small US teams as sector advisers in the provinces to help the Vietnamese province chiefs in pacification matters. It was not until mid-1964 that sector advisers were employed in all provinces, but meanwhile elementary pacification reporting did begin, by sector advisers and by US civilian advisory personnel in the field. Population and area-control information was transmitted to Saigon in basically narrative form and, later, also in several related formats of an area assessment system that included map plots. Beginning in mid-1962, J-2 forwarded summary reports of population control every few months to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington, where their substance became available to the Secretary of Defense and other senior officials.

This general arrangement probably looked good on paper, but appearances were apt to be deceiving, for a number of reasons. First, the US sector advisers were heavily dependent on their Vietnamese counterparts for information because (a) they were physically unable themselves to check on a significant number of villages and hamlets in the province, (b) even "spot checks" could hardly be meaningful without some basic command of Vietnamese, which the overwhelming majority of them lacked, (c) even some basic command of Vietnamese was not enough to check on such complicated matters as the Viet Cong infrastructure, and (d) even a good command of Vietnamese (exceptionally rare at this time) could not compensate for the disadvantages of a long break-in period on a short tour.

4. Quote from Chapter 19 of the forthcoming Taylor book, Swords and Plowshares.

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Second, the Vietnamese province chief counterparts of the US advisers during this period were under great pressure from President Diem himself and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, to report impressive progress in pacification, especially through the strategic hamlet program,⁵ and it was on these euphorically optimistic reports of progress that the US advisers were largely drawing in their own reports.

Third, MACV, on balance, also was inclined to overly-optimistic reporting prior to the coup of late 1963, perhaps in part because its senior officers were "wired" to senior Vietnamese officers and officials who were in turn "wired" to the Diem-Nhu clique. Then, too, military organizations generally stress specific goal-setting, and this, however valuable in many ways, is not likely to encourage admissions by subordinates that they are "failing" to meet those goals. (As an example of an "atmospheric," in late 1962 MACV combined its J-2 situation report and its J-3 operations summary into something called a Headway Report.)

Fourth, the strategic hamlet program, which was "center stage" in 1962-63, was especially vulnerable to misleading conclusions. This was partly because reporting concentrated on material "inputs"--kilometers of barbed wire, tons of rice, and the like--and tended to overlook the impact of enemy reactions to the program, reactions that could and did significantly affect the program's "outputs": secure hamlets en route to rational development. This numbers-oriented "management" approach was also not capable of reflecting more subtle but far more meaningful factors such as, for example, the extent of Viet Cong infrastructure activity in the hamlets and the extent to which the peasants in those hamlets--including the "strategic" ones--were cooperating with that infrastructure instead of with GVN authorities.

Fifth, military officers want to draw assignments they think will further their careers, and the job of sector adviser to a Vietnamese province chief concerned with something called pacification could not

5. For a detailed discussion of this program, including the reporting aspects, see the chapter "The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961-1963," in Volume III of this study.

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have looked nearly as mainstream-like as the job of adviser to the commander of a Vietnamese fighting unit. The dimensions of this problem were to expand later on when US combat units were introduced, but even in 1962-63 it was exerting its influence on the perceived desirability of various categories of advisory assignments.

And finally, perhaps most important of all, not many Americans, either in Vietnam or Washington, knew very much about insurgency and counterinsurgency, so it is not surprising that the action-reaction between US officials in the two places rather resembled a dialogue of the deaf.

C. OTHER REPORTING SOURCES

Of course the province advisers' reports to MACV in Saigon and their consolidation in MACV reports to the Department of Defense in Washington were not the only source of information for US policymakers. The embassy was still in business, but it tended to confine its attention to large-dimension political reporting. The CIA's reporting, which, as mentioned earlier, had usually been more realistic than that from other elements of the US mission, unfortunately drifted into occasional overoptimism during 1962-63 because of the Agency's operational involvement with parts of the strategic hamlet program. However, the activities of the United States Operations Mission (USOM, the field organization of the Agency for International Development, AID) began in this period to result in some reporting of the pacification situation in the countryside, and this reporting often contrasted sharply with what the sector advisers were transmitting to MACV. As 1963 moved along, still other voices began making themselves heard. Roger Hilsman's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department challenged the alleged optimism of prevailing reporting, and in the White House Michael Forrestal, a National Security Council (NSC) staff member with direct access to President Kennedy, did likewise.⁶ Finally,

6. The Pentagon Papers, pp. 113 and 180.

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it was in 1963 that several old hands in the American press corps in Vietnam, notably Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam, began to zero in very critically on the status of affairs there and on the way it was being represented by government officials at all levels.

President Diem was in serious political trouble by the summer of 1963. Though the events that led to his assassination in the coup of early November are not directly germane to reporting and evaluation of pacification, some of the "fallout" from the record of those events is. On 19 September Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in a cable to President Kennedy reported "General Big Minh's opinion expressed very privately yesterday that the Viet Cong are steadily gaining in strength; have more of the population on their side than has the GVN ... and that the 'Heart of the Army is not in the war.' All this by Vietnamese No. 1 General is now echoed by Secretary of Defense Thuan ... who wants to leave the country." Six weeks later, and only days before the coup occurred, General Paul Harkins, the commander of MACV, expressed in a cable of 30 October to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff his fundamental disagreement with the pessimistic view Ambassador Lodge had been expressing: "I do not agree with the Ambassador's assessment ... that we are just holding our own. The GVN is a way ahead in the I, II, and parts of the III Corps and making progress in the Delta." In a later cable that same day, Harkins underlined his own differing judgment: "On balance we are gaining in contest with the VC. There will continue to be minor ups and downs but the general trend has been and continues to be upward."⁷

Without regard to the substantive merits of the opposing positions espoused by Lodge and Harkins, what is important to the present subject is that such fundamentally different evaluations of the question "How are we doing, anyway?" existed in the first place, and above all that the antagonists were the ambassador of the United States and the senior US military officer in Vietnam. Ambassador Lodge has been described as a "loner," whose communication with General Harkins (and

7. Ibid., pp. 209 and 221-22.

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others) left something to be desired, but personality quirks and personal styles do not adequately explain why the president of the United States was so poorly informed at such a critical time.

These shockingly different assessments from Lodge and Harkins only reflected at the highest in-country level the difficulties that had been besetting all attempts to evaluate the status of both the insurgency and the efforts to defeat it through military operations and pacification. As late as July and August 1963 in Washington, both DIA and JCS's Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) were circulating basically optimistic prognoses. In early October, less than one month before the anti-Diem coup was to usher in many moments of truth, Secretary McNamara and JCS Chairman Taylor's report to the president on a just-completed Vietnam visit was also essentially optimistic in its conclusions on progress in countering the insurgency.

It is, however, interesting to note that the Secretary and the General included the following paragraph under the heading, "Standards of Measure":

The test of the military situation is whether the GVN is succeeding in widening its area of effective control of the population and the countryside. This is difficult to measure, and cannot be stated simply in terms of the number of strategic hamlets built or the number of roads that can now be travelled without escort. Nor can the overall situation be gauged solely in terms of the extent of GVN offensive action, relative weapon losses and defections, VC strength figures, or other measures of military performance. All of these factors are important and must be taken into account; however, a great deal of judgment is required in their interpretation.⁸

Such expressions of reservation were rare indeed prior to November 1963, although in August one of DIA's daily intelligence bulletins had noted an increase in Viet Cong offensive actions during the previous

8. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 12, p. 557. For DIA and SACSA, see Book 3, p. 17 of section entitled "Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962-1964."

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three weeks.⁹ The most striking dissent in Washington from the prevailing mood of somewhat qualified euphoria appeared in a 22 October 1963 evaluation by State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Drawing only on statistics compiled by DIA, SACS, and MACV, the evaluation concluded that all was far from well with the GVN's counterinsurgency. Under the heading "Statistics as Indicators," the memorandum noted:

Statistics, in general, are only partial and not entirely satisfactory indicators of progress in the total counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam. First some statistics are incomplete, as for example, those relating to Viet Cong attacks against strategic hamlets and desertions within the South Vietnamese military and security services. Second, all statistics are acquired largely if not entirely from official South Vietnamese sources. As such, their validity must, to some degree at least, remain questionable, even though the efforts of the United States military and civilian advisors have improved the quality of this data during the past year or [so?]. Third, there are several other important indicators which are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to handle statistically. These include: morale and efficiency within the bureaucracy and the armed services, the degree of locally acquired or volunteered intelligence, popular attitudes toward the Viet Cong and the government, and the status and impact of the government's political, social, and economic activities in support of the strategic hamlet program. Nonetheless, statistics touch on some significant aspects of the military situation and provide a guide at least to trends in the fighting.¹⁰ (Underlining added.)

Nevertheless, beginning in this strategic hamlet period of 1962-63 and continuing for several years, statistics continued to beguile Washington's policymakers--especially Secretary McNamara, whose zeal

9. Ibid.

10. Text of Research Memorandum RFE-90 is in *ibid.*, Book 12, pp. 579-89; quoted paragraph on pp. 579-80. This memorandum provoked controversy and recrimination in interdepartmental circles, ending with a personal memorandum from Secretary Rusk to Secretary McNamara more or less apologizing for State's issuing "military appraisals without seeking the views of the Defense Department." *Ibid.*, Book 3, p. 24 of section entitled "Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962-1964."

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for quantified data was already well developed. As a reaction to the erstwhile, overly impressionistic reporting based on Vietnamese sources, the stress on quantification was understandable. Overdone, as it often was, it seemed as though a search was on for some Holy Grail of magic indices that would somehow clarify the murk of Vietnam. Thus, "Secretary Rusk was not trying to mislead his audience when in a speech on April 22 [1963] he noted with satisfaction that 'already approximately 7 million Vietnamese live in well over 5000 strategic hamlets. The program calls for the completion of another 3000 by the end of this year'."¹¹

11. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1970), p. 201.

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II

REASSESSMENT AND TRANSITION

A. REASSESSMENT EFFORTS

In the wake of the collapses on several fronts that followed the coup of November 1963, it soon became readily apparent to US officials in both Vietnam and Washington that the reports from Vietnamese sources on which they had been relying so heavily for reporting and evaluation of progress had been not only deficient but seriously misleading. Secretary McNamara's report to President Johnson at the conclusion of his 18-20 December 1963 visit to Vietnam, his first since the coup, made this disillusionment clear. Reflecting his gloomy view of the substantive situation, McNamara wrote: "my best guess [is] that the situation has in fact been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realized because of undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting" (emphasis added). He also reported that in his judgment the country team represented a major weakness, had been "poorly informed," and was "not working according to a common plan." On reporting, he wrote: "As to the grave reporting weakness, both Defense and CIA must take major steps to improve this." CIA Director John McCone had accompanied McNamara to Vietnam, and on 23 December, two days after their return, he sent the Secretary a memorandum that included the following observations:

information furnished to us from MACV and the Embassy concerning the current Viet Cong activities in a number of provinces and the relative position of the SVN [South Vietnamese] Government versus the Viet Cong forces was incorrect, due to the fact that the field officers of the MAAG and USOM had been grossly misinformed by the province and district chiefs. It was reported to us, and I believe correctly, that the province and district chiefs felt obliged to 'create

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statistics which would meet the approbation of the Central Government.¹

In the light of this awakening, Director McCone proposed to Secretary McNamara that they send to Saigon a joint Defense-CIA survey team to assess the whole question of reporting and evaluation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to participate in this effort, and in the end the team that went to Vietnam was composed only of CIA personnel with experience in Vietnam. After about two months, the survey team prepared a draft appraisal containing both substantive assessments of the status of the insurgency and recommendations for improving reporting. When invited to comment on the appraisal, General Harkins, still COMUSMACV, wrote of the assessments that: "Where the statements are clean-cut, the supporting information was usually provided by my field personnel and reflected in reports already sent to Washington by this headquarters. Where the statements are sweeping, they are based on opinion or an unfortunate penchant for generalizing from the specific." An obvious rejoinder to this remark would have pointed out that only interpretive professional analysis of concrete details could make them meaningful to policymakers and that such evaluative analysis was the very essence of intelligence as opposed to mere information regurgitation.²

Toward the end of its tour of temporary duty in Vietnam, the CIA survey team tied in with two other efforts, one out of Washington and one out of MACV. The first was a small interdepartmental team, headed by Chester Cooper of the White House, which traveled to Saigon to look into the mission's reporting system just prior to another visit by Secretary McNamara in early March 1964.³ The second was a study begun in late 1963 by a MACV Information and Reports Working Group (IRWG).

1. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 3, pp. 19-21 of section entitled "U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, November 1963-April 1965." Also, The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 271-74.

2. US-Vietnam Relations, Book 3, p. 24.

3. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1970), p. 229.

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This IRWG examined in detail both US and GVN systems for reporting on hamlet, population, and area control, and in early 1964 it proposed a system using a set of over 100 military-oriented indicators. "This approach soon fell apart, largely of its own weight but also because data to support some of the evaluations, although quantifiable, were not readily available, and partly because measurement of progress in some of the indicators selected could not be quantified or even evaluated by sound subjective judgment."⁴

The CIA survey team and Cooper's group made several suggestions that were soon put into effect. Among them were (1) the submittal from Saigon to Washington of a weekly Mission assessment of political and economic progress, as well as of progress on the military front; (2) the establishment of a MACV Provincial Reports Office separate from J-2 and J-3 (although staffed by them), and (3) the intensification of the nascent program of developing embassy "provincial reporters"--bright, young, language-trained foreign service officers who would course through the countryside independently assessing status and trends in nonmilitary-operational fields. The provincial reporters provided, and for several years into the future would continue to provide, nonprogram-oriented assessments of the situation in the countryside--to include the general security status as well as characteristic provincial attitudes, behavior, and problems. Although not always popular with the appointed civilian and military US field representatives, they did furnish subjective, well-informed judgments in considerable depth, which could be used in conjunction with the increasingly objective and numbers-focused reporting from the operators involved in pacification.

The CIA and Cooper efforts of early 1964 merged with that of MACV's Information and Reports Working Group to produce agreement in May on a pacification reporting system that was to survive in all major

4. Dorothy K. Clark and Charles R. Wyman, An Exploratory Analysis of the Reporting, Measuring, and Evaluating of Revolutionary Development in South Vietnam, Research Analysis Corporation (McLean, Virginia, 1967), pp. 7-8 and 22.

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respects for over two and a half years. Meanwhile, quantitative data on more strictly military indicators of "progress"--body counts, weapons captured, sorties flown--continued to be reported separately from MACV's J-3.

B. NEW FIELD REPORTING SYSTEM

The pacification reporting system that went into effect in May 1964 was based largely on Vietnamese classifications indicating various degrees of control over hamlets, areas, and populations. The five degrees of control were secured, undergoing securing, undergoing clearing, uncontested (i.e., controlled by neither side and of secondary importance), and VC-controlled; on the map plots these five were represented, respectively, by dark blue, light blue, green, white, and red. The criteria for determining how to classify were expressed verbally, and key words or terms were subject to widely varying subjective assessments, such as "adequate," "available," "sufficient," "qualified," and "largely."

By this time (mid-1964), US sector advisers were present in all provinces, so thenceforth pacification reporting in US channels included data from all provinces. Also, beginning in 1964, "the creation of sub-sector advisory teams--attached to [Vietnamese] district headquarters--brought the MACV advisory role into more direct, daily contact with the actual process of pacification."⁵ The reports on population and area control were based insofar as possible on evaluations by US advisers in the districts, prepared by the US province advisers, and channeled to MACV's Revolutionary Development and Support Directorate (RDSD) in Saigon. The RDSD then consolidated this information into a report to DIA in Washington called the "MACV Monthly Report of Revolutionary Development Progress, Population, and Area Control."⁶

The more methodical linkage of classifications and criteria, along with an increasing US advisory presence in the countryside, constituted

5. William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 86.

6. Clark and Wyman, Reporting, Measuring, and Evaluating, pp. 12 and 46.

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a substantial improvement over the pacification reporting that had prevailed until then. So did the greater frequency and regularity with which this information was sent to Washington, as well as the fact that it was now available there broken down by provinces. Nevertheless, many difficulties and shortcomings continued to beleaguer reporting and evaluation in and from Vietnam. Among them were the following:

(1) Information was still derived overwhelmingly from Vietnamese sources. Prior to the coup, sycophancy toward and fear of Diem and Nhu by Vietnamese officials had distorted it; now, after the coup, the new Vietnamese administrative leadership at all levels was on the whole inexperienced, unknowledgeable, constantly changing, and at sixes and sevens with respect to what was really going on in this very troubled time.

(2) Evaluations by many criteria remained overly vulnerable on both the US and Vietnamese sides, to subjective judgments by the very program-oriented operators whose performance ratings might be influenced by those judgments. Where criteria were specific, it was often not hard to satisfy their "letter" without really fulfilling them--as, for a theoretical example, providing half-serviceable rifles to a handful of untrained peasants in order to be able to claim that "hamlet inhabitants have been organized for self-defense tasks."

(3) Trying to avoid the need for addressing such subjective concepts as "adequate" or "sufficient," sector advisers often fastened on some unofficial but concrete control-status indicators to help them. One such indicator was the arrival in or departure from a hamlet of Revolutionary Development (RD) cadre. "For example, in August 1966, these reasons were cited for 53 percent of the changes in hamlet status for which explanations of any kind were given in the DIA report. In these cases a hamlet was classified as undergoing securing when RD cadre started working on it, downgraded if RD cadre left before completing their work, and upgraded to secured if the cadre completed their work and left."⁷ The effect of this was to make the sector adviser's classifications dependent on the RD commitment-and-withdrawal decisions of some Vietnamese administrator whose motives may have been influenced by many factors tangential or even extraneous to orderly and effective pacification.

(4) The data were still coarse at province level, and not for another two years or more would there be enough US sub-sector advisers in the districts to permit shifting to them a full

7. Ibid., p. 24.

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requirement for finer-grain data that could be reflected in country-wide summations.

(5) The pacification criteria that were now so strongly stressed were overwhelmingly military in nature. To grant that security is a necessary but not sufficient condition of pacification is not enough; the fact is that criteria required to reflect true pacification were largely lacking. Naturally, this skewing favored optimistic perceptions of the status of pacification as reported to Saigon and Washington.

(6) The system itself prevented accurate categorization of large areas in some provinces. According to one US province representative, for example, "in Quang Nam, ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam--i.e., the regular forces] would move its regiment around in several districts, staying a few weeks in each place, but without concomitant systematic pacification efforts. Invariably, the Communist incidents would go down with ARVN troops present. This was taken as an improvement in the security status of the area and the map report would be changed. Then incidents would soar again when ARVN moved somewhere else."⁸

By any standard, the years 1964 and 1965 were by far the worst ever for the Government of Vietnam and its supporting American ally. As recounted in detail elsewhere in this study, the political, economic, and military situations all deteriorated dramatically, and sheer survival compelled concentrating on military operations against enemy main forces, operations which after March 1965 involved US combat troops committed in ever-increasing numbers and types. Under these circumstances, the task of pacification, sometimes called the "other war," did not receive much attention, but had to yield to the manifestly higher priority demands of the "big war." With pacification itself in limbo, there was not overly much high-level concern with pacification reporting; as for evaluation of progress, this was a black period during which everyone knew that almost all indicators of almost everything were pointing sharply downward.

There were some changes in 1964 besides the installation of the new field reporting system in May. In July, General Maxwell D. Taylor's arrival in Saigon as the new US ambassador marked the beginning of a more sustained attempt to coordinate all aspects of US activities in-

8. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification, p. 217.

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country, including reporting and evaluation. Taylor established a "Mission Council," patterned after the National Security Council in Washington, which comprised the heads of all US agencies in Vietnam and which transmitted to Washington weekly reports that included status assessments. Individual council members were free to register dissents, but Taylor's reputation, forceful leadership, and, perhaps above all, his carte blanche mandate from President Johnson, tended to promote council harmony. It was also while Taylor was ambassador that the institution of embassy "provincial reporters" came into its own.

Two judgments expressed in 1966 will help provide some feel for how the system for pacification reporting and evaluation was perceived at the two most widely separated nodes of the information network. An author who had served as an AID province representative from 1963 to 1965 wrote a year later as follows:

There was no room in the classification for the truly contested area, ruled at night by the Viet-Cong, but by the government during the day. Yet this was the standard situation in most of Quang Nam and many other provinces....

The "grapevine" usually kept the local citizens aware of where they could go and what they could do. Many officials relied on such local intelligence to determine their own activities and travel. But the maps sent to MACV and ARVN in Saigon did not reflect this data....

The inadequately based interpretations, when neatly quantified, color-coded, and placed on a briefing board ... appear[ed] as clear "evidence" on which top-level American policy-makers [had to] rely to make far-reaching decisions.⁹

On 21 September 1966, a department serving those "top-level American policy-makers" had occasion to express its view of what it was receiving in the way of status assessments from Vietnam. On that day, State sent Embassy Saigon a telegram that spoke of the "striking inconsistencies" between the embassy's latest monthly report on RD programs and a corresponding MACV monthly report of RD progress, accompanied by MACV's customary map overlay for showing population and area control.

9. Ibid., pp. 217-18.

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Apparently in some exasperation, the department complained that the discrepancies "render both sets of data useless for our purposes." Saigon's explanation by return telegram that the discrepancies were due to the use of "different criteria" was not calculated to be especially mollifying almost five years after the Taylor mission of October 1961 had underlined the need for coordinated, reliable reporting.

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III

THE HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM (HES)

The year 1966 witnessed important changes affecting the conduct of pacification reporting in Vietnam. Although a hard road still lay ahead, US combat forces in continually increasing numbers since their introduction in early 1965, were beginning to contain enemy main forces in the "big war" that had gone so badly for the GVN in 1964 and 1965, and this emerging development permitted the devotion of somewhat more attention to pacification planning on both the US and Vietnamese sides. Ambassador Lodge, back for a second tour in Saigon since mid-summer 1965, had become an outspoken partisan of pacification, and when it appeared that President Johnson himself was of like mind, the stage was set for considerable emphasis on pacification, even if--like everything else in Vietnam--it took a little time and a little doing before very much happened.

A. AFTERMATH OF HONOLULU CONFERENCE

It all began early in February 1966 with a Honolulu summit conference at which the US and Vietnamese delegations were headed by President Johnson and Premier Nguyen Cao Ky. Forecasting the nature of the conference, of the final communiqué, and of the presentation of the results to the public, President Johnson took Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John Gardner along with him. In closing the conference's final session, the President stressed the importance of hard work to achieve concrete results in the areas covered by the communiqué. For example:

In paragraph 5; how have you built democracy in the rural areas? How much of it have you built, when and where? Give us dates, times, numbers.

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In paragraph 2; larger outputs ... handicraft, light industry, rural electrification--are those just phrases, high-sounding words, or have you coonskins on the wall...?

Next is health and education, Mr. Gardner. We don't want to talk about it; we want to do something about it. "The President pledges he will dispatch teams of experts." Well, we better do something besides dispatching.¹

Regardless of how well the President's remarks reflected what was and what was not possible in the near term, there was no mistaking his desire to press ahead with the "other war." Within little more than a month, Robert Komer of the NSC staff was promoted to presidential Special Assistant and was acting as a White House "blowtorch" on that "other war," while in Saigon Deputy Ambassador William Porter had begun to try pulling together all nonmilitary US agencies in-country that were involved in matters bearing on pacification. And over at the Pentagon in those same weeks of early 1966 following the Honolulu conference, Secretary McNamara established a Southeast Asia Programs Office in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis. The primary mission of this new shop was to provide the Secretary with the best factual information available on the ongoing buildup of US forces in Vietnam, with emphasis on how actual deployments were comparing with agreed plans. However, before long, the arrival of staffers with in-country experience with reporting matters from the field resulted in the preparation of comprehensive data tables that made it possible for the first time to deal with data on a time-series basis, thus exposing trends over time--including some trends in population control in terms of hamlets and people.

All these promising developments were only embryonic, to be sure, and the actual status of Vietnam events in the real world of the present continued to be deeply discouraging, especially in pacification. In October, after another of his periodic trips to Saigon, Secretary McNamara sent a memorandum to President Johnson that reflected his own

1. The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 495-96. See also US-Vietnam Relations, Book 6, pp. 36-44 of section entitled "Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965-1967" for a rundown of the conference.

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discouragement with pacification progress but that also advanced constructive recommendations for improvements, including some forthright ones on reorganizing the US civilian and military structures in Saigon for the more effective pursuit of pacification activities.² The next five months were to see the successive births of first the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) and then of the longer-lived organization called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). These organizational developments are covered in Part Six of this volume, but what is germane to this discussion of reporting and evaluation is that McNamara's state of mind, as reflected in his memorandum to the president, helps explain the initiative he took in the reporting area during that same month of October 1966. It was then that he decided the time had finally come for a radical reform in pacification reporting from Vietnam. For about a year, the marines of I Corps had been reporting on pacification there through a village-level evaluation system of "scoring," and McNamara asked Richard Helms, the new director of CIA, to take it into consideration in devising a new US system for measuring pacification in Vietnam.

Thereupon out at CIA, Helms laid the responsibility for working something out on his Vietnamese affairs staff, which included members of the CIA survey team which, in early 1964, had spent about three months in Vietnam assessing the evaluation and reporting practices of that time. The paper produced at this new juncture was essentially the work of the CIA staff. The concept was later refined through coordination with some staffers in McNamara's relatively new Southeast Asia Programs Office and with a few old Vietnam hands elsewhere in Washington, including in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Near the end of October, the package was completed and sent to McNamara. The Secretary approved it and recommended that its implementation be the responsibility of CIA. However, CIA was able to persuade McNamara that a broader basis of sponsorship was desirable, and that the system proposed in the paper should in any event be

2. For text of 14 October 1966 memorandum, see The Pentagon Papers, pp. 542-51.

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checked out with the country team in Saigon and tested in the field before implementation. Consequently, in early November one representative from CIA and another from the JCS Joint Staff left for Vietnam with a proposed system for US evaluation of and reporting on pacification, and with a virtual mandate from McNamara to use it as the basis for moving toward full implementing action in-country by 1 January 1967.

The suggested system carried to Saigon proposed lodging the initial and basic job of US evaluation of the status of pacification squarely on the MACV advisers in as many of the country's approximately 250 subsectors (districts) as possible. The following extract, written by two research analysts who collaborated with the Washington team after its arrival in Saigon, provides a succinct outline of how the system formulated in the Washington "crash plan" of October was expected to work:

The objective was to obtain from each U.S. subsector advisor a detailed evaluation of each hamlet with some degree of GVN control in the district to which he was assigned. There are on the average about 50 hamlets per district, the range extending from about 25 to a maximum of more than 100. The basic element of the proposed system was a questionnaire containing 191 separate evaluations to be filled out for each hamlet with some vestige of GVN control (about 70 percent of all the hamlets in the country). Responses to the questions were to be recorded on a one-page checklist as a yes/no response. After completing the evaluation checklist the advisor was to be asked to compute from his responses an overall evaluation index for the hamlet. These forms were to be submitted to sector [province] headquarters where the number of hamlets in five evaluation levels were to be tabulated and the summary data from them forwarded through division and corps headquarters to RDSD and to the Office of the Deputy Ambassador.³

In late September 1966, Dorothy Clark and Charles Wyman of the Research Analysis Corporation (RAC) had begun a study project in Saigon under an Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) contract for

3. Dorothy K. Clark and Charles R. Wyman, An Exploratory Analysis of the Reporting, Measuring, and Evaluating of Revolutionary Development in South Vietnam, Research Analysis Corporation (McLean, Virginia, 1967), p. 26.

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MACV's Revolutionary Development Support Division. This project designated with the acronym ARDEMS (Analysis of Revolutionary Development Evaluation and Measurement System) was intended to point toward automation of statistical reports and, more importantly for present purposes, to recommend improved bases for measuring and reporting pacification progress--especially by taking more substantial account of the nonmilitary aspects of revolutionary development. The first phase of the ARDEMS project, scheduled to end on 30 December, was in part overtaken by the arrival of the team from Washington in mid-November. The embassy, RDSO, and the Saigon establishments of AID, USIA, and CIA were all agreed that the Washington-proposed system would impose an unmanageable burden on subsector (district) advisers. The Washington and ARDEMS teams therefore spent the next few weeks working with RDSO to simplify the system and to reach agreement on such changes as structuring the hamlet checklists for multiple-choice instead of yes-no answers, refining the selected indicators, adapting the system for automatic data processing where possible, and conducting limited field tests. (On 13 December the Mission Council approved the package, and in the following month, January 1967, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) went into effect throughout Vietnam.

B. INTRODUCTION OF THE HES

The HES operated on a monthly reporting cycle. At the heart of the many and complex ramifications that soon came to characterize the system was the Hamlet Evaluation Worksheet (HEW), which the district adviser was to prepare on every hamlet in his district that was under some degree of GVN control. The HEW required the adviser to address the pacification status of the hamlet in terms of six factors, with each factor being defined by three indicators that the adviser was to rate from E (worst) through A (best). The six factors were (1) VC military activities, (2) VC political and subversive activities, (3) security (friendly capabilities), (4) administrative and political activities, (5) health, education, and welfare, and (6) economic development. Thus three of them were security oriented and three development oriented.

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For an example of how the ratings worked, consider the indicator "Military Incidents Affecting Hamlet" under the first listed factor, "VC military activities." The adviser's job was to decide which of the following brief descriptions best expressed the status of the hamlet:

E. Armed VC units in hamlet at night, sometimes in day. Little GVN authority at night. Routes to hamlet interdicted by day; may be ambush near hamlet.

D. GVN activity under harassment. Frequent sniping on routes to hamlet; VC night activity in hamlet.

C. Long range fire at night; VC activity in adjacent hamlets in Vil[lage]. Occasional sniping on routes to hamlet.

B. No incidents in hamlet during month; infrequent harassments within village or nearby.

A. No incidents, including harassments, in Vil[lage] or near hamlet or on routes to Vil[lage] during month.⁴

These brief descriptions were supplemented by more detailed written guidance to assist advisers-evaluators. In any event, with whatever guidance he had and based on the best sources of information available to him, the adviser ended up submitting 18 lettered ratings (one for each indicator) on every hamlet in his district. When these reached MACV in Saigon through channels, an overall rating for each hamlet was calculated by an unweighted averaging in which E=1, D=2 ... A=5, and in the emergent numerical averages 1.0-1.5=E, 1.5-2.5=D ... 4.5-5.0=A.

Besides the indicator ratings scaled from A to E, the adviser had to complete a multiple-choice list of 14 questions on "hamlet problems during the month." For example, he had to indicate whether in his judgment the incidents by US military elements "adversely affecting relations with hamlet populace" could best be characterized as "none or very few," "minor only," "serious enough to cause active resentment," "not applicable," or "unknown." So from the very beginning of HES,

4. Ibid., p. 27.

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the system provided for some registration of the adviser's reaction over and above the lettered ratings under the specified indicators.⁵

The HES had obviously been formulated, approved, and effected on a very short-fused time schedule. It is therefore not surprising that "bugs" in the system soon became apparent. What does seem surprising is that the first changes, when they were made in May 1967, after five months of experience, were so relatively few and minor. They amounted to little more than clarifications of wording in some indicator descriptions, plus a handful of deletions from and additions to the "hamlet problems" questions, which thereafter number 19.⁶ There were two major reasons for the slowness of these early revisions. First, the system turned out to have been basically well designed, in spite of the crash-action that had attended its introduction; and, second, there was general agreement among responsible officials that moving wisely on more fundamental changes was going to require the increased data that only longer experience could provide, as well as some deep-draft, detached study that was sure to require considerable time also.

Nevertheless, by the middle of 1967 and increasingly thereafter, HES became the subject of much critical attention. This turn of events was partly motivated by realization of HES's substantive shortcomings, and partly by a growing conviction among those working most closely with HES results--for example, the workers in the Southeast Asia Programs Office of the Pentagon--that those results in highly aggregated forms were being unduly pressed into service at high policy levels for the purpose of "demonstrating" the progress that high policy officials

5. The HES and the other reporting systems bearing on pacification have always aroused complaints about the burden they have imposed on busy operators. Without judging that allegation here, it should be noted that the district advisers did not have to fill out complete HES forms every month; after the first submission of full reports on each hamlet, advisers thereafter had only to report changes from their previous submissions.

6. For a fairly detailed explanation of these changes, see Dorothy K. Clark and Charles R. Wyman, The Hamlet Evaluation System in the Republic of Vietnam, Research Analysis Corporation (McLean, Virginia, 1968), pp. 41-48.

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were eminently eager to claim in 1967. As Robert Komer put it a few years later when referring to such misgivings: "critics really seem[ed] to be complaining less about the HES itself than about the way in which its aggregate scores have often been used in simplistic fashion to advance the notion of 'progress.' Unfortunately, there is much to this criticism."⁷

There were a variety of explanations advanced for the perceived substantive shortcomings of the HES. Some of those explanations were more or less common to all aspects of the US pacification effort in Vietnam--for example, short tours of duty, inadequate language training, and failure to understand Vietnamese cultural patterns. Others bore more directly on the HES itself--for example, considering the large numbers of "C" hamlets relatively secure when they often were not, and an occasional inadvertent "masking" of critical security situations because the equal weighting of indicators permitted high development scores to offset low security scores.⁸ In 1970 an agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff retrospectively summarized some other "serious disadvantages" of the 1967 HES as follows:

a. Evaluations were based on the subjective judgments of over two hundred and fifty district senior advisors, thus introducing problems in comparability of results.

b. Evaluations were made at the hamlet level only; however the basic geopolitical subdivision which accounts for all the land area in the country, as well as the population, is the village. Consequently, significant land areas which were sparsely populated remained unevaluated, and the influence of village level political, social, and economic progress was largely ignored.

7. Robert Komer, "Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam," Journal of International Affairs, vol. XXV (1971), no. 1, p. 58.

8. Col. Erwin R. Brigham, "Pacification Measurement," Military Review, vol. L, no. 5 (May 1970), p. 52. Brigham had helped devise HES in the autumn of 1966, and in 1967 was the head of CORDS's Research and Analysis Division, which supervised HES country wide.

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c. Since the HES ratings were the results of advisors' judgments they were very difficult to verify. Furthermore, a potential for bias existed since ratings were the subject of command and counterpart interest.

d. The multi-dimensional nature of old HES indicators were a constant source of consternation for the district senior advisor. For example, a single indicator addressed VC taxation, terrorism and sabotage (which often were inversely related). The advisor often had to choose ratings which did not describe the situation exactly since the conditions for a given rating seldom occurred simultaneously. Consequently, indicator data was not directly usable for specific analyses of unidimensional conditions.

e. The old system did not address several significant elements of pacification (for example, political conditions, or programs, such as People's Self Defense Forces, instituted after January 1967).⁹

It is possible that simply living with the HES and its results would eventually have resulted in major modifications in the light of that experience. However, some outside talent was also brought to focus on the problem of improvement. First, Clark and Wyman of RAC stayed on well into 1967 and produced a short study assessing the HES as of mid-year.¹⁰ Second, the Simulmatics Corporation of Cambridge (Mass.) carried out for the Army Concept Team in Vietnam an extensive field data collection exercise that was designed to assess the trustworthiness of the inputs into the HES and that used interview techniques involving US and Vietnamese military and civilian supporting personnel.¹¹ And, third, Pacific Technical Analysts, working under an ARPA contract and relying substantially on the exploitation of relevant

9. "The Hamlet Evaluation System--1970," Combat Analysis Bulletin, Plans and Analysis Division, 5 September 1970, pp. 1-2, Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, J-3.

10. Clark and Wyman, Hamlet Evaluation System.

11. Hamlet Evaluation System Study, Department of the Army Concept Team in Vietnam, 1 May 1968.

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expertise through interviews, developed an indicator-evaluation methodology based on a standard decision model.¹²

These studies, which became available in early 1968, helped pave the way for a basic revision of HES, but they were not governing, nor were all their recommendations accepted. Critical questions about HES were constantly being formulated, discussed, and tested within the CORDS organization beginning in about mid-1968, and for six months prior to full-scale implementation of the new HES in January 1970 both the old and the new systems were run simultaneously.

C. HES-70

The revised HES was known as HES-70. Intended to correct the perceived inadequacies of the old HES, its design objectives have been officially summarized as follows:

The design objectives of HES/70 were to increase the objectivity and specificity of the data; expand the data base to include more functional areas of pacification; centralize the methodology for evaluation of pacification and make it uniform throughout the country; and increase the management utility of the system by designing reports specifically for field and command users. For example, whereas the original HES rated only population centers (i.e., hamlets), leaving large land areas unreported due to lack of population centers, HES/70 was designed to address area security in addition to population security by including village level data reported for all villages in Vietnam, regardless of population; and whereas the original HES was a relatively simple, subjective system involving ratings that were both subjective and multi-dimensional, HES/70, designed to provide a more objective and uni-dimensional question set with all scoring done centrally, is a much more objective and highly sophisticated application of statistical concepts.¹³

12. A Probabilistic Evaluation of Pacification Indicators, Pacific Technical Analysts, Inc. (Honolulu, 15 March 1968).

13. Hamlet Evaluation System 1970 (HES/70), MACV Command Manual, Document Number DAR R70-79 CM-01A, 1 September 1970, p. 2.

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As had been the case under the original HES, the US district senior adviser (DSA) was the fundamental source of information for HES-70. Every month he had to answer (or update) four security-related questions for each village and 21 security-related questions for each hamlet in his district; and every three months he had to answer (or update) 56 hamlet-level and 58 village-level questions for each hamlet and village, respectively, in his district, those quarterly questions covering the security, political, and socio-economic aspects of pacification. Also, every month he had to update general descriptive data on such matters as hamlet names, locations, and populations.

The DSA's basic working form, which had been called the Hamlet Evaluation Worksheet was now called the HES questionnaire or question-set. All the questions in it were multiple choice, and all were intended to elicit objective answers insofar as possible. The single most significant change from HES to HES-70 was that under the latter the DSA no longer had to record his evaluations of indicators (or of anything else) from E (worst) to A (best); he simply answered the factual questions, while the scoring was all done centrally in Saigon in accordance with a scoring algorithm that was an application of Bayes' theorem from the theory of statistical inference (as had been recommended by Pacific Technical Analysts in their 1967-68 study).¹⁴

For an example of a DSA's filling-out of the new question-set, consider a monthly question that roughly parallels the example of the indicator from the old HES already cited:¹⁵ "What was the most serious level of enemy-initiated military activity directed at local security force positions in or near this hamlet?" To answer this question, the DSA had only to indicate the most nearly applicable of the following choices: none; minor harassment (sniping, mining, etc.); attack by coordinated small arms or automatic weapons fire; attack by heavy

14. For explanations of the scoring technique, see *ibid.*, Appendix C, pp. C-2 to C-6, as well as User's Guide to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), published by MACV, 30 May 1970, Annex B, pp. B1-B6.

15. See p. 220.

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weapons fire (mortar, rocket, RR, etc.); ground assault--repelled; and ground assault--friendly position overrun.¹⁶ The DSA under HES-70 was not supposed to be able to "G-2" the question-set so as to influence the Saigon scores along lines corresponding to his own subjective assessments, and this seems in fact to be the case. Whether this is altogether a felicitous circumstance is another question, which will be addressed later.

D. SUBORDINATE AND ASSOCIATED HES REPORTS

In January 1971 the HES underwent a few minor changes in scoring, and a rather elaborate glossary of terms was included in the DSA's handbook containing the question-sets. The glossary was to help the DSA relate qualitative expressions in the question-set to quantitative measures, and thus further minimize the amount of subjective interpretation required of him. For example, on the frequency with which some phenomenon occurred, the glossary equated "regularly" with "more than 50% of the time (three times a week or more, on the average)"; "periodically" with "once a week or more"; and "sporadically" with "1-3 times a month (less than once a week on the average)." Use of this glossary also hopefully contributed to uniformity among the mental sets of all district advisers.¹⁷

As of late 1971, CORDS was still the chosen US instrument for addressing pacification in Vietnam, and, within the CORDS headquarters and field organizations, the HES was the primary instrument for the evaluation and reporting of pacification status and trends. The HES had developed into a massive reporting system, with subsystems and subreports that provided all kinds of data that were cut and served in all kinds of ways by supporting computers. The HES-generated reports are divided into staff analysis reports, management reports,

16. For examples of filled-in samples of the updating forms related to the DSA's question-sets, see HES User's Guide, pp. 37-39.

17. Glossary appears in Revised HES Handbook Question-Set and Glossary (January 1971), pp. D.1.1-D.1.14.

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and map plots. As an example of how HES has been elaborated, the management reports alone now include the following: HES-70 management summary report, HES-70 information report, historical report, HES-70 summary report, HES-70 question response report, generalized condition analysis reports, HES-70 gazetteer report, and area profile analysis report.¹⁸

Besides this extensive array integral to HES, over 20 additional major pacification reporting systems have sprung up, most of them in the wake of HES. Among the more important of these are the Chieu Hoi Management Information System, the People's Self-Defense Force Management Information System, the Territorial Forces Evaluation System, the National Police Evaluation System, the Terrorist Incident Reporting System, and the Viet Cong Infrastructure-Guerrilla Forces Reporting System.¹⁹ There is some feeling, even among the most analytically oriented officials in Washington, that what has been needed is less proliferation of reports and more analysis of those already in hand. Nevertheless, some of these new systems have proved exceptionally valuable to program management in critical areas of pacification; outstanding among these are the Territorial Forces Evaluation System and the National Police Evaluation System.

The HES proper and its subordinate and associated systems are so comprehensive that one is prompted to ask "Who guards the guards?"-- i.e., what are senior managers and policymakers doing to check on the reliability of the basic DSA-level assessments that eventually generate these mountains of reports? Part of the institutionally oriented

18. Hamlet Evaluation System 1970, pp. 34-37.

19. Brigham, "Pacification Measurement," pp. 54-55; Komer, "Impact of Pacification," p. 57. For a full listing of these systems and a discussion of each, see Final Technical Report (Draft), Technical Requirement No. 1350, Systems Development and Modifications to the MACV Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) Program, Contract No. DAAH01-71-C-009, prepared for Advanced Research Projects Division, Research and Engineering Directorate, US Army Missile Command, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, by Jim R. Smith, Control Data Corporation, 15 July 1971, pp. II-22 to II-62 and Appendix B.

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answer to that question lies in the Pacification Studies Group (PSG), an element of CORDS's Reports and Analysis Division (RAD) in Saigon. Initially conceived as more or less of a personal staff to Deputy Ambassador Komer when he directed CORDS in 1967-68, PSG responded directly and immediately to his requests for monitoring and verification of pacification trends as reported by HES and the other systems. Many US officers assigned to PSG in this early CORDS period were selected from among the most outstanding province and district senior advisers. One technique used was to dispatch a qualified PSG team of Vietnamese nationals to a given district to execute what amounted to a rerun of the HES question-set in that district, or at least in selected villages and hamlets of that district. Another technique was to conduct an "attitudinal survey" among the population of a given district (or of selected villages and hamlets therein), in order to see how popular attitudes compared with HES pacification ratings.²⁰ Unfortunately, with the departure of Ambassador Komer in mid-1968, PSG's activities became more routine. At approximately the same time, the embassy's system of provincial reporters began deteriorating, until by 1971 only one junior embassy officer remained assigned to this duty, and his function had regressed to mere vestigial liaison with agencies active in the countryside.

20. For an explanation of the Pacification Attitude Analysis System (PAAS) as conducted by PSG, see Final Technical Report, pp. II-32 to II-34.

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IV

LESSONS LEARNED IN REPORTING AND EVALUATION

It is clear that, as of 1971, the reporting and evaluation of pacification in Vietnam had come to center very markedly in a Hamlet Evaluation System that had been formulated without Vietnamese participation and that was (a) not only US but dependent on a pervasive US presence right down to the rice-roots of Vietnamese hamlet life, (b) vast in scope and sophisticated in mode, and (c) tied to a US ad hoc creation, CORDS, that had no parent organization in Washington. The anomaly of all this lay in the fact that, also in 1971, the United States was swiftly drawing down its presence in Vietnam in a way that, among other things, suggested CORDS might not last much longer. It was also anomalous that, after the major commitment of effort and resources to developing HES and its associated reporting systems, many of the middle-level managers who were supposedly among the prime beneficiaries of it all and who were responsible for command emphasis or the lack of it--officers and officials at regional, province and district levels--were often hostile to what they perceived as the excessively burdensome requirements of a fancily computerized exercise.

In any event, the time was ripe for the formulation of some "lessons learned," both for their possible applicability in the Vietnamese context of the near future and, at least equally important, for their possible applicability in other parts of the world where the United States might, in a longer-term future, find itself called upon to contribute to the success of a counterinsurgency.

If and when the United States ever again undertakes to advise and assist a government that is trying to defeat an insurgency, the following major points, derived from the Vietnam experience with reporting and evaluation, will be worth considering.

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1. In a friendly country where an insurgency is in the incipient stage and where the United States hopes to see it effectively countered, a special effort should be made to ensure (a) that the US mission contains outstanding individuals highly qualified to act as overt reporters on the status and trends of the insurgency-counterinsurgency, and (b) that any covert US presence in the country is also made up of individuals highly qualified to report on the same range of subjects. This is nothing more than an admonition to remember the homily about an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure. The period prior to any unusually marked US presence in such a country is precisely the time during which accurate reporting, sensitively evaluated, can most benefit US policymakers, since it could lead to an early and basic US decision simply not to engage itself in any way whatever. If it does result in the extension of some US advice and materiel assistance, both ought to be significantly more relevant because of the earlier accurate and sensitive reporting and evaluation.

2. One senior US official, probably the ambassador or someone at his right hand who enjoys his absolute confidence, should unify all US reporting and evaluation from the host country; and one senior Washington official, probably a White House adviser with direct access to the President, should coordinate Washington high-level reactions to that reporting and evaluation. There is doubtless a good case for learning how to decentralize decisionmaking, followup, and associated activities such as reporting and evaluation, but we cannot wait for the political scientists to teach us. Besides, we have not yet really learned how to centralize (i.e., unify and coordinate), as the Vietnam experience eloquently testifies. If a situation anywhere in the world ever again becomes serious enough to prompt the United States to go back into the business of giving advice and assistance on counterinsurgency, that situation will, ipso facto, warrant the highest executive attention both in the country concerned and in Washington.

There are two corollary caveats to this second major lesson:

a. The senior responsible US official in-country should constitute outside institutional channels a small group of monitors or

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"inspectors-general" to conduct independent verifications of what "the system" (whatever and whoever it is) is reporting to him.

b. The senior responsible US official in-country should not try to compel agreement among the US agencies there, but should welcome and report their dissents. The same applies to the senior responsible official in Washington. However, if these two officials are going to be able to permit such dissents, and thus perhaps tend to undermine the impact of their own considered judgments, they must be clearly perceived as the President's men enjoying the President's full confidence.

3. From the very beginning, the United States should focus primarily on advising and assisting the host government to develop its own sound system for reporting and evaluation, instead of concentrating on elaborating and perfecting a system made in America for Americans. In the Vietnam context, many understandable factors appeared to compel the United States to move toward its own system for evaluating and reporting on pacification. Two such factors worth repeating are the perennial distortions of Vietnamese reporting and, after a while, the fortuitous availability of enough Americans to run a US system. It is doubtful if any future situation broadly analogous to Vietnam will ever find enough Americans in-country to run a US complex like HES and its associated systems, and the purpose of this recommendation is precisely to encourage an early US effort to help the host government develop an undistorted system of its own. Unless care is taken, there is the danger that still another American tendency will somehow assert itself--i.e., the tendency to do what we know how to do well, right out to the limits of the state of whatever art is involved. However, many of the most knowledgeable Washington analysts currently dealing with computer manipulations of HES data are convinced that it is possible to develop for host-nation use a rudimentary reporting and evaluation system that will suffice for identifying major patterns and trends.

4. US personnel involved in the reporting and evaluation of the counterinsurgency's status and trends should, insofar as possible,

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command the language and empathically understand the culture of the host country, and they should perceive their assignments to such duties as markedly advantageous to their career advancement. This major point applies to Americans associated in any way with the host government's pacification efforts, but is especially important for those individuals in the field of evaluation and reporting. As was amply demonstrated in Vietnam, the highest policymakers in Washington must "fly blind" unless they are provided with accurate and timely information. In future situations in which the US presence in-country is far less prominent than it became in Vietnam, it will be all the more important to identify, and to assign as US representatives, individuals who will be able to work in full harmony and understanding with the host country's instrumentalities for reporting and evaluation. Such a goal is almost inconceivable without language fluency and the ability to project oneself into the cultural patterns of that host country. Making such assignments attractive is not easy, but as was proved in Vietnam--although unfortunately very late--it can be done if command emphasis from the very top is unmistakable and relentless.

5. Senior US officials, both in Washington and in-country, should remain alert to the tendency to overstress military factors in the evaluation and reporting of pacification. It took the United States rather a long time to learn that in Vietnam military security, generally, and battles won in the "big war," particularly, were not a sufficient criterion for evaluating the success of pacification. Military men can hardly be faulted for tending to concentrate on military factors, but this tendency can sometimes lead to a combination of distortion and euphoria in evaluation and reporting. This fifth major point applies as much to the military establishment of the host country as it does to the US military in-country. Fortunately, the US officer corps now contains a whole new generation of bright and insightful young officers who have come to understand the anatomy and dynamics of rural Asian insurgencies; as

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they advance in rank, this problem should therefore diminish over time.

6. US military and civilian officials at all levels in Washington and in-country should guard against relying on the evaluation and reporting criteria that have evolved from Vietnam. Many Americans now understand infinitely more about Asian rural insurgencies ("revolutionary wars," as the French called them) than they did ten or fifteen years ago, and that is certainly all to the good, especially if, next time around (if there is a next time around), what we have to deal with is an Asian rural insurgency in a country comparable to Vietnam. However, if a future trouble spot that elicits advice and assistance from the United States is neither Asian nor rural, it will be important to avoid the pitfall of always being ready to fight the next war--or address the next big problem--just as we did the last one. It was a mistake in the 1950s to prepare the South Vietnamese to fight a Korean-type war, the last we had known. It could prove equally short-sighted to assume that evaluation and reporting in a future imbroglio somewhere will require no adaptation of the Vietnam experience to the new circumstances.

7. Both the management and the information uses of reporting and evaluation should be adequately and soundly accommodated. As the opening paragraphs of this paper indicated, reporting and evaluation should provide information (status and trends) to policymakers, as well as information (guidance for resource allocation) to managers. Unfortunately, neither of these purposes has been served too clearly in Vietnam, with the result that, even after HES and HES-70, vast amounts of information have sometimes existed for their own sakes. American officials in-country have deplored the alleged abuse of overly summarized pacification reporting in briefings for visiting firemen in Vietnam or for "public relations" purposes back home. Fair enough, perhaps, but there is evidence to indicate that right in-country the extensive information generated from reporting and evaluation has unfortunately not been used to any striking extent as the "middle management tool" that those same officials prefer to designate as its

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primary function. There are no easy answers here, as elsewhere, but it does seem that two measures, both admittedly hard to effect, could help correct this unfortunate situation: (a) there should be the strongest possible command emphasis at all levels on using the results of reporting and evaluation in future resource allocations and in corrective action generally, and (b) the greatest possible restraint should be exercised by senior officials and policymakers in using highly aggregated reporting results in which vital qualifications have been "summarized out."

8. Although objective criteria for an evaluation and reporting system are certainly desirable, a mature system manned by well-qualified people can go too far in precluding subjective and independent assessments. A reporting and evaluation system that minimizes subjectivity has many advantages: it makes for uniformity, it frustrates possible attempts to make "brownie points" in the eyes of a superior, its component parts are fairly readily verifiable by a monitoring effort, and it is especially suitable to the difficult early stages of operating such a system. A rigidly objective system has two offsetting disadvantages, however: (a) it reduces the ability of an operator-reporter (such as the DSAs in Vietnam) to take managerial corrective action, because if the system is working well he is not supposed to know what particular objectively reported facts caused a low hamlet score, for example, and therefore does not know what to do about it, and (b) it fails to capitalize on the sensitive expertise that can characterize operators-reporters in well-matured reporting arrangements--i.e., this rigidly objective system can provide the two-dimensions of length and breadth, but not the third dimension of depth. What seems best is to combine an objective, HES-like pacification measurement system with (a) complementary subjective pacification reporting by well-qualified observers and (b) supplementary intelligence appraisals of enemy objectives, plans, and activities by independent intelligence sources.

9. The United States should from the very beginning reach detailed, hard-and-fast agreements with the host government on the modalities of reporting and evaluation, especially with respect to the

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US role therein. Never again should the United States, while lending advice and assistance to a host nation fighting an insurgency, allow itself to become: (a) dependent, for the vital information it requires for policymaking, on distorted and otherwise unsatisfactory reporting and evaluation by host nation agencies, (b) frustrated in its efforts to have the host nation improve its reporting and evaluation, and (c) precluded from effectively monitoring the operations of the host nation's system for reporting and evaluation. In Vietnam, the United States eventually vaulted over these sorts of difficulties by formulating and putting into practice an elaborate system of its own. Even if this were a good solution, it will almost surely not be possible to resort to it in the foreseeable future. Instead, US representatives will be helping the host to do it on his own. The very early stages of such assistance, when the host is "hungriest" and therefore most likely to agree to stiff quid pro quos, will be the best time to exact from him tough and specific agreements designed to compel a sound reporting system and to insure a constructive US role in keeping it honest.

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PART FIVE

SELECTED RELATED ISSUES

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I

THE URBAN PROBLEM

A. INTRODUCTION

Pacification activities in Vietnam reflected little concern with cities until the Viet Cong hit them hard in the Tet offensive of early 1968. Even after that, the reaction of US and Vietnamese authorities consisted mostly of short-range improvisations unrelated to any serious urban planning because there was none.

Several reasons help account for this neglect and ignorance, and a few of the more persuasive ones will be mentioned below. In any event, the result has been that, in contrast to matters of security and development in the rural areas that commanded so much attention, there is almost no record of substantial efforts to address major urban problems, in the pacification context or outside it. Hence the lessons learned from the urban aspects of the counterinsurgency experience in Vietnam tend to be fragmentary when they are not indeed negative--i.e., when they do not derive from the absence of action rather than from a positive record of program planning and execution.

B. VIETNAM'S CITIES IN THE INSURGENCY

At the time of President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, 80 percent of South Vietnam's population of about 14 million lived on farms; ten years later, over 40 percent of the country's population of about 19 million were living in urban environments. Of those living in urban environments at the beginning of 1971, almost 18 percent were concentrated in the Saigon metropolitan area, the population of which had increased since 1960 from about 2 million to about 3.3 million, or over half again as populous as Philadelphia. In the same decade Da Nang, Vietnam's second largest city in 1971, had increased

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its numbers from about 110,000 to almost 400,000, approximately the population of Newark, New Jersey.¹

These figures underline two facts. First, during its early years the insurgency in Vietnam was carried on and countered in a highly rural country. Second, by the late 1960s "the image of South Viet Nam as a country composed largely of landlords and peasants ... [had] little relationship to reality." In fact, "South Viet Nam is now more urban than Sweden, Canada, the Soviet Union, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy."²

In the truly rural environment of Vietnam in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Viet Cong insurgents, faithful to the teachings of Mao, concentrated largely on targeting the peasants of the countryside. The government of President Diem naturally reacted to the challenge, as it had to, and so concentrated on rural pacification programs³ that were designed to keep the peasants on the side of the government. Still, during the Diem period some attention was paid to urban problems, even if it leaned heavily toward French-type bureaucratic foot-shuffling that did not accomplish much in the cities themselves. Ministries, directorates, and departments with changing titles engaged in considerable planning on urban reconstruction and development, but concrete results were sporadic and only amounted to the expenditure between 1954 and 1962 of about a billion piasters (roughly equivalent to a few million US dollars), much of it on

1. James E. Bogle, The Coming Urban Crisis in Asia, prepared for Metcalf and Eddy, Inc., as contract research studies for the Ministry of Public Works, Republic of Vietnam, and the United States Agency for International Development (March 1971), p. 22, and Year 2000 Population Projections for Republic of Vietnam and Saigon Metropolitan Area, p. 72; and The Five Northern Provinces of Republic of Vietnam: Urban Development (New York: Development and Resources Corporation, October 1969, p. 63.

2. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Bases of Accommodation," Foreign Affairs, July 1968, p. 648.

3. For an account of these programs, see "Early Pacification Efforts, 1956-1960," and "The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961-1963," in Part One of Volume III of this study.

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construction and repair of public buildings. In late 1964, the GVN's Director General of Reconstruction and Urban Planning commissioned the Athens firm of Doxiadis Associates to do a study on organization and development of the Saigon area. The recommendations of the study, submitted in January 1965, resulted in the creation of a Saigon Metropolitan Area Development Committee and in some national-level bureaucratic reorganization that survived for a few years, but meanwhile the course of the insurgency was diverting high-level attention away from concern with urban problems.

As covered in detail elsewhere in this study,⁴ the two years or so following the collapse of the Diem regime in late 1963 came close to witnessing the defeat and downfall of the GVN. Sheer survival dictated concentrating on "big-war" military operations. Accordingly, even rural pacification programs and activities necessarily suffered, to say nothing of efforts intended to insure the pacification of the cities--i.e., to keep their inhabitants secure and to provide for their development into viable population centers.⁵ Furthermore, by this time there was a tendency for both GVN and US officials to think that somehow the cities seemed to be able to run and take care of themselves. The actual situation lent support to this judgment, certainly in the context of security, because the ideological rigidity of the enemy kept him focused on the struggle for the countryside, as dogma directed, and the cities of South Vietnam continued to stand rather low among his priorities.

4. See the chapters on pacification from 1964 through 1967 in Part One, Volume III of this study.

5. It was during this period, specifically in the spring of 1964, that a four-man team from RAND recommended to AID an expanded program of urban aid as part of a proposed reorientation of the entire US economic assistance program. This recommendation proceeded in substantial part from the team's assessment of the "defensive" need to bolster the GVN's confidence in itself by at least preventing a rise in urban troubles from worsening its already highly parlous situation. (C. J. Zwick, et al., U.S. Economic Assistance in Vietnam: A Proposed Reorientation (U), R-430-AID, The RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, California, July 1964), pp. vi-vii and 9-39. SECRET) Nothing seems to have happened as a result of this contract study's recommendations on urban programs.

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Meanwhile the intensity of hostilities increased, especially as more and more US troops entered combat beginning in 1965. As a result, the process of urbanization normal to developing countries was rapidly, almost precipitously, accelerated by a special war-related urbanization that derived chiefly from two factors. First, the cities were perceived as relatively safe places to be and so attracted bona fide refugees as well as others who simply wanted to feel safer than they did in countryside battlegrounds. Second, the wartime boom, vigorously intensified by the buildup of US forces and installations, drew to the cities many rural Vietnamese who wanted a piece of the apparently lucrative action there.

By late 1966 or early 1967, the GVN and its US ally had fended off the worse of the military threats of the previous two or three years, and so began to devote more attention than formerly to pacification programs in the villages and hamlets of the countryside. The cities were still apparently "running themselves" satisfactorily, since the enemy was not bothering them much and since their inhabitants were showing no particular signs of seditious unrest. The refugees who flowed into the cities often required accommodations in temporary camps, and, in a more general context, USAID, the Vietnam field organization of the Agency for International Development, became involved in improving certain urban utilities and facilities that were being badly strained by increased war-connected use. USAID also supported some urban welfare efforts directed at ameliorating extreme cases of human deprivation due to wartime urbanization. But on neither the US nor the GVN side was there any substantial organized activity in the field of urban affairs, even compared to the early years of the 1960s when urbanization was just beginning to burgeon. For example, in 1967 the GVN's Directorate General of Reconstruction and Urban Planning spent less than one-third as much as it had back in 1962.

Then came the enemy's general blow at the cities during the Tet period of January-February 1968, along with followup attacks in May and August. In Saigon alone the result was 30,000 homes destroyed

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and 300,000 persons--approximately the population of Akron, Ohio--homeless. Like all disasters, these enemy attacks on the cities produced some action. With characteristic American dispatch, USAID formed an Office of Urban Reconstruction and Development, and CORDS established a Saigon Civil Assistance Group (SCAG). With characteristic Vietnamese sluggishness, the GVN took a year or so to get around to a few bureaucratic and procedural responses intended to manifest some emphasis on urban matters. Among these GVN responses was the establishment of urban planning annexes in the national pacification plans of 1969 through 1971.

The experience of SCAG in Saigon provides the best example of the kinds of successes and problems that can attend the attempted application of pacification techniques of security and development within an urban instead of a rural environment. Established in August 1968, SCAG at first had to concentrate on advising and assisting the municipal authorities in conducting strictly emergency activities of various kinds. After a few months, SCAG developed a Saigon Action Program that included projects in the fields of military security, public safety, and community development with stress on self-help.

The most striking successes most readily achieved in Saigon tended to be security oriented--for example, advice to the Vietnamese military authorities of the Capital Sub-Region, infiltration of the Viet Cong infrastructure, expansion and training of people's self-defense forces, and establishment of a joint tactical operations center with elements from SCAG, the Capital Sub-Region operational staff, and the national police. The programs that tended to move most slowly were those with perceived political implications, especially any that might be viewed as potentially threatening to entrenched political interests or established bureaucratic jurisdictions--for example, rational administrative reorganization of Saigon and the surrounding urban areas of Gia Dinh Province, and streamlining of administrative procedures in general. In between, with a spotty record, were projects that drew too confidently on the extensive experience with rural programs. For example, the self-help idea so useful in the countryside

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proved not always adaptable to urban conditions. Almost all city dwellers were daily wage earners who, like their opposite numbers elsewhere in the world, rarely had time outside nights and weekends for community projects. Besides, and again like their counterparts elsewhere, they tended to be more than a little sophisticated or even cynical about "do-good" activities that could and did motivate their country cousins.

In the autumn of 1970, the security-related responsibilities of SCAG were phased out, thus attesting to the virtually full restoration of the GVN's authority and ability to handle security in Saigon by itself. At the same time, a special assistant for urban affairs to the director of CORDS was nominated and directed to formulate an "urban strategy" in coordination with the appropriate GVN instrumentalities. Some minor headway was made, and in late 1971 the function was upgraded when CORDS established a new Directorate of Municipal Development, with the former head of SCAG as the first director.

On the GVN side, the office of the prime minister issued in March 1971 a decree formally establishing an Interministerial Central Committee for urban affairs under the central Pacification and Development Council, as well as parallel provincial committees under the Pacification and Development Councils at that level. Unfortunately, the decree was long on listings of council members and short on substantive content. It appears that the GVN still feels no compulsion to face up to the long-term urban problems that are upon it, perhaps in part because of an inertial inclination to continue doing what it has been doing: counter rural insurgencies and pacify countrysides. This could prove shortsighted, even from the viewpoint of military security and certainly from the viewpoint of how the future Vietnam will survive. If the GVN does not realize this, its enemies may.

C. VIETNAM'S CITIES IN THE FUTURE

From about 19 million in 1970, the population of South Vietnam is projected to increase to 25 million by 1980, 32 million by 1990, and 41 million by 2000, when it will have more than doubled in thirty

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years. Wishful thinking notwithstanding, urbanization is certain to continue. The population of the Saigon metropolitan area, numbering 5.3 million souls in 1970, is projected to increase to 5.6 million by 1980, 8.4 million by 1990, and 11.3 million by 2000, when it will have more than tripled from its present seemingly intolerable level. These projections thus forecast that twenty-eight years from now almost 28 percent of the country's total population will be huddled in one stifling urban concentration.⁶

At least Saigon was a substantial city before the war and had evolved an appropriate infrastructure of urban facilities for its size at the time. The other major cities of Vietnam owe their growth in overwhelming part to wartime circumstances, and have developed very little to support their vastly increased populations. The Newark-size city of Da Nang, for example, which had counted only 25,000 inhabitants in 1943, was described in 1971 as "a miserable collection of unserviced huts, infused with temporary military infrastructure, surrounding a heavily overused and outdated city core." As of 1969, Da Nang had six postmen, 380 telephones, no sewage system, and no newspaper. Only 10 percent of its people were served by the local electrical system, and only 7 percent by the water system.⁷

The world has witnessed rapid urbanization before now, of course, but the societies that have experienced it have usually undergone at the same time a parallel industrialization that absorbed many of the city dwellers into a working class for the new and expanding industries. The great majority of the present Vietnamese urban class are not so employed because there is not enough industrial activity to accommodate them. Instead, they constitute a shiftless lumpenproletariat (as Marx had it) or "underclass" (as his collaborator, Engels, had it), "wholly concerned with the routine of eking a living by petty

6. Bogle, Population Projections, pp. 36 and 68, and, Coming Urban Crisis, p. 25.

7. Da Nang data from Bogle, Five Northern Provinces, pp. 54-55, as secured by him in 1969 from authorities in Da Nang.

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theft or by performing minor services."⁸ Most of them would not have migrated to the cities, at least not so soon and in such large numbers, had it not been for the war, and only the customary economic spinoffs of a wartime environment have kept them more or less remuneratively occupied.

Prominent among these spinoffs has been US economic largesse. "War consumes, it produces nothing. Without American aid, the South Vietnamese economy, and with it the Saigon government, would have gone under long ago. It is the goods, ranging from fertilizer and pharmaceuticals to motorcycles and cars, brought in with this aid that continue to give the peasants meaningful purchasing power."⁹ In 1971, an official of the Agency for International Development wrote in a scholarly journal that these large quantities of imported consumer goods had made for a consumption-oriented society and, worse yet, had tended to discourage increased local production. "Quick money opportunities (hotels, bars, speculation, etc.) have diverted potential entrepreneurial skills from industrial pursuits."¹⁰

The foregoing economic reflections appear here only to emphasize that the demographic and social plight of the Vietnamese cities is severely compounded by near-certain lack of economic viability after the US military establishment in Vietnam has left entirely or has been cut back to a very modest level, and after US economic assistance has also shrunk or been stopped. The inhabitants of these cities are no more likely to join a postwar "back-to-the-land" movement than their counterparts anywhere else in the world have ever been. This is likely to prove highly dangerous, given that "men do not rebel because

8. Robert Moss, Urban Guerrilla Warfare, Adelphi Papers No. 79 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971), p. 6.

9. Takashi Oka, "The War Brings Galloping Inflation to Vietnam," New York Times, 12 July 1970, Section 4, p. 2. See also the following chapter on "The US Economic Aid Program for Vietnam, 1963-1969," in this volume.

10. Solomon Silver, "Changes in the Midst of War," Asian Survey, April 1971, p. 333.

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they are deprived, but because they are conscious that they are deprived."¹¹ Trouble may not occur right away, because "typically, the second generation--the children of the slums, not the migrants to the slums--provides participants for urban riots and insurrections."¹²

But of course that delay remains problematical, and in any event by 1975-80 the second generation sons in the urban slums of Vietnam will be in their teens. If the Communist enemy decides to relax the ideological rigidity that has focused his efforts almost exclusively on the peasants of the countryside, he could find the consciously deprived urban population of Vietnam a rewarding target indeed for his attention. Meanwhile, it is probably not too late to try doing something about it, but the knowledgeable and heroic measures required do not appear too likely to issue from a sluggishly motivated GVN or from a US political-military establishment that is, as usual, well prepared to fight the last war or confront the last critical situation--in this case a Southeast Asian rural insurgency--just as in the middle 1950s it was well prepared to deal with a Northeast Asian conventional limited war like the one in Korea.

D. THIRD WORLD CITIES IN FUTURE INSURGENCIES

The increasing urbanization that looms ahead for South Vietnam is going to be paralleled in all the other developing nations of the so-called third world. Even now, almost half of the 250 cities in the world having populations of over 500,000 are in the developing countries. Over the entire globe, "by the year 2000, there will be almost as many people living in cities of 100,000 or more as there were in the total world population in 1960."¹³

What this may mean to the pattern of future insurgencies can perhaps be illuminated somewhat by considering what has already begun to

11. Moss, Urban Guerrilla Warfare, p. 8.

12. Huntington, "Bases of Accommodation," p. 650.

13. Bogle, Coming Urban Crisis, pp. 7 and 29; quoted sentence on p. 7.

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happen in an area close to home that has been of solemnly declared special interest to the United States for a century and a half: Latin America. North Americans still tend to think of their "good neighbors" to the south as mostly languid peasants listlessly pounding corn when they are not sleeping the day away in rustic torpor, sombreros tilted over their eyes. In fact, however, nowhere in the world have the cities been sucking in rural populations faster. "More than two-thirds of the populations of Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Chile now live in towns. For Mexico, Brazil and Colombia, the figure is over 50 per cent."¹⁴

It is therefore not surprising that a former Venezuelan guerrilla leader, Moises Moleiro, could write in a 1971 article as follows: "In Venezuela, it is just not possible to start a rural uprising that will end with the countryside encircling the town. The rural areas are marginal to the life of the country.... A peasant revolt is impossible, in the last analysis, because we are not a peasant people."¹⁵ This awareness that urban insurgencies are the wave of the future in Latin America has spread throughout extremist groups everywhere in that area: "since about the time of Che Guevara's death in the Bolivian hills in October 1967, his successors in Latin America have made the city their target."¹⁶ No Mao or Giap has yet published an accepted codification of techniques for the conduct of urban insurgency, but some beginnings have been made, based in part on the experience of groups such as the Tupamaros in Uruguay.¹⁷ One widely accepted central feature of this emerging theory is that urban insurgency ought to aim at a breakdown of the target society's social fabric by creating an increasing sense of insecurity and malaise among the urban population. Preferred techniques include "armed propaganda"

14. Moss, Urban Guerrilla Warfare, p. 5.

15. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 7.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

17. See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 20-42, where Moss has appended to his paper a tract by the late Brazilian guerrilla leader, Carlos Marighella, entitled "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla."

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(influencing opinion through armed local actions), political kidnappings, selective terrorism, "stiffening" riots and strikes, and subversion of all government security forces.¹⁸

An authoritative and experienced British student of third-world insurgencies has recently expressed the following view of the direction in which trouble probably lies in Latin America:

in the highly-urbanized settlement pattern of that continent, as Guevara discovered to his cost, the countryside lacks the human jungle which characterizes the countryside of the Orient, and the citadels of power can be besieged more effectively by practice of blackmail and intimidation in the alleys and shantytowns--just as, incidentally, they could in North Africa more effectively in the casbahs and suqs than on the latifundias or in the deserts. Above all, the true countryside cannot be mulcted, as it can in Asia, of the funds the revolution depends on almost as much as it depends on the labor-force, so the guerrillas turn to the city where money, including foreign aid, is concentrated.¹⁹

So far, urban insurgencies in Latin America have not succeeded in making much headway, nor has urban unrest in such widely disparate areas of the world as the Philippines, Northern Ireland, and Quebec. The point remains, however, that there are many nations in which future insurgencies, if and when they hit, are overwhelmingly likely to be urban in nature, because the environment in those nations is either already urban or is rapidly becoming so. If the United States is asked for advice and assistance in the countering of such insurgencies, much of what it has learned so painfully in Vietnam is likely to prove not transferable. The parallel to the situation in the mid-1950s is clear: having just come off the prosecution of one counter-insurgency that we have now begun to understand, the danger is that we will try to force its lessons into an entirely different set of circumstances somewhere else.

18. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

19. Dennis J. Duncanson, The Police Function and Its Problems, paper prepared for the National Strategy Information Center Conference, Airlee House, Warrenton, Virginia, 11-14 March 1971, pp. 11-12.

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In the years ahead, the enemy in Vietnam may well compromise the dogma that so far has kept his efforts focused almost exclusively on the countryside. But, even if he does not, the hectic pace of continuing urbanization in Vietnam will make for high volatility among the wretched "underclass" of the cities after the Americans and the war-related artificialities of Vietnamese urban life have both disappeared.

Everywhere in the third world of developing countries, and especially in Latin America, nations will continue to become more highly urbanized during the years ahead. Although rural insurgencies à la Vietnam will certainly not disappear, it does seem that if some of those nations request US help of any kind to counter incipient or actual insurgencies, these latter are increasingly apt to be urban-based.

If the United States elects to respond to any such requests for help, it will be important to avoid trying indiscriminately to apply to urban-based insurgencies all the lessons learned over many years of countering the rural-based insurgency in Vietnam.

It would appear advisable for the United States to take account of the coming prominence of urban insurgency. For example, and as was not the case when we entered the Vietnam scene in the middle 1950s, we should begin by studying carefully what other nations with experience in this area think they have learned so far.

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II

LAND REFORM

A. INTRODUCTION

Land reform in South Vietnam has been an "off again, on again" issue since 1954. In the last several years, it has received a great deal of high-level attention by both the US and the Vietnamese governments. President Thieu's 1970 "Land-to-the-Tiller" law and the associated implementing decrees have been welcomed by those who view land reform as an integral part of the Saigon government's efforts to compete with the enemy for the loyalties of the rural population. Land ownership and land tenancy have been identified by most scholarly observers as critical factors in the evolution of the Vietnamese insurgency. However, like other important problem areas, such as refugees and urban affairs, recent efforts at land reform may prove to be yet another example of "too little, too late." It is difficult at this stage to measure accurately the impact of the GVN's current land reform program on the peasants and on the insurgency. Nonetheless, it seems apparent that if such a program had been implemented fifteen years earlier it would have put the GVN in a more favorable position relative to the Viet Cong and perhaps would have removed a major element of popular contention among the Vietnamese peasantry.

B. EARLY GVN LAND REFORM EFFORTS

During the past decade and a half, land reform was addressed in earnest only during the early years of the Diem regime. Beginning in 1955, President Diem, acting upon the advice of his American land reform advisers, J. Price Gittinger and Wolf Ladejinsky, promulgated a series of decrees that were aimed at reducing land rents, securing land tenure, putting abandoned land back into cultivation, and redistributing land to the landless.

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For its part, the Viet Minh had been engaged in what can be loosely called a land reform program during the 1946-54 Indochina war. Given the high incidence of tenancy that existed throughout much of Vietnam and the unfavorable landlord-tenant relationships, it is not surprising that the Viet Minh seized upon this issue to attract the support of the landless, discontented peasants. As the war with the French intensified, many of the landlords fled the countryside for the relative security of the larger cities and towns, and payments of land rents, which had frequently mounted to as much as 50 percent of the crop, virtually ceased. In some areas, the Viet Minh confined themselves to promises of land ownership after the war; in areas more firmly under Communist control, de facto land redistribution was actually carried out. The situation confronting the Diem government in late 1954 and early 1955 was one in which the promises of the Viet Minh--"land of one's own and an end to the traditional landlord-tenant relationship"--had struck a most sensitive spot.¹ The post-war revolutionary ferment that had swept over Asia was contributing to the peasants' rising expectations for personal rewards and social justice, and they were by then beginning to believe what they had been told.

American economic advisers had been urging a land reform program on the Vietnamese even prior to the conclusion of the French-Viet Minh war. Although the Vietnamese were politically unwilling to carry out any thorough agrarian reform program, the Americans continued to discuss measures within the US mission and with the Vietnamese government. The influx of the northern refugees into the south following the Geneva Accords of 1954 focused attention on land reform. Diem's American advisers felt that the refugees would be an excellent source of manpower for putting South Vietnam's thousands of hectares of idle rice fields back into cultivation. Before such a

1. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Vietnam," in Wesley R. Fishel, ed., Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 157.

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refugee-resettlement program could be undertaken, various landlord-tenant relationships would have to be clarified.

Early in 1955, the Diem government promulgated two basic measures which addressed certain questions affecting the welfare of the individual tenant farmer. The ordinances contained the following basic provisions: rent would range between 15 to 25 percent of the principal crop; loans for seed or fertilizer were repayable at cost plus an interest rate up to 12 percent per annum; all tenancy contracts were to be in writing; each lease would run a minimum of five years, and the traditional right of a landlord to cancel a lease agreement was circumscribed; landlord-tenant disputes would be resolved by specially created village, district, and provincial committees; and penalties were established for those failing to comply with the provisions of the ordinances.² Unfortunately, parts of these ordinances were ill-conceived, while others were beyond the capability of the Vietnamese civil service to supervise and implement. The 25 percent ceiling on rent may have appeared favorable in comparison with the 50 percent many tenants had to pay before the war, but it was not enthusiastically received by those who for years had paid nothing in the way of rents to their absentee landlords. In effect, the 1955 ordinances actually restored "the landlord-tenant relationship for hundreds of thousands of families in formerly Viet Minh-controlled areas who had thought the land was now theirs."³

Later the following year, in October 1956, President Diem inaugurated a program of land distribution in an effort to narrow the gap between the landlords and the landless and undermine the growing political appeal of the Communists. This program (Ordinance 57) provided a ceiling of 100 hectares (or 247 acres) of rice land per landlord (another 15 hectares could be reserved for ancestor worship).

2. Ordinance 2--8 January 1955, and Ordinance 7--5 February 1955, *ibid.*, p. 159.

3. Roy L. Prosterman, "Land Reform in Vietnam," Current History December 1969, p. 330.

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Of his 100 hectares, only 30 could be privately cultivated by the landlord, and the remaining 70 hectares had to be leased or sold. Holdings in excess of 115 hectares were subject to purchase by the GVN for resale to the tenant farmers. Former landlords were compensated by the government with a 10 percent cash down payment and the remainder in nontransferable government bonds "bearing a 3 percent interest rate and amortized in 12 years."⁴ The tenants paid for their land in six annual installments, but did not receive clear title to the land until full payment was made. Available information on the amount of land available for redistribution to tenants under this program varies from source to source; the figure most often cited is probably on the conservative side--425,000 hectares (representing the surplus holdings of approximately 2033 Vietnamese landlords).⁵ In addition to these lands, there were also 245,000 hectares of surplus land belonging to 430 landlords of French citizenship, which were also available for redistribution, although final agreement over the method of payment was not worked out until 1958. In total, then, there were approximately 670,000 hectares (1.7 million acres) of rice lands available for distribution--approximately one-third of all the rented farm land in South Vietnam.⁶

The redistribution of land under Diem commenced very slowly--due, on the one hand, to difficulties in obtaining clear titles, surveying the land, determining costs, and compensating landlords, and, on the other, to foot-dragging on the part of GVN officials. The Minister of Agrarian Reform, for example, reportedly did not comply with some of the basic provisions of the land reform decrees and had no interest in the land redistribution program which would have divested him of much of his property.⁷ By 1962 it was estimated that most of the available

4. Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Vietnam," p. 166.

5. Ibid., p. 169.

6. Ibid.

7. J. Price Gittinger, Agrarian Reform Status Report, mimeo., n.d.

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land had been expropriated from the land owners, but only one-third of it had been redistributed. The number of tenant farmers receiving land under Diem's various land reform ordinances was only a little over 100,000--or less than 10 percent of the total countrywide.⁸ By this time, efforts to implement the GVN's land reform programs had virtually come to a standstill as a result of the growing insecurity in the countryside, and land reform was to remain a dead issue until the end of 1967, when various pressures for change came to bear on both the GVN and the United States.

While part of the shabby record of the Diem government's land reform efforts can be explained by poor implementation, the ordinances themselves were not designed to produce dramatic results. Given the conservative outlook of the Diem administration, it is hardly surprising that the land reform program was so modest in scope. Much of Diem's personal base of support rested with wealthy Saigon land owners whom Diem was reluctant to antagonize.

Even when efforts were underway to implement the GVN's land reform programs, the US role was generally confined to paying the administrative costs of the program; by 1960 these were estimated at approximately \$4 million.⁹ To be sure, American officials were instrumental in outlining the provisions of the land reform ordinances, but the final product was less than what was then recognized to be politically desirable for advancing the counterinsurgency. The major obstacle confronting the US mission was the lack of genuine Vietnamese interest. Furthermore, despite the fact that land reform was a matter of high priority on the US side, "working-level officials allowed themselves to be backed off step by step from a workable program by the clear signs of hostility emanating from major segments of the ruling elite."¹⁰

8. Prosterman, "Land Reform in Vietnam," p. 330.

9. John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 127n.

10. Prosterman, "Land Reform in Vietnam," p. 330.

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In the view of the peasant, these early efforts at land reform must have had little to recommend them. It was difficult for a tenant farmer to see the advantages of a 25 percent ceiling on rent when for years he had paid nothing; he questioned why he should be compelled to pay for the land he received under the government's program when several years earlier the Viet Minh granted him the land free of charge. According to Roy Prosterman, who was later instrumental in drafting the current Land-to-the-Tiller law, the effect of the Diem land reform programs was to further convince the rural population that the Communists were supporters of land reform and that the GVN represented the hated landlords.

C. INTERIM EFFORTS

From 1962 to mid-1968, scant attention was paid to land reform. Occasional efforts were made by a few conscientious bureaucrats to enforce the laws on the books, but rural insecurity made this task increasingly difficult. During this period many landlords fled the rural areas for greater security in the larger cities and towns and were therefore unable to collect their rents. But the military buildup of both US and ARVN forces during the mid-1960s, and the subsequent sweeps through the countryside to "secure" hamlets and villages were used by the landlords as a shield behind which they could return to the villages to reclaim their land and collect back rents. Landlords could often be seen riding in ARVN jeeps to reassert control over their former lands.¹¹ In other instances, landlords arranged for local military authorities to collect their rents during military sweeps. For this service, they received a commission, which thus gave the military a stake in blocking further land reform efforts.¹²

11. Ibid.

12. Jeffrey Race, "The Battle Over Land," Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 August 1970, p. 19.

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On the American side, a lack of continued interest in land reform was reflected in the fact that from 1960 through 1965 AID did not have even one full-time official concerned with this question on its Saigon staff. During the mid-1960s, the US lack of interest in land reform was rationalized on the basis of the need to rely on the landlord class for political and governmental stability. This explanation, however, overlooked the fact that the GVN's lack of political stability was critical in the countryside and that most landlords by then were urban dwellers. It has been further pointed out that the absence of administrative machinery on the GVN side was one of the real stumbling blocks to land reform, but this rationale overlooked the fact that for centuries Vietnam's village hierarchies had exercised powers of adjudication over inheritance rights, contract violations, and boundary disputes.¹³

Another part of the problem prior to 1968 was that one of the more important issues was not so much what kind of a land reform program should be adopted in South Vietnam but rather whether there should be such a program at all in view of the widespread hostilities in the countryside. In addition to not wanting to antagonize the landlords, there was some skepticism about the relevance of land ownership to the peasantry. The increased scale of hostilities in South Vietnam had caused the peasant to forget about owning his few hectares of land; what he really wanted was to be left alone and to pursue his life without interference from anyone. In late 1966, for example, when the United States was beginning to show renewed interest in land reform, General Thang, who was then in charge of the GVN's pacification programs, remarked to a journalist that land ownership was no longer a burning issue among the peasantry. Early in 1967, Col. Samuel Wilson, one of Ambassador Lodge's pacification assistants, came to the same conclusion.¹⁴ Generally speaking, most American

13. John D. Montgomery, "Land Reform in Vietnam," Orbis, vol. XII, no. 1 (Spring 1968), p. 23.

14. Richard Critchfield, The Long Charade (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), pp. 193 and 198.

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advisers (who were in close contact with the more conservative Vietnamese landlords) felt that land reform would make little contribution to rural pacification. "Winning the hearts and minds," it was reasoned, would be best accomplished by distributing increased quantities of pesticide and fertilizer, providing miracle rice, improving the strains of hogs and poultry, and similar programs. In effect, modern technology would be substituted for reform as an answer to insurgency.¹⁵

D. LAND-TO-THE-TILLER

The assignment of a land reform adviser to USAID in late 1965, followed by an AID commissioned study on land tenure policies by the Stanford Research Institute in 1967, refocused American attention on land reform.

The Stanford Study was particularly important because it brought back into the AID effort specialists who were sympathetic with, and in some cases had assisted in, the thorough-going tenure reforms in Taiwan, Japan and elsewhere. It also brought into the picture Roy Prosterman, a land law specialist ... who was to become chief engineer and chief propagandist for a radical reform programme.¹⁶

In addition, the Honolulu Conference of early 1966 not only interested high-level American officials in pacification for the first time, but also marked the beginning of a long series of Vietnamese promises on land reform. However, much of the expressed concern for land reform (principally by Nguyen Cao Ky) merely turned out to be empty rhetoric and vague promises.

Despite American urging, renewed GVN interest in land reform took somewhat longer to develop. It was only after the 1968 Tet offensive had demonstrated the GVN's tenuous hold on the country that President

15. William Bredo, "Agrarian Reform in Vietnam: Vietcong and Government of Vietnam Strategies in Conflict," Asian Survey, vol. X, no. 8 (August 1970), p. 744.

16. Frances Starner, "Bowling to Revolution," Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. LXIX, no. 27 (2 July 1970), p. 76.

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Thieu was convinced of the necessity for translating rhetoric into meaningful action. Perhaps President Thieu also recognized the need to develop a rural-based political constituency; to this end, land reform would certainly represent a major step. The Tet offensive further served to convince Vietnamese landlords and politicians that a government-sponsored land reform program was a more attractive alternative than imminent VC confiscation.

Legislative enactment of the Land-to-the-Tiller law was preceded by several important administrative actions by President Thieu. First, the GVN sought to revive the process of redistributing the expropriated lands retrieved by the Diem government. Assisted by American land reform advisers, the GVN simplified the administrative procedures involved in issuing land titles. While the program proceeded rather slowly during 1968 and early 1969, in July 1969 President Thieu decreed that these lands would be distributed free to the present cultivators, which resulted in the distribution of approximately 180,000 acres to some 50,000 families.¹⁷

At the same time Thieu sought to eliminate what has been termed the "negative land reforms" so prevalent in the previous years by declaring that landlords would no longer be permitted to evict occupants and collect back rents in newly "pacified" areas. This was followed by more formal actions: a November 1968 order prohibited officials or soldiers in newly pacified villages from reinstating landlords or helping to collect rents; and a February 1969 occupancy and rental freeze went into effect in newly secured areas, and later was extended to cover the entire country.¹⁸

In the meantime US-GVN discussions were underway concerning the design of a broader land reform program. One of the programs given rather active consideration was the "Voluntary Purchase Program," whereby the government would have purchased land from landowners and

17. Roy L. Prosterman, "Land-to-the-Tiller in South Vietnam," Asian Survey, vol. X, no. 8 (August 1970), p. 759.

18. Ibid., pp. 759-60.

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resold it to selected tenants. A retention limit of from 15 to 30 hectares was frequently mentioned in connection with this arrangement, which was favored by the GVN Land Reform Minister and some of the more conservative elements within USAID. However, President Thieu was leaning toward a more far-reaching program. In the spring of 1969, a newly appointed Minister of Land Reform and Agriculture proposed a broadly based land reform program under which tenant farmers would receive the land they were cultivating without charge. Landlords would be compensated by the government. This proposal was readily approved by President Thieu and a bill was drafted and submitted to the National Assembly on 1 July 1969. According to MacDonald Salter, a USAID official, the bill "became the first major piece of social legislation put before the newly established Assembly."¹⁹ It was finally signed into law by President Thieu on 26 March 1970, after nearly eight months of legislative debate. Under the primary provisions of this Land-to-the-Tiller law, land tenancy as a way of life for approximately one million of South Vietnam's farm families would be virtually eliminated.

The law provides for the distribution of riceland and secondary cropland to those actually cultivating it; landlords are permitted to retain only 15 hectares (37 acres) of land, only if they or their families directly cultivate it. In addition, the law stipulates that a person may retain only 5 hectares (12.3 acres) of land for ancestor worship, although a portion of this may be leased to others. Tenant farmers in the delta are permitted to acquire no more than 3 hectares, while those in the central lowlands are limited to 1 hectare. Excess lands are to be distributed according to the following order of priorities: (1) the present tiller, (2) families of war dead, (3) retired or discharged soldiers or civil servants, (4) civil servants and soldiers who had to abandon their land because of the war, and (5) farm laborers. However, the clear emphasis of this law is on the present tiller.

19. MacDonald Salter, "Land Reform in South Vietnam," Asian Survey, vol. X, no. 8 (August 1970), p. 731.

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The terms of compensation for landlords (20 percent cash down payment with the remainder in government bonds payable at 10 percent interest over an eight-year period) are more favorable than under the Diem ordinance. Furthermore, whereas under Ordinance 57 the government expropriated and actually took possession of the land before reselling it to the tenant farmer, under the new law the government theoretically acts only as a transfer authority between the landlord and the tenant farmer or beneficiary. It should be mentioned here that decisions on land transfers are to be made by the Village Administrative Committee with the assistance of land reform cadre; the central government's role is limited to the more formalized procedures of title issuance and recording. Previous GVN land reform programs required a highly centralized administrative apparatus, as a result of which all decisions were made in Saigon and excessive delays were common. It has been anticipated that with the new procedures approximately 1 million hectares of land can be given to some 500,000 farmers during the three-year period of implementation, 1970-72.

The reactions to President Thieu's land reform program have been diverse. Some expert observers are withholding judgment until progress on the implementation side is clearly visible. Many of the large landowners who heretofore had been unable to collect much if anything in the way of rents are probably surprised and delighted to be compensated so generously by the government for the expropriation of their land. Other landlords, however, may be unhappy over the delay in receiving payments, which, according to the Director General of Land Affairs, were not started until late in 1971,²⁰ despite the fact that the United States has pledged \$40 million to pay for the confiscated land.

As with many other pacification programs in South Vietnam, implementation has not always measured up to theory. There is still a

20. New York Times, 4 January 1972.

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shortage of land reform cadre to help with some of the administrative details of the program, which are often complicated and beyond the capability of the average official to handle. Disputes over land boundaries and rightful ownership have not been uncommon; unfortunately, the local courts to whom cases are referred for adjudication tend to further slow down implementation. Often, too, the justices of the provincial land courts are close friends of the landlords, which reinforces the peasants' inherent pessimism about the program.

Since many of South Vietnam's tenant farmers had heard earlier promises of government land reform but had seen little positive results or benefits, they were naturally skeptical of yet another promise of land reform. While the typical Vietnamese peasant has traditionally wanted to own the land he worked, the certificates of land ownership (now computerized) may not take on much more meaning to him than the certificate of ownership presented several years earlier by Premier Ky or than his "provisional" title dating from the Diem era. Elaborate village ceremonies for the transfer of land often presided over by President Thieu or some other Saigon official may not appear much different than those arranged for the benefit of President Diem ten years earlier. While some peasants are no doubt happy to now own their land, others are either reserving judgment or are still skeptical.

The present law in essence amounts to a recognition by the GVN and the United States that "a revolution has taken place in the Vietnamese countryside which they are powerless to reverse."²¹ In simple terms, it merely legalizes the status quo in the countryside and puts Saigon's seal of approval on the land "reform" program carried out years ago by the Communists. Hopefully, however, the current program will narrow the gap between the two competing forces. Even if the peasants do not come out in full support of the GVN or

21. Starner, "Bowling to Revolution," p. 77.

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President Thieu as a result of this law, perhaps they will at least not act against the government. It should be pointed out, however, that the GVN must correct some of the deficiencies of the present law before it can win even a minimum of grudging acceptance from Vietnam's apathetic peasantry.

E. LESSONS LEARNED

Because of the great importance of the land question in Vietnam, the primary lesson to be learned is that the present law was fifteen years too late in coming. If the present land reform law had been enacted in 1955 rather than 1970, it might well have removed or attenuated one of the major causes of rural discontent. Enactment of this land reform program as late as 1962 or 1963 might still have had important consequences for the way the conflict evolved. In retrospect, however, it seems clear that the United States, as the principal supporter of the Vietnamese government, was unwilling or unable to press the issue, despite the fact that land reform was recognized as a priority matter by the GVN's American advisers.

Land reform may not be a problem area in some future insurgencies--particularly if they are urban based. Thus, one cannot automatically conclude that a land reform program will always be a necessary component of a counterinsurgency strategy. But in a future rural insurgency in which land ownership is recognized as an area of potential enemy exploitation, a land reform program should be addressed early on. This specific point on land reform applies generally to other areas of widespread popular grievances against the government. Such grievances should be redressed early and effectively.

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III

ORGANIZATION

In the last analysis, institutional arrangements for conducting a successful pacification effort are less important than the basic philosophy behind the programs. Any one of a number of organizational approaches would work if there were a sensible concept behind it that all participants could sign on to. This is not to say that the organization of the American pacification effort was unimportant. The desired goal might have been achieved in any case, but it might have been reached less expensively, more quickly, and more completely if the institutional instruments had been more rationally employed, both in Washington and Saigon.

The American approach toward the insurgency in Vietnam, not only in Washington but for many years in Vietnam itself, has been characterized by a groping for administrative formulas which, on the one hand, would permit an adequate degree of interagency coordination, but which, on the other, would not disrupt existing institutional and jurisdictional arrangements. In the early years of our involvement, that is from 1954 through 1960, Washington had literally no institutional arrangements for dealing with Vietnam as a whole. Each Washington agency handled its own programs in accord with whatever guidelines were laid down by the White House or the National Security Council. When the situation in Vietnam began to deteriorate in 1960, and the Kennedy administration began to increase American aid to Saigon, arrangements to manage and coordinate the efforts of the various parts of the US Government dealing with the main military threat and with the "other war" in Vietnam took the form of ad hoc committees, task forces, and "special groups"--some at the highest policy level, some at the working level. Some had adequate permanent staffs or sufficient bureaucratic power or sustained access to the

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top policy levels, but none had all three of these requisites for effective management.

This approach toward institutional change stemmed not only from bureaucratic inertia; each administration hoped to be able to deal with Vietnam without traumatic economic, social, and governmental perturbations at home. There was a reluctance (which, if anything, increased with the passage of time and the increase of our commitment) to permit American assistance to the GVN to interfere with the normal process of government. This was true despite the growing recognition that the war in Vietnam had unique characteristics which cut across normal governmental jurisdictions and that many governmental policies and programs could not be implemented effectively through established organizations. Such programs as psychological warfare, rural reconstruction, paramilitary training, and public information, for example, involved at least two and sometimes several Washington agencies.

A. INITIAL AMERICAN EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE THE OTHER WAR

1. In Washington

The genesis of our arrangements for providing military and economic assistance to Vietnam dates back to 1950 and the implementation of our decision to help the French in their war with the Viet Minh. By the mid-50s the two principal instruments for providing assistance were available within the American governmental structure. There was the network of Military Assistance Advisory Groups (MAAG) that had been established to channel and monitor the flow of military equipment, supplies, and training to selected countries confronting an actual or incipient Communist threat. And there was an established institution for handling economic assistance--the predecessor organizations to the Agency for International Development (AID). These two institutions, one providing military assistance and the other economic aid, worked with little or no overall guidance from Washington and with no central philosophy or

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agreed concept as to what the US objectives were or how they were to be achieved.

When the insurgency in Vietnam increased in intensity and scale in the early 1960s, American military and nonmilitary assistance was expanded substantially and, at the same time, became much more complex. As Washington's concern about and stake in the course of the hostilities increased, additional elements of the US Government and additional groups within those elements began to assume more active roles in intelligence, analysis, planning, operations, public affairs, and so on. In short, the problem of Vietnam soon began to preoccupy more and more consequential people in more and more parts of the Washington bureaucracy. Traditional approaches to military and economic assistance programs no longer applied, and strains on routine ways of doing business in the executive department became evident. By 1961 the Department of Defense had to face up to the fact that the United States was no longer merely supervising the delivery of equipment and instructing Vietnamese how to use it; the MAAG in Vietnam found itself confronted with a combat situation in the field, and, as we shall see, had to make some important adjustments to reflect this. By the early 1960s, AID, too, had to deal with very different problems and in circumstances very different from those that organization faced anywhere else in the world. But whether in Washington or in Vietnam, MAAG wielded far greater influence and leverage than did AID; the odds were high that in any controversy between the two organizations MAAG would come out on top.

One consequence of the expanding American assistance to Saigon and the growing American stake in the fortunes of the GVN was the tendency, first becoming evident in 1962, for Washington to assume close direction over American advisory and assistance efforts in the field. It was a common complaint among American officials in Vietnam that Washington was always "looking over the mission's shoulder." The position of CINCPAC, who had command and control responsibility for all American forces deployed in Asia, was, at best, anomalous with respect to Vietnam prior to the assumption of a direct American

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combat role there. Some thought was given in 1963 to removing CINCPAC from the chain of command between Washington and Military Assistance Command Vietnam. Until February 1965, when the Seventh Fleet became actively engaged in the war, CINCPAC was little more than an information recipient and a conference host. Although CINCPAC retained the standard area commander's official responsibility for the administration of military assistance in Vietnam, actual control over military aid to Vietnam was tightly held in Washington. The White House and the defense establishment continued to deal directly with MACV--and do so up to the present time.¹

Despite a growing, albeit grudging, recognition in Washington by 1961 that the struggle in Vietnam was absorbing substantial American resources in terms of men, equipment, and money, there was little attempt made to establish effective overall control, or even coordination, of the various and far-flung American programs. Within the Central Intelligence Agency, propaganda analysis, national estimates, current intelligence, economic analysis, and covert operations were uncoordinated below the level of the Director of Central Intelligence until 1965 when the director appointed a special assistant for Vietnam affairs. In the Department of State, the Policy Planning Council and the bureaus dealing with the Far East, Public Affairs, and Intelligence and Research, not to mention various elements or individuals from other parts of the department, frequently operated independently and without guidance with respect to Vietnam; the senior official in the Department of State with full-time responsibility for Vietnam has never been higher than a deputy assistant secretary and during some periods has been an even more junior official. Until 1967 the highest AID officer spending full time on Vietnam was an office chief in the Far Eastern Division. The Pentagon was the only part of the Washington bureaucracy that

1. The question of the position and authority of the area commanders in situations in which the US military role is advisory and indirect, rather than participatory and direct, is wanting of further analysis, but the issue goes well beyond the scope of this paper.

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was relatively well organized by 1965: by 1963 the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), on a virtually full-time basis, and the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs (ISA), spending about half his time, provided a military-political team of senior advisers for the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. Nevertheless, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the individual Services had special and individual responsibilities that were not always coordinated within the Defense Department.

Not only was there little coordination within each element of the government below the level of secretary or director, but there was little or no day-to-day coordination among agencies and departments. An early attempt to provide some degree of interagency coordination was made in the winter of 1961 with the organization of a Vietnam Task Force, initially chaired by a Defense Department and later by a State Department official. Members of the group included representatives of SACSA and ISA from the Pentagon, State, CIA, AID, USIA, and the NSC staff. Within a short period this task force became inactive and it was not until February 1964 that it was revitalized by removing responsibility for Vietnam from the State Department's Far East Bureau and assigning a senior officer to head the group under the cognizance of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Vietnam specialists from the Far East Bureau and INR comprised the full-time staff of the task force and an interagency Coordinating Committee was established under the chairmanship of the task force director. The committee met about twice a week, but it had little administrative or bureaucratic "clout" and functioned primarily as an information clearinghouse. The Far East Bureau assumed responsibility, once again, for Vietnam in 1965, and the Coordinating Committee and Vietnam Task Force were placed under a deputy assistant secretary. On occasion the Coordinating Committee assigned responsibilities for and followed up on actions in the pacification area. But major policy decisions and the disposition of resources continued to be dealt with at the very top of each agency.

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In January 1962 President Kennedy organized an interagency group of senior officials to review areas where insurgency was proceeding or was likely and to recommend American policy with respect to them. The Special Group--Counter-Insurgency met weekly under the chairmanship of General Maxwell Taylor, who was then the president's military representative (it was subsequently headed by U. Alexis Johnson and, finally, by Governor Averell Harriman). Membership included the Under Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the president's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Attorney General. It was primarily an advisory group to the president and had no operational or coordinating responsibilities per se, but the high-level nature of its membership obviously produced appropriate action by one or more of the participants. Vietnam was obviously a matter for frequent consideration, although it was by no means the only one; in 1962 when Laos was at a flash point, Laos was the primary item on the group's agenda.

Vietnam was specifically excluded from presidentially-approved arrangements, made in early 1966, to rationalize the government's approach to foreign policy by organizing Interdepartmental Regional Groups under the chairmanships of assistant secretaries of state. The White House was reluctant to turn over major decisions or policy control to the assistant secretary level of the bureaucracy. This was pretty much the situation until the end of the Johnson administration in January 1969--and indeed is pretty much the situation now. In essence the "Vietnam desk" of each department or agency has typically been handled at the top level, and the "senior Vietnam desk officer" continues to be the president or his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. There was, to be sure, a brief moment in 1966 when responsibility for pacification (but not the military, intelligence, public affairs, or other aspects of the Vietnam effort) was centered in the White House, under Robert Komer. But when Komer went to Saigon in 1967 to head the pacification effort there, the White House organization withered and soon reverted to the status quo

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ante. Komer chose to go to Vietnam wearing two hats, assistant to the President and director of CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), but this was strictly an ad hominem, rather than an institutional, arrangement. Thus Komer took Washington's pacification focal point with him to Saigon. The consequence of this decision was that he had no opposite number in Washington, a bureaucratic anomaly he could live with and work around, but one which would plague his one-hatted successors.

Loose management of the prosecution of American military and non-military programs in Vietnam was, of course, not without advantages nor was it bureaucratically illogical from the point of view of the White House. It should be noted that domestic political imperatives obviously had a bearing on presidential decisions not to disturb the organization of the executive department. No one was inclined to break any bureaucratic "china" or to do anything that might imply that the Vietnam situation was so serious that it needed consequential changes within the government. Moreover, each president, together with his principal subordinates, felt a need to exert strong personal control over American policy and over the implementation of American programs in Vietnam--control which might have been eroded by the appointment of a top-level "Mr. Vietnam." Because of this, each president preferred to lean on a small group of close personal advisers whom he felt he could trust and on whom he placed a major share of responsibility for dealing with Vietnam. President Kennedy relied heavily on such organizational arrangements as the NSC "Executive Committee"; President Johnson, on his "Tuesday Lunch"; and President Nixon, on a small group of key advisers in and outside the White House.

These reasons notwithstanding, important disadvantages accrued to the absence of a top-level coordinator. The most important of these was the lack of an agreed concept of pacification within which each program could be developed and implemented. Another, more practical, problem became apparent soon after the deployment of American forces. This was the competition for manpower and resources between military

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and nonmilitary programs--a competition that was stacked in favor of the military. Because everything seemed to be first priority and because there was no overall coordination of these programs in Washington, various elements of the US mission in Vietnam had to bid against each other for local labor and building materials. The military and AID also found themselves in competition for sea transport to Vietnam. It took more than a year for AID and the army to establish a joint and rational approach to the construction of major facilities in Vietnam.²

Perhaps the most serious disadvantage resulting from the division of responsibility and labor in Washington was the difficulty of providing the US mission in Vietnam with efficient and expeditious backstopping. This reflected the fact that although each element of the Vietnam mission theoretically reported directly to the ambassador, each was also directly responsible to its parent organization in Washington. In effect the implementation of American policy was in the hands of exclusive, highly secret "clubs" with overlapping and poorly coordinated responsibilities.

2. In Saigon

a. The US Mission. It is common parlance to speak of the total American official presence in a foreign country as the "United States mission," which is headed by the ambassador. In Vietnam, however, the various American activities and programs have, in effect, been conducted by several individual "missions," and the ambassador has, at best, had only general cognizance over matters that went beyond the institutional and organizational bounds of the American embassy, per se.

2. Over and above these questions involving military and non-military programs in Vietnam, of course, there were problems of orchestrating American military and diplomatic policy and of gearing mounting demands in Vietnam to emerging problems in our domestic economy. Both of these latter considerations, of course, are beyond the scope of our task.

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Almost from the very outset of our involvement in Vietnam, in the late 1950s, the United States had five quite distinct types of programs, each of which was the responsibility of a particular agency: the military aid-intelligence-advisory-combat operation was obviously run from the Pentagon in Washington (with genuflections in the direction of CINCPAC); nonmilitary-intelligence reporting and operations were the responsibility of CIA; economic assistance programs were administered by AID; information programs were dealt with by USIA; and diplomatic functions and political reporting were handled by the Department of State. It is ironical, although perhaps inevitable, that when, in 1966 and 1967, some consequential modifications were made in the American organizational structure in Vietnam to provide tighter central management over all American activities, the array of programs and the number of people administering them had mushroomed to the point that the bureaucracy by then inherent in the system seriously constrained effective top-level control and coordination.

The problem our ambassadors in Vietnam have faced is not unique, although it is much more complicated than that of American ambassadors to other countries. With the expansion of the functions the United States assumed abroad after World War II, virtually every ambassador has found himself responsible for a host of activities administered not only by regular Foreign Service officers, but by representatives of elements of the American government outside the State Department. The ambassadors' problems have been compounded by the fact that American officials operating outside the embassy proper felt primarily responsible to and frequently reported directly to the heads of their parent agencies in Washington. As a consequence, ambassadors have been frequently informed and occasionally consulted, but it was the rare ambassador in charge of a large embassy who was able to maintain tight and continuing control over officials involved in intelligence activities, aid programs, and military operations.

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As early as 1959, Ambassador Durbrow requested and received a memorandum from the White House spelling out his authority to coordinate all aspects of the mission's responsibilities. But he had only modest success in getting the various American elements in Saigon to toe the line. Another and more general attempt was made to correct this major deficiency in the administration of American foreign policy in 1961 when President Kennedy provided each American ambassador with a presidential letter giving him specific and immediate authority over all American officials operating within his assigned country, except for military commands. Armed with this directive, an ambassador could, if he were energetic, if he chose, and if he were actually kept closely informed, assure that all official American activities in his country were within his cognizance and under his authority.

This presidential directive, as might be expected, did not always prove sufficient. It was clear by 1963 in Vietnam, for example, that our ambassador in Saigon had a position more akin to the head of a holding company than the chief of a closely knit mission. One problem in particular seemed in need of resolution: with an American military presence of almost 20,000 men, and with an American military headquarters commanded by a four-star general, the ambassador, while theoretically in charge of the entire American effort except for the actual conduct of military operations, seemed to be at a considerable psychological and institutional disadvantage. Thus, when Ambassador Lodge was assigned to Saigon in mid-1963, he carried with him yet an additional presidential letter spelling out his authority over the military mission. Subsequent ambassadors to Saigon were given the same presidential assurance.

The ideal perception of an American ambassador to Saigon, armed with all the authority the president could provide him, would lead to the conclusion that he would, in fact, be able to keep a sufficiently tight rein on the complex and far-flung activities of the American mission. But the real world which all recent ambassadors have had to confront gives (even with the back-stopping of a deputy ambassador)

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little time to deal with any but the most urgent and critical problems. Days and nights are filled with briefing and entertaining a procession of visiting government officials, congressmen, press correspondents, and unofficial but "important" personages. Both the ambassador and deputy ambassador have been required to spend a great amount of time and much effort consulting with high-level Vietnamese officials. And a substantial part of each day must be spent in dealing with telegrams to and from Washington. It is no wonder, then, that little time has been available for top-level "mission management." As one proceeds with the quest for "lessons learned," this would seem to be a happy hunting ground.

Within the United States mission in Saigon the functions of the embassy, per se, have been relatively clearcut and well understood. To be sure, the embassy developed many unique characteristics, especially after the late spring of 1965 when the United States began deploying large numbers of combat troops and the American embassy was, for all practical purposes, in the front lines of the battle. At this point, Foreign Service officers found themselves in a much closer relationship with military personnel and much more involved in military problems than they typically were in other assignments. They were also exposed to and involved with more visiting American VIPs than the vast majority must have been in their previous postings. In large part because of this, the Saigon embassy became larger and more highly structured than any other American embassy. It is the only embassy graced with an ambassador and two deputy ambassadors.

Surely, one outstanding feature of the Saigon embassy since the early 1960s has been the range and depth of reporting that Washington demanded from it. High on the list of reporting priorities (perhaps second only to reporting on the stability of and threats to the central government) was reporting on security and pacification progress outside the major cities. Thus in 1963, a group of young, Vietnamese-speaking Foreign Service officers was charged with providing the ambassador and Washington with independent judgments about

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the political, economic, and security situation in the countryside. The ambassador thus had his own check on the reporting of other elements of the American mission, as well as on the information he was receiving through Vietnamese channels. This gave him some degree of control over the various American activities in the area of pacification. This provincial reporting group was phased out in 1967 when CORDS was formed and a more elaborate reporting structure was established.³

The principal problems the ambassador to Saigon faced with respect to the coordination and organization of the American mission arose, obviously, not from the traditional functions of the embassy and other official government elements represented in Saigon. Conventional military operations, day-to-day political reporting, budgetary support for the GVN, narrowly defined intelligence analysis and operations, and protocol matters could be and were easily dealt with in a routine fashion. It was those programs and activities that cut horizontally across the various components that caused difficulties. These functions were primarily those that were geared to fighting the "other war."

Although the "country team" approach⁴ is a device used by many ambassadors to help them keep informed of and maintain cognizance over the activities of the various elements of their missions, Ambassador Lodge preferred to work with a small, personally selected staff that was directly responsible to him. Thus in late 1963 and 1964, responsibility for keeping abreast of the mission's disparate and expanding functions was placed in the ambassador's office, and the country team existed more in form than in substance.

3. "Provincial reporters" are discussed in Part Four of this volume.

4. The "country team" is a committee comprised of US agencies in-country, chaired by the ambassador, and convened by him to advise on the operation of the mission.

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When General Maxwell Taylor succeeded Ambassador Lodge in July 1964, he felt that a more robust coordinating and advisory arrangement was necessary, and he organized a Mission Council, comprised of the heads of the principal elements of the mission. Taylor conceived of the Mission Council as the Vietnam counterpart of the National Security Council in Washington. The council met weekly under Taylor's chairmanship, but day-to-day responsibility for contact with Mission Council members and for follow-up on Mission Council decisions was given to Deputy Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, who headed the council's executive committee. All representatives on the Mission Council were expected to operate on the basis of decisions reached in the council. Divergent views were to be thrashed out in Taylor's presence; if opposing views could not be resolved within the council, each member had the opportunity to record his dissent in council messages to Washington.

The Mission Council was a Taylor innovation and had no official status in Washington, although Taylor, like Lodge before him, went to Saigon with a presidential letter emphasizing the ambassador's authority over all the elements of the mission. The council's effectiveness as a coordinating body depended on the use the ambassador chose to make of it and on the readiness of the chiefs of the various American elements in Vietnam to report frankly and fully on their activities. Even more important was their willingness to regard the ambassador as a link in the command channel to the chiefs of their parent agencies in Washington and a similar readiness on the part of their agency chiefs to recognize that the ambassador and the Mission Council had assumed a considerable measure of authority over day-to-day operations in Vietnam. When Ambassador Lodge went to Saigon to serve his second term in 1965, he did not disband the Mission Council, although his style of operation relegated it to an information and reporting mechanism rather than an advisory and action one.

In his second stint, Lodge hoped to give renewed emphasis to pacification and to improve communications and relations between

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the Americans and the Vietnamese. To this end he established a Mission Liaison Group, comprised of economic, military, and political specialists, which was headed by General Edward Lansdale. This group was to serve, on the one hand, as an informal staff to the ambassador, and on the other, as a ready, if somewhat free-wheeling, confidential channel between the mission and those Vietnamese officials responsible for pacification. The latter responsibility was a reflection of Lansdale's conviction that the Vietnamese needed to formulate their own programs in their own way and that the highly structured US mission gave them no opportunity to talk out their problems.

(Lansdale's arrangement suited Lodge's style, but would not have been consistent with Taylor's more tidy and structured approach.) The performance of the group was disappointing, however. In the first place, there was confusion from the outset as to Lansdale's mission--bringing influence to bear on the Saigon political scene, or pacification. Second, even under the Mission Council concept, the various elements of the American mission were still virtually independent and sovereign. As we have noted above, this was especially complicated when cross-jurisdictional pacification programs were involved. Attempts by Lansdale's team to deal directly with the ambassador on the many issues which cut across the mission's responsibilities were resented within the mission and frequently frustrated, although it had some success in improving the embassy's communication with key Vietnamese officials. Lansdale and his team had no independent operating authority, no funds, and no constituency in Washington and, as a consequence, had little leverage and no bureaucratic "clout." The group was disbanded in 1967 when Ambassador Bunker took over in Saigon.

b. JUSPAO. The establishment of a Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) in 1965 represented the first attempt at direct ambassadorial control and authority over various elements of the American mission outside the embassy proper. This new group was placed under an official with the rank of minister and was given responsibilities for psychological warfare operations, rural affairs,

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and the relation of the entire American mission with the news media. Public affairs officers from all elements of the mission, including MACV, were assigned to JUSPAO, as were the Cultural Affairs officers of AID and the entire staff of the United States Information Agency. The chief of JUSPAO managed a wide variety of programs in the overall field of communication and was the principal contact point between the American effort in this area and the Vietnamese Ministry of Information. Over and above this, the chief of JUSPAO was the official public spokesman for the ambassador and for the American mission in general.

This organization was the precedent for the central management of disparate programs within the mission. It was established as a result of some serious problems the American mission had been having with the media since 1963, when Americans in Saigon, including those who had no official responsibilities for dealing with the press, as well as those who had, were complicating the task of senior American officials in Saigon and Washington by free-wheeling, indiscreet, and sometimes self-serving relations with American and foreign correspondents. Although JUSPAO performed effectively as a central management tool, it would be yet another year before an attempt would be made to bring together other elements of the mission under a central managerial body.

c. MAAG-MACV. American military assistance to the government of Vietnam during the decade of 1955 to 1965 ran the gamut from a modest and conventional military assistance program and a few training specialists to the deployment of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and major units of the Navy and Air Force. How we organized our efforts in Vietnam to deliver this assistance and how the resultant institutions and modalities were related to the equally important political and economic responsibilities we assumed are worth touching upon here. Many of the problems encountered in Vietnam were new to the American government, and many of the solutions were reached only after much trial and error.

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By the late 1950s the United States had had considerable experience in many countries with MAAG operations. The MAAG organization had clear channels to and effective backup in the Department of Defense in Washington. In addition, the relationship of a chief of MAAG to an American ambassador was in theory, at least, well established; the MAAG chief was by rank and function subordinate to the ambassador and was generally regarded as one of several senior specialists on the country team. In Saigon, however, the growing American military role created difficulties between these two senior officials. The mission found itself with new military responsibilities that it was unable to carry out under existing institutional arrangements. One problem that proved to be especially troublesome for the chief of MAAG was his interaction with the embassy, in general, and the ambassador, in particular. The following exchange between Ambassador Durbrow and MAAG Chief Williams is revealing:

Senator Mansfield: Have you, as Ambassador, ever directed the MAAG group to pursue or to refrain from pursuing a particular military aid project?

Mr. Durbrow: Yes. We discussed various military aid projects and made recommendations. Sometimes General Williams does not agree with them. We bring these back here and have them coordinated in Washington.

Senator Mansfield: Could you give us one example or could you furnish one for the record?

Mr. Durbrow: I would prefer to do it in executive session, if I may, sir.

General Williams: Mr. Chairman, would you mind reading that question once more, please, sir?

Senator Mansfield: Have you, as Ambassador, ever directed the MAAG group to pursue or to refrain from pursuing a particular military aid project?

General Williams: The answer to that is "No."

Mr. Durbrow: I guess you are right on that.

Senator Mansfield: The answer is "No"?

Mr. Durbrow: What I meant to say was that in discussing various matters affecting MAAG, I have recommended things that I did not think were within policy guidance, and we have come back to Washington here to ask for coordination on that.

Senator Mansfield: Now, the answer to that question is "No."⁵

5. US Senate, Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, Situation in Vietnam, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 30 and 31 July 1969.

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The traditional MAAG-embassy relations that characterized the earlier period of our involvement and which have been described above became increasingly onerous. The MAAG chief found his activities, particularly as they related to the GVN, constrained by the need to clear his contacts with GVN civilian and military officials with the ambassador and other embassy officials.

The early reliance upon the traditional MAAG structure as the delivery, training, and accountability vehicle for American supplies and equipment was, as we have already noted, a reflection of the institutional instruments we then had available. In terms of the objectives that were laid down by Washington and by the early MAAG chiefs, the MAAG mission in Saigon performed reasonably well throughout the 1950s, taking into account the special problems it confronted with a new and untried Vietnamese government and military establishment. We know now that the type of equipment and the kind of training we provided the South Vietnamese during this early period turned out to be largely irrelevant to the problems the GVN was facing, but this is a reflection on the rigidity of American military policies and doctrines at the time, and on the leverage MAAG was able to exercise in Washington, rather than on the organization and structure of the Military Assistance Program.⁶ It was not until 1960, under General McGarr, that the MAAG mission was given responsibility and the personnel for training Vietnamese irregulars, in addition to conventional forces.

In early 1961, 400 American Special Force troops were dispatched to train Vietnamese paramilitary teams and to participate as necessary in the defense of their bases. Authority over American Special Forces in Vietnam was given to the CIA, not only because MAAG was not geared to directing paramilitary programs, but perhaps also because President Kennedy felt that the mission of the Special Forces would be eroded under the conservative MAAG doctrine that then prevailed. In effect then, the American mission in Vietnam had two separate

6. We discuss this matter in some detail in Volume II, Part Two.

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channels of command for the American military advisory effort--the MAAG, which controlled the regular military advisers, and the CIA, which controlled the Special Forces. (This unusual situation persisted until 1964.)

By February 1962, Washington had recognized the need to separate the military assistance and advisory functions and established a new military command, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. The MAAG was placed under MACV and continued to administer the flow of supplies and equipment to the Vietnamese armed forces, and MACV assumed command of the advisory effort. After several months, however, it became clear that this arrangement was much too cumbersome and MACV absorbed MAAG.

The military element of the American mission was characterized by another interesting anomaly which bears at least passing attention. For more than two years after the creation of MACV, military attachés continued to be assigned to the ambassador's staff. Military attachés were, of course, standard equipment for every embassy, but with the development of intelligence and operations staffs within MACV, the reporting function of the military attachés soon became redundant. Nonetheless, it was not until March 1964, while Secretary McNamara was in Saigon, that a final decision was made to close out the military attachés.

Although its functions were expanded tremendously after the deployment of American combat forces in 1965, MACV's basic organization remained pretty much the same until General Westmoreland was given specific responsibility for pacification with the creation of CORDS in 1967. A civilian (Robert Komer), with the personal rank of ambassador and the equivalent rank of lieutenant general, was made a deputy to General Westmoreland, and a staff of several thousand civilian and military officers was assigned to the pacification function under the command of MACV. (CORDS will be dealt with in greater detail below.)

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d. AID. The Agency for International Development has had, as we have seen, a long history in Vietnam dating back (in earlier incarnations) to the French period.⁷ As the requirements for nonmilitary assistance expanded in the late fifties, the AID establishment in Saigon and its counterpart in the Far East Bureau of AID in Washington were given increasing responsibilities. Over and above such traditional functions as technical assistance and long-term development, AID was increasingly assigned a host of other programs--largely by default since they did not fall within the purview of any existing government agency. To a very considerable extent, therefore, AID Saigon and its counterpart in Washington became the executive agent for many of the nonmilitary aspects of counterinsurgency. Valid arguments were made at the time, and since, that AID executives and staff officers had little or no experience in "revolutionary development" or pacification. These were countered, also with some validity, by the point that no other institution in Washington was any better equipped in terms of capability or experience.

Since 1962, when it was given responsibility for the nonmilitary aspects of pacification in the rural areas, AID Saigon has been divided into two broad components which, under some of its directors, frequently tended to function as virtually separate institutions. One component operated almost exclusively in Saigon and dealt with such functions as the management of the Commodity Import Program, the funding of major public works, long-term development programs, and technical assistance in areas such as taxation, public administration, and public safety. The other component operated primarily in the provinces and administered a variety of local assistance, short-term development, and operating programs. While the rural pacification program was administered by a Saigon-based chief, its implementation rested heavily on AID province representatives. It was this component of AID that prepared the way for a more ambitious and ultimately more effective American pacification effort.

7. The role of the Agency for International Development in Vietnam is discussed in detail in Volume II, Part Three.

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Until early 1967, when many of its functions were taken over by CORDS and placed under the direct authority of MACV, the AID mission in Vietnam was the principal civilian element of the United States Government involved in fighting the "other war." From 1965, when the United States became directly engaged in the war, until the CORDS takeover two years later, AID fought a constant and, more often than not, losing battle against American military requirements for resources. AID personnel in the provinces had difficulty getting their hands on allocated materials and hiring skilled or semi-skilled local personnel in the face of ever-increasing American military demands. In many instances AID was unable to recruit the necessary American civilian personnel to administer its programs in the rural areas and had to rely on an infusion of young military officers who were seconded to provincial pacification duties.

While the AID experience in Vietnam has already been dealt with at some length in Part Three of this volume, it is worth noting here some of the principal characteristics which distinguished the AID programs in Vietnam from AID programs elsewhere in the world:

- (1) Officials in charge of the AID program both in Washington and Vietnam were exposed to the continuing interest and concern, not only of the AID administrator, but of the Secretaries of State and Defense, and frequently by the president himself.
- (2) AID's effort in Vietnam was so much an integral part of the war itself that its organization, programs, and operating philosophy were strongly influenced by a wide variety of interagency committees and task forces in Washington. The provincial pacification programs that were launched after 1962 provided AID officials, both in Washington and Saigon, with problems of administration, logistics, and recruiting that they had not faced in any previous AID program and which, in the end, proved too much for AID to handle on its own.

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(3) Largely in connection with the provincial pacification programs, but also with respect to others, AID personnel found themselves directly operating or implementing programs rather than, as was the traditional AID practice, advising or consulting with local officials.

(4) Finally, as noted earlier in this chapter, a separate country bureau had to be established for Vietnam in 1967-- the only country bureau that existed in AID.

e. The CIA. The Central Intelligence Agency has obviously played an important if largely submerged role in the American mission. There is little that should and even less than can be said in this paper about the organization of the Saigon station and its affiliates.

As mentioned above, the period of the early sixties was noteworthy, in terms of the organization of the United States mission in Saigon, because of the direct responsibility CIA was given for the Army Special Forces units that had been dispatched to Vietnam. This activity, together with the special relationships the station had with the Presidential Palace during the same period, probably made CIA the key element within the American mission at the time.

In the mid-60s, the Agency assumed a major role in the recruitment, training and administration of the Political Action Teams (PATs)-- an early version of the Revolutionary Development cadres. In February 1966, however, the Agency handed over its responsibility to AID, and the PAT's along with the other cadre groups were consolidated into 59-man RD cadre teams. Since that time the Agency appears to have concentrated on gathering covert intelligence and on working with the Vietnamese in identifying the Viet Cong infrastructure and in developing an effective Vietnamese Special Police force for eliminating that infrastructure.

B. REAPPRAISAL

By the end of 1965 it was clear that despite the various efforts by senior American officials in Saigon to come to grips with the military, economic, political, diplomatic, intelligence, and

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information activities of American agencies in Vietnam, the problem of overall coordination and management was, if anything, more vexing than it had been in previous years. This was not surprising since, in addition to approximately 200,000 American troops in Vietnam, there were thousands of American civilians representing many different agencies. There were, of course, a vast number of operating directives emanating from Washington but these were much too detailed and too precisely geared to the responsibilities of individual operating elements to be generally useful. On the other hand, the policy guidelines that came from Washington were much too broad, frequently platitudinous, and sometimes mutually inconsistent. Doctrines, objectives, priorities, and operating techniques more often than not reflected the perceptions of Washington's desires by the chief of each element of the American mission, as well as his personal style and past experience. Ambassador Taylor's Mission Council, while providing some semblance of reason and order by creating a forum through which the Ambassador and his senior subordinates could exchange views and keep abreast of major problems, was inadequate as a central focus of authority and policy. Ambassador Lodge's watered-down version of the council was an even less useful instrument for this purpose.

To add to the unsatisfactory state of affairs within the US mission, the situation in Vietnam, itself, was discouraging. While American troops and occasionally ARVN forces were performing well in conventional military engagements, progress in reestablishing security throughout the countryside was hardly commensurate with the tremendous effort the United States had mounted.

And, finally, there was the problem of the GVN, and of American relations with Vietnamese officials. It was by no means clear that the government in Saigon was on the same wave length with respect to security and pacification as the United States. To complicate the problem even further, scores of relatively senior American officials in Saigon seemed unable to tap into relevant parts of the Saigon government; and wheel-spinning, wasted effort, and counterproductive

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activity were the inevitable results. Except for the start that was being made on the Revolutionary Development cadre program, there was little if any fresh thinking or energy devoted to the question of where and how the pacification effort should proceed.

Clearly, it was time to reexamine where we were and where we were going in the area of pacification. To this end a three-day conference was called in Warrenton, Virginia, from 8 to 11 January 1966, to appraise the situation and to recommend more reliable measures of progress and more effective means of implementation.

1. The Warrenton Report

The Warrenton meeting was attended by Deputy Ambassador William Porter, by the chiefs of all the agencies operating in Saigon and their Washington counterparts, as well as by representatives from the Vietnam Coordinating Committee in Washington, CINCPAC, and the Bureau of the Budget. There was general agreement that neither the US mission nor the Mission Liaison Group provided the necessary degree and quality of coordination, control, and management of American activities in Saigon. In the words of the Warrenton report, "there was widespread recognition of the need to provide within the US mission a single focus of operational control and management over the full range of the pertinent US efforts in order to gear all such US activities and resources effectively into implementation of the rural construction (i.e. 'pacification') concept."

Despite the strong conviction that the report conveyed (and the even stronger conviction that many officials expressed orally during the meetings), the Warrenton group could come up with no specific prescription for resolving the problem. While it was generally agreed that the focal point should be a senior mission official, just below the ambassador, devoting full-time to this responsibility, the group could not agree on the authority that should be granted to this official, nor could it reach a consensus as to how the various Saigon organizations should be structured so that coordination, control, and management could be possible, let alone effective. It was apparent

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that the senior officials representing both the Washington and Saigon interests of the agencies involved in pacification were unable or unwilling to come to grips with any solution that would impair the essential sovereignty of their own organizations. It was also apparent that there was an underlying reluctance by military participants, on the one hand, and civilians, on the other, to recommend any solution that would give primary responsibility to AID or MACV. Thus, Deputy Ambassador Porter returned to Saigon implicitly charged with a considerable amount of responsibility for the coordination of American pacification programs, but with a clear understanding that none of the relevant agencies was ready to give up enough of its own sovereignty to permit him to accomplish the objective.

In addition to wrestling with the organization of the American pacification effort, there was considerable discussion at Warrenton about American relations with relevant components and individuals of the Vietnamese government. There was little disagreement that the current situation called for more robust, systematic, and effective liaison between the American mission and the Saigon government at all levels, but there was also a deeply felt concern that Americans were already leaning too hard on the Vietnamese. The participants recognized the grave danger that the growing and powerful American establishment in Saigon could easily take over the entire direction of the pacification effort from the Vietnamese. They recommended that liaison should continue to be conducted in a style and through channels that would put major responsibility for the pacification effort on the Vietnamese. This was thin gruel, but it was the best the Warrenton group felt able to serve up.

2. Impact of the Honolulu Conference

High-level interest in pacification within both the American and Saigon governments was confirmed during 1966 as a result of a conference convened in Honolulu by President Johnson in February. This summit meeting focused almost exclusively on pacification problems and set a series of events in train which resulted in higher priorities,

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additional programs, and more resources for the "other war." But perhaps the most important consequence of the Honolulu Conference in terms of our present discussion was that, for the first time, President Johnson personally addressed some of the problems in which his senior subordinates had, up to that point, shown only general and polite interest. It became all too clear to the president that progress in "winning hearts and minds," as opposed to gaining military control of territory, had been all too slow.

An important result of the Honolulu meeting, perhaps the most important in terms of turning pacification into a substantive program as opposed to a collection of disparate enterprises, was announced in April 1966: the president faced up to the problem that had thus far been slipping and sliding around the Washington bureaucracy and charged a single person with responsibility for the pacification effort there. Robert Komer of the White House staff was given this task and was assigned a small staff to help him carry it out. His loosely worded charter was contained in NSAM 343, dated 28 March.

With Komer's appointment the various efforts and programs in the area of pacification began to be brought under a measure of control at the Washington level, but the problem in Saigon remained. Despite Lodge's keen interest, Porter's Wagnerian efforts, and Lansdale's great enthusiasm, there was still no effective central focal point of authority. The various military and nonmilitary activities continued to be directed by independent baronies, and the barons, despite a measure of good will, felt to compulsion to submit themselves or their programs to the authority of anyone but their Washington chiefs.

3. Office of Civil Operations (OCO)

During the summer of 1966 several alternative reorganizations of the Saigon mission were proposed in Washington, including one by Secretary McNamara recommending that MACV be given the entire responsibility for pacification. All these proposals were turned down by the Saigon mission or one or more of the Washington agencies involved. Finally, in November, agreement was reached on an arrangement which,

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hopefully, would come to grips with the problem in Saigon. An Office of Civil Operations (OCO) was established under the full-time responsibility of a senior official who, in turn, was directly responsible to the deputy ambassador. The charter of the office was clear enough:

The Office of Civil Operations is responsible for implementation of Revolutionary Development policy and for the direction and command of all US civilian activities and personnel in the field (region and below). The objective is to obtain a fully-integrated civilian effort which can effectively support the Revolutionary Development program, working through a single chain of command. The single civilian chain of command will also coordinate all activities with military elements, to include planning and deployment, in order to insure the development and execution of an integrated and mutually supporting Revolutionary Development plan.

The director of OCO was given broad responsibility for and control over the RD cadres; the public safety, community development, and refugee affairs units from AID; the Chieu Hoi (Viet Cong rallier) program from AID and JUSPAO; and certain information and psychological warfare programs from JUSPAO.

All of this was a step in the right direction, but OCO had some built-in problems that quickly became evident. In the first place, the director was too low in the hierarchy of the American mission. He reported directly to Deputy Ambassador Porter who, presumably, was to continue to regard pacification as his most important responsibility. Although the OCO director was permitted to attend the Mission Council meetings, he was not a member of the Mission Council. In the hierarchy-conscious environment of the mission, his position was at best anomalous; most of the component chiefs in the American mission regarded the director of the Office of Civil Operations as having a status junior to their own. This was especially evident in his relations with AID, CIA, and MACV, all of whom maintained substantial operating programs which did not fall under OCO's responsibility. The director's lack of bureaucratic "clout" made it especially

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difficult for him to obtain the necessary staffing, logistics, and resources to implement the programs for which he was responsible. In this, he was simply following in the footsteps of AID and some of the other civilian agencies represented in Vietnam. The American army, with its growing requirements and overpowering presence, made any civilian-directed effort, especially an effort that was headed by a relatively junior official, a residual claimant for people, transportation, and materials. Nonetheless, he was able to get some able men to head the regional and provincial pacification offices. Indeed, one of the most important contributions OCO made was to place all the civilians working on pacification programs in the provinces under one authority. Up until this point there had been no central management of the various pacification programs in the provinces and districts.⁸

While OCO provided the ambassador and Washington with some sense of confidence that the pacification effort was at long last being integrated and that significant progress in implementing the various programs could now be made, it became clear after several months that OCO was not big enough for the job. In May 1967, a major new reorganization of the pacification effort was announced. But before perfunctorily dismissing the OCO experience as an inadequate organizational effort, it should be noted that during OCO's brief lifetime the American government was graced with the only arrangement it had up to that time and, indeed since, in which there was a central focus for pacification coordination both in Saigon and in Washington.

Although the Office of Civil Operations experienced problems from the outset, it can be argued that the experiment did not get a fair trial. President Johnson, himself, had doubts from the beginning and had given OCO a limited lease on life to prove itself. Even if all the early omens were favorable, the experience factor for a reorganization of this magnitude and complexity was very brief. The fact that senior OCO personnel and the heads of the other operating

8. This problem is discussed in detail in Volume II, Part Three, and Volume III, Part Two.

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agencies in Saigon were aware that high government officials had decided in advance to give OCO a six-month test, in itself, probably put the whole arrangement at a considerable psychological and operational disadvantage.

It is conceivable that OCO could have passed muster if it had started out on more solid footing. If, for example, its sponsorship on the part of the president and his advisers had been more positive, and if it had been placed directly in the charge of (as its successor organization was) a top-ranking official in the mission, OCO might have been able to do more, more quickly, and its components might have been more responsive and effective. Moreover, the cooperation, which was essential, of the components of AID and CIA might have been more forthcoming. It would appear that few consequential officials in either Saigon or Washington genuinely wanted OCO to succeed. But in the last analysis, it was OCO's predominantly civilian flavor that probably doomed the organization from the outset. Despite the best will in the world on the part of General Westmoreland, OCO was regarded as outside the mainstream of MACV's interests and responsibilities, although its responsibilities and objectives cut across or paralleled the military mission of establishing and maintaining the security of the countryside.

Yet another problem that confronted OCO was its obscure parentage. The chief of OCO was, as we have seen, immediately responsible to the deputy ambassador in Saigon. But the White House, and in particular Mr. Komer, exerted substantial control and direction, not only from Washington but through Mr. Komer's frequent trips to Vietnam in the autumn and winter of 1966 and 1967. The chief of OCO could be forgiven if he were somewhat bemused as to his channels of authority and responsibility.

In any case, Washington decided and Saigon agreed that a more potent organization was necessary to manage the pacification effort in Vietnam, and that if this organization was to be able to do its job it would have to be placed directly under General Westmoreland in MACV. A National Security Action Memorandum directed that the

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American pacification effort (both civil and military) be incorporated into one organization, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). In mid-May the newly appointed Ambassador Bunker announced that Mr. Komer would be placed in charge of CORDS.

4. Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)

CORDS represented not only a horizontal integration of the civil and military aspects of the pacification effort, but also a vertical integration through the establishment of lines of control and communication from the top of the American mission in Saigon down through the military regions, provinces, and districts. Each of the military regions was headed by an assistant deputy for CORDS to whom provincial and district advisers were responsible. The institutional, programmatic, and personnel problems involved in the creation of CORDS were eased considerably by the steps OCO had already taken in both Saigon and the provinces.

In addition to making major strides in rationalizing the American organization for pacification, CORDS was also designed to improve day-to-day relations with appropriate Vietnamese components and individuals. The chief of CORDS had direct access to the premier, and each level in the CORDS hierarchy tied into a roughly comparable point in the Vietnamese structure. There developed, as a consequence, a pattern of "advisers" and "counterparts" from the premier's office to the districts.

CORDS not only took over those American responsibilities that had already been assigned to OCO, but additional ones as well, such as the Revolutionary Development support functions of MACV. Both military and civilian personnel assigned to CORDS were unequivocally placed under Komer's authority. Unlike OCO, CORDS was quickly able to resolve hitherto sticky questions of logistic and budgeting support. This was due in part to its prestigious Washington birth certificate and in part to the authority granted to Ambassador Komer. Moreover, the fact that (by some piece of bureaucratic legerdemain)

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Komer maintained his title of special assistant to the president gave him and his organization in Saigon an institutional "clout" that OCO could not have hoped to wield.

Within six months after its organization CORDS had a personnel roster of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese. But this rapid expansion was understandable in the circumstances of the time. The American mission in Saigon had long been spinning its wheels with respect to the management and coordination of the pacification program. At long last, more than a decade after the United States had become involved in counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam and more than two years after the United States had directly entered the war, an organization had been established to manage this major element of the struggle. In hindsight, however, it would appear that the expansion of CORDS took place too rapidly with consequent compromises in the quality of personnel and in the effective implementation of programs. A few weeks spent in careful advance planning might have made CORDS a tighter, more efficient organization.

When all is said and done, CORDS is not really an "organization," but rather an institutional "arrangement." Moreover, it has neither a constituency nor a counterpart in the Washington bureaucracy, nor in fact does the chief of CORDS have a backstop in Washington to handle his interests. Thus, despite its major, even critical, responsibilities in Vietnam, it is characterized by a built-in fragility and, indeed, a built-in self-destruct mechanism since it will wither away with the American disengagement in Vietnam. We will have more to say on this question below.

In assessing the role of CORDS, one important consideration is frequently overlooked: CORDS has had a profound effect in loosening up the organization and the administrative style of the government of Vietnam. Even those American officials most instrumental in reorganizing the American pacification effort probably did not realize the extent to which the new arrangements would shake up the bureaucracy in Saigon. The establishment of CORDS thus provided an important bonus in terms of increasing the effectiveness of the government of

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Vietnam and has implications for the future character of Vietnamese administration.

C. THE VIETNAMESE ORGANIZATION TO DEAL WITH PACIFICATION

The government of Vietnam, despite certain innovations since 1954, has largely been shaped by a combination of a Mandarin type of rule and a French type of bureaucracy. This mix has had a potent effect on the style of Vietnamese administration. It means in the first instance that authority and responsibility have typically been exercised from the top of each institution and have been yielded grudgingly and sparingly by each superior to his immediate subordinate. The director-general (the chief civil servant) of each ministry has traditionally been virtually independent of whatever government was in power--policies he wished to implement were pushed, those which he chose to ignore were suffocated. Power has been centered in Saigon, and little if any latitude has been given to province governments or even to national government representatives operating outside the capital. Finally, the shape and style of administration in Saigon exaggerated even the natural tendency of a bureaucrat to concern himself only with the affairs (very narrowly construed) of his own bureau and to protect the functions and interests of his bureau from encroachment by others. Not surprisingly, the result has been to stifle initiative and flexibility.

As a consequence of the authority and responsibility delegated by the director of CORDS to his regional deputies and senior province advisers, the Saigon government found itself, per force, giving much greater latitude to its own officials in the military regions and provinces. Moreover, the number and variety of pacification programs being implemented and monitored in the provinces and districts made it necessary for the government of Vietnam to increase both the size and the quality of its provincial civil service. Province chiefs had to assume more responsibility and to demonstrate independent initiatives if only to meet the requirements imposed on them by their CORDS advisers and the ambitious goals established in the pacification plans.

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It is worth backtracking for a moment to trace briefly the evolution of the GVN's organization for pacification. The record of the Saigon government over the past decade in developing institutions to win over "the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese has been very spotty. Until the coup of November 1963, Ngo Dinh Nhu personally controlled the GVN's pacification programs. It was Nhu, for example, who developed the concept and then assumed responsibility for implementing the Strategic Hamlet program. With the assassination of Diem and Nhu, and the bewildering succession of governments that followed, pacification received short shrift until 1964, when an ambitious effort was launched to secure priority areas, especially the area around Saigon. To manage this campaign, the GVN organized a Central Pacification Committee, headed by Prime Minister Khanh, composed of representatives of the various ministries and departments concerned with pacification. The executive agent for pacification was the High Command of the Vietnamese armed forces. This arrangement first faltered because of a lack of direction and coordination among the ministries involved and then fizzled out when Khanh was deposed. In 1965 the Ky-Thieu regime established a new structure under a Commissioner-General for War and Reconstruction. Deputy Premier General Thieu assumed this post. The new organization grouped the major civil and military agencies of Interior, Youth, Psywar, Defense, and Rural Construction. Thus the new organization brought some of the ministries involved in pacification under one roof and represented an improvement over the Khanh model.

At the urging of the American mission in 1965, a separate administrative structure was provided for the Hop Tac campaign to secure the area around Saigon. A Hop Tac council was established which was directly subordinate to the High Command in Saigon. Membership in the council consisted of the commanding generals of Military Regions III and IV and representatives for civil affairs, military, police, and intelligence. In addition, a permanent secretariat with representatives from several relevant American and Vietnamese organizations was responsible for operation and coordination on a continuing basis.

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The Hop Tac council was a relatively effective organization and after several months there was considerable interest on the part of both the Vietnamese and Americans to extend the organizational and conceptual approach to other areas of Vietnam. It soon became clear, however, that the Saigon-based Hop Tac arrangement was unique, if only because it was Saigon based. The control that high Vietnamese officials could execute over all elements of the effort, simply because the council operated out of the Joint General Staff compound, could not be duplicated elsewhere in Vietnam. Nor could the direct communication between military commanders and civilian ministers. Nor, for that matter, could the leverage that key members of the American mission could exert on their Vietnamese opposite numbers. In short, the management of and the interface between American and Vietnamese pacification efforts became diluted with distance from the center of control.

In 1966 the GVN instituted a far-reaching set of organizational changes. These were designed not only to improve coordination of the civil agencies and programs involved in pacification, but also to ensure coordination of civilian and military programs as well. The extremely competent and dynamic Maj. General Thang was elevated from his position as head of the Ministry of Rural Development to that of Commissioner-General for Revolutionary Development. He was given responsibility for supervising the Ministries of Youth, Agriculture, Public Works, and the Commissariat for Administrative Affairs, in addition to the Ministry of Rural Development, which was reorganized along functional lines.

General Thang's assignment also carried with it the responsibility of acting as secretary-general of the Central Rural Development Council, which comprised the senior echelons and ministries of the government. The Ministry of Rural Development served as executive agent. The Central RD Council thus embraced all civilian elements of government and was paralleled by similar councils in the regions, provinces, divisions, and districts. This reorganization was made

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shortly before the Honolulu Conference of February 1966 at which, as the GVN correctly expected, President Johnson would press them hard on giving renewed emphasis to pacification. It anticipated by more than a year a comparable American reorganization that culminated in the creation of CORDS.

In December General Thang was appointed to a new position, Assistant for Territorial Affairs and Pacification to the Chief of the Joint General Staff. His new responsibilities included the important functions of developing concepts and policies for military activities in support of RD, inspecting military units involved in pacification, and, more importantly, supervising the training and employment of the Regional and Popular Forces. Since General Thang already had responsibility for the RD cadre, these new assignments, theoretically at least, gave him authority over all the instruments of pacification, with the exception of the police and some technical cadre.

An important step in improving administration of the GVN pacification programs was the establishment of the Inspection Directorate in the Ministry of Rural Development. The mission of this organization was to improve evaluation of the pacification programs, to supervise all regional agencies in the execution of RD activities, to monitor expenditures of RD funds and materials, and to prevent embezzlement. In addition to a central team, four regional inspection teams were organized.

Events during 1967 demonstrated that General Thang was unable to direct the military and paramilitary activities in support of pacification. The unresponsiveness of the High Command, and the vague, and more often ignored, responsibilities of such established ministries as Interior, Health, Economics, and Agriculture, over which Thang had no authority, made it difficult for him to discharge his responsibilities. And, too, the chronic problems that had plagued all efforts to move ahead expeditiously on the pacification front bogged Thang down in a mire of bureaucracy and corruption. Thang resigned in September 1967 to assume operational responsibility for the Regional and Popular Forces.

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The organization of CORDS in 1967 led immediately to consideration by GVN officials of a parallel organization which would have put Rural Development under the Ministry of Defense. However, they were persuaded by the United States (and perhaps by their own reservations as well) to retain the organization then in effect. The Ministry of Revolutionary Development remained the principal Vietnamese operational agency for the implementation of pacification programs, but a new, across-the-board, coordinating element, the Central Pacification and Development Council (CPDC) was organized. As a consequence of CORDS' encouragement and stimulation, and because of the sheer range and complexity of the pacification programs, there developed a degree of inter-ministry consultation and cooperation that had thus far been lacking within the Saigon government. But the problem of inducing the GVN to undertake programs of interest to the United States or to improve the implementation of existing programs remained.

The matter of "leverage" of course was not a new problem; it was one that every American ambassador to Saigon had faced since 1954. As the American commitment expanded there was a concomitant increase in Washington's stake in effective GVN performance. The ability to influence Vietnamese performance became a matter of increasing urgency, but in the last analysis, Americans had to rely on the carrot rather than the stick; threats to hold back or cancel aid became increasingly threadbare. Perhaps there was no greater source of frustration for every American official serving in Vietnam than the matter of exerting influence over a Vietnamese counterpart. Countless efforts, formal and informal, were made to address this question.

The establishment of CORDS did not by any means solve the problem of "leverage," but the major emphasis that was given to implementation in the provinces and districts resulted, as we have noted earlier, in giving increased authority and responsibility to the provincial governments and loosening up the rigid bureaucratic channels to Saigon. With the thinning out and likely demise of CORDS as

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"Vietnamization" proceeds, these two major improvements in public administration may fall victim to the deeply imbedded, centralized, bureaucratic practices that have characterized the Government of Vietnam for almost two decades. But there are some signs, barely perceptible to be sure, that some of the effects of CORDS on public administration practice in Vietnam may be long lasting. The National Institute of Administration, the Vietnamese training program for middle-level officials, has concentrated on the improvement of provincial administration. The population, at least in the provincial capitals and larger towns, may have learned to expect and may therefore continue to demand a higher standard of administration from their local civil servants than has been the case in prior years. And, the new breed of young, well-trained administrators that is beginning to assume responsibility in the central government may refuse to revert to the arcane practices that characterized the past.

D. SOME LESSONS

At the outset of our involvement in Vietnam in the mid-fifties, we relied on existing institutions, primarily AID and MAAG, for the management and implementation of American assistance. This was probably adequate considering the level and nature of our effort at the time. Problems arose, however, as the scale and complexities of American involvement increased, since neither AID nor MAAG had the institutional experience or personnel to operate actively in an environment of full-blown counterinsurgency. Long and precious time passed before these instruments were adjusted to the tasks they had to perform.

Even after 1961 when we began to play a more direct role in Vietnam, Washington's efforts to coordinate the various US programs consisted largely of organizing, reorganizing, and reconstituting interagency committees both at the policy and the working levels. None of these ad hoc groups had effective operating authority and few had sufficient power to impose their will on any of the constituent agencies involved in the pacification effort. It was not until

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1966, and then only briefly, with the appointment of Robert Komer as White House coordinator, that there existed a single focus for management and coordination of pacification in Washington. Otherwise, the relevant Washington agencies and, in some cases, elements within agencies, functioned as independent baronies. This not only created problems in the implementation of pacification programs, but it made it difficult for Washington even to reach an agreed concept of pacification.

In short, throughout our experience in Vietnam there has been no single focus of management in Washington and, partly as a consequence of this, no generally agreed approach to the goals and techniques of pacification. For all practicable purposes, this is still the case,

At the Saigon level, the situation was, if anything, even more confused. Until the organization of CORDS in 1967, the ambassador, although he was armed with presidential directives giving him authority over all elements of the American establishment, found that his ability to be cognizant of, let alone manage, all government programs conducted in Vietnam was a "sometime thing." Each element of the Saigon mission continued to feel responsible to its parent organization in the United States. With justifiable confidence, senior Saigon officials assumed that they could outflank the ambassador by communicating directly to their agencies in Washington.

The organization of CORDS provided the American mission in Saigon with the centralized management of pacification programs it had previously lacked. However, CORDS had no comparable, Washington-based organization. The first director of CORDS, by his own choice, and subsequent directors by default, had no single designated back-up arrangement in Washington. Because of this, the valuable experience that we have acquired over the last few years in developing a centrally managed pacification program may be eroded when CORDS itself stands down in Vietnam. To be sure, CORDS, as it was conceived and developed, was basically an instrument for managing a vast American effort to parallel or complement military operations. For this reason, CORDS

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is probably unique to the post-1965 situation in Vietnam. Nonetheless, the American experience from the mid-fifties through the early sixties indicates the desirability, if not the need, to engage in effective coordination and management of military and nonmilitary assistance programs in situations of emerging insurgencies. Various possibilities for developing this kind of management have been explored in Volume I.

The lessons that emerge from a review of the organization of the American and Vietnamese efforts in pacification are neither very subtle nor profound. And yet, unless they are taken into account and become a fundamental part of our approach to assisting friendly governments faced with insurgent threats, the accomplishment of American objectives will be placed in jeopardy.

As we have indicated time and again elsewhere in this study, our goal should be to assure that the level of an insurgency is kept below that requiring direct American military participation. More than that, it should be to confine American nonmilitary participation to a level and style that permits a modest, low-profile American presence.

If these objectives are to be achieved, any future national decision to provide American assistance to a friendly power threatened by internal forces should be accompanied by steps to ensure that all operationally involved elements of the American government play their roles in close concert and with a clear and generally agreed understanding of American objectives. Vietnam has taught us that careful government-wide orchestration cannot be accomplished through a plethora of committee arrangements. Some official must be the executive agent for implementing government policy and all participating elements of the bureaucracy must be responsive to his direction. Moreover, such an official should have direct access to the White House so that there is no confusion and no uncertainty on the part of either the operating or policy-making elements as to terms of reference or policy.

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Yet another lesson derives from our experience in Saigon rather than our experience in Washington. No program of American assistance, no matter how well conceived or skillfully implemented can accomplish American objectives with a modest presence and low profile unless the recipient country, itself, has the institutional and bureaucratic resources to absorb advisory assistance and material support effectively. Obviously, we must set our sights realistically; if a government had a highly motivated leadership, skilled administrators and ample dedicated and experienced civil servants, it probably would not need American assistance in the first place. But to say this is not to say that we can go forward with undertakings involving significant American aid and consequential commitments when it appears likely that our partner in the enterprise is unable to operate effectively without American "counterparts" in every ministry and bureau of its government. In short, we cannot "take over" a government nor substitute for its own bureaucracy.

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IV

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN VIETNAM, 1963-1969

A. INTRODUCTION

From the very outset of American involvement in Vietnam in late 1954, the United States launched a two-pronged program for shoring up the Saigon government. One element of this program concentrated on providing the South Vietnamese regime advice and assistance in the military area; the other entailed economic aid. American military and economic assistance has continued without interruption, although with some changes in character and scale, for almost two decades. Elsewhere, primarily in Volume II, we have discussed in detail the American military assistance programs as well as certain aspects of our economic programs that related to pacification. American support in this latter category has been dealt with largely as one facet of what we have termed "the development phase" of pacification (social and political programs are other aspects of the "development" phase). We have discussed the responsibilities, concepts, and implementation of such programs as they were administered initially under AID and later CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support).

In this paper we discuss yet another facet of the American economic aid program--those programs designed to assist the Government of Vietnam to develop an economy which would help meet not only its tremendous military commitments but at least the minimum necessary nondefense obligations as well. Such programs have been largely operated through the GVN budget, tax structure, and central banking system. By and large these programs represented a more traditional facet of AID's responsibilities, and the experience that was gained elsewhere by American economists within and outside of AID proved to be more relevant than was the case in AID's responsibilities for counter-insurgency problems.

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Next to the Communist threat, perhaps the most dangerous problem the Saigon government confronted was that of inflation. Perceptive Vietnamese officials had a profound example of this close at hand in time and place--the rampant inflation in China during the late 1940s, with its consequent alienation of the middle class and the burgeoning of corruption, was a major, perhaps indispensable, ally to the Communists in their victory over the Chinese Nationalists. Clearly, every Saigon regime was conscious of this and receptive to American assistance to avoid such an inflation in South Vietnam. No military effort, no matter how skillfully mounted, no pacification program, no matter how carefully conceived, would succeed in the face of a runaway inflation.

What follows in this paper is a discussion of the American and South Vietnamese efforts to cope with the economic problems of an underdeveloped country fighting a long and costly war. The paper, first, reviews, in aggregate terms, the economic conditions and their major determinants in Vietnam for 1963 through 1969. This period covers the years of political and military turmoil, from the downfall of Diem through the reconstruction after Tet. The paper does not go beyond 1969 because the available data are inadequate to describe more recent conditions.

The discussion begins with a survey of national expenditures, production, productive capabilities, and monetary and fiscal conditions. It then traces the impact on these broad economic indexes of the rapid expansion to a large US economic and military presence, and describes some social and economic difficulties aggravated by the procedures adopted to fund US purchases and to administer US economic assistance and GVN foreign exchange sales. The paper concludes with some observations about what the United States could have done to improve the effectiveness of its economic assistance and to avoid the counterproductive aspects of its economic presence.

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B. STATUS AND CHANGES IN THE ECONOMY

A good first approximation of the general condition of an economy requires measurement of various types of national expenditures, production activities, productive capabilities, and monetary and fiscal conditions. National income accounts are the best source of consistent data on national expenditures and production. For expenditures, these accounts show the current value and volume (in constant prices) of annual consumption purchases by households and government, and investment outlays by business and government. For production, they indicate the contribution to the national output by the government and the various sectors of the private economy. The GVN budget and retail price indexes furnish coherent summary statistics for a reasonably comprehensive picture of inflationary pressures and government activities and sources of revenue. Lack of data, however, limits measurement of productive capabilities to sketchy, incomplete descriptions.

1. Availability of Goods and Services to the Private Sector

From 1963 through 1969, the volume of goods and services available to the private sector for consumption and expansion of productive capacity increased, in irregular annual spurts, by a total of almost 45 percent. Table 1 shows that domestic private spending (measured in 1964 prices) grew from about 94 billion piasters in 1963 to 118 billion piasters in 1969. Of this growth, annual purchases for consumption by households increased by nearly 15 percent from 87 billion piasters to 100 billion piasters. Annual expenditures for plant and equipment increased by nearly 160 percent from about 7 billion piasters to about 18 billion piasters.

The average annual increase in goods and services acquired by the private sector amounted to nearly 4 percent. The volume of goods and services consumed by households increased on average by about 2.5 percent annually, while investment in production capacity expanded at an 18 percent average annual rate. With an annual population

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Table 1

VOLUME OF GOODS AND SERVICES PURCHASED BY THE DOMESTIC
PRIVATE SECTOR, 1963-1969
(Expressed in 1964 prices)

Year	Total Purchases		Private Consumption		Private Gross Capital Formation	
	Billion Piasters	Percent Change	Billion Piasters	Percent Change	Billion Piasters	Percent Change
1963	93.7	--	87.1	--	6.6	--
1964	100.4	7.2	92.4	6.1	8.0	21.2
1965	103.6	3.2	94.0	1.7	9.6	20.0
1966	111.3	7.4	95.6	1.7	15.7	63.5
1967	124.8	12.1	107.1	12.0	17.7	12.7
1968	106.5	-14.7	94.5	-11.8	12.0	-32.2
1969	118.0	7.9	99.6	5.4	18.4	53.5

Sources: Private Consumption and Private Gross Capital Formation, in Current Prices, National Bank of Viet Nam, Research Department.

Price deflators from Edward S. Pearsall and Dietrich Petersen, "Estimates of the National Income and Product of South Viet Nam," March 1971 (mimeographed).

growth of 1.7 to 2.6 percent,¹ per capita annual private sector purchases on average increased by about 1.5 to 2.5 percent. Per capita consumption by households remained constant or grew by about 1 percent annually. Per capita investment in production capacity expanded annually by about 15.5 to 16.5 percent. As shown in Table 1, these average rates mask substantial year-to-year fluctuations. In the year of the Tet offensive, 1968, there was a large reduction in the volume of consumption and capital formation. In the year of the

1. The data of estimated population presented in the Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, National Institute of Statistics, implies an annual growth rate of 1.7 percent. Population experts believe this implied rate is too low for the 1960-69 decade. The same Yearbook presents an explicit population growth increment of 2.6 percent.

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largest increase in US forces, 1967, a large increase in the volume of purchases was registered. In general, the average values suggest stability in Vietnamese living standards and a substantial accumulation of wealth in the absence of large-scale disruption in the distribution network.

2. National Output

Data on the volume of national output, expressed in 1964 prices, are available through 1968. Only scattered and nonuniform statistics are available for production during 1969. The data for 1963 through 1968 show a substantial growth of output of goods and services prior to "Tet." These data indicate a 45 percent increase in the volume of output from 90 billion piasters in 1963 to 130 billion piasters in 1967 (Table 2). Ninety percent of this growth, 36 of the 40 billion piasters, derived in equal parts from the two sectors most closely associated with the execution of the war. Private services increased in volume of output from 28 to 46 billion piasters. This sector includes US military purchases and employment and activities associated with distribution of goods financed by US aid and expenditures. The output of the public administration and defense sector, which reflects GVN wage and salary payments to civilian and military personnel, expanded, in 1964 prices, from 19 to 37 billion piasters.

Output of the agricultural sector, the main source of livelihood in Vietnam, declined by about 10 percent from 1963 through 1967. This reduction reflects a diminished production for all crops. As an illustration, the output of rice, the predominant subsistence food crop, decreased from 5.2 million metric tons in 1964 to 4.7 million metric tons in 1967. Production of rubber, the predominant commercial crop, diminished from 74 thousand metric tons in 1963 to 43 thousand metric tons in 1967.

This stagnation in agriculture reflects the war-caused disruption in the countryside, expansion of the military, and increased claims on resources by the US sector. The land under rice cultivation diminished by about 10 percent from 2.54 million hectares in 1960

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Table 2

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT AT FACTOR COST IN 1964 PRICES, 1963-1968
(Billions of piasters)

Year	Total GNP	Total Private	Private Sectors			Public Sector	Statistical Discrepancy
			Agriculture ^a	Industry ^b	Services ^c		
1963	89.9	71.4	28.6	13.0	27.9	18.5	1.9
1964	99.9	78.5	32.5	14.3	30.9	21.4	0.8
1965	113.6	86.6	30.7	16.2	34.5	27.0	5.2
1966	128.6	92.5	28.5	18.1	44.2	36.1	1.7
1967	130.4	93.3	29.0	17.5	45.8	37.1	1.0
1968	125.8	83.2	25.8	15.5	40.6	42.6	1.3

- a. Agriculture encompasses farming, forestry, hunting, and fishing.
b. Industry includes mining; manufacturing; construction; and electricity, gas, and water.
c. Services incorporates transport, storage, and communication; wholesale and retail trade; banking, insurance, and real estate; ownership of dwellings; other services; and net factor income from abroad (largely wage and salary receipts from US agencies and contractors).

Sources: GNP in current prices, National Bank of Viet Nam, Research Department.

Price deflators from Pearsall and Petersen, "Estimates of the National Income and Product of South Viet Nam."

to 2.29 million hectares in 1966.² Correspondingly, best, though crude, available estimates show employment in agriculture declined from about 5.7 million to 4.0 million. One segment of the reduced agricultural labor force reflects an increase in the number of displaced peasants in refugee camps. A large segment, over 600,000, represents a sharp growth in GVN civilian and military employment and in individuals working for the US sector. Total RVNAF (Republic

2. USAID/Vietnam, "Civilian Employment by Type of Activity, 1960 and 1966," Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1968, p. 9.

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of Viet Nam Armed Forces) and paramilitary forces expanded from over 400,000 in 1963 to over 700,000 in 1967.³ GVN civilian employment expanded by about 90,000 during this period,⁴ and employment by the US sector increased from a few hundred in 1960 to about 150,000 by 1967.⁵ Employment in service sectors, which were closely tied to the US presence, expanded by about 100,000 through 1966.⁶

For 1968 and 1969, the data indicate first a substantial reduction in the volume of production and then a sharp recovery beyond the levels prevailing during 1967. The data in Table 2 show an overall 10 percent decline in the output of the private sector of the economy for 1968. Production contracted by about the same proportion in each of the three components of the sector--agriculture, industry, and services. In contrast, the output of the public sector expanded by 15 percent. This increase reflects an enlargement of military forces by 200,000 to 900,000 men and the employment of 30,000 additional civilians by the GVN.

The available scattered statistics indicate a complete recovery of the economy by 1969. Rice output not only exceeded the 1968 level but approximated the output of 1964 (5.2 million metric tons), i.e., before the decline set in as a result of the war.⁷ The industrial production index for 1969 shows industrial production 13 percent

3. For 1965 through 1967 see USAID/Bureau of Vietnam, Summary of Monthly Economic Data, August 1970. The data for 1964 comes from The Military Balance, 1964-1965, Institute for Strategic Studies (London).

4. "Number of Government Employees by Status and Region," Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, p. 307.

5. USAID/Vietnam, "Employment in the US Sector, 1960 to 1967," Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1968, p. 10.

6. "Number of Persons Engaged in the Industrial and Commercial Establishments, 1960 to 1966," Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, p. 303.

7. "Agricultural Crops: Planted Area and Production," Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, p. 32.

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above the previous high achieved in 1967.⁸ This expansion of agricultural and industrial output occurred concomitantly with another 130,000-man increase in the size of the military establishment.⁹ Scattered preliminary statistics for 1970 suggest continued growth in the production output of the Vietnamese economy.¹⁰

A comparison of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that consumption by households and investment by business far exceeded the volume of goods produced by the private sector. This pattern prevailed throughout the period. In 1963, the volume of goods and services acquired for private domestic use exceeded private production of such products by 31 percent. By 1967 and 1968, this excess was still about 30 to 35 percent. This deficiency in private output was made up by imports financed with US economic assistance and piaster purchases.

3. Fiscal and Monetary Conditions

From 1963 through 1969 GVN expenditures increased by over 110 billion piasters. Table 3 shows annual expenditures grew from about 29 billion piasters in 1963 to 143 billion piasters in 1969. Concurrently, total annual GVN revenues increased from 19 billion to 110 billion piasters. The annual budget deficit during this period fluctuated widely, averaging about 12 billion piasters through 1967 and about 35 billion piasters for 1968 and 1969. The government turned largely to the printing presses to finance these deficits. This action resulted in an average growth of the money supply of 11 billion piasters through 1967 and of about 24 billion piasters for 1968 and 1969.

As shown in Table 4, the increase in the quantity of money amounted to an average annual 35 percent rate of growth in the money supply. Consomitantly, consumer prices, as measured by the index

8. "Index of Industrial Production," Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, p. 176.

9. Summary of Monthly Economic Data for Viet Nam, May 1971, p. 14.

10. "Delta Rice Deliveries to Saigon," Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, p. 11.

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Table 3GVN BUDGET AND INCREASE IN MONEY SUPPLY
(Billions of piasters)

Year	Budget			Money Supply Increase
	Expenditures	Revenues	Deficit	
1963	28.9	19.3	- 9.7	--
1964	28.9	19.4	- 9.5	3.5
1965	53.8	26.4	-27.4	13.8
1966	61.9	63.3	+ 1.4	13.2
1967	95.5	83.0	-12.5	15.3
1968	114.6	78.4	-36.2	30.5
1969	142.8	110.4	-32.4	16.3

Sources: USAID/Vietnam, Annual Statistical Bulletin, No. 11
(June 1968), pp. 58-61.

USAID/Bureau of Vietnam, Summary of Monthly Economic Data for Viet Nam, April 1971, p. 10.

Table 4

ANNUAL RATE OF INCREASE OF MONEY SUPPLY AND CONSUMER PRICES

Year	Money Supply	Consumer Prices
1964	22.8	3.1
1965	73.7	16.3
1966	33.4	62.4
1967	29.4	43.5
1968	51.0	26.9
1969	13.0	21.8

Source: Viet Nam Statistical Yearbook, 1970, pp. 248 and 335.

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for Saigon working families, rose at an average annual rate of 28 percent. These price rises amounted to a fairly high rate of inflation when compared with industrial countries where consumer prices rise at a 3 to 6 percent annual rate. But they compare favorably with other countries, like Brazil and Indonesia, which during five-to-ten year periods have experienced annual price rises of 50 percent or more.¹¹

C. CONTRIBUTION OF US AID AND PURCHASES TO THE ECONOMY

1. Growth of Private Consumption and Investment

Available data indicate that imports accounted for all the growth in the volume of goods and services purchased for private consumption and investment during the 1963-69 period. Table 5 shows the volume of imports purchased or used in domestic production for consumer or investment products increased by 150 percent.¹² Expressed in 1964 prices, imports intended for private domestic use increased from 21 billion piasters in 1963 to 53 billion piasters in 1969. Concurrently, the contribution of domestic production to private consumption and investment fluctuated between 58 and 83 billion piasters, in 1964 prices.

Two sources of financing underwrote this large growth of imports: purchases on the economy by US agencies and personnel, and expansion of US economic grants. Since precise estimates of the dollar amounts

11. International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics, selected issues.

12. The estimates in Table 5 were calculated by netting out GVN imports from the gross import figures in the national income accounts. A previous IDA study by Bruce Grimm and Rolf Piekarz, A Macroeconomic Planning Model for Viet Nam (draft, July 1971), suggests that the GVN allocates about 5 percent of its expenditures for imports. The net import figures in Table 5, therefore, reflect purchases for domestic private use, based on the further assumption that Vietnamese exports incorporate only a negligible amount of the total imports. This represents a reasonable first approximation, since during the 1960s exports of goods were negligible, and those goods exported contained only a small amount of imports. Commodity exports involved principally rubber and rice.

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Table 5

IMPORTS AND DOMESTIC PRODUCTS IN PRIVATE CONSUMPTION
AND INVESTMENT EXPRESSED IN 1964 PRICES, 1963-1969
(Billions of piasters)

Year	Total Value of Private Consumption and Investment	Import Content	Contribution of Domestic Production
1963	93.7	20.9	72.8
1964	100.4	21.7	78.7
1965	103.6	25.3	78.3
1966	111.3	44.8	66.5
1967	124.8	54.1	70.7
1968	106.5	48.9	57.6
1969	135.0	52.7	82.3

Sources: National Bank of Viet Nam, Research Department.

Pearsall and Petersen, "Estimates of the National Income
and Product of South Viet Nam."

are not available, the data in Table 6 are close approximations. For US purchases on the economy, the figures show purchases of piasters with dollars by the US Disbursing Officer (USDO) for use by US agencies, contractors, and personnel. These data show an increase from \$42 million in 1964 to \$347 million in 1969, excluding piaster purchases with dollars on the black market. Aside from earnings on commodity exports, the USDO piaster purchases probably correspond closely to the imports purchased through GVN sales of foreign exchange. Black market dollars generally were used for illegal investment abroad or payment for smuggled and unrecorded imports. For US economic grants, Table 6 uses the dollar value of imports financed by these grants. Here, the data indicate an increase from \$217 million in 1963 to \$450 million in 1969. Total US purchases and aid grants expanded by over \$550 million between 1963 and 1969.

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Table 6

US PIASTER PURCHASES AND AID GRANTS, 1963-1969
(Millions of dollars)

Year	Total	Piaster Purchases	Aid Grants ^a
1963	--	--	217.0
1964	239.6	42.0	197.6
1965	351.1	74.0	277.1
1966	644.0	233.1	410.9
1967	636.3	202.8	433.5
1968	711.1	310.8	400.3
1969	796.9	346.7	450.2

- a. Aid grants represent Vietnamese imports financed under the Commercial Import Program, Food for Freedom (PL-480, Titles I and II), and Public Aid.

Sources: Piaster Purchases--USAID/Bureau of Vietnam, "US Piaster Purchases with Dollars by US Disbursing Officer, Saigon, Viet Nam," Summary of Monthly Economic Data for Viet Nam, April 1971.

Aid Grants--USAID/Vietnam, "Import Arrivals by Type of Financing and by Country, 1963-1969," Annual Statistical Bulletin, No. 13 (December 1970).

The United States played a central role in underwriting improvements in the material welfare of Vietnam. A close examination of the national income accounts indicates that US purchases explain the growth of the service sector, which in turn accounted for most of the expansion of private production for the 1963-68 period. Estimates of the volume of productive activity in the service sector generated by nonresident (i.e., predominantly US) purchases presented in Table 7 show an increase from about 1.5 billion piasters during

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1963 to about 19.5 billion piasters for 1967.¹³ Netting these results from the total productive activity of the service sector reveals that from 1963 through 1967 the output contributed by this sector, exclusive of sales to Americans, fluctuated between 26 and 30 billion piasters. In other words, the contribution of the private domestic sector to private consumption and investment stagnated between 1963 and 1968. Output by agriculture and industry remained more or less unchanged. Thus, US aid and purchases was the predominant stimulus behind the observed growth of private consumption and capital formation.

Table 7

CONTRIBUTION OF US PURCHASES TO THE NET PRODUCT OF THE
SERVICE SECTOR EXPRESSED IN 1964 PRICES, 1963-1968
(Billions of piasters)

Year	Total Sector Net Product	Contribution of US Purchases	Residual
1963	27.9	1.4	26.5
1964	30.9	1.7	29.2
1965	34.5	4.9	29.6
1966	44.2	17.4	26.8
1967	45.8	19.6	26.2
1968	40.6	15.2	25.4

Sources: Total sector net product: Table 2.

Contribution of US purchases: National Bank of Viet Nam,
Research Department; Pearsall and Petersen, "Estimates of
the National Income and Product of South Viet Nam."

13. These annual estimates represent the sum of two magnitudes expressed in 1964 prices: net factor payments from the rest of the world (i.e., wages and salaries paid by foreigners to Vietnamese); and the net product of the service sector for the purchase of services by nonresidents. To obtain the latter, 60 percent of the expenditures of nonresidents for goods and services in Vietnam was allocated to the service sector. This product was then deflated by the Saigon consumer price index for services, using 1964 as base. This result was then multiplied by 0.9, the average net product of the service industry. The factors for these multiplications were taken from Grimm and Piekarz, A Macroeconomic Planning Model for Viet Nam.

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UNCLASSIFIED**2. Reduction in the Tax Burden and Rate of Inflation**

US aid and purchases also significantly influenced domestic taxation and the rate of inflation. US aid provided revenue to the GVN from the piasters received by the government through the payments of local firms for CIP imports and local sale of Food for Freedom (PL-480) imports (both of these programs are discussed below). Imports financed by dollar aid and purchases also provided the government revenues through the collection of taxes on imported goods. Revenues from these sources enabled the government to hold down taxes on domestic transactions and income and still meet growing government defense needs. In other words, GVN revenues from US aid and purchases limited the government deficit for a given level of expenditures and domestic taxation. Lowering the government deficit diminished additions to the money supply and thereby the increase in prices.

From 1963 through 1969 most of the increase in GVN expenditures was financed by revenues collected from US aid or from taxes on imports purchased with dollars provided by US sources. As shown in Table 8, annual GVN revenues increased by over 90 billion piasters. Of this increase, taxes from domestic transactions and income accounted for about 30 billion piasters, and receipts from commodities financed by US aid accounted for about 15 billion piasters. Taxes collected on US-financed imports and on purchases by US agencies, contractors, and personnel accounted for 45 billion piasters.

Despite the large rise in GVN expenditures (see Table 3), the tax burden on domestic transactions and income remained constant and relatively low. Throughout the 1963-69 period, these taxes amounted to about 7 percent of the value of GNP. Domestic taxes represented the total tax burden on the Vietnamese.¹⁴ Import taxes in Vietnam did not involve a sacrifice of income from production. These tax collections merely offset the unrealistically low exchange rates on

14. A complete analysis of this position is presented in J. A. Stockfish, The Shifting and Effects of Excise Taxes and Import Duties (IDA draft, September 1971).

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imported goods financed by the United States. In other words, import taxes reflected the unwillingness of the GVN to set an exchange rate high enough to balance the demand for dollars with the available supply. To the degree that import taxes did not eliminate this excess demand, individuals obtained windfall gains, i.e., income without providing a useful service. A tax burden of 7 percent placed Vietnam among the lowest taxed nations in the world.¹⁵ Taxes in developed countries generally run 25 to 35 percent of GNP. Among less-developed countries taxes range from 10 to 20 percent of GNP.

Table 8

GVN REVENUES, 1963-1969
(Billions of piasters)

Year	Total Revenues	Domestic Revenues	Foreign Revenues	
			Import Taxes	Aid
1963	19.3	7.2	4.7	7.4
1964	19.4	7.8	5.2	6.4
1965	26.4	10.7	5.7	10.6
1966	63.3	16.1	23.9	23.3
1967	83.0	24.8	28.4	29.8
1968	78.4	27.5	26.7	24.2
1969	110.4	35.3	50.8	24.3

Sources: USAID/Vietnam, Annual Statistical Bulletin, No. 11 (June 1968), pp. 58-61.

USAID/Bureau of Vietnam, Summary of Monthly Economic Data for Viet Nam, April 1971, p. 10.

15. See J. A. Stockfisch, "A Tax Strategy for South Viet Nam," The Economic Development of South Viet Nam, Volume III: Related Essays (IDA draft, October 1971).

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D. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AGGRAVATED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OF US PURCHASES AND AID

Intensification of the Vietnam conflict drained resources and output from personal consumption and expansion of productive capacity. The conflict, as customary with wars, also led to corruption, profiteering, and evasion of government restrictions. Large-scale US economic assistance and purchases played the central role in expanding private output, consumption, and investment, as well as containing inflation. At the same time, the procedures adopted to exchange dollars for piasters and for distributing economic assistance tended to promote corruption and profiteering and to undermine some of the benefits from US purchases and aid.

1. Expansion of Currency Black Market from the Piaster Purchase System

Throughout the 1963-69 period US agencies, contractors, and personnel were obligated to purchase their piasters at the official rate of exchange. Prior to 1967, this rate was set at 80 piasters to the dollar. In the summer of 1967, the rate was 118 piasters to the dollar. Both these rates were substantially below the exchange rate offered in the illegal open market. As early as 1964, the currency black market offered, on average, 131 piasters per dollar--63 percent more than the official rate. By the spring of 1967, the open market rate had risen to over 160 piasters--double the official rate. By the end of 1969, the rate was over 300 piasters to the dollar--more than 2.5 times the official rate.¹⁶

The open market premium encouraged American personnel and contractors to purchase piasters illegally. No reliable data exist on the transactions in the black market, but, when in 1970 a special accommodation rate closer to the black market rate was instituted for US contractors and personnel, there occurred an immediate rise in piaster purchases from the US Disbursing Officer. In fact, despite

16. USAID/Bureau of Vietnam, Summary of Monthly Economic Data for Viet Nam, May 1971.

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sharp reductions in US contractor activities, dollars sold for piaster purchases by the US Disbursing Officer during the last half of 1970 and the first half of 1971 approximated the dollars expended for piasters during the first half of 1970.¹⁷

The GVN probably gained additional revenues by selling piasters at the low official rates to US agencies and personnel, but it lost foreign exchange for imports. The low official rate lowered the price of foreign exchange for capital flight and thereby stimulated the illegal export of capital by wealthy Vietnamese. This situation, then, enhanced the wealth of individuals profiting most from the war, in consequence providing an additional incentive for profiteering. Unrealistic exchange rates fostered corruption even more directly. The Vietnamese authorities never seriously cracked down on the illegal currency market (US authorities did some enforcement). Evasion of foreign exchange laws necessitated, of course, bribery of public officials, from policemen on up.

2. Loss of Goods and Services from Tying Aid

The bulk of Vietnamese imports was financed in one of three ways. The GVN sold dollars to importers from foreign exchange obtained through exports and through the sale of piasters to the US Disbursing Officer. (Earnings from commodity exports became a smaller and smaller source of foreign exchange, declining from \$77 million in 1963 to \$12 million in 1969.) Most of the remaining imports were financed under two US economic assistance programs: the Commercial Import Program and PL-480 (Food for Freedom). These programs helped to stabilize the economy by absorbing purchasing power and providing revenues for the GVN budget. These goals were achieved by making goods available to Vietnamese and then turning over the piaster proceeds from the sales to the GVN. The Commercial Import Program sold funds to importers largely for the purchase of materials for production and capital equipment. Under this program purchases

17. Ibid.

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were limited to a restricted list of items and to US suppliers.¹⁸ The PL-480 program involved the transfer of US agricultural products for sales on the local economy.

As shown in Table 9, on average, 50 to 70 percent of the imports into Vietnam during the 1963-69 period were financed by the United States and were thus "tied" imports. CIP imports declined from about 40 percent of total imports in 1963 to 15 percent in 1969. In the interim, PL-480 imports climbed from over 15 percent to about 30 percent of the total. Public aid-financed-imports made up the remainder of tied purchases. In general, the share of tied imports tended to decline over the period. The share of GVN-financed imports increased from about 25 percent in 1963 to 45 percent in 1969. Miscellaneous sources (e.g., other foreign loans and grants and barter) accounted for less than 5 percent of imports by 1969.

Table 9

IMPORT ARRIVALS BY TYPE OF FINANCING, 1963-1969
(Millions of dollars)

Year	Type of Financing						Total
	GVN	United States				Other	
		CIP	PL-480	Public Aid	Total		
1963	77.7	125.8	57.8	33.4	217.0	20.7	315.4
1964	95.0	108.5	67.0	22.1	197.6	34.1	326.7
1965	85.4	179.9	59.2	38.0	277.1	25.0	387.5
1966	167.8	233.1	152.1	25.7	410.9	28.5	607.2
1967	289.5	200.7	198.5	34.3	433.5	21.0	744.0
1968	286.0	108.6	233.5	58.2	400.3	21.2	707.5
1969	372.2	103.3	228.7	118.2	450.2	15.3	837.7

Source: USAID/Vietnam, Annual Statistical Bulletin, No. 13 (December 1970), p. 23.

18. The Commercial Import Program Office in Vietnam was permitted to license 10 percent of the available dollars to purchases in a limited number of less developed countries.

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For imports under the US aid program the Vietnamese received less value for each dollar spent than for imports obtained with GVN financing. Tying CIP purchases to a restricted list of goods predominantly from US sources prevented importers from purchasing these goods from the cheapest source. No precise estimates of the price discrepancies exist, but best available judgments place the prices of US goods purchased under CIP, on average, about 50 percent higher than prices on similar merchandise which Vietnamese importers could or would have bought elsewhere. The higher average US price frequently bought higher quality merchandise, but, within the context of Vietnam, local buyers would probably have preferred the lower quality merchandise. Restricting the list of permissible imports also denied the Vietnamese American products which they might have preferred over the ones available. These restrictions in a number of instances also prevented Vietnamese from utilizing efficiently goods purchased under CIP; for example, CIP would permit the import of machinery but frequently prohibit the purchase of spare parts.

The deficiencies of tying aid under CIP hold in spades for the PL-480 imports. In general, the prices for US agricultural products acquired under this program exceeded world market prices. The agricultural commodities made available, especially rice, were less suited to local preferences than similar items obtainable elsewhere. In addition, given the choice to buy manufactured as well as agricultural products, Vietnamese probably would not have chosen as much of the PL-480 commodities as were made available.

Tying economic assistance not only diminished the material benefits Vietnamese could receive from a given aid budget; it also lowered GVN revenues. Because a dollar of tied-aid imports comprised less desirable commodities, Vietnamese paid less for these goods than for items available with GVN financing. This condition forced the authorities to make aid dollars available at a lower charge than GVN-owned dollars.

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3. Corruption and Inflation from Foreign Exchange Sales

The procedures for distributing foreign exchange from GVN and CIP sources contributed to corruption, profiteering and, through government deficits, inflation. Foreign exchange for imports was allocated through import licenses which enabled importers to claim foreign exchange at the official rate of exchange. The piaster cost of a dollar of imports therefore amounted to the official rate of exchange plus import taxes for the specific item. Table 10 shows that this piaster cost to the importer per dollar of foreign goods tended to fall short of the landed value of the merchandise (measured by the black market rate) on the domestic market. Devaluation and a steep rise in import taxes eliminated this differential for about 21 months beginning mid-1966. Then, from spring 1968 through 1969, the differential between piaster costs of imports to importers and the domestic landed value again rose to about 30 percent.

Table 10

PIASTER PRICE PER DOLLAR OF IMPORTS TO IMPORTER
VERSUS BLACK MARKET RATE OF PIASTER

Period	Piaster Cost of Imports to Importer*	Black Market Rate of Piaster**
1966, 1st half	90.9	176.0
1966, 2nd half	176.0	175.3
1967-March 1968	171.9	161.8
1968, April-December	178.9	190.0
1969, 1st half	182.6	191.5
1969, 3rd quarter	192.1	215.7
1969, 4th quarter	212.2	305.3

*These data were presented in an internal memorandum by Douglas Dacy.

***"Free Market Gold and Currency Prices, US\$10 Green," Viet Nam Economic Data, January-March 1972, p. 6.

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These gaps gave businessmen the opportunity to earn large profits from imports. In addition to the wholesaler's margin, businessmen also could capture the difference between the piasters paid to acquire the merchandise and its landed domestic value. Opportunities for such large gains generated an excess demand for foreign exchange, which in turn led to a demand for import licenses which the authorities could not satisfy at the existing exchange rate and import tax rate. This unsatisfied demand, coupled with inadequate GVN administration and enforcement capabilities, encouraged importers to offer public officials bribes. Use of high tariffs in place of upward adjustments in exchange rates also encouraged bribery of customs officials. In general, rationing of foreign exchange and evasion of import taxes probably represented the largest sources of corruption in Vietnam.

Windfall gains from importing provided businessmen opportunities for higher incomes than they could obtain from other activities. This incentive tended to divert businessmen from domestic production activities, especially processing materials.

More important, unrealistically low piaster charges for foreign exchange under import licenses contributed heavily to government deficits. Table 11 shows the additional GVN revenues and the size of the deficit which could potentially have resulted if the government had captured the market value of the foreign exchange sold to importers. Comparing these revenue figures with the data in Table 3 indicates that the GVN could have increased revenues by 5 to 20 percent. At the levels of GVN expenditures observed for the period, these additional revenues would have moderated the budget deficits greatly. These additional receipts would have eliminated the large budget deficits of 1967 and 1969. They would have lowered the deficits of 1965 and 1968 by about 20 to 30 percent, and would even have created a sizable budget surplus in 1966. Since the major portion of the increase in the money supply resulted from the financing of GVN budget deficits, additional revenues from foreign exchange sales would have substantially moderated the growth of the stock of money, and thereby diminished the rate of inflation.

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Table 11

POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL REVENUES AND BUDGET DEFICIT
FROM REALISTIC EXCHANGE RATES FOR IMPORT LICENSES
(Billion of piasters)

Year	Actual Deficit	Potential Additional Revenues	Potential Budget Deficit
1963	- 9.7	0.0	-10.6
1964	- 9.5	0.7	- 8.8
1965	-27.4	6.3	-21.1
1966	+ 1.4	7.9	+ 9.3
1967	-12.5	11.2	- 1.3
1968	-36.2	9.9	-26.3
1969	-32.4	33.5	+ 1.1

E. RELEVANCE TO CURRENT US FOREIGN POLICY

The US experience with its economic assistance programs in Vietnam provides important insights bearing on current and future foreign policy. The Nixon Doctrine commits the United States to relying primarily on economic and military assistance, in contrast with American military participation, to help protect friendly nations from Communist insurgency or attack. Future US policy then will emphasize economic programs that provide the threatened nation with additional resources (a) to support the military effort necessary to improve national security and (b) to establish reasonable living standards and thereby enhance popular support of the government.

American aid and purchases in Vietnam more or less satisfied these objectives. These money transfers financed imports which provided for improvement in private material welfare by offsetting the loss of productive services diverted or idled by the war. GVN sales of this foreign exchange yielded the bulk of the revenues necessary to sustain a substantial military force. The sale of dollars for piasters was the predominant factor in holding inflation to 25 or 30 percent a year and in maintaining a low tax burden.

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On the other hand, procedures adopted for exchanging dollars for piasters and for distributing economic assistance tended to undermine the political benefits of US aid and purchases. The potential economic benefits to individuals suffering most from the war were diminished by procedures that promoted corruption and profiteering. Stipulating an unrealistically low exchange rate for legal purchases of piasters by US agencies, personnel, and contractors expanded the currency black market and cost Vietnam foreign exchange for imports. Forcing Vietnam to apply the bulk of economic assistance to purchases of a restricted list of commodities in the United States decreased the benefits obtainable from a given aid expenditure. Making dollars for imports available too cheaply encouraged profiteering, corruption, and inflation and diverted businessmen from investing in domestic production activity.

The United States could have eliminated most of these shortcomings by insisting on realistic exchange rates and allowing a wider choice on commodity imports. Well-tried procedures exist for the frequent adaptation of exchange rates to the changing supply and demand for foreign exchange (e.g., inflation, increased import demand). Under conditions of domestic economic controls, these procedures entail weekly or monthly modifications on the order of 1 to 5 percent by the central bank authorities. The magnitude of the change would depend on the divergence between foreign exchange demand (as reflected in requests for import licenses) and the amount authorities are willing to supply during a period, say a month or quarter.

Realistic exchange rates would have eliminated a major cause of widespread corruption and profiteering. Such rates would have virtually eliminated windfall gains from importing and thereby the incentives to bribe officials for import licenses. Continual adjustment of exchange rates also would have avoided the necessity for many of the high and increasing import taxes and, in turn, much of the bribery of customs officials. Concomitantly, this course would have provided the GVN with greater revenues and thereby permitted a reduction of the government deficit, the growth in the money supply, and inflation.

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Realistic exchange rates also would have stimulated production of traditional and new export products. Continual upward adjustments of piaster prices for traditional exports like rubber, coffee, and tea would have greatly offset rising production costs from inflation. Maintenance of profitability would have encouraged planters to maintain their facilities and to market their crops. Realistic exchange rates for procurements on the local economy would have stimulated US agency purchases of fruits, vegetables, and simple manufactures. As it was, because of the high price of piasters, such procurements went to suppliers in surrounding countries, and these foregone sales vitiated potential additions to the export base.

Together with realistic exchange rates, elimination of restrictions on the commodities imported with aid money would have retarded the increased GVN dependence on the United States for its economic welfare. The restrictions on commodity purchases had two objectives: to minimize importation of luxury goods; and to assure the availability of necessities at relatively low prices. This approach failed on both counts. GVN foreign exchange and smuggling were sufficient to flood the country with motorized bicycles, automobiles and all sorts of other consumer durables. What did not come from importers came from Americans out of the PXs. Limiting a large fraction of imports to commodities like rice, textiles, and pharmaceuticals probably did not make them available at a substantially lower price than if no commodity restrictions had existed. Prices of necessities rose about as sharply as for other goods. Without restrictions, individuals could have chosen freely among commodities, whether luxuries or necessities. Importers would then have attempted to satisfy market demands accordingly.

Tying a large fraction of aid imports to certain commodities also hurt domestic production and productive capabilities. For example, given the fixed demand for rice, imports of rice limited domestic market opportunities for farmers. Large-scale imports available at competitive prices tended to discourage farmers from undertaking extensive efforts to expand production. Instead they

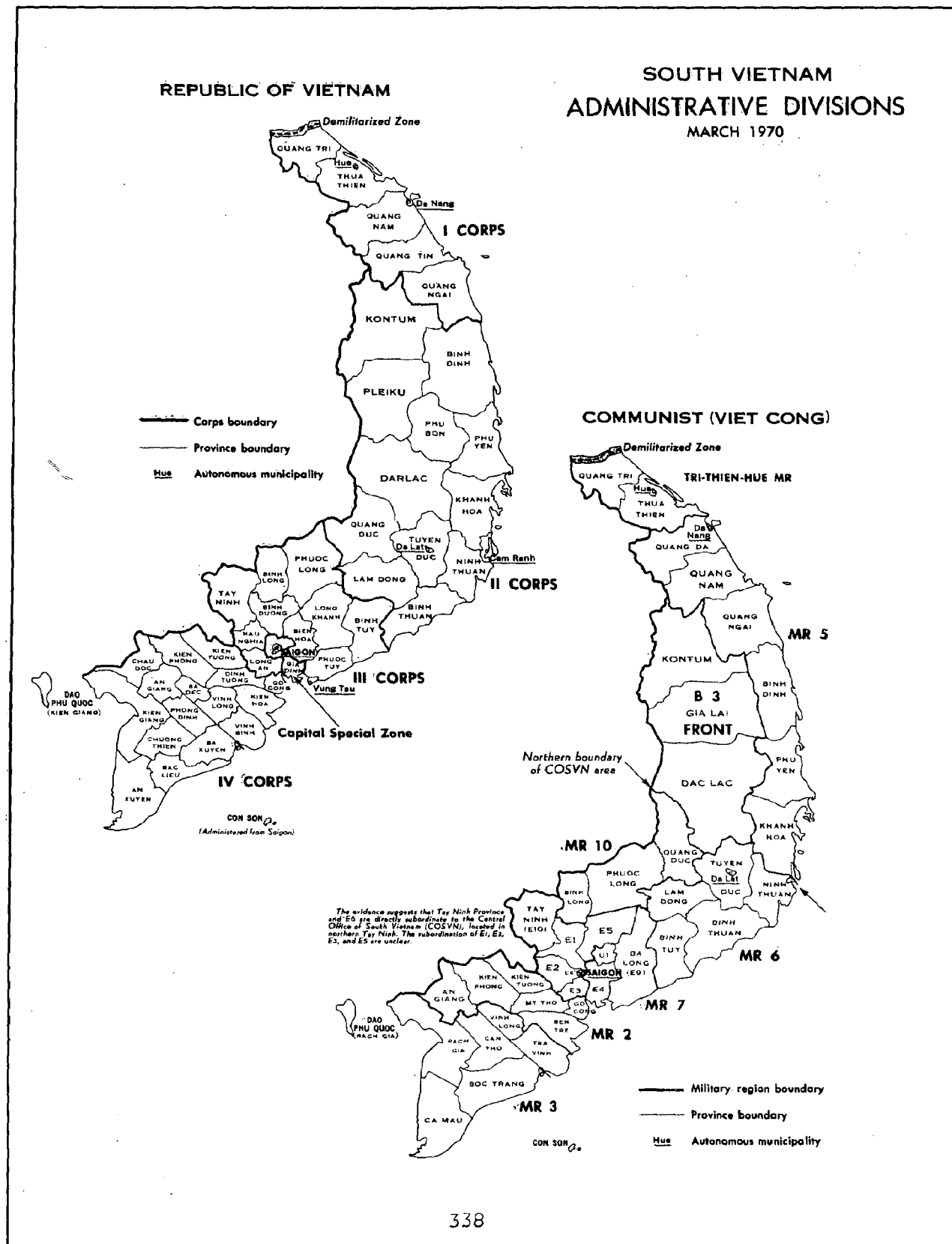
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tended to divert their energies to raising alternative crops or to seek urban employment. Potential producers of domestic substitutes for imported manufactures faced even greater discouragement, since they would have had to compete with a superior foreign product. When firms did venture to set up local production, importation of machinery required months of bureaucratic clearances, and importation of spare parts frequently was prohibited. In the absence of commodity restrictions on imports, domestic prices for necessities probably would have remained more or less the same, but more goods would have been available through domestic production.

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<p>(U) This study derives doctrinal and operational lessons from the US experience with pacification in South Vietnam to guide US policy-makers in providing technical assistance and advice in the future to a friendly government facing an internal security problem.</p> <p>(U) Volume I presents a synthesis of the study's findings and the major lessons learned. Based on those lessons, the volume concludes with some specific recommendations for courses of action by US policymakers.</p> <p>(U) Volume II examines in considerable detail the major elements of pacification: security; economic, political and social development; reporting and evaluation systems; and the US and GVN organization for pacification. In addition, some problem areas (e.g., land reform, refugees, US economic aid) are also discussed.</p> <p>(U) Volume III opens with an account of the Malayan and Philippine insurgencies and the lessons learned there and then traces in detail the evolution of pacification plans and programs in Vietnam from the French-Indochina war to the present.</p>		

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