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REPORT R-185

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

**VOLUME III
HISTORY OF PACIFICATION (U)**

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March 1972



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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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HISTORY OF PACIFICATION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
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| 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 |
| MTT | 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 |
| OCB | Operations Coordinating Board |

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| 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 |
| U.M.D.C.'s | Mobile Units for the Defense of Christendom |

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| 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

OTHER PACIFICATION EXPERIENCES

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UNCLASSIFIED**COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE AND
THE PHILIPPINE AND MALAYAN EXPERIENCES****A. INTRODUCTION**

The Communist insurgencies in the Philippines and Malaya both began at about the same time as the Viet Minh insurgency against the French soon after World War II. However, by 1954 the Philippine insurgents had been smashed; and so had those in Malaya for the most part, although minor mopping-up continued until 1960. Why the contrast with Vietnam? Was it because the environments were entirely different? Was it because the conduct of the counterinsurgencies in the Philippines and Malaya was more knowledgeable than has been the case in Vietnam? Or what?

To help in the search for answers to such questions, Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale (Ret.) has written Chapter I entitled "the Philippine Experience," and Sir Robert Thompson has written Chapter II entitled "The Malayan Experience." Neither author would claim that his paper provides definitive answers, but the observations of both these distinguished authorities merit the attention of everyone interested in the problems of insurgencies in the so-called third world. This brief introduction summarizes the major points Sir Robert and General Lansdale have highlighted in their papers.

B. LANSDALE ON THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippine Communists (known as Huks), like their Vietnamese comrades, counted leaders who had received revolutionary education in the Soviet Union and China. Between World Wars I and II, both groups of Communists had carried on their organization and agitation under colonial powers: the United States in the Philippines, and France in Vietnam. During World War II, both sets of Communists

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were prominent, even central, in the anti-Japanese resistance activities in their homelands. For a short time after World War II, both sets tried to seize and hold power peacefully, but both soon resorted to "people's war" as an alternate route to power.

It is at this point that differences began to emerge. Whereas the Viet Minh were perceived by many of their non-Communist countrymen as trying to evict a rapacious foreign colonial power intent on reestablishing its white man's dominion, the Huks had to zero in on a government of their own countrymen, since the Philippines had achieved formal independence in 1946. Besides, the American administration in the Philippines, while not perfectly altruistic in all respects, had clearly been more high-minded than that of the French in Indochina. Even much later, the Viet Cong could continue to capitalize on the fact that all the white faces fighting in the war were Americans on the side of the Saigon "lackeys"--a psychological advantage the Huks never enjoyed.

For a year or so after the rigged presidential election of 1949 in the Philippines, the Huks were able to make substantial headway among the people, telling them that the only way to secure justice for themselves was with "bullets, not ballots." Then, in the autumn of 1950, Ramon Magsaysay became Secretary of Defense in the Philippine cabinet. The superb leadership of this thoroughly honest man, expressed and executed in countless practical ways, took hardly more than a year to rally the people to the side of the government. Magsaysay, himself a man of humble origin, fought the entrenched interests; weeded out sloth, corruption, incompetence, and high-handed conduct from the military establishment; and brought the insurgency to an effective halt without having to call for the help of foreign military forces from anyone. The contrast with Vietnam is, of course, overwhelming. There no leader ever approached the leadership of Magsaysay; there no government was ever able to inspire the trust and confidence that he did; and there a half million Americans saved the local political regime from defeat and extinction.

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| | | RESERVE AF | | | |
| | | INFORMATION AG | | | |
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| | | JUDGE ADVOCATE AI | | | |
| | | MEDICAL OFF, USMC AM | | | |
| | | DENTAL OFF, USMC AN | | | |
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| | | FISCAL AS | | | |
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Lansdale admits that the geographical factor favored the Philippine counterinsurgency, because, unlike the Viet Cong, the insurgents in the island republic could not count on foreign sanctuaries across international frontiers, nor could foreign supplies and forces reach them over land routes. He insists, however, that this factor was not as critical to the government's success as its understanding of "the prime political nature of people's warfare as waged by Asian Communists." He also notes that the peak strength of the Huks was in the neighborhood of 15,000, with the corresponding figure for government troops being about 34,000. This is a very inadequate ratio from the viewpoint of a government trying to suppress an insurgency militarily, and it therefore further reinforces the Lansdale view that the Huk insurgency was defeated by winning people, not battles.

C. THOMPSON ON MALAYA

Unlike the Americans in Vietnam, the British in Malaya unquestionably were able to run the show, insofar as they cared to do so. Despite this formal authority, however, they elected to conduct the counterinsurgency in close partnership with Malayan officials at all levels, thus following Sir Winston Churchill's advice to High Commissioner Sir Gerald Templer "to gather all the reins of power into your own hands and then never use it." The British preference for this mode was reinforced by the pattern of substantial decentralization in Malaya, where the sixty districts (corresponding roughly to Vietnamese provinces) had always constituted important administrative entities in the eleven traditionally autonomous subdivisions within the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States. In Vietnam, on the other hand, there was little working administrative structure between the centralized national authority emphasized by the French and the thousands of villages surrounded by their bamboo fences.

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The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which was at the center of the insurgency in that country, was made up almost entirely of members of the large Chinese minority, which prior to and during World War II had acted militantly in support of China in its struggle against Japan. The British tried to mute this clearly racial factor of Malays versus Chinese, because they did not want to alienate the "good" Chinese in Malaya, but, willy-nilly, it had the advantage of mustering a virtually united Malay front against the insurgent movement that was so manifestly Chinese-dominated. In contrast to this, the Viet Cong in Vietnam came squarely from among the main body of southern Vietnamese, and even the northern Vietnamese were not, after all, members of a different race from their southern compatriots.

The counterinsurgency in Malaya was much more low-key on the military side than the one in Vietnam turned out to be. Thompson, calling it a platoon leader's war, says that, even as far as direct artillery support was concerned, "I doubt whether the number of rounds fired in twelve years was more than the maximum number fired in one day in Vietnam." As for air power, he remarks of the British air force in the area that "its aircraft fortunately were fairly antiquated," adding that "the bombing of the jungle was put into its right perspective by the complaint of the eighty-four-year-old sultan of Johore that it was disturbing the game!"

The deliberate strategy of this platoon leader's war was "to isolate the MCP guerrilla from the population.... If the people could be protected by the government, then the guerrillas would be killed when they attempted to make contact." Sir Robert sees a very striking analogy here with anti-submarine warfare in World War II: "The hunter-killer groups in the vast wastes of the Atlantic Ocean were not a great success. It was the convoy escorts which sank the submarines, because the submarines had to attack the convoys." It is not hard to conclude that Sir Robert would probably equate the hunter-killer approach with the search-and-destroy operations in Vietnam.

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At the heart of the British counterinsurgency effort was not a campaign of regular military operations, at platoon level or otherwise, but a heavily emphasized development of and reliance on the police force, the strength of which throughout the entire period of the insurgency was always two to three times that of the military. Besides the regular Federation Police Force, which was expanded and received intensive training, a "Police Field Force, capable of operating at company strength, was established for offensive operations against corresponding enemy units in their area." Also, a Police Special Branch was created to identify the insurgent infrastructure and to target operations against it. Here again, the contrast with Vietnam is pronounced, because the police there were for years ignored, degraded, or treated as a second-order problem. In fact, it was largely due to the study and recommendations of Sir Robert Thompson himself that both US and Vietnamese officials eventually, in the late 1960s, began turning their attention seriously to the police function, including field forces and a special branch.

A final comparison between Malaya and Vietnam lies in the respective attitudes of the British and the Americans toward the seemingly endless task of suppressing the respective insurgencies they confronted. Sir Robert puts the British outlook this way:

Because of their long standing commitment and responsibility the British also inherited a patient attitude to revolt (after all it had taken Henry and John Lawrence a generation to pacify the Punjab). I do not remember anyone being in the least worried by the length of the Emergency; one just adapted to and lived with it.

Part of the contrast between this cool perserverance and the manifest American disillusion with the Vietnam war may of course have been due to differences in national character, but part may also have been due to the greater insulation of British foreign and military policy from public opinion and the information media. Finally, the casualties in the Malayan counterinsurgency, as cited by Thompson,

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were hardly such as to dismay the public back home in Britain: over twelve years, a military total of 519 killed and 959 wounded, and a police total (including auxiliaries) of 1346 killed and 1601 wounded.

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UNCLASSIFIED**I****THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE**

A gut question comes to mind when comparing the "people's wars" of Vietnam and the Philippines: Why did the Communist forces of two neighboring countries, having much the same start in life and using much the same strategy against government forces which were armed, equipped, and backed by the United States, come to such different ends? In Vietnam, the Communists won their first people's war and, in their second one, remain undefeated. In the Philippines, the Communists lost their first people's war so thoroughly that they have had to await a new generation before even considering attempting another.

A second question also comes to mind: Why was there a special effort at "pacification" by the government in Vietnam, while the word pacification was unknown in the war in the Philippines? In Vietnam, pacification has been a follow-up activity to the main military combat effort, a separate endeavor using its own civilian and paramilitary resources to a large extent. In the campaign against the Huks in the Philippines, after 1950, all government forces pursued the main objective of winning the allegiance of the people--while protecting them, and while defeating the enemy forces.

Some Americans refuse to think about true answers to these questions. They say that the wars in Vietnam were bigger than the one in the Philippines--without realizing that the Philippine conflict had the potential of becoming as big as the Vietnamese wars, but was not given that chance. Or, they say that geography made the two wars utterly different. By that, they mean the feasibility of containing the battleground. The Communists in the Philippines were isolated on islands, cut off by sea from help by other Communists. The Communists in Vietnam have land borders which permit

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not only ready supply from Communist nations, but also provide close-by sanctuary.

There is merit to this geographical comparison of the two countries. However, it ignores the prime political nature of people's warfare as waged by Asian Communists. The staggering expenditure, especially in the last six years, of human and material resources by our side in Vietnam to seal off borders, to spoil enemy sanctuaries, to grind down enemy forces by attrition, and to provide physical security for what we have gained--only to find the enemy forces still in being and still capable of initiating attacks--surely suggests that there is a vital element in the war that cannot be explained away by simplistic references to geography.

No, there are more meaningful lessons to be learned by comparing what happened in Vietnam and the Philippines.

A. BEGINNINGS

During the first quarter century of their existence, the Communist parties of Vietnam and the Philippines might well have been twins. Each was born at the end of World War I and went through the early growing pains of rivalries and schisms which mark such political groups. Each was helped by the Communist party of its country's colonial power. Each sent delegates to the Communist conferences of the 1920s in Leningrad, Canton, Shanghai, and Moscow. The leaders of each became toughened up as hard-core revolutionaries by their political militancy, by existing clandestinely while the police hunted them, by training and directing terrorists and agitators, and by serving time in jail. The stated aims of each were practically identical: national independence, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, agrarian reform, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Each party managed the necessary reorganization to meet the standards set by the Third International (or Comintern) and was recognized formally by that body in 1930--with each having about 1500 card-carrying members at the time.

The Vietnamese Communists had the edge over their Filipino comrades in one significant category: trained professionals in the art

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of Leninist organization and action. Available information puts the number of leaders trained before World War II at the Lenin Institute and similar centers in Moscow at at least thirty Vietnamese and only about five Filipinos. In addition, hundreds of Vietnamese received revolutionary education in China, while only one or two Filipinos did. The Vietnamese profited further by having one of the Communist "greats" as their leader, Ho Chi Minh was a founding member of the French Communist Party and was an intimate of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. (Born as Nguyen Tat Thanh in Nghe An Province, he assumed such names as Ly Thuy, Song Man Tcho, and Nguyen Ai Quoc or "Nguyen the Patriot" before becoming "Ho the Enlightened.") Although Ho directed the party remotely from China until 1944, he was very much its boss, particularly after 1930. He personally trained many of the activists who later became the top leadership of Communist Vietnam.

The Vietnamese Communists also had the edge over their Filipino comrades in another, even more significant, category: a political situation that just begged for change. In the Philippines, the Americans not only had founded a public school system for universal education, but the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 established the self-governing Commonwealth of the Philippines, with complete independence promised for 1945. In Vietnam, however, education was for the few rather than for the many, while the French held the country in political and economic thrall. Cochinchina was an outright colony. Tonkin and Annam were closely monitored French protectorates. Emperor Bao Dai and his ministers had only token roles. Vietnam was filled with patriots yearning to free their country. French suppression, especially after 1931 (the Year of the White Terror), helped swell the ranks of the anti-colonialists. The French continued their stiff-necked "master" role, even during France's "Popular Front" of 1936, until the Japanese coup of 1945 and the subsequent establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that year.

(The French muffed a chance to change history in 1933, when Bao Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem as his chief minister. Diem, then thirty-two, was widely respected for his integrity and ability. He proposed that the French permit the Vietnamese to have a deliberative assembly.

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The French refused even to consider the proposal. Seeing that his position as chief minister was a farce, Diem resigned.)

World War II and the Japanese occupation of their countries gave the Communist parties of Vietnam and the Philippines the impetus to build the political-military forces they later used to wage people's war. Both parties called for national resistance to the Japanese, following a Chinese lead. In Vietnam, villages were organized to participate in a new patriotic front controlled by the Communists (Ho was its secretary-general), the League for the Independence of Vietnam, known popularly as the Viet Minh. In the Philippines, the Communists organized the villages politically in the Barrio United Defense Corps, known as the BUDC. Both parties established these organizations as the real civil authority in the villages, recruiting manpower, collecting taxes, administering justice, and even performing marriages.

Both parties organized and trained guerrilla armies with Chinese Communist help. The Viet Minh army actually started life across the border in China, not entering Vietnam until 1944; its commander, lawyer-teacher Vo Nguyen Giap, studied guerrilla warfare under Mao and others in Yen-an. The Philippine Communist's Huks (Huk labang sa Hapon or Army against Japan), under command of tailor-agitator Luis Taruc, was readied for combat by veterans of the Chinese Communist 8th Route Army (who later split away from the Huks, forming the Wachi guerrillas made up of 1200 Chinese residents of the Philippines). The Huks started active attacks on Japanese convoys and garrisons in 1942, growing to about 10,000 men in 1943. The Viet Minh strength did not reach 10,000 until 1945.

The Viet Minh and the Huks were alike in their selection of World War II priorities. Both had the future in mind, acting against potential enemies, as well as against the Japanese. Their armies often served as terrorists against proscribed nationalist persons and groups, in support of political rivalry. Estimates are that only about one-fourth of the enemies killed by the Viet Minh were Japanese, the majority being French and Vietnamese. Of the

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estimated 25,000 killed by the Huks, only about 5000 were Japanese. At war's end, the Japanese turned over military supplies to the Viet Minh (instead of to the British and Chinese who entered Vietnam for the French). The Huks became armed mostly with US weapons picked up from the battlefields of Luzon or stolen from US dumps during the liberation of the Philippines.

B. PEOPLE'S WAR

At the end of World War II, there were Communist political triumphs. The Viet Minh established and controlled a new and independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The Huks held the gubernatorial and congressional seats for their home base in central Luzon. These triumphs were short-lived. The French drove the Viet Minh regime out of Hanoi; the Philippine Government refused to acknowledge Huk governors and congressmen. So, the two Communist parties turned to people's war as the alternative route to national power. Both had political organizations intact in the countryside, as well as clandestine nets in the cities capable of political-psychological actions, intelligence collection, and logistical support. Both had guerrilla armies based among the people. The strategy chosen by both was Mao's: to gain control of the people while becoming dominant in the countryside and isolating the cities, and then to wear down, fracture, and finally bring the collapse of the opposing power.

The Viet Minh made themselves the champions of a patriotic, highly emotional cause: drive the hated French colonialists out of Vietnam! Non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists swarmed to join the Viet Minh. The French attempted political counteractions, but continually moved with too little, too late. Even when, late in the war, the Communists tightened their control over the Viet Minh and many nationalists quit the Viet Minh in dislike of the Communists, these non-Communists did not join the French side. It remained the politically wrong side to the end.

The French army remembered history and applied the pacification concepts originated by its Marshal Lyautey in North Africa years

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before. The work enjoyed temporary success--temporary because it was based upon colonial politics among a people yearning for independence. In Tonkin and Annam, military successes were followed by moving GAMOs into villages. The GAMO (Groupe Administratif Mobile Operationnel) was a civil-military, French-Vietnamese team that would stay in a village long enough to route out the obvious Viet Minh infrastructure, select and train village administrators and a village self-defense unit, and set up schools and agricultural help. Most GAMO successes were within the heavily defended Red River Delta perimeter. In Cochinchina to the south, the major pacification effort was in wooing the armies of the Binh Xuyen, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai sects over to the French side. Ill-timed purges and perfidy by the Communists coincided with the French army's fielding some skilled negotiators to deal with the sects. The result was that the sect armies became "suppletifs" or militia for the French. Each sect army was responsible for security in its area, wherein it quickly started exercising satrap-warlord powers, including as many economic powers as could be grabbed.

The Franco-Viet Minh war went on for eight years, until 1954. Toward the war's close, Giap had some 300,000 to 400,000 men in his forces against some 455,000 in the French "Forces d'Extreme-Orient" (including 100,000 in the new Vietnamese army). Although Giap and his fellow Politburo members were proud of having defeated the French in set-piece battles such as Dien Bien Phu, they were prouder still of another accomplishment. The Viet Minh had added a new dimension to Mao's strategy. They had striven to collapse the enemy's home front at the same time they were fighting his troops in Vietnam. Skilled agitation against the war in metropolitan France had made it highly unpopular, had provoked draft riots and large-scale military desertions, and evoked the support of politicians, press, and pulpit to stop the "immoral" war. The home front in France was in a state of collapse at the time of Dien Bien Phu.

About the time the French organized the Vietnamese army in 1949 and fielded its first units in 1950, over on the other side of the South China Sea in the Philippines the Huks were reaching their high point. The Huks had been off to a slow start mainly because the

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forces opposing them were serving a popular political cause. The Philippines not only had achieved independence from the US, but had established a representative, elected government. Thus, the Huks had made do with secondary recruiting appeals, based mainly on social and economic injustices in rural areas, as well as on resentment of the people over the misbehavior of government troops. Then came the presidential election of 1949. Evidence of large-scale fraud in the election and widespread popular resentment over it gave the Huks an emotional cause to adopt. They urged that the corrupt government be changed by the people, while stressing that elections were powerless instruments for the people under the current system. "Bullets, not ballots" became the Huk slogan, and people started flocking to the Huk banner.

In 1950, the Huks had some 15,000 armed guerrillas, with a supporting "mass base" they estimated at 1 million people. The Philippine Politburo, excited at finding itself at long last the champion of a popular cause, drew up plans to increase the Huk military force to 35 divisions (116,480 men), the party membership to 172,000, and the organized "mass base" to 2.5 million people. The Politburo set the target date of 1 May 1952 for the overthrow of the Philippine Government and the establishment of a People's Republic.

On 1 September 1950, Ramon Magsaysay became Secretary of National Defense in the Philippines. He was acutely aware of the political nature of the people's war waged by the Huks. Magsaysay had worked with his hands as a mechanic, been a guerrilla leader against the Japanese, served as governor of his home province which had become a Huk battleground, and had been elected to Congress by a whopping majority. Against the will of entrenched interests, he wrested what amounted to actual command of the government military forces into his own hands and made those forces more than a political-military match for the Huks.

Under Magsaysay's constant pushing, military attitudes towards civilians changed radically. Trigger-happy, overbearing soldiers were led into becoming brotherly protectors of the people. Sloth and corruption in the military establishment were weeded out, at

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times against powerful political pressures, while the diligent were rewarded with promotions. Judge-advocate lawyers helped tenant farmers in land court cases. Civilian casualties were treated in military hospitals. The people even were given a voice in military affairs by means of a special 10-centavo rate (less than 5 US cents) for any one-page telegram via the postal radio net to the Secretary of National Defense. As people saw that he paid attention to these messages, he was flooded with telegrams about Huk plans and movements, as well as with complaints or praise about troops. Huks were given a chance to surrender and get a fresh start in life in EDCOR (Economic Development Corps) farm communities, where Huk surrenderees were mixed in with retired military personnel and given the right to earn title to their own land.

In the November 1951 by-election, Magsaysay arranged with the Commission on Elections to have the military assist the commission to prevent fraud at the polls. This was done, despite strong objections by the party in power (Magsaysay's own party). The obvious honesty of the 1951 election, with most of the opposition candidates winning and troops protecting the sanctity of the ballot box (teamed with Boy Scouts and ROTC youth), made the government troops great heroes among the people. Suddenly, the people realized that they could change government by ballots--and did not need the Huks and their bullets. From that moment, the Huk cause was finished. The people and the government had become one, leaving the Huks as outsiders.

Many Huks surrendered in the weeks following, with the rapidly dwindling remainder taking to the hills as fugitives--where they were eliminated as a force over the following years (only a small band was left by 1953). Philippine army records show that a total of 25,000 served in the Huk ranks during the 1950-55 period. Of these, 6874 Huks were killed, 4702 were captured, and 9458 Huks surrendered. Most of those unaccounted for simply quit and went back to farming. In this same period, the top strength of the Philippine armed forces reached 34,000.

In Vietnam, the Geneva Accords of 1954 awarded North Vietnam to the Communists. The French started freeing South Vietnam (withdrawing

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their forces two years later). Also in 1954, Ngo Dinh Diem became Prime Minister in Saigon. Under him, South Vietnam initially was given some enlightened political life in the form of a constitution, a representative government elected by the people, and a series of social and political reforms. Although the Communists kept clandestine networks in the south and reinforced them by infiltrating new cadre from the north, they kept a low profile while the Saigon government was politically responsive and popular.

Lessons from the Huk campaign in the Philippines were applied in the successful 1955-56 pacification operations in Vietnam. Given the name "national security action" by Diem, pacification was carried out mainly by the Vietnamese army (then still mostly organized in battalions, French style). Troops were given indoctrination on the need for good behavior and for helping the people with military civic action. Initial operations consisted of occupying territory being vacated by the Viet Minh under the terms of the Geneva Accords and then establishing Saigon's rule there. The ways in which the work was to be carried out, as well as the steps by which military rule would be transferred to civil rule in these territories, were thrashed out in meetings attended by top leaders, provincial and district authorities, and troop commanders, under the aegis of the prime minister's office, and with side-line advice from French and Americans.

The National Security Division of TRIM (Training Relations Instruction Mission), staffed by twenty US and French officers, advised and supported this Vietnamese pacification work. But, in sensitive awareness of Vietnamese xenophobia and its vulnerability to Communist exploitation, only one American (2nd Lt. Rufus C. Phillips) accompanied the Vietnamese troops in the actual pacification zone. In 1955, the pacification effort of Camau was about division-size in battalions used, while that in the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh operation was about corps-size.

Military use of the term "civic action" caught the imagination of the Vietnamese. Thus, when Saigon initiated a new program of training teams of civil servants, dressing them in the black pajamas

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of the farmers, and sending them to work in the villages in 1955, this civilian effort was dubbed "civic action" by the government. It was distinctly different from military civic action. Reminiscent of the GAMOs of French days and forerunners of the Revolutionary Development cadre teams of later years, the Civic Action teams brought a government presence into the villages. A team would live and work for three months in a village, then rotate to the next village. The work was that of organizing village administration, building an information center, starting schools, public health and public works programs, improving agriculture, and, when the need arose later, creating village self-defense units. Efficiency in the Defense Ministry led Diem to set up the Civic Action directorate there, although it served under him and drew civil service personnel from all ministries.

The Communist ambition to win the southern half of Vietnam remained very much alive. Without a popular cause, such as the one they had in driving out the French, they cold-bloodedly set out to take the south with another people's war. The strategy to win it, as Le Duan of the Hanoi leadership put it, was one of "exploiting internal contradictions in the enemy camp." Even small "contradictions" were exacerbated into big ones. When the Diem administration started rigging elections to stay in power, built a one-party system, and autocratically started treating the people as pawns, the Communists correctly saw these as contradictions worth exploiting. Encouraged by early results, they formed the National Liberation Front with their cadre who had stayed behind when the Viet Minh moved north in 1954-55 and who had been reinforced by newly trained cadre infiltrated into the south since then. The Front was fleshed out by disgruntled southern politicians as showpieces, while the hard core recruited, trained, and fielded a new guerrilla force which Saigon called the Viet Cong or VC. The VC grew to about 4000 in April 1961, to some 35,000 by the time of Diem's overthrow in 1963, and to 221,000 (including 26,000 NVA) by 1965, according to General Westmoreland's estimate.

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By 1961 the situation for the Saigon government had worsened to such an extent that Diem's brother Nhu took personal charge of pacification in the countryside. The Vietnamese army was used in sweeps of the countryside, including artillery support for infantry even in inhabited areas, which abandoned practically every lesson learned from the "national security action" it had undertaken in 1955-56. Farmers were relocated, for better defense of the countryside, into "strategic hamlets," an idea borrowed from the "new villages" of Malaya and from the earlier "agrovilles" of South Vietnam (the planned farm communities wherein refugees were settled, mostly in the trans-Bassac area, in 1955-56). After the failure of the strategic hamlets and the downfall of Diem, pacification programs were devised along the lines of the civilian Civic Action village teams of 1955 and the old French GAMOs.

Ironically, the significance of some other villages and hamlets in the countryside seemed to escape the Vietnamese and Americans who were most concerned with pacification. These were the villages wherein all inhabitants held to a belief they found so precious they would defend it to the death. Enemy troops were wary of attacking such villages. Both sides had them. The Viet Cong, using thorough political indoctrination and organization, created "resistance" and "combat" villages of their own. The die-hard villages on the government side were religious ones, mostly communities of Catholics or Hoa Hao; every man, woman, and child in them had defense duties and were unified by commonly held spiritual beliefs. Not until 1965 did a Vietnamese leader start considering the possibility of these religious villages as models for pacification. Prime Minister Ky briefly toyed with the idea of a "revolutionary village" program that would reward villages able to defend themselves, such as the religious villages. He dropped the idea in favor of the Revolutionary Development program backed by Americans.

The quarrel between Diem and the Buddhists and the subsequent overthrow of Diem and the constitution in 1963, which led to a series of further coups, were acts that violated a cardinal rule of warfare;

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by them, the South Vietnamese split up their forces in the face of a strong and determined enemy. True, the forces were political rather than military. But the enemy waged a war in which political action was prime. The coups and quarrels were bonus "internal contradictions" exploited savagely by the Communists. Viet Cong recruiting soared, while ARVN morale hit bottom. The Viet Cong, with North Vietnamese reinforcements, went in for the kill. Only the intervention of US combat forces at this moment prevented the Communists from taking South Vietnam. Even now, years later, it is not certain that Vietnamese and Americans understand the nature of the blunder made in overthrowing Diem and the constitution when South Vietnam was trying to withstand the powerful Communist political offensive.

In many ways, the introduction of American and allied (especially Korean) combat forces into Vietnam seemed to turn back the pages of history to the French era. True, American intentions and methods were different from those of the French. However, Americans were as pre-occupied as the French had been with the Communists as a military enemy and thus unwittingly made war on the people to about the same extent as had the French. They also adopted the French concept of pacification as being a separate follow-on to military actions, with pacification teams being distinctly separate from regular military units. These touches of French styling were old hat to the Communists, who promptly exploited such "contradictions." Significantly, also, the Communists remembered the lesson about destroying a foreign enemy's home front. About the time that the first American combat forces were arriving in Vietnam, the first NLF movies were being distributed and shown by radical student groups in the United States. The "teach-ins" against the war followed, with a movement similar to the one that had previously wrecked French morale then blossoming in all its emotional vibrancy.

South Vietnam started regaining its political footing in 1966 when the military regime took its first steps toward making a constitutional government rather than one that ruled by fiat. The election of delegates to a constitutional assembly, interestingly enough, was made the responsibility of General Nguyen Duc Thang,

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the Minister for Revolutionary Development (Pacification). Thang had taken over management of pacification in late 1965, sparking the program into new life with his dynamic leadership and his insistence that villagers and farmers increasingly be given more say in their affairs. Despite combat conditions and wartime emotions, the 1966 election was carried out with considerable honesty and efficiency. It was a remarkable achievement during a war.

The reason for giving supervision of the election to the pacification boss was that Thang had been made a "super-minister" some weeks before, overseeing a group of ministries which included the one that is now Interior and that was responsible for administration of provinces and districts. Thang's group consisted of the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Works, Youth, Interior, and his own Revolutionary Development. Within the government, it was nicknamed the Sandwich Cabinet because Thang insisted that ministers accompany him on flying visits to the provinces, carrying sandwiches to eat while they worked and to save provincial officials from the expense of dining the visiting bigwigs. The expressed feelings and needs of the people gathered directly during these visits had a later impact on the top echelons of government in Saigon when these ministers attended cabinet meetings and other gatherings. Thang tape-recorded many of his own conversations with villagers, later playing them for the cabinet.

The political turn towards government of, by, and for the people under a constitution written in 1966-67 and adopted in 1967, with its subsequent elections, plus outstanding leadership by Thang and several of his subordinates (notably Hoang Van Lac and Nguyen Be), initiated a trend towards striking gains in pacification. The timing matched a reorganization of US efforts in support of pacification, putting those American efforts under single management for the first time. The momentum was spurred further by the Saigon government's returning self-rule to villages and hamlets, with leaders being elected by secret ballot in 1967. (The starting date of village-hamlet elections was held up pending the arrival of sufficient typewriters donated by

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the United States to insure that each village had one for doing the paperwork demanded by Saigon. These typewriters required type faces bearing the Portuguese accent marks used by the Vietnamese language.)

Thus we come to the present time. Large portions of the Vietnamese countryside have returned to peace, or at least to a semblance of peace. The American presence is being diminished rapidly. The Vietnamese armed forces have increased their size and their military prowess (although still infected by the pernicious habits of looting and graft that eat away at their true effectiveness). The South Vietnamese have a political foundation upon which to rally themselves as a defensible nation, unless overly ambitious individuals and the ingrained wrangling nature of Vietnamese politicians destroy it once again. The Communist enemy has suffered gravely, with losses that would have proven fatal to a conventional army; but it remains alive, exploiting every "internal contradiction" that we pose. The Communists still want South Vietnam.

C. LINCOLNIAN YARDSTICK**1. "Of the People"**

A people's war is designed by Asian Communists to be an intimate affair, one of contention between fellow nationalists. Their political leadership goes to great lengths to project an image of their side as being "of the people." The visibility of foreign allies is kept to the lowest possible profile, while the sympathy, encouragement, and support of foreign powers are portrayed as coming from "the people" of those countries. This performance is one of the most expertly done illusions of modern history.

There is widespread popular antipathy towards the Chinese in Vietnam and the Philippines. Yet, the Communists in both countries received help from the Communist Chinese in ways that became widely known among the people. Sinophobia in these cases was dispelled by a thorough psychological campaign, initiated by top local Communist leaders and carried on down through the ranks by the political cadre. The campaigns sold the concept that the Chinese helping the local

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Communists were "socialist comrades," and therefore both admirably acceptable as persons and quite different from the Chinese towards whom the people had antipathy.

Much the same was done by the Vietnamese Communists for other foreigners. Not only has North Vietnam seen teams of Soviet military trainers and technicians, but also East German medical personnel, who established a hospital in Hanoi, and medical-welfare teams of Czech youth, who toured the provinces in 1955-56 as a Communist answer to the popularity of the International Jaycee's "Operation Brotherhood" teams in South Vietnam.

The only foreigners who were kept under cover by the Communists--perhaps out of embarrassment--were those of nationalities against whom the Communists had mounted hate campaigns. Thus, the one American (William J. Pomeroy) who joined the Huks was assigned a minor teaching role in a remote jungle school. Similarly, a technical team from the French Communist Party was positioned in a remote jungle workshop to make and repair weapons during the Franco-Viet Minh war (afterwards transferring to Algeria and giving similar help to the FLN in their fight against the French army).

The pertinent point is that, during the long years of people's war, only a scant and well-sponsored number of foreigners appeared on the Communist side. It permitted the Communists to sell the idea that they were "of the people" and thus not in need of hordes of foreigners to help them. This Communist ability was matched by the government in the Huk fight in the Philippines. It was not matched by the government in Vietnam in either of the two people's wars there.

The American presence had been overwhelming in the Philippines during World War II, especially at the end when American troops and installations were seemingly everywhere. Yet, the American presence had shrunk greatly by the time the Huks gained an attractive political footing in 1949. There were two big American bases at Clark and Subic, but personnel there were segregated and many never bothered even leaving the bases. During the critical 1950-51 months of the Philippine Government's campaign against the Huks, only four

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Americans were noticeably present with Philippine combat troops on the battlegrounds. Three were giving combat advice and one was inspecting troop readiness. The four were on the JUSMAG staff, which itself consisted of only two dozen Americans concerned mainly with advice on organization and training or supervising US military aid. Most JUSMAG officers stayed in the Manila area, dealing with the headquarters echelon of the Philippine armed forces. The US civilian mission operated almost as though the Huk fight did not exist, except as a conversation piece and its battlegrounds being places to avoid. There were exceptions to this general attitude, of course, notably the ambassador and several of his chief assistants.

Despite the scarcity of Americans seen in the Huk conflict, there were some Filipino politicians, journalists, and other opinion makers who were militantly nationalistic and who articulately expressed their antipathy for almost everything American. The Huks did their best to exploit this "contradiction" with a campaign against "American imperialism." It caught some fire among urban intellectuals, but fell flat among the hoi polloi, who had fond memories of friendly Americans they had known. Magsaysay (in contrast to so many of the Vietnamese leaders who depended upon American help) stated strongly and often that he and the Americans were friends and that he was proud of the fact. His campaign for the presidency in 1953 was filled with pro-American statements; it tapped the great pool of Filipino goodwill towards Americans and helped him win by a whopping majority. It can be said that he identified a "contradiction" in the enemy's political line and exploited it.

In Vietnam, the period of French fighting against Vietnamese was followed by a period of an increasing presence of Americans, which at its end found Americans fighting Vietnamese. At no point after the Geneva Accords of 1954 were there as few Americans directly involved in the facets of people's war in Vietnam as there had been in the Philippines. There were over one hundred Americans visibly involved during 1954-56 when South Vietnam got its start as an independent nation, although the American presence was mainly noticed because of the thousands of Americans who helped Vietnamese refugees from the

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north during that period. General Westmoreland in his Report on the War in Viet Nam notes that the number of military advisers alone had increased to 746 in 1961, jumped to 3400 by June 1962, and to 23,300 in 1964. With Americans in combat, the number of military Americans in Vietnam rose to 500,000 by the end of 1967. Along with the military were thousands of American civilians advising and helping the Vietnamese in pacification, administration, and other civilian interfaces with the military endeavors of our side.

To a Vietnamese farmer or villager, there usually were some Americans on the scene or close by when military or civilian representatives of the Saigon government appeared. Regardless of the kindly behavior, the hard-working habits, or the open generosity in fulfilling local needs which were exhibited so often by so many of these Americans, none of them was a Vietnamese. He was a foreigner, in a land where everyone not from that immediate locality was suspect. It did not take much skill for the Communist cadre to exacerbate the inbred suspicions of the Vietnamese and ascribe ulterior motives to the American presence. Bad behavior by some of the Americans fed welcome grist to the Communist's/psychological mill. Certainly the bald presence of so many Americans on the Saigon government's side gave it a foreign taint and strengthened the Communist's contention that only they were "of the people."

2. "By the People"

In Vietnam and in the Philippines most of the main actions took place in the countryside. Rural society became deeply involved in the struggles. In Vietnam, sad to say, a bright lad from that rural society has had a better chance to rise to a position of leadership on the Communist side than he has been given by the government side. This was not true in the Philippines. A rural youth's opportunities for education lie at the crux of this difference between the two conflicts.

The minimum standards for the appointment of officers and officials on the Communist side are that a person can read and write, has demonstrated some unusual personal ability, and subscribes to the

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disciplines of the cause. In the military forces, such a person does not even have to be a member of the Communist party. On the Communist side in these Asian people's wars were a number of outstanding military leaders who came from farms and who had only a primary education in a local grammar school.

The government sides in Vietnam and in the Philippines set higher standards for the appointment of officers and officials. At the beginning, both favored a minimum of a college education, in the Philippines, the government could draw upon a large reservoir of college graduates, including many who had had ROTC training. In Vietnam, the scarcity of college graduates quickly caused the standards to be lowered to include holders of baccalaureates from high school. In French times, a higher education was hard to come by in Vietnam. University facilities were extremely limited. High schools were mostly private and located in cities. Thus, the manpower pool upon which the Vietnamese Government drew its leadership consisted mainly of city or city-oriented youths from families affluent enough to pay for their education. In American times, Vietnam's educational system has expanded, but it still lags far behind that of a country such as the Philippines--or the United States.

Along with its woes of political, religious, and regional partisanship, Vietnam also suffers a pervading dichotomy between its urban and its rural people. They look upon one another in the classic "city slicker" and "country bumpkin" roles. Usually when a Saigon military officer or civil official deals with country folks, he never truly overcomes their inner feelings that he is a city slicker. He even dresses differently than they, something that the Communists are careful not to do. (Under the Americans, the pacification cadre dressed in the black pajamas of farmers. The program called for them to be from the neighborhood where they were to serve. Yet, by the time the pacification cadre was recruited, the rural manpower cupboard had been nearly bared by the war. Of necessity, many of the cadre were city or town boys, usually quickly spotted by rural folks not only by their mannerisms but also by their pointed city shoes. It hindered rapport.)

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In the Philippines, the enlightened program initiated by the US War Department early in the century had resulted in a public education system similar to that of the United States. Farm boys and city boys had education of equal quality open to them. During the Huk campaign, some of the most effective leaders on the government side were essentially country boys who had made good in the nation's capital, but who continued their intimate ties with home in the country. Magsaysay, the most outstanding of these leaders, grew up on a farm that later was in the Huk operational area. Among others, the top echelons of the Military Intelligence Service and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency were filled with men from farms and small towns which the Huks had overrun; they were unusually sensitive to events at home. After 1950, the people felt sure that their own kind were at the head of the government campaign against the Huks. Military help in making the 1951 election an honest one clinched this feeling. It became a war "by the people" against the Huks.

3. "For the People"

The constitutions of democracies are both symbols and codes of the people's authority. A person who swears to support and defend the constitution when he enters upon governmental duty is, in effect, acknowledging the sovereignty of the people. Further, the concepts that give birth to the constitution of a democracy, and that underlie the spirit in which its provisions are intended to be carried out, form the hard core of the people's political ideology. In a people's war in which the Communists attempt to get the people on their side--in order to destroy this constitution and the government that serves it--it becomes imperative that the constitution be kept alive through faithful service.

All Americans serving our country in Vietnam, whether civilian or military, took oaths to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States" and to "bear true faith and allegiance to the same." All Filipinos serving their country in the Huk campaign, whether civilian or military, took oaths to "support and defend the

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Constitution of the Philippines" and to "bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

The Vietnamese have had three constitutions establishing the sovereignty of the people of South Vietnam since 1956. The first two became scraps of paper in the violent overturns of the governments of Diem and Khanh (although the high-handed method in which a constitution was produced by Khanh made it a scrap of paper from the start). The current constitution was promulgated in 1967, the product of elected representatives of the people as was the 1956 constitution. However, the common denominator of all three is that they were intended to specify the sovereignty of the people of South Vietnam and were in being during a time when the Communists were waging a people's war in the country. Yet, aside from the current president and vice president, no Vietnamese serving his country in this war has taken an oath that is ideologically comparable to the oaths taken by Americans and Filipinos.

Vietnamese oaths of service are a grab-bag of ideas. Cadets at the military academies swear to "protect the foundation of the Republic and to protect the people." Upon enlistment, military recruits swear that they "have not yet been drafted by RVNAF or French forces" nor have been condemned by a provincial tribunal. Of local administrators, only a district chief takes an oath "to execute my mission in a devoted manner." An upper-grade civil servant swears "to execute my job faithfully and my sole concern the government business ... and I will keep professional secrets."

Under Nguyen Duc Thang, Vietnam's pacification cadre took a lengthy oath which outlined duties and stressed ideals. It included swearing "to serve the people with all our heart," "to treat the people so that they will trust and love us," to "annihilate totally the Communist gang hiding in the countryside and those among the gentry who treat the people badly," and to help the people "build up the countryside, developing a new life in freedom, democracy, and happiness." (The phrase "build up the countryside" is a translation of "Xay Dung Nong Thon," which remained the official

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Vietnamese name of their pacification program and cadre--despite the Americans giving them other names, such as "Revolutionary Development.")

It is a fair question to ask if those Vietnamese serving their country on the government side in the people's war in Vietnam have a belief in their constitution and thus in the people. They will not win freedom and peace for their country unless they do.

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II

THE MALAYAN EXPERIENCE

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Pre-World War II

In the period before World War II, Malaya was divided into the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States. The Straits Settlements were composed of Singapore, Penang, and Malacca, which were Crown Colonies and for the government of which the British Government was directly responsible through the Governor of Singapore. The nine Malay states were sovereign Protected States by treaties with the British Government, under which the British Government was responsible for their defense and foreign policy and they agreed to accept a British Resident whose advice they were obliged to accept on all administrative matters except those relating to Malay religion and customs. Needless to say, formal advice was seldom, if ever, given. The Governor of Singapore was High Commissioner for the Malay states which provided for coordinated policy on major matters. The British officers in the Malayan civil and public services were liable to service in all the Malay states and in the settlements. This also helped to provide both continuity and common policies. Four of the Malay states--Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Negri Sembilan--had federated in 1897, with many public services and departments common throughout all four states. The Unfederated States--Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Johore--were more independent and, except for Johore because of its wealth and position on the southern tip of the peninsula, were generally more backward.

The country was peaceful and comparatively prosperous; its major revenues came from the export tax on tin and rubber and customs

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import duties. There was no income tax. Malaya's revenue surpluses had enabled it to provide free primary education for Malays, free hospitals, good roads, an extensive railway system, and sufficient reserves to back its currency 100 percent in gilt-edged securities. The cost of living was cheap and the normal Asian family could feed itself quite easily on \$3 a month. (In 1938 I myself, as a junior member of the service, could play golf, run a car, and live comfortably on \$50 a month.) The police force numbered a little over 10,000 and, except for Singapore where there were two British battalions, naval and air bases, there was only one battalion (the Burma Rifles) in the whole of mainland Malaya, stationed in Taiping. By the outbreak of war, one battalion of the Malay regiment had been formed and a second was formed during the first year of the war.

During this period the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was no threat either to the government or to the peaceful existence of the country. It had originally been started in 1925 as an overseas branch of the Far Eastern Comintern and one of its prime promoters was a man who subsequently became known as Ho Chi Minh. The party itself was officially formed as an independent party in 1930. It gained its first advance as a result of the Japanese attack on China and made its appeal to the Chinese population as anti-Japanese rather than on an anti-imperialist platform. Through such organizations as the Malayan People's Anti-backing-up Society, which of course had a strong Chinese nationalist appeal, particularly to those Chinese who were new immigrants in Malaya, it attracted laborers and youth in the larger towns, especially Singapore. It also had a limited success in the embryo trade union movement, notably among Chinese workers in the Batu Arang colliery, Malaya's only coal mine (now uneconomical and defunct). The party was at that time banned and illegal and a number of its leading members were convicted and jailed under the Societies Ordinance (the main purpose of which had originally been to deal with Chinese secret societies such as the Triad).

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED**2. World War II**

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the MCP put out feelers to the government offering its services in the war against fascism. However, these were initially refused and there were in fact clashes with the Malayan Government when the British Government, to appease Japan, was compelled in 1941 to close the Burma Road which had already become the main supply line to China. With the outbreak of war with Japan, however, the offer was renewed and accepted. Communists were released from jail and many young Chinese were trained in Singapore and incorporated into a unit known as "Dalforce." Singapore fell, however, in February 1942 before it could be used. Most of its members dispersed and escaped to the mainland. The immediate effect of the British surrender was that the MCP was the sole organization left in Malaya opposing the Japanese and became, as a result, the core of the resistance movement. While the Malay administrations of the states, in a truncated form, were taken over by the Japanese as a means of administering the country, the Chinese population, which had depended for its existence mainly on commerce, tin, and rubber, was regarded as hostile and left to fend for itself. This had two effects: (1) the MCP was able to make a strong nationalist appeal to the Chinese, thereby obtaining recruits for its forces and building up a strong support organization within the population; and (2) over half a million Chinese were compelled, in order to live, to leave the towns, estates, and mines and to exist by subsistence agriculture in the remoter areas of the country on the jungle fringe. These "squatters" became the commissariat of the resistance movement. Contact was made with the MCP in 1943 by Malayan officers now in Force 136 (a branch of the Special Operations Executive); and an agreement was made through them with the Supreme Allied Command in Southeast Asia whereby the MCP would accept British instructors and, of course, arms, ammunition, and other supplies. In fact, there were little more than minor skirmishes with the Japanese because of the Japanese surrender resulting from the use of the atomic bomb. The MCP therefore came through the war with its

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forces and organization comparatively untested but absolutely intact.

The party came through the war with its prestige greatly enhanced. It had attracted many supporters less on an ideological cause than on an anti-Japanese cause. All were, however, put through the usual indoctrination processes and the MCP made clear its post-war aims of driving out the colonialists and establishing a People's Republic. It could also bask in the prominence given to the Russian, rather than British and American, victories over Germany. Moreover, defeat of the colonial powers by Japan in 1942 had left a much greater impression on people's minds than the final victory over Japan in 1945. There was no question of the British being able to return and to pick up the reins as if nothing had happened.

3. Post-World War II

The sudden surrender of Japan also meant that there was an interregnum before the British forces, originally assembled for an invasion, could be landed in the country. This gave the MCP (as it gave Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam) an opportunity not just to pay off old scores on grounds of collaboration but to assassinate political opponents. Some Malays were included in the victims and this led in the immediate post-war era to bitter racial clashes for the first time in various parts of the country. The landing of the British forces in invasion strength put out of the question any immediate military challenge by the MCP. Moreover, there was at this time a new Labour government in the United Kingdom and terms were agreed upon under which the party would be recognized as a legal political party within the country but its forces would be paid off and disbanded. In fact, at the disbandment, the arms handed in exceeded those officially issued by Force 136, but this took no account of those arms which had gone astray in the supply drops or which had been recovered from the battlefields. These were hidden in waterproof caches in the jungle. The MCP's underground organization also remained intact.

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It was the pronounced policy of the Labour government to accelerate the granting of independence to colonial territories and this was achieved comparatively quickly in the case of India, Pakistan, and Burma. The same statement of intention was made in the case of Malaya. As one step in this process, it had been planned at the end of the war to incorporate all the Malay states, together with the settlements of Penang and Malacca, into a single unitary state with a central government in Kuala Lumpur. This ran into considerable opposition from the Malay sultans and their Malay subjects, and for the first time forced the Malays to enter the political arena. The United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) was formed to oppose the Malayan Union and to restore the sovereignty of the states. For two years, therefore, there were long, but never acrimonious, negotiations with the Malays, as a result of which a new constitution was drawn up turning Malaya into a federation of the nine states and two settlements (excluding Singapore). The British High Commissioner of the federation was appointed jointly by His Majesty and the sultans, and, while the British Government remained responsible for defense and foreign policy, the federal government became responsible for internal security and other major departments of government, but the states retained many administrative responsibilities--in particular over land policy. Agreement was also reached on the terms under which citizenship would be granted to Chinese and other races in the federation. Fundamentally the Malays and the moderate Chinese were happy with the new federation and their trust in British intentions was unimpaired. With hindsight, if any mistake was made, it was in excluding Singapore. There were two reasons for this: the British still required it as a Far Eastern military and naval base, and the Malays were very reluctant to incorporate a city which would have given the Chinese element of the population in the joint territories as a whole an overall majority.

Meanwhile the MCP concentrated its attention on the new trade unions and other associations which were formed for political and other purposes and soon gained full control over the Pan-Malayan

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Federation of Trades Unions. From its vantage point in this legal position the party was able to exercise a great deal of control over labor relations, with frequent strikes in the tin and rubber industries, and continued to attract members. The party did not however confine itself to subversion but used all measures of intimidation and terror--including assassination. In the immediate post-war years the government was at a disadvantage in having to rebuild both its administration and police force. As progress was made and law and order reestablished, there was a natural confrontation when party members or their supporters found themselves in court on criminal charges. During the twenty-seven months from October 1945 to the end of 1947, there were 191 murders and abductions attributed to the party but, during the first six months of 1948, these escalated to 107. At that point, whether the party realized that it was beginning to lose ground as a legal political party, with no prospect of winning over or penetrating either UMNO or the moderate Chinese who were KMT-inclined, or whether instructions were issued at the Calcutta Conference is immaterial. The party decided that it must return to the "armed struggle." In May and June 1948, its forces were recalled to the jungle, and in the middle of June its first minor operations took place, leading to a declaration of Emergency on 19 June.

B. THE ENEMY AND THE COURSE OF THE INSURGENCY**1. The Enemy**

The MCP forces at the beginning of the Emergency were estimated at 5000 in their armed units, 10,000 Min Yuen (infrastructure and armed propaganda), and, more loosely organized, 50,000-100,000 passive or active supporters, whether willing or not. The federation police strength was over 11,000 and there were approximately ten battalions of which two were Malay Regiment, six Gurkha, and the remainder British, with a total strength, including headquarters, of about 10,000. This gave the government approximately a 5 to 1 ratio of superiority against the formed enemy units who in the early stages held the initiative.

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More than that, the enemy was immediately a going concern both in armed units and in underground organization. What had been the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was easily converted into the Malayan Races Liberation Army. This was a slight misnomer, in that over 90 percent were Chinese. The main weakness was that a popular cause was lacking. The British were not all that unpopular and, in any case, their offer of independence was credibly believed by the great majority of the population. Communism as such had little appeal and did not appear as a word in the manifesto issued by the MCP, which was unexceptionally phrased and included reunification with Singapore. The only event which gave the MCP any political or psychological advantage did not occur until the end of 1949 when Mao Tse Tung won in China and the Chinese People's Republic was established and recognized by the United Kingdom. This led to the delightful anomaly whereby the Bank of China, now Peking controlled, continued to operate in Malaya--from the banking point of view impeccably, but it took no risks of giving any direct financial support to the insurgents. (Not that the insurgents were ever short of funds, because wealthy Chinese are great insurers and bought protection for themselves, their business, and their transport.) The main supply support for the insurgents came from the squatters already mentioned who still remained on their small agricultural holdings scattered all over the country. They were now a bit wealthier because many members of their families were reemployed on estates and mines. The armed-unit structure of village guerrilla squad, district platoon, and regular battalion or regiment and the underground cell organization, distributed both territorially and functionally, were on the classical model and almost identical with those in Vietnam.

Lack of a strong basic cause was the MCP's greatest disadvantage and, in this respect, right throughout the Emergency the government was able to keep communism and nationalism divorced. More and more the country came to see the enemy as Chinese Communists, not as Malayan Nationalists. This led automatically to the second great

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failure which can best be described as lack of "space." The MPC failed to penetrate, except in one or two areas, the Malay and Indian populations and, as a result, could not therefore develop a threat throughout the whole country among all elements of the population (which the Viet Cong were able to do in Vietnam).

2. The Insurgency

The course of the insurgency which lasted from 1948 to 1960 can be roughly divided into three periods. The first period, 1948-51, was one of preparation, expansion, and experimentation on both sides and culminated in the ambush and murder of the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, in October 1951. Forces on both sides were expanded but, whereas the MCP's armed units had doubled to about 10,000, the government had almost trebled, thereby achieving a higher ratio of superiority. Many people say that at this point the government was losing, if only because it was not winning. But, in fact, in spite of its force expansion, the MCP had been effectively contained and had failed to achieve any of its objectives, whereas the government was becoming geared and organized for more effective operations.

The government offensive came between 1952 and 1954, when General Sir Gerald Templer was appointed as both High Commissioner and Director of Operations (he was a four star general obviously destined to be Chief of Staff). During this period, the military strength of the enemy was broken and his underground organization seriously weakened--though not by any means destroyed. At the same time, the problem of the Chinese squatters was solved by their resettlement into new villages. The point should be made here that the General made no alteration to the basic plans produced by Sir Henry Gurney and Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs, the first Director of Operations, but he put an enormous head of steam into them. This was greatly aided by the fact that he had the full support in the United Kingdom of a Conservative government headed by Sir Winston Churchill. During this period the country also made further political advances on the road to independence with elections starting at village level and eventually working up to the first

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general election in 1955, as a result of which Tunku Abdul Rahman became Chief Minister. This period ended when Chin Peng offered to negotiate. The government had offered periodic amnesties and a liberal continuing surrender policy but had never offered a negotiated settlement. However, the enemy's offer was accepted but the talks at Baling, near the Thai border, failed. The MCP was prepared to lay down its arms and cease all operations on the one condition that the party should again be recognized as a legal political party and allowed to take part in the political processes again just before and of course after independence. In view of its record, the Tunku refused and offered only a complete amnesty, with individual members being allowed to opt either to return to China or to take their position again as law-abiding citizens of the country.

The final period, 1955-60, was a mopping up period, during which the stable transition to independence in 1957 was really of greater account than the Emergency. But there was no letup and the pressure was never taken off. As a result of this and the political developments, the majority of the remaining enemy forces surrendered, particularly those which had no hope of reaching the sanctuary of the Thai border, to which Chin Peng retreated with about 500 of his remaining forces. During this period, and partly as a result of the high surrender rate, the Police Special Branch was able to smash the party's underground organization but not of course to eliminate it entirely.

3. After the Insurgency

However good the result looked, the point must be made that Communist insurgencies never end. Constant attention has had to be paid by the Malayan Government over the last decade to prevent a resurgence mainly by eradicating Communist cells in schools and trade unions as their activities began to reach threatening proportions. Meanwhile, on the Thai border and more especially in the southern Thai provinces, Chin Peng nursed his forces and gradually built up a strong underground organization among the Chinese population. Fortunately this was no threat to Malay during the period of

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the confrontation with Indonesia from 1963 to 1966. That alone required a full-scale effort by the Malayan Government (and British forces of 50,000) and would have been impossibly complicated if there had been an internal insurgency at the same time. But the insurgent threat is growing again now and MCP forces are again penetrating into northern Malaya and reaching as far south as the tin mining center of Ipoh. The Malayan Government, however, is both experienced and now has greater resources of its own so that it should be able to handle the threat with little outside support.

The MCP has therefore been a political threat within Malaya since 1930 and a military threat since 1942. Both threats still remain. This is the meaning of protracted war, to which, in my view, the answer is stable war--i.e., a state in which the threat can be indefinitely contained without interfering with the progress and development of a country.

C. FACTORS AFFECTING THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**1. The United Kingdom-Malayan Relationship**

Technically the United Kingdom was the protecting power, and the High Commissioner under the constitution could veto legislation passed by the federal Legislative Council and, in the last resort, had reserve powers to rule direct. Naturally these were never used. While the country was financially solvent, and therefore independent of UK treasury support, the federal government had full authority to conduct all its internal affairs and, if the High Commissioner was supported by the unofficials in the Executive Council (cabinet) and in the legislature, Whitehall was most reluctant to interfere. The only issue pressed by the Labour government was the introduction of income tax (during the Malayan Union period) but this proved to be an asset. There was equally little interference by the Commissioner-General in the Far East and the British service Commanders-in-Chief in Singapore, under whom the GOC in Malaya came. The latter had full authority to support the Malayan Government, with the resources made available to him, without reference.

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The Emergency began under a Labour government in 1948 and, from 1951 until its conclusion, continued under a Conservative government in the United Kingdom. On the major issue of giving full support to the Malayan Government there was no political controversy. It was a bipartisan policy with the result that there was never at any time uncertainty as to UK support. British forces were in fact committed from the very first day and continued to operate in a combat role even after Malayan independence in 1957.

2. The Administration

British officers in the Malayan civil service and the other public service departments were employed and paid by the Malayan Government and the great majority spent a full career of over thirty years in the country. Not only was there a high degree of continuity and institutional memory but, in fact, all officers identified themselves with Malaya and the aspirations of its people. (Even after independence, for example, when I was Secretary for Defence, I would not have dreamed of communicating either openly or secretly with the British Government behind the Malayan Government's back. In fact, I had to draft Malayan defense papers and letters in its dealings with the British Government on defense aid.)

By 1948 the public service had been largely Malayanized and the British element was comparatively small, though of course it still held most of the senior appointments. This British element was depleted by the war and the rigors of internment. There was therefore a comparatively high level of post-war recruitment to fill vacancies. All of these were officers who had seen war service, generally in junior officer combat rank. This proved an advantage during the Emergency and assisted in promoting good relationships with the army.

By 1948 the administration and police force had just had time to recover from the war, and normal administrative, financial, and judicial procedures were working smoothly; the rule of law and the civil courts had been reestablished. This whole structure was never weakened by the Emergency; every effort was made to strengthen

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it and additional officers for special Emergency tasks were recruited (mostly on a contract basis) to work within the regular administrative machine. Never was there any question at any time of introducing martial law; all offenses in connection with the Emergency were dealt with through the civil courts. The military, therefore, throughout the Emergency operated in support of the civil power--a traditional feature of the British response to rebellion inherited mainly from Indian experience.

3. Attitudes

Because of their long-standing commitment and responsibility the British also inherited a patient attitude to revolt (after all it had taken Henry and John Lawrence a generation to pacify the Punjab). I do not remember anyone being in the least worried by the length of the Emergency; one just adapted to and lived with it. On the other hand, it was not allowed to prevent progress in other fields of government and notably the steps necessary for the achievement of independence.

This promise was never questioned by the Malays though it was appreciated that the timing might be affected. Obviously it would be desirable for the back of the insurgency to be broken before the final steps were taken. In effect, the MCP came to be regarded not as freedom fighters for independence but as obstructionists. The Malays therefore rallied to the government cause. There was no shortage of recruits and all were volunteers. Five divisions could have been raised if money, equipment, instructors, and officers had been available. Fortunately they were not. The Malayan forces, throughout the Emergency were in fact increased from two to only nine battalions (with some ancillary units)--a level which the country could support itself.

The Communist-led trade union movement of course collapsed but those unions, mainly Indians on the rubber plantations which had not been penetrated by the MCP, also came out on the side of the government as did the great majority of the leading Chinese Towkays, most of whom had KMT affiliations. They had a strong influence

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over the many Chinese clan associations (based on the districts in China from which immigrants came).

One other element must be mentioned--the European planters and miners, who played a vital role. These were the first target of the insurgents, three being murdered on the first day. The great majority had spent a lifetime in Malaya; it was not just a question of their livelihood but of their life's work. In spite of the danger, situated as they were in the rural areas of the country, they did not desert their posts. They provided a rallying point around which local defense could be organized, inspired, and led.

With such local popular support and full UK support, the Emergency never became a moral issue. Criticism there was of some measures and methods, especially if they did not work, but never of general policy. This equally applied to the press. The MCP throughout was illegal, foreign, evil, and the enemy. It must be recognized that this was 1948, at the height of the cold war and the Berlin airlift. In that respect, it was a different epoch. Tough emergency laws could be passed by executive decree under a statute reenacted annually by the legislature. Terrorists were defined as any persons carrying arms, ammunition, or explosives without a license or consorting with such persons. The death penalty for terrorism was mandatory and a high court judge had no option (though the High Commissioner could exercise the royal prerogative of mercy to pardon or reprieve). Persons could be held by the police for twenty-eight days and then detained without trial for two years (renewable). Alien Chinese not born in Malaya could be deported. Everyone over the age of twelve had to have an identity card. Entrance to large areas of the countryside could be restricted (this was tantamount to a free fire zone). But the rule of law prevailed and anyone exceeding the powers granted by legislation could be challenged in the courts. I still maintain that the secret of tough laws right down to house curfews is that they must be imposed at the right time and in the right place, be strictly enforced, be effective in their objective, and be seen by the population to work. Then they are acceptable.

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It was an interesting point that the rural population found the strictly enforced food control measures a perfect excuse for not being able to help the terrorists when demands were made.

4. Military Limitations

By 1948 the war-time armies had been disbanded and the United Kingdom still had commitments in Europe and other overseas territories. What is more, the Indian army, which for a century had been the main reserve force for the whole area from the Middle East to the Far East, was no longer available. By arrangement with Nepal, however, six Gurkha battalions remained as part of the British forces and were organized into a light infantry division. At various times other forces from the Commonwealth were made available, including some from Australia and New Zealand, also an East African battalion and a battalion from Fiji (probably the most outstanding to serve in Malaya). Other commitments such as Kenya and Cyprus limited the forces available but, above all, the Korean war, coming as it did at a critical period in the Emergency, was the greatest influence. This meant that the forces, at their maximum strength, about 1953, never exceeded the equivalent of 25 battalions (including artillery regiments used as infantry).

Artillery was used for harassing purposes, but I doubt whether the number of rounds fired in twelve years was more than the maximum number fired in one day in Vietnam. The Royal Navy was adequate to prevent any infiltration by sea, though there is little evidence that it was attempted. Coastal bombardment in support of military operations was extremely rare. The Far East Air Force had greater strength and its aircraft fortunately were fairly antiquated. It was well versed from Burma days in supply dropping, almost its main role; but there was occasional tactical air support, including harassment by Lincolns (the successor of the war-time Lancaster). The bombing of the jungle was put into its right perspective by the complaint of the eighty-four-year-old sultan of Johore that it was disturbing the game! There was only one established case where terrorists were killed by bombing. Helicopters were few and novel.

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and were confined almost entirely to the evacuation of wounded. Light STOL planes were constantly used for communications, liaison, and reconnaissance. The real point here was that the military presence was never overwhelming and the question never arose of the commanding generals running the war. As I once quoted, the best remark made by a British major general, commanding the equivalent of a division, was that in this type of war all he had to do was to go round seeing that the troops got their beer!

5. Costs

The Korean war had one great advantage; it put the world market price of tin and rubber through the roof. Malayan Government revenues, since taxes were on a sliding scale, got the full benefit. Until that point commodity prices had been almost prewar and had not even been greatly affected by the devaluation of the pound in 1949. Government revenue jumped from M\$443 million in 1950 to M\$735 million in 1951. Although there was a slight recession by about M\$100 million in 1953-54, revenue went over the M\$800 million mark in 1956. In spite of the Emergency there was, therefore, an overall continuing revenue surplus so that all normal programs could be locally financed. There was moreover no problem over raising development loans on the local market. The UK contribution, other than the cost of its own troops, was confined to capital projects, although there was an implied promise of backing should Malaya run into financial difficulties on annually recurrent expenditure. The total cost of the Emergency to the Government of Malaya has been estimated at under US\$500 million and the cost to the United Kingdom at US\$235 million. Costs have been assessed in both cases, particularly with regard to troops and police, as those in excess of what would have been required under normal peace-time circumstances.

The limitation on forces, money, and other resources had one very good effect: it compelled civil and military commands at all levels to get their priorities right, and to exclude both the trivial and the highly desirable which was excessively expensive. All the above

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factors therefore compelled the development of a long-haul, low-cost strategy.

6. The Racial Factor

I have already mentioned the failure of the MCP to penetrate the Malay and Indian communities and therefore to achieve "space." But there were also disadvantages with the enemy being mainly Chinese and the government forces mainly British and Malay. It proved a great problem for the government in its turn, from the intelligence point of view, to penetrate the Chinese and to differentiate, as it were, between good and bad Chinese. Therefore, every effort had to be made to recruit Chinese, especially into the police force, and to increase the number of officers who spoke Chinese. Very great care also had to be taken to prevent the Emergency from becoming a racial and religious war between the Muslim Malays and the Chinese. If the Malayan Communist Party had been able to present itself as the protector of the Chinese, then the conflict would have been more violent and bitter (compare Ulster) and the outcome more uncertain. In spite of the conflict, the Malays under Tunku Abdul Rahman never went back on the citizenship terms for Chinese. One of the major factors in the defeat of the MCP was the well-founded trust which the moderate Chinese had in the Tunku's promise. This, in turn, helped the formation of the Alliance party which led Malaya to independence and still governs it today.

One further problem of the mixed racial structure was that all government leaflets, posters, and pamphlets had to be produced in four languages and Radio Malaya's news programs, with only three channels, had to be issued in twelve different languages and dialects.

7. Terrain

About 80 percent of the country was still tropical jungle, either mountain or swamp, but the remainder was highly developed with a good all-weather road system. On the border with Thailand, which for the main part is mountain jungle, there was throughout a hot-pursuit agreement under which Malayan police forces, but not military,

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could operate twenty-five miles across the border. The Thais had the same right but were allergic to exercising it.

8. Districts

It is important to emphasize that the real administration of the country centered on the district (larger than those in Vietnam and equivalent to some of the smaller provinces). The chief government representative was the district officer (either British or Malay). He was not a local governor and did not have command responsibilities over the police or other government departments, except the Land Office which came directly under him (the most vital subject in a rural community). He was primus inter pares and, of course, the coordinator and natural leader whom his colleagues looked to for guidance and the community for relief and support.

Within their voted budgets and departmental directions, everyone was expected to get on with his job and to consult higher authority only when further help was required. Party politics, while they might influence policy direction at higher levels, were never allowed to interfere at this level with executive action on the ground.

D. COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT

1. Initial Set-up

As already stated, the Government of Malaya, except for external defense and foreign affairs, was to all intents and purposes self-governing. There was no interference either from Whitehall or from the Commanders-in-Chief in Singapore. The latter were in a position to keep an overall objective eye on the situation and provide help when required. It was, for example, they who in early 1950 saw the need for a Director of Operations, responsible to the High Commissioner, to direct and coordinate all the security aspects of the Emergency.

The federal government was itself organized on a territorial basis with its headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, but with police and other government departments deployed throughout the country. There were eleven separate state and settlement governments and approximately

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sixty districts. The army, with its headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, was also deployed on a territorial basis with its brigades and/or battalions allocated to states or districts.

At first, informally but naturally, at district level, the local police and military commanders got together with the district officer to plan their joint activities. The same applied at state level, where the main coordinating responsibility fell on the British adviser to the state government. (Since there were not Malay prime ministers in each state, the British adviser had no executive authority and little else to do.) An informal committee system was thereby built up with different local varieties. At the top level, major policy and the allocation of resources were decided by the High Commissioner in Executive Council, of which the GOC was a member. The Secretary for Defence in the Federal Secretariat and his staff originally provided the civil headquarters with the channel through which plans were presented for approval and government instructions issued. There were clear weaknesses in the system (if it could be called that) and too much had to be referred to the High Commissioner.

2. Director of Operations

It was at this stage that the Commanders-in-Chief in Singapore recommended the appointment of a Director of Operations and the recently retired Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed. He soon brought order and formality into the situation where previously there had been doubt and uncertainty. In April 1950 he established a Federal War Council directly responsible to the Executive Council. Briggs at first presided but this position was soon taken over by the High Commissioner to give the council fuller authority. It included the Chief Secretary (the leading official of the civil government), the Secretary for Defence, the Commissioner of Police, the GOC, and the AOC, Malaya. Other heads of departments might be called in when necessary. Subsequently, when the appointment was made, the Director of Intelligence--later the heads of Special Branch--also attended all meetings.

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UNCLASSIFIED**3. SWECs and DWECs**

Beneath this, State War Executive Committees were established under the chairmanship of the prime minister of the state, although the British adviser frequently substituted for him and was in any case a member of the committee which also included the chief police officer of the state and the senior military commander in the area, normally a brigadier. Again other officers could be called in and the local head of Special Branch and the adviser on Chinese affairs subsequently became permanent members. The committees at this level had a permanent executive secretary provided by the Malayan civil service.

Similarly, District War Executive Committees were established with the district officer as chairman and the local senior police officer and military commander (either battalion or company) as members.

The committees met weekly with a formal agenda and the subsequent minutes were executive action documents setting out the joint decision to each problem and defining the various roles. These were circulated upwards at all levels and relevant extracts downwards. This saved an enormous amount of reporting time because at the highest level it was possible to follow what was happening even in the remotest district. The key word in the title of the committees was "executive." All those present held command positions and their joint decision was therefore binding both on themselves and on all those under them. The minutes themselves indicated who was responsible for taking the necessary action, and progress reports were therefore required from that officer at subsequent meetings. If a problem proved intractable, then assistance could be asked from the next higher level and, if approved, additional resources or a greater planning effort could be applied. If joint decisions could not be amicably reached, then someone was in the wrong. But the machinery was there at the higher level to monitor this and, if necessary, the Director of Operations could descend to admonish the offender and compel a solution. There had to be not just a coordinated but a united effort.

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UNCLASSIFIED**4. General Templer and After**

Even so, at the highest level, General Briggs found that direction was not enough. He depended on the Secretary for Defence, the Commissioner of Police, the GOC, and the AOC to ensure that directives became commands down their respective channels. It was irksome to have to go either to the High Commissioner or to the Commanders-in-Chief in Singapore if he felt that any particular element was out of line. Accordingly, after the retirement of General Briggs and the assassination of Sir Henry Gurney, General Sir Gerald Templer was appointed both as High Commissioner and Director of Operations. As a serving four star general, this gave him a full command position over all the services. He had a deputy high commissioner to take the weight of the normal civil government problems off him and a deputy director of operations (later a chief of staff) to handle day-to-day Emergency matters. He was in every sense a proconsul. He was advised by Sir Winston Churchill, whose unqualified support he had, "to gather all the reins of power into your own hands and then never use it."

Through the critical years this system worked well. An important point was that the Director of Operations, including General Templer, had a very small joint staff never exceeding ten. The principle behind this was that the responsible command or department of government should do the work. No one usurped anyone else's function.

When Templer left in 1954, the posts were again divided with Templer's civil deputy becoming High Commissioner and General Sir Geoffrey Bourne, again a serving four star general, Director of Operations. When elections were held and the first government with Malayan ministers was formed before independence, the title Federal War Council was changed to the Emergency Operations Council with the Tunku as chairman. This continued through the transition to independence and afterwards (it was revived for the confrontation with Indonesia).

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UNCLASSIFIED**5. The Committee System**

At each level there was a single controlling operations room always in police headquarters, next to the main source of intelligence (Special Branch) and with communications to all allocated forces. It was here that the weekly War Executive Committee meetings were held and, on other days, there would be brief "morning prayers" to deal with day-to-day matters. All units, whether military or police, were under the operational control of the committee to which they were allocated and all operations were planned and directed from the single operations room. Rarely, if ever, did even a brigade headquarters plan and carry out any operation on its own.

The committee system is often derided but these were no ordinary discussion or waffling type of committee. They were fully executive and their members had full authority, within the general plan, to use the funds, resources, and troops allocated to them without any further reference to their superiors. They made their own plans, carried them out, and either succeeded or failed. If they failed, they learned from their mistakes and, because of the distribution system, others learned too. Everyone was given a chance to make his mark. Fortunately most of them succeeded.

E. ISOLATING THE GUERRILLA**1. The Briggs Plan**

The essential strategy of the Briggs plan, prepared by General Briggs and his three-man staff (civil, police, and military) was to isolate the MCP guerrilla from the population. Briggs appreciated that for this purpose the primary need was to protect the population. The target, for both sides, was the people. If the people could be protected by the government, then the guerrillas would be killed when they attempted to make contact. (There is a very striking analogy here with anti-submarine warfare in World War II. The hunter-killer groups in the vast wastes of the Atlantic Ocean were

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not a great success. It was the convoy escorts which sank the submarines, because the submarines had to attack the convoys.) The important psychological feature of this strategy was that it put the people in a position of hostility towards the guerrilla. As the strategy progressed and succeeded, the guerrilla became increasingly the enemy of the people in a position of hostility towards the guerrilla. As the strategy progressed and succeeded, the guerrilla became increasingly the enemy of the people.

As explained, the initial resources were limited so that, in order to carry out the strategy, General Briggs developed two major types of operations: framework operations, mainly police but with some military support to hold territory and protect people within that territory; and priority operations in which, on this framework, additional resources of police and military were allocated for offensive operations against the enemy. It was the original intention of the plan to select the southern part of Malaya as the first priority area and gradually work northwards. The plan however was flexible and it did not work out this way. In the event, earlier success was achieved in the center and there was no problem in switching resources to comply with the sound military principle of reinforcing success.

2. Resettlement

Many practical measures were taken to secure the isolation of the guerrilla. The first and quite the most important was the resettlement of the squatter population into new villages. During a period of three to four years (1950-53), over 500,000 people were moved and over 500 new villages were created. The size varied but the majority were about 1000 people. There were however a few of over 10,000. The movement of the people down to the last chicken and the creation of the village were meticulously planned. A great number of the villages, particularly the larger ones, were in fact dormitories for a wage-earning population. In the case of an agricultural community, the village was sited normally within reach of its land. In a few cases, however, there was a complete relocation and alternative land was made available.

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The same policy was applied to a few Malay kampongs in remote and vulnerable areas. But the great majority of Malay kampongs, other than perhaps regrouping one or two outlying houses, were not moved. The population was merely organized and armed to defend itself as home guards, normally in support of a small local police station. On many larger rubber estates, the labor lines were also regrouped to reduce the number of population centers which had to be protected. The whole program was strategically planned to fit in with framework and priority operations and, of course, the intensity of enemy activity. The aim was to produce extensive secure areas in which the whole program was completed rather than widespread, scattered, new villages which would still have been vulnerable to enemy attack.

When the villages were established and security achieved, other benefits followed--schools, clinics, water supplies, electricity, the election of village committees, and the first steps toward local self-government.

The squatter problem had to be tackled by the government in any case. It would probably have taken a generation and caused considerable resentment. This program solved it in about three years and, because it was widely supported by the legislature and the budding political parties and was carried out in a determined manner, it was accepted by the people concerned as being an unavoidable fact of life. The measure of its success is that 95 percent of these villages today are flourishing and many of them are prosperous small towns of brick and concrete.

3. Measures

It was the resettlement program which made many of the other necessary measures feasible and effective. All members of the population over the age of twelve were issued identity cards. There was no squeamishness about issuing either marked or colored cards to members of the population who had been arrested or detained or whose area of residence was restricted. In many large towns, tenants registration was imposed whereby absentees and visitors had to be reported.

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Curfews were imposed around villages at night and, in bad areas, house curfews during the hours of darkness were imposed. Entry into certain areas, mainly scrub or jungle, was banned or restricted to certain daylight hours.

Food control measures were introduced early, particularly the convoying of lorries to prevent the enemy from obtaining bulk supplies. As the new villages were created, together with police stations and home guards, food control areas were established through which no one was allowed to carry any item of food whatsoever. For example, tappers going out at dawn on a rubber estate and returning about midday were allowed to carry only a container of tea. In some bad areas, particularly as part of priority operations, rice rationing was introduced and, in some cases, the communal cooking of rice (cooked rice goes rapidly sour) to prevent leakages to the enemy in cigarette tins and bicycle pumps. Canned food in the village shop had to be punctured on sale. As a result terrorists were frequently killed or captured with hundreds of dollars in their pockets but starving. The controls also applied to other vital items such as printing materials, plastic cloth, articles of clothing, and medical supplies. The penalties for infringement were severe, which provided the population with a good excuse for not supporting the terrorists.

Quite apart from the practical purpose of denying supplies to the guerrillas, these measures had two other main objectives. If the underground organization (the Min Yuen) was to continue functioning, it had to break the regulations. This surfaced its active members and enabled the security forces to identify, kill, or capture them. Also, measures such as tenants registration, while they cured nothing, often provided an item of information which was sufficient for Special Branch to start a fruitful line of inquiry.

The most important points about all these measures were not to apply them in a blanket manner but to specific areas at the precise moment when they would have the most effect, to publicize them widely, and to enforce them strictly.

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There was no hesitation at all about detaining suspects and putting them through a most intensive interrogation. In one or two cases detention was even used as a punitive measure (rather than preventive). One particular village of 3000 people, from which a guerrilla company of over 100 derived its support, proved quite incalcitrant and impervious either to stick or carrot. The whole village (men, women, and children) was interned for a year while the area was cleaned up and the company thereby eliminated. The village was subsequently fully restored with all benefits and amenities. No one questioned or criticized such drastic action because it was seen to be necessary and proved effective. To offset these harsh measures, as soon as an area was declared "white," all restrictions were removed. The onus was clearly placed on the people, with some security force framework support, to keep it "white" and, although a few minor incidents might occur, there was no regression.

4. Jungle Forts

It was appreciated that, until the developed populated areas of the country were clear, little could be done to protect and win over the aboriginal tribes in the jungle areas. A statute was, however, passed recognizing their tribal rights, traditions, and customs and contact was maintained with them as the guerrillas were forced back into the jungle. The security forces followed and, in the period after 1954, using forces such as the Special Air Service Regiment and the Police Field Force, jungle forts were established around which aborigines could rally and be protected. The forts became administrative centers and trading posts, thereby improving the economy and standard of living of the tribes. In the later stages, they were recruited into a special force (the Senoi Pra'ak) and, in the closing stages, this little force of about 300, in scattered platoons, accounted for more enemy kills than all the rest of the security forces.

5. Hearts and Minds

While much emphasis was placed on winning the hearts and minds of the people, it was clearly understood that people whose hearts might

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prefer the government would be compelled in their minds to support the side which appeared to be winning. While all the benefits and amenities might have some influence on the heart, an essential feature of the concept was that people in their minds must realize that the government was both determined and capable of winning. The guerrilla had to be both physically and psychologically isolated from the people.

F. POLICE, INTELLIGENCE, AND PSYWAR**1. Police**

The Federation Police Force was a well-established and respected service, but at the beginning of the Emergency had hardly recovered from the war. With a multitude of willing Malay recruits available, it was by far the easiest force to expand with the result that, throughout the Emergency, the strength of the police force was always two to three times higher than the military. Moreover, with its command structure territorially based, it was a flexible instrument. Police were liable for service anywhere in the country, and this meant that additional forces could be switched from one state to another with few logistic problems and no command problems.

To meet the protective role in the populated areas, special constables were recruited and formed into units of squad or platoon size for the protection of installations, estates, and mines and were used to give added rifle strength to police stations in rural areas. They were on temporary engagement and received initially only about two-months training, but a considerable retraining program was organized in 1952. The regular police force was also expanded but, in this case, all regular policemen went through the full training course, which was temporarily reduced from nine to about six months.

When the home guards were formed in villages they were administered by their own organization (which had previously been the Civil Defence Department). They came under the operational control of the police at the local level. In fact, they were technically recruited as auxiliary police so that they had police powers as granted by

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statutes or by emergency legislation. (The same applied to the armed forces under the latter.)

As the police force expanded (it did at one stage reach over 60,000) it did not remain solely static within the framework. Police jungle squads (15-20 men) were early formed and the Police Field Force, capable of operating at company strength, was established for offensive operations against corresponding enemy units in their area. It was, however, laid down that the primary role of the police was to dominate the populated areas while the army was to operate outside this on the jungle fringe. The general police role was still basically that of enforcing the law without political interference. In that regard, the police were responsible, if they in any way exceeded their powers, to the courts.

2. Intelligence

Directly after the war the Malayan Security Service (MSS) was established as a separate internal intelligence security organization, staffed by seconded police officers. Intelligence gathered by this service was available by general distribution to both police and military, also to the government. For their own intelligence, the police had to rely on the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), its detectives and agents. This dichotomy was a complete failure and, in place of the MSS, the Police Special Branch was created. The CID of course remained to handle normal crime and any criminal charges brought against terrorists or their supporters.

The build up of the Special Branch took time. It was particularly necessary to recruit Chinese of high quality and to build up within the branch a core of professional specialists. In this respect, some training was provided by MI5 from the United Kingdom but MI6 (corresponding to the CIA) was prohibited from operating in Malaya. Special Branch was to be the sole intelligence organization.

Because of the police headquarter facilities available throughout the country, Special Branch officers were deployed down to district level. Here again, as stated before, the district was the vital level

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because it was necessary to identify the enemy counterparts and target operations against them. These were not just armed units but, more important, the underground organization--especially district and branch committee members. It was at this level that the enemy had to make contact with the people. It was the task of Special Branch at higher levels (state and federal) to support the district, to see that the effort was not dispersed, and to ensure control so that wires never became crossed. Naturally some highly skilled penetration operations were conducted at higher level, but these never queered the pitch of local operations--nor the other way round.

The two main sources of intelligence were surrendered enemy personnel (SEP) and documents, both of which were handed over immediately to Special Branch. There was also much overt intelligence to be gained through normal police and government channels and through the use of the restrictive measures already described. Special Branch was fortunate that, in the early stages of the Emergency, there were some members of the MCP who for one reason or another had disagreed with party policy. Some had been picked up but others surrendered. These formed a useful brain trust both from the operational point of view and for interrogation.

At federal, state and most district levels, where the military were operating, military intelligence officers were attached to the local Special Branch. In this way they could extract Orbat and operational intelligence and, at the same time, military tactical intelligence could be fed into the system. There was gradually built up in battalion and company commanders a feeling of complete trust in the accuracy and quality of the intelligence provided to them by Special Branch. This meant that, on the receipt of juicy intelligence, an operation could be planned using exactly the right type of force--whether police, military, or both--to achieve the best result.

Throughout, the priority intelligence target was the underground organization rather than the guerrilla units. The maxim was developed that, if you target the infrastructure, you get the Orbat, but if you target the Orbat you do not get the infrastructure.

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UNCLASSIFIED**3. Psywar**

It was the duty of the information services, including radio, to keep the public and press informed of what was going on through all available media of which, in the rural areas, the mobile cinema unit was the most effective. It was the overall aim of the information services to promote unity, nationalism, a sense of achievement, and confidence, thereby encouraging the cooperation of the people and the identification of the people with the government and against the MCP. By this process the following formula was gradually created in people's minds: legality + construction + good results = the government; illegality + destruction + phoney promises = the MCP.

The psychological warfare section was part of the information services and could draw on all its facilities, but was sited close to Special Branch so that all exploitable intelligence could be rapidly used, particularly to induce surrenders. The basis of the psywar effort depended on the government's surrender offer and on the reward system. It soon became known and believed that, if a terrorist surrendered, he was well treated and that, if a person gave hot information, he got paid in full on the nail. One good result, therefore, led to the next.

It was also the duty of this section to interpret the enemy's propaganda policy and to keep the government informed of its general line and any changes. It was soon realized that it did not pay to enter into argument with the enemy. The answer was for the government to issue its own information and conduct its own psywar campaign and to compel the enemy to argue with that.

G. MILITARY AND PARAMILITARY**1. Military Role**

Most of this has been covered elsewhere in this chapter. The two fundamental points were that the military were in support of the civil power and that the great majority of the combat units were under the operational control of the SWECS or DWECs to which they were allocated. There were no separate paramilitary forces which

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were not under police or army operational control (the army had the Sarawak Rangers-Dyak Trackers). This made operational control and unity of effort at the district level much easier.

As stated, the army's main area of operations was on the fringe of the populated areas and, until in the later stages the guerrillas sought sanctuary in the deeper jungle, it was realized that their main units in the jungle would be within not more than a few hours marching time of the populated areas. It was therefore the task of the army to insert itself between these units and the populated areas which were the enemy's targets. It must of course be remembered that seldom did the enemy operate in units larger than 100. There were a few instances where forces of 300-500 were concentrated but the normal enemy unit for most of the Emergency was 20-50 men. From the military point of view the war was a platoon commander's war.

In the early stages some sweeps, though not on a massive scale, were conducted but proved abortive. As local intelligence built up, the army came to be used more and more in small units on operations against specific targets. Where the enemy was elusive, the main tactic was to mount ambushes on known trails and to maintain them for quite long periods--even a week. Even if unproductive, this tactic denied carefree movement to the enemy. The Fijians were quite happy to conduct such operations in parties of only three men and were highly successful.

The SAS developed the technique of parachute dropping into high jungle and, operating in small parties, used similar ambush tactics in the deep jungle, where the few trails used by the enemy could more easily be covered (the Malayan jungle is much denser than that in Vietnam owing to year round rainfall).

Battalions were kept in the same area as long as possible, thereby learning the ground, and those from Britain or the Commonwealth normally served for three years. The Malayan and Gurkha battalions served the whole period, of course with some personnel changes. Most of the British servicemen were conscripts (national service having continued after the war) and did only 18 months, but there

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was continuity through the regulars. All battalions came out of operations for two months each year for rest, recuperation, and retraining as battalions.

2. Casualties

Casualties were not high and in no way affected morale or public support in the United Kingdom. The military total killed was 519 and wounded 959, as compared with the police total (including auxiliaries) of 1346 killed and 1601 wounded. The corresponding terrorist figures were 6710 killed, 1287 captured, and 2702 surrendered--a total of 10,699.

H. COMPARISONS WITH SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Period 1959-63

Taking into account the relative size and population of the two countries, the enemy strengths in Malaya in 1948 and South Vietnam in 1959 were almost equivalent. Opposing them, the GVN had a much greater superiority of strength as far as forces were concerned but was much weaker in its administration and territorial structure. To a certain extent, this dictated that the approach to the problem in Malaya was more administrative, supported by the military; while in Vietnam, it was almost entirely military.

The modus operandi of both enemy forces during the initial period was almost identical, as was the structure of their organization. The Viet Cong strength in South Vietnam, however, expanded far more rapidly than that of the MCP in Malaya. This was partly, but not by any means entirely, due to infiltration from North Vietnam, with the result that the scale of the war in 1963 in South Vietnam far exceeded the scale of the war in the corresponding period in 1952 in Malaya.

In comparing the respective pacification programs, that in Malaya was better planned, was strategically directed, was supported by the army, and was more ruthlessly carried out. To a great extent it was this that prevented the enemy from expanding more rapidly, thereby

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reducing the prospect of large-scale battles in the populated areas. This, coupled with the fact that the population was protected where it lived, prevented any refugee problem from arising.

It is quite impossible to speculate whether the approach in Malaya would have been different if the enemy had achieved greater armed strength, or if the Emergency had coincided with the Indonesian confrontation. It is doubtful whether the United Kingdom at that period could have afforded to commit further forces, though there was undoubtedly still some room for the expansion of Malayan forces--either police or army--possibly up to another 50,000. Money could probably have been found, but only at the expense of postponing development projects and the transition to independence. Such a postponement, coupled with the damage to the economy (especially to rubber production through increased violence), might well have precipitated a political and economic crisis. The British could then have found themselves in a similar situation to the French in Indochina in the 1950s.

2. The Period 1968-71

The recent pacification program in South Vietnam since 1968 in some ways has more similarities with Malaya than the earlier strategic hamlet program. It has been strategically directed and militarily supported. In the better areas it has proved unnecessary to do little more than organize the people (PF and PSDF) in their own defense as in Malay kampongs. But in some other areas such as Quang Ngai, more defended villages have been created similar to the Malayan new village. The GVN still suffers from a weak civil government structure and a weak police force, with a corresponding weakness in the intelligence organization. This has resulted in a dependence for security on sheer numbers, which is expensive.

Moreover, at this present stage, while the ARVN is in a position to contain the NVA threat, the provincial and district administrations are still uncertain as to their real objectives, which may vary from area to area. These objectives have been obscured by incentives--such as the quota system--against the infrastructure, itself far too

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vague a description of the target. In most areas where there is still a local Viet Cong security problem, the present target should be the residual village guerrilla squads, rather than the remaining provincial force units in the jungle (many of which are phantom) or the infrastructure (in the sense of party members still within the population) because, in the rural districts, many of these individuals are now with the village guerrilla squads. The point here is that the GVN police and administrative machine is not yet sufficiently experienced or flexible enough to deal with changing enemy situations. This was the type of management problem for which the local DWECs in Malaya were designed.

While not as closely knit as the British-Malayan system to provide centralized strategic direction and decentralized operational control, the present joint planning and pacification management system in South Vietnam (through CORDS and the Pacification and Development Council) are such a great improvement that they have been the main factor in the success of the program. If they had existed in 1961, the insurgency in Vietnam, though unquestionably more difficult and on a larger scale, might have followed a similar course to the Malayan experience.

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PART TWO

EVOLUTION OF PACIFICATION IN VIETNAM

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UNCLASSIFIED**I****PACIFICATION LESSONS LEARNED BY THE FRENCH IN INDOCHINA, 1945-1954**

This chapter reviews the French experience with pacification in the 1945-54 war against the Viet Minh in Indochina, with emphasis on the "lessons" derived from that experience. An appreciation of those lessons requires some opening coverage of the basic environmental factors and major military developments of those years. However, the emphasis is on what the French learned and published about pacification, thus making it available to any nation that might find itself up against a similar situation in the future.

A. ENVIRONMENT**1. At the Outset in 1945-46**

Attlee, Stalin, and Truman agreed at the Potsdam Conference of July 1945 that when the Japanese surrendered, British troops would disarm them in Indochina south of the 16th parallel, while Chinese troops would disarm them in Indochina north of that parallel. The Japanese there, who after their arrival in the autumn of 1940 had permitted a Vichy French administration of the country to remain formally in place, had ousted and interned that administration overnight on 9 March 1945, replacing it with a puppet Vietnamese government directly responsive to Japanese designs. Meanwhile, Free French representatives at the combined allied headquarters at Kunming in China and at Kandy in Ceylon had been doing what they could to promote and facilitate France's return to Southeast Asia.

When the Japanese surrender did come in mid-August 1945, none of these currents of often conflicting forces immediately prevailed. It was, rather, Ho Chi Minh who, just a few days after the American atomic bomb drop on Nagasaki (and therefore before Japan's surrender),

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ordered a general insurrection and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) as the government of a nation that was to comprise Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, the three areas making up both the traditional and the future Vietnam. The vehicle for this insurrection was a united front of Vietnamese nationalist parties established in 1941 with the name Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, or "League for the Independence of Vietnam," which became popularly known as the Viet Minh. Ho and his revolutionary Communists manipulated the shifting components of the League virtually at will, both then and later. The Viet Minh League had received support and supplies from the Americans during the war because they believed that Ho wanted to fight the Japanese, but, in fact, the "Vietminh never dreamed of sacrificing its precious troops in the hopeless and ultimately unnecessary task of fighting the Japanese." Now, during the critical period just before and after Japan's capitulation, the Japanese in Indochina gave support and supplies to the Viet Minh League because they believed, quite rightly, that Ho wanted to execute a lightning-like power play so that he could "receive the Allies, and in particular the French, as head of an entrenched government...."¹

In Hanoi in the Tonkin north, which was the seat of the DRV, events proceeded much as Ho wanted. First the Japanese and, beginning in mid-September 1945, the Chinese dealt with Ho's apparatus as the de facto authority, while frustrating all efforts by the senior French representative in Tonkin, Jean Sainteny, and his small team to assert the rights of France. It took six months of tortuous French negotiations with both the Chinese and Ho Chi Minh before the Chinese agreed to go home and Ho agreed on 6 March 1946 to permit specific numbers of French troops to enter Tonkin for a limited period in return for French de facto recognition of the DRV "as a free state

1. Quoted phrases are from Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 1:292 and 299.

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having its own government, its parliament, its army and its finances, forming a part of the Indochinese Federation and of the French Union."² This March agreement at Hanoi resulted in a theoretical cease-fire with a view to definitive government-level negotiations on the future status of Vietnam. The cease-fire proved only sporadically effective, and the high-level negotiations, which took place that spring and summer, failed to resolve anything substantial.

At Saigon in the Cochin-Chinese south, events proceeded much differently. The Viet Minh had not built as firm a base in Cochin-China as in Tonkin (and, to a lesser extent, in Annam), and its regional governing body, the Committee of the South, had not really taken hold before the British arrived in early September. Also, the British commander favored and promoted a quick turnover to the French, who in early October began disembarking elements of their 2nd Armored and 9th Colonial Infantry Divisions under the command of General Jean Leclerc, the liberator of Paris a year earlier. Almost at once French forces began moving into the countryside to clear it of Viet Minh, while in Saigon the new High Commissioner, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, went about assembling a civilian administration.³

2. In France, 1945-54

The confusing pattern of the Fourth Republic's crazy-quilt politics was nowhere more manifest than in its policy toward the war in Indochina. From 1945 to 1947, when genuine French concessions to Vietnamese nationalism just might have produced a reasonably satisfactory

2. Article 1 of Sainteny-Ho Chi Minh accord of 6 March 1946, reproduced in Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquée: Indochine 1945-1947 (Paris: Librairie Fayard, 1967), pp. 199-200. A detailed first-hand account of the negotiations with the Chinese at Chungking is that of the senior French military representative, General Raoul Salan, in his Memoires: Fin d'un Empire (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1970), 1:258-311.

3. Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (California: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 106-21; Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 128-34.

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compromise solution,⁴ two of the three political parties--the Socialists and the Communists--in the tripartite governing coalition in Paris were supposedly "anti-colonial," but the Communists were immobilized by an ambiguous party line out of Moscow, while the Socialists proved vacillating, opportunistic, and ineffectual. Besides, during those two critical postwar years, the nation was agonizing its way toward the adoption of a new constitution and toward the concept of a French Union--a prerequisite for any proposals to associate an autonomous or independent Vietnam with France. "Apathetic" is probably the best single word to describe the attitude of both politicians and population toward the war during its first few years; the fighting was, after all, being done by regulars (conscripts never were sent to the area), most of whom came from other parts of the empire.⁵ As time went on, however, the economic consequences of the war began to hit home, and a strong antiwar sentiment that had begun in intellectual and journalistic circles soon spread to trend-sniffing political combinations and finally to parts of the general public. By the early 1950s the war had come to be regarded by increasing numbers of Frenchmen as "a bottomless pit, an endless adventure, an absurd sacrifice."⁶

4. This is the point of the title of Jean Sainteny's book, Histoire d'une Paix Manquée [The story of a peace that failed].

5. As one senior officer later expressed the essence of French opinion: "If men are fighting in Indochina, it is 'because they are willing to do so', because they 'have chosen a military career.' This expeditionary corps does not implicate France in the war." He then added, "Why look elsewhere for [explanations of the] neglect from which the corps suffered so much, why not see in that fact the primary assumption of the campaigns of denigration and abuse that were directed against it?" Colonel Nemo, "La Guerre dans le milieu social," Revue de Défense Nationale, vol. 22 (1956), p. 609.

6. Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, La Fin d'une Guerre (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960), p. 42, in a chapter entitled "Une lueur au bout du tunnel" [A light at the end of the tunnel].

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On the resources side, France could ill afford the drain of an Indochina war while, along with the rest of Western Europe, it was struggling to recover from World War II. A few general assessments are worth citing. In the autumn of 1952, President Vincent Auriol stated that the war had cost twice the amount of Marshall Plan aid to France up to that point. A 1965 estimate put the cost of the entire 1945-54 war at \$7 billion for the French and more than \$4 billion additional in US aid. A little earlier, Bernard Fall had written that "the war had cost [France] twice as much as America had pumped into the French economy during this period, and ten times the value of all French investments in Indochina."⁷ The slaughter of human resources reached a total of about 75,000 killed or missing by 1954, of which about 20,000 were Frenchmen, 13,000 Foreign Legionnaires, 15,000 North African colonials, and 27,000 locally enlisted Indo-Chinese; the estimates for wounded were about three times those figures.⁸

The French military eventually came to believe that the feckless self-seeking of gutless politicians without policies had betrayed not only a bleeding army but the pays réel--an expression that had much the same connotation as "silent majority" does today. However, this stab-in-the-back syndrome was not clear during the early stages of the war in the late 1940s. At that time French military general staffs, schools, and publications were for the most part absorbed in studying the lessons of a World War II in which France's role had been marginal

7. Auriol statement from Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 297. The 1965 estimate was by Anthony S. Bouscaren, quoted in Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:1072. Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 223.

8. Various sources cited in Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:1071. These figures help correct the impression that France fought in Indochina almost exclusively with foreign "mercenaries." On the basis of equivalent casualties per capita, the 20,000 figure for metropolitan France itself would translate into approximately 100,000 US dead in Vietnam.

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and humiliating, and in trying to associate French military capabilities with those of the United States and Britain in postwar West European defense. Only gradually did French officers begin to think that perhaps their experience in Indochina would prove more germane to the likely conflicts of the future than hideously destructive nuclear weapons no one would ever use, more germane, even, than the aberration that was the limited conventional war in Korea.

3. In Indochina, 1945-54

Several major factors in Indochina strongly conditioned the course of the French war there. First was the difference between Cochinchina in the south and Tonkin in the north--with Annam, in the center, partaking of a little of both and largely escaping the direct influence of any central authority. The Cochinchinese were, like most southerners everywhere, easy going and pleasure loving, and their capital of Saigon was a kind of Southeast Asian New Orleans. The Tonkinese, less well endowed with rich soil to work, were more industrious and industrialized than the Cochinchinese; their "regional character" tended to a harshly rational outlook quite congenial to Marxist thought, and their capital of Hanoi, with its university, lycées, and research institutes, was a kind of Southeast Asian Boston. Also, Cochinchina had always been administered as a straight-out colony of France, whereas Tonkin and Annam had been protectorates and enjoyed somewhat greater autonomy in internal affairs. Most important of all, the war in the south and the war in the north were almost entirely different. The "big war" of major military units took place and was lost in the north; the "other war" of pacification also failed overall, but in the south it enjoyed some considerable successes, whereas in the north it never really took hold.

A second factor was the complexity of divisions among both the French and the Vietnamese. Official French policy eventually rallied behind the "Bao Dai solution" of supporting a Vietnamese government headed by the ex-emperor as a nationalist alternative to the Viet Minh, but before and even after the belated jelling of that policy,

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influential French groups were actively pushing other policies that ranged from a negotiated peace with the Viet Minh all the way to a reversion to the unadulterated colonialism of the good old days. Doctrinal differences among French military men often centered on whether to emphasize conventional operations against Viet Minh combat forces or tache d'huile ("oil spot") pacification to restore and maintain at village level a sense of personal security and well being that would immunize the people against the Viet Minh's blandishments. On the Vietnamese side, the Viet Minh was not the only nationalist party or group, and the French worked hard at trying to spread the umbrella of the Bao Dai solution so as to attract as many of these non-Viet Minh nationalists as possible. Not too successful in these attempts, the French had better luck with the non-Vietnamese ethnic groups, such as the Thai in the north and the Moi in the south-central regions, and with the religious and other sects or cults, such as the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen in the south and the Catholics everywhere.

The third factor, which had generated the Bao Dai solution, was the need for the French to diminish their image as white imperialists seeking to reimpose an exploitative colonial rule. There were, to be sure, some greedy business and financial interests and some parasitical bureaucrats who longed for nothing more than a master-servant relationship between France and Vietnam, but a great many Frenchmen, particularly military men whose prewar Indochina service had been anything but soft and cushy, had come to love the country and to hope for the voluntary association of an autonomous Vietnam with France.⁹ For this to have any chance of coming about, it was clearly necessary that

9. Jean Sainteny observes that the most "gung ho" officers in Indochina during the first year or two were those with Vichy antecedents or at least without combat records in Free French units. Those who had such records, like General Leclerc himself, felt no such purgative compulsions and often expressed and acted upon remarkably liberal views toward Vietnamese nationalist aspirations. (Author's interview with Sainteny in Paris, 4 June 1971.)

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an authentic and viable Vietnamese administration, friendly to France, be constituted as an independent entity and be perceived as such by the Vietnamese people. Only such a government could provide the effort and command the loyalty required to overcome Viet Minh implantation in the countryside; French "fish" could not swim in a Vietnamese "sea," certainly not by themselves.

The fourth factor was the familiar shortcoming of too little too late, of the learning process lagging behind the press of events and developments. It took two years to reach agreement on a Bao Dai solution, which was essential in principle even if Bao Dai turned out to be the wrong man for it. It took two more years for that solution to take concrete form, and two years after that to make any progress toward the creation of a Vietnamese national army to fight and pacify alongside the French.¹⁰

Between 1946 and 1950 the course of pacification in Cochinchina was fairly substantial, but then the intensification of military operations in Tonkin resulted in the transfer of numbers of French troops from pacification duty in the south to combat duty in the north. The security of the Cochinchinese countryside soon began to deteriorate, without any compensatory lasting improvement in the main-force "big war" up north. What might have closed this open loop was a massive infusion of additional forces from outside Indochina, but no French government of the time was about to send conscripted French boys to die in an Asian war. When this became clear, the war was as good as lost, two or even three years before Dien Bien Phu.

4. International, 1945-54

Until the onset of the cold war in 1947-48, the war in Indochina seemed a somewhat peripheral affair on the world stage, although US

10. As late as January 1952, "only one division had been formed, and that was assigned to the defense of the Crown Domains, while the remaining three divisions, without staff, artillery, engineers, and communications sections, consisted merely of a mosaic of infantry battalions." (Lancaster, Emancipation of French Indochina, pp. 247-48.)

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governmental and public opinion generally tended to view it idealistically as the struggle of an oppressed people yearning to be freed from exploitation by anachronistic colonial masters. The Marshall Plan and the preparatory steps leading to NATO in 1947-48 served to highlight the emergence of France as an almost-equal member of the US-British-French major defense triumvirate; at the same time, the general intensification of cold war perspectives lent greater credibility to the French thesis that what they were fighting in Indochina was one virulent form of the monolithic Communist disease that was threatening the entire "free world."

This French argument about the oneness of malevolent communism became much more persuasive after China went "red" in early 1949, and, a year and a half later, began killing American boys in Korea.¹¹ It was therefore not especially surprising when US dollar aid to French forces in Indochina increased from \$23 million for the year ending June 1950 to a decision five months later "to underwrite the French war effort to the tune of between \$300 million and \$400 million, representing a two-year program of aid to French and French Union forces." And as the two wars ground on, one in Northeast and the other in Southeast Asia, the friends and allies of France perceived the war in Indochina less and less as a colonial affair and more and more as part of the anti-Communist crusade. The earlier \$300 to \$400 million grant from the United States, "estimated in June 1952 to represent 33 percent of the total French expenditure, was further increased during the latter half of the year to cover some 40 percent

11. As a former commander in chief of the French Expeditionary Corps wrote in the winter of 1950-51: "Without France, the country [Indochina] would fall to the practitioners of an ideology opposed to the forms of civilization we are charged with promoting or protecting around the world. The door would open to a spread of the disease into Siam, Burma, Malaysia, perhaps also India.... It is therefore no longer a question in Indochina of a colonial war, but actually of a contemporary war in which, with the help and protection of France, the Associated States are struggling for their independence against tyranny." (General Jean-Etienne Valluy, "La Guerre en Indochine," Revue Militaire d'Information, 25 February 1951, p. 8.)

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of the total cost of the war...." A year or so later this figure had risen to 70 percent, and "finally, not long before the Geneva conference, the American government undertook to underwrite the entire cost of the war, allocating \$1,175 million for that purpose."¹²

However, the French failed to "win" their war, and it was not long before this failure caused a reversion of international political opinion to the earlier position that the war had, after all, been only a colonial last stand foredoomed to fail. Within the international military network, and especially in the US military establishment, there was little inclination to study the complexities of a war that "our side" had lost.

B. MAJOR MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. In the South

When General Leclerc moved his armor and colonial infantry into the Cochinchinese countryside to begin mopping up the Viet Minh in October 1945, he predicted the job would take four weeks. It actually required about four months, during which the French forces captured one town after another without ever engaging in real battle with the guerrillas, who simply melted away into the bush, implementing a "scorched earth" strategy as they did so.¹³ At the end of that time, "much of what was still called Cochinchina was in French hands--to the extent of 100 yards on either side of all major roads."¹⁴ In a

12. Quotations from Lancaster, Emancipation of French Indochina, pp. 416-17. The final joint communiqué of a high-level Franco-American meeting in Washington in the middle of 1952 stated that the war in Indochina was "an integral part of the world-wide resistance by the Free Nations to Communist attempts at conquest and subversion." (Department of State Bulletin, 30 June 1952, p. 1010, quoted in Lancaster, p. 251.) An account that cites classified US policy documents to illustrate this evolution of perspectives on the Indochina war appeared in the Washington Post, 3 July 1971, pp. 1 and 11.

13. Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), pp. 163-66. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 1:335-37.

14. Fall, Two Viet-Nams, p. 107.

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press conference on 5 February 1946, Leclerc said, "The pacification of Cochinchina and southern Annam is all over."¹⁵

At that period the word "pacification" in French often connoted simply a hammering into submission, rather than the complex combination of security and development that it later came to connote, but even in the primitive sense the south had not really been pacified. French control was largely confined to the major provincial towns; in the smaller towns, in the villages, and throughout the countryside, the Viet Minh dominated the population. To move into substantial pacification in the broader sense, "it was not 35,000 men (the number Leclerc then had available) that were required, but 100,000, and Cochinchina was not the only task."¹⁶ Indeed it was not, for a month later Leclerc had to embark about half his troops for Haiphong and "occupation" duty in the north in accordance with the terms of the Sainteny-Ho Chi Minh agreement of 6 March 1946.

Thereafter in the south, the French did try to engage in a campaign of true pacification, as the concept is understood today. They enjoyed few brilliant successes, but they were breaking new ground, learning from their mistakes as they went along. The demands of the "big war" up north, which began in late 1946, meant that down south the pacification effort had to make do with what was on hand or could be made readily available. In practice this required considerable reliance on Vietnamese auxiliary troops of one kind or another--on the fuedal-like forces raised by the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, and on the Catholic brigades raised by the 29-year old half-caste, Colonel Jean Leroy.¹⁷ Leroy's understanding of what France was up against comes through vividly in the following passage:

15. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 176.

16. Ibid., p. 167.

17. The Cao Dai provided about 15,000 men in organized units, the Hoa Hao about 12,500, and the Catholics about 5,000. An account of these forces is in A. M. Savani, Visages et Images du Sud-Vietnam (no publisher or date, but known to have been published in Saigon in late 1953 or early 1954), pp. 95-137.

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At the War College my instructors would later talk to me about Clausewitz and about theories of all-out war. How overtaken by events in Asia that instruction had already become, in Asia where the war reached into every village and every straw hut, where everyone was immersed in it: the woman who hid grenades under the rice in her carrying baskets and the 12 year old child who worked as an informer.

It was not a matter of capturing terrain, troops, or towns, but rather involved every being, everything that lived and moved.¹⁸

The prime task in Cochinchina was thus far from a conventional military one. The senior French commander there from 1947 to 1949 put it this way in one of the first seriously professional articles on the war: "The military man in Cochinchina must be, above all, a pacifier. He must restore confidence, little by little, among the people. Consequently, we advance only very slowly and only in those areas where we are sure of being able to protect the population effectively."¹⁹ This was indeed pacification, and the discussion of it belongs in a subsequent section of this paper.

2. In the North

In November and December 1946 the uneasy modus vivendi between the French and the DRV that had eventually followed the Ho-Sainteny agreement earlier in the year definitively broke down in Tonkin, and the war began in earnest. By March 1947, French troops had occupied Hanoi, Haiphong, Hue, and almost all the other towns of any size in Tonkin and northern Annam; they also controlled many of the lines of communication between those towns. However, "the Vietminh Army, most of which had not been engaged in any fighting, was largely intact. It had been moved, before the fighting broke out, into the so-called

18. Jean Leroy, Un Homme dans la Rizière (Paris: Editions de Paris, 1955), p. 117.

19. General Pierre Boyer de la Tour, "Evolution de la Pacification au Sud Viet-Nam," Revue Militaire d'Information, November 1949, p. 11.

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Viet Bac, the mountainous region north of Hanoi...."²⁰ Seven years of war lay ahead, but the territory under French control never became greater than it was after this initial sweep in the north.

Late in 1947 the French Expeditionary Corps of 30,000 pushed into, around, and beyond the Viet Bac with the mission of wiping out the Viet Minh forces there. Although it did initially occupy several important but abandoned towns, the corps failed to engage its enemy, discovered that it was a prisoner of the roads its modern equipment required, and eventually became badly overextended and vulnerable to the Viet Minh's guerrilla hit-and-run strikes against its lines of communication, strikes that forced it to withdraw back to the Red River Delta around Hanoi in early 1948. A new strategy followed, one that called for cutting off the Viet Minh forces in the Viet Bac from other Viet Minh regions by bringing those other regions under French control. Great efforts toward this end were made throughout 1948 and 1949, but "the more territory the French tried to occupy, the less effectively they controlled what they already had." Hundreds of small actions took place, but "far from extending their hold on Tonkin ... [their feeble] grip on it became even weaker."²¹

The Viet Minh forces had by 1950 reached a fairly advanced stage of organization and training under their commander, Vo Nguyen Giap. Beginning in the spring and continuing until year-end, Giap used battalion-size regular units in successive attacks on French garrisons and outposts all along the Chinese border. The result was that "when the smoke cleared, the French had suffered their greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm had died at Quebec.... By January 1, 1951, the French had lost control of all of north Viet-Nam to the north of the Red River and were now desperately digging in to hold on to ... the Red River delta."²²

20. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:736. An excellent summary of the military operations of the Indochina war is given on pp. 736-63 and 787-96 of this volume, although maps are lacking.

21. Ibid., pp. 747-48.

22. Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy, 3rd rev. ed. (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Telegraph Press, 1963), p. 30.

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One event and one circumstance then intervened to transform 1951 into a year of some hope for France. The event was the arrival in Indochina in mid-December 1950 of a new commander in chief, the brilliant and inspiring General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. The circumstance was that Giap, elated by his recent victories, thought he could now graduate to a war of movement and large-scale (division size) attacks. Three such attacks failed badly against de Lattre's troops during the first half of 1951. Thereafter, the overall picture returned essentially to the stalemate characteristic of 1948-49. Meanwhile, de Lattre concentrated on constructing a line of concrete fortifications around the delta, on trying to speed up the formation of a Vietnamese national army, and on seeking massive military aid from Washington.

By late 1952 de Lattre was dead of cancer, and the Viet Minh had decided on the strategy that was to bring it victory--an attack across the top of the Indochinese peninsula. "The French would find it almost impossible to use heavy equipment; their air force would be fighting at maximum range against troops hidden under a thick canopy of trees; and the Viet-Minh could make fullest use of its inherent quality of fast cross-country movement, rapid concentration from dispersed points of departure, and hit-and-run ambushing of troops unfamiliar with jungle fighting."²³ Giap struck across the Thai country of Tonkin into Laos, refusing to be sidetracked by diversionary French attacks out of their bastion in the delta. In early 1953 he withdrew into the Thai country, then in April moved back into Laos. "By the end of 1953, a military situation had developed whereby the French efforts to win the battle for Laos were leading up to a French defeat in the Indochina War."²⁴ Speeding things along were the massive shipments of Chinese aid--trucks, heavy artillery, and antiaircraft guns--that began to bolster Giap's forces after the signing of the Korean Armistice in July 1953. After awhile, everything came to a

23. Ibid., p. 60.

24. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:788.

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sharp focus in and around a town whose name meant "seat of the border country administration": Dien Bien Phu.

C. PACIFICATION IN THE SOUTH**1. Overview**

Beginning in the early spring of 1946, the French in Cochinchina set out to achieve some political area control that would supplement the complex of watch towers and patrols designed to maintain their military axes of communication. The guiding principle was that of the oil spot, which called for the establishment of military security and public confidence in those areas least infested with Viet Minh before expanding control gradually into areas progressively more infested. The oil-spot technique, along with the idea of a program of accompanying pacification (in the modern sense), had been developed by French soldiers-administrators beginning in the late nineteenth century, notably by the future Marshals Gallieni and Lyautey in Indochina, Madagascar, and North Africa. It called for establishing a chain, then a network of fortified posts to serve as nuclei for coordinated civil-military actions that would "attract" the people as well as "repress" the armed opposition, with patrols between posts maintaining the integrity of the whole.

As control was extended, villages in the relatively secure zones were armed and made responsible for their own defense; concurrently, natives were organized into auxiliary Army units, so that a large part of the population became committed to the French cause.

The military phase of occupation, or pacification, was prepared and accompanied by political action.... As the Army established control, it imposed its administration, which extended from the purely military realm of defense to the maintenance of roads, the building of schools and medical centers, the collecting of taxes, and the handing down of justice....

For the smooth progress of pacification, close cooperation between civil and military authority was obviously essential. The best way to insure this ... was to create unity of command, placing military and

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administrative responsibility in the same hands, not only at the summit of the official hierarchy but on lower levels as well.²⁵

This classical system of establishing fortified fixed posts was at the heart of the French pacification of Cochinchina in the late 1940s, but it was elaborated by adding the concept of quadrillage and ratissage. Quadrillage is "the splitting-up into small squares, or 'gridding', of the countryside, with each being carefully 'raked over' (the ratissage) by troops thoroughly familiar with the area or guided by experts who know the area well."²⁶ The classical system of the great marshals was also modified in other ways. For example, the constant shortage of troops meant fewer posts with fewer men and weapons than necessary even to defend themselves properly, so wherever possible the command organized mobile forces that could reinforce beleaguered posts in time to turn back the attackers. All of this worked out fairly well until about 1950, thanks in considerable part to the anti-Viet Minh sects and their armed contingents. With the onset of Giap's Tonkin offensive beginning early in that year, the high command assigned highest priority to the "big war" up north. Thereafter, security in the Cochinchinese countryside slowly deteriorated, since the departure to the north of French and auxiliary Vietnamese armed units left the job more and more to the sects, which were often hard to handle and were not inclined to serve outside their home provinces.

Toward the end of the relatively successful 1946-50 period of Cochinchinese pacification, a French general in that region defined in one of his reports some criteria of pacification that seem to bridge the years from the past of Gallieni and Lyautey to the future of the French in Algeria--and of the Americans in Vietnam. The key sentence read as follows:

25. Peter Paret, French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 104-105. For sources of the seminal literature on pacification written by Gallieni, Lyautey, and others beginning at the turn of the century, see pp. 151-52.

26. Fall, Two Viet-Nams, p. 107.

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For a province to be considered pacified, it is necessary for the authority of the legal government to manifest itself by the restoration of normal political institutions, for the clearing of the area to have been conducted by the people themselves, and, finally, for the centers of population to have organized self-defense units.²⁷

2. Evolution of Policies 1946-50

Pacification in Cochinchina during its period of relative success from 1946 to 1950 went forward under three commanders of the F.T.S.V. (Forces Terrestres Sud-Vietnam, the "Ground Forces in South Vietnam"): General Nyo from early 1946 until mid-1947, General de la Tour until mid-1949, and General Chanson thereafter. During the research for this paper, the senior members of the directorate of the Service Historique de l'Armée at the Château de Vincennes on the outskirts of Paris read from and explained the annual pacification directives of those F.T.S.V. commanders, thus providing very useful information without contravening the letter of the inflexible "50-year rule" that withholds military records from release to scholars and the public. Interesting as these directives are, their main value is as a "weather vane" to indicate the perspectives that opened up as time went by, and so the treatment of the directives here will be quite summary.

The year 1946 was one of searching for some answers. The directives on pacification divided the recommended efforts into methods of "repression" and methods of "attraction," clearly in the Gallieni-Lyautey tradition. The "repression" consisted of anti-Viet Minh

27. This is attributed to "General X" in A Translation from the French: Lessons of the War in Indochina, RAND Corporation Memorandum RM-5721-PR (Santa Monica, 1967), p. 110. Translated by V. J. Croizat (Col., USMC, Ret.), this was a "lessons learned" volume prepared and issued as an official document by the Commander in Chief, French Forces, Indochina, in May 1955. (Hereafter referred to as Official Indochina Lessons.) The chapter entitled "Pacification" covers only 4½ pages in this bulky document of over 400 pages. As will be seen, the most intensive, interesting, and influential reflections on pacification in Indochina were published by individual authors, both privately and in semi-official military journals.

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measures, largely military in nature, designed first to secure axes of communication and then to move toward area control through cloisonnement ("partitioning off"), a process that combined quad-rillage and ratissage and that was to proceed via the oil-spot technique, with pacification teams following in the wake of the military units as they pressed outward. The "attraction" was, in effect, pacification proper. It was to proceed slowly, village by village, restoring security and confidence and installing or re-installing local administrations that would cooperate in the struggle against the Viet Minh. Troops were to avoid all unjust and "excessive" conduct toward the population.

With the arrival of General de la Tour as commander of the F.T.S.V. in July 1947, the pacification directives became more explicit. That year there were three developments in the tenor of those directives worthy of note. First, the directives stressed strongly and provided for the closest civil-military coordination from the highest level in Saigon all the way down to the humblest villages in the paddy country, but with Franco-Vietnamese civil authority charged with Viet Minh political purging (called Phung Hoang/Phoenix twenty years later) and rallying (from the French word rallier, meaning "to win over"--called Chieu Hoi twenty years later). Second, the directives provided for the creation of a Vietnamese Garde Républicaine de Cochinchine, which was gradually to make possible the withdrawal of French units from pacification duty (in effect, one of the first manifestations of what was to be called "Vietnamization" twenty-odd years later). And third, the directives ordered that the fortified posts in different regions and provinces should receive special guidance when necessary to reflect the differing conditions of the areas in which they were located.

In 1948 the policy directives expressed the growing belief that pacification in Cochin-China was taking hold. The emphasis now was on still finer adaptations of techniques to particular areas and cases, and on constant solicitude for the sensibilities of the people so as to help convert the undecided among them. The directives also reflected some concern over improving when possible the conduct of

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the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao armed formations, valuable though they had proved on the whole; thenceforth, sect partisans were to be recruited into either the regular French forces or the Garde Républicaine.²⁸

In 1949-50 the high command in the south decided that it had become possible to collate some pacification norms, or lessons, for the period up until then, and so incorporated several into its basic directives:

- (a) Armed force must never become an end in itself; it is only a means for achieving pacification.
- (b) Neither political nor military effort can do the pacification job by itself.
- (c) The military man must act primarily as a pacifier, only occasionally as a soldier.
- (d) The political and military arms must be very closely coordinated, and the best way to accomplish this is by unifying the political and military authority at all levels.
- (e) The Vietnamese themselves must play an increasingly greater role in all pacification activities.

3. Example

Perhaps the most successful single pacification operation in Cochin-China was that directed by the half-Vietnamese Jean Leroy, in what is now the province of Kien Hoa. Although his methods were often arbitrary and even merciless, this youngest colonel in the French army took only one year to expand the controlled area of Kien Hoa "from 46,000 hectares (3/10 of the province) to 123,000 hectares (8/10 of the province), which was in striking contrast to the other areas of Indochina."²⁹ The forces at his disposal were locally recruited Vietnamese, mostly Catholic, organized into 60-man "brigades" called U.M.D.C.'s, the French initials signifying Mobile Units for the Defense of Christendom.

28. To add Vietnamese individuals or small units into larger French formations was to jaunir those formations--i.e., to "yellow" them. The French more or less had to put up with the feudalistic conduct of the sect forces, which they found a little anarchistic and pillage prone.

29. "Summary of Pacification of South Vietnam," MACCORDS Fact Sheet, 31 August 1967.

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Leroy's explanation of his method included the following:

I divided my sector into a given number of zones that took account of [the terrain]....

Firmly installed in one pacified zone, I would push my units into the next compartment. Slowly, with many precautions, I would advance in oil-spot fashion toward the areas where the [Viet Minh] were most solidly entrenched.

Pacification as such would occur in three phases. First phase: my U.M.D.C. would occupy an area and mop up pockets of enemy resistance, then they would set themselves up in the villages. My men knew they were to stay there, [and] very quickly the people understood that this time they would be protected.

Then, according to Leroy, a second phase of real pacification would begin in which he would reconstitute in every village a council of notables, through whom he would recruit local self-defense militias. There followed a third and final phase consisting of such peaceful activities as reopening or rebuilding schools, establishing infirmaries and maternity hospitals, and organizing group activities. "Once the self-defense militias were on hand and the authority of the notables well established, I would send my U.M.D.C.'s a little farther on."³⁰

4. Assessment

Idyllic outcomes such as Leroy's were not general, and even in Kien Hoa the situation regressed after his departure in 1952. The usual case was that after an area had been allegedly pacified, it continued to be threatened by Viet Minh terroristic activity, which required troops to try to contain it. As for those troops, always too few, "they would patrol for days, sometimes for weeks ... in pursuit of guerrillas ... sometimes successfully, which made them think the sector was pacified. They were then transferred elsewhere, where they were needed. It was the moment the Viet-Minh had been waiting for ... to inflict terrible reprisals on those who had cooperated against them."³¹

30. Leroy, Un Homme dans la Rizière, pp. 147-49.

31. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 323.

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Besides, the troops did not always conduct themselves in accordance with the enlightened directives of the generals commanding the F.T.S.V. Young, green, confused, nervous, and exhausted, "they all too often act and react brutally and blindly.... And when, unfortunately, the victim of terrorists is a French soldier, the reprisals are all too often collective. The nearest village gets ransacked, plundered, sometimes burned. The people scatter into the countryside."³² If, as sometimes happened, this "nearest village" happened to be well on the way to an orderly pacification, the effect can well be imagined. The situation was not always or everywhere so black, of course. In fact, what was typical of pacification in the south was its uneven character in detail--good in some areas, not so good in others, while doing on the whole rather well until 1950, and doing on the whole not as well after 1950.

Nevertheless, the more strictly security aspects of Cochinese pacification continued, except in a few areas, to be quite good even after 1950, when the manpower and resource requirements of the "big war" in the north began to increase. As late as 1953, practically all major roads and many secondary roads were safe to travel by day, while Saigon itself was virtually entirely safe for circulation both day and night.³³

Probably the most disturbing feature in the entire process of Cochinese pacification was the way the French followed up in the areas where pacification achieved its greatest initial successes, those areas in which it became possible to introduce an anti-Viet Minh political administration. The people of the villages and hamlets, many of whom had been secretly happy at first to see a return to law and order, peace and security, were soon disillusioned when the French

32. Ibid., p. 252.

33. Interviews in Paris on 9 and 10 June 1971 with Messieurs Jean Letourneau and Claude Cheysson. In 1952-53, Letourneau was the high commissioner of France in Indochina, and Cheysson was senior French adviser to Bao Dai's prime minister of that time, Nguyen Van Tam.

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began reintroducing many of the very same colonial administrators and their Vietnamese yes-men who had served there before 1945 and whose "first concern ... was all too often to re-establish their prestige on the same premises where they had lost it ... earlier." These functionaries failed to understand the enormously important changes that had since taken place in the psychological environment, and so, "by way of liberation, what the Cochinese actually saw was the return of the Old Order and of those hated individuals 'who had plenty of things on their minds'."³⁴

At the highest levels in Saigon the situation tended to be the same. A French parliamentary mission of inquiry that visited Indochina in 1953 submitted a report that included this stricture:

It is no longer up to us to govern, but to advise.... Instead of ... looking for inspiration in the village and in the ricefield, instead of informing themselves and winning the confidence of the most humble people, in order to deprive the rebels of their best weapon, the Norodom Palace clique has allowed itself the luxury of administering à la française and of reigning over a country where revolution is smoldering.³⁵

What was really needed to follow through with effective pacification all the way was full Vietnamese participation and a viable Vietnamese authority at all levels of the effort: "a strong people's political force that might perhaps have been able, village by village and hamlet by hamlet and through 'national' means, to identify, isolate, and neutralize (or bring back) the 'prodigal sons'.... But because this was [the way] to Vietnamese independence, Paris and its representatives refused to adopt it...."³⁶

34. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 246.

35. Quoted in Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 283.

36. Devillers and Lacouture, La Fin d'une Guerre, p. 23.

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UNCLASSIFIED**D. PACIFICATION IN THE NORTH****1. Overview**

The most important single fact about pacification activities in Tonkin and Annam, or northern and central Vietnam, is that they did not accomplish very much. There were many reasons for this, some of which have already been suggested. Among them were (a) the head start the Viet Minh had up north--six months before any French troops arrived in March 1946 and nine months after that before the fighting began; (b) the far lesser role played up north by pro-French (or anti-Viet Minh) religious and ethnic minorities; (c) the relative lack of a tradition of "Frenchness" in the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam, as compared with the colony of Cochinchina; (d) the plain circumstance that Giap's main force units were concentrated in the north, which either forced or tempted the French to seek "set-piece battles" to supplement their resource-consuming static defense of the Red River Delta, which they considered essential.

That delta defense of the "de Lattre line" eventually tied down between 80,000 and 100,000 troops in over 900 forts, but even so the Viet Minh were able to infiltrate inside the line 30,000 to 40,000 troops, including three regular regiments and many smaller semi-regular and militia units. By 1953, "the Viet Minh were estimated to control either completely or partially 5,000 out of the 7,000 villages in the deltaic plain."³⁷ As expressed by a senior naval officer in an article that attacked the concept of a static delta defense punctuated by offensive sorties, "We were in the enemy's back yard, but at the same time he was in ours.... We thought we were holding ground, but actually we held nothing."³⁸

37. Lancaster, Emancipation of French Indochina, p. 265; other estimates are from Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:1038, and Fall, Street Without Joy, p. 177.

38. Admiral Castex, "Quelques Aspects Stratégiques de la Guerre d'Indochine," Revue de Défense Nationale, May 1955, p. 523.

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One wonders, of course, how pacification could receive any attention under such circumstances. When General Henri Navarre succeeded General Raoul Salan as commander-in-chief in early 1953, what he wanted to do was transfer some of his regular forces from static delta duty to duty as a mobile "battle corps" for fighting Giap's main forces. He believed that any such transferred troops would have to be replaced by other troops, even if the latter were of lower quality--as they would be if he was able to succeed in accelerating the development of the Vietnamese national army. This long chain of "ifs" was spelled out as follows:

The only satisfactory way [of handling such a replacement of regulars by local forces] would consist of expelling from an area the Vietminh regular and regional forces, of destroying their bases, and, once the area was cleaned out, but only then, of maintaining there only regular or auxiliary troops of lower quality. "Pacification" operations would therefore have to precede any important displacements. Both time and the wherewithal were necessary.³⁹

As things turned out, neither time nor the wherewithal was available, but what commands attention in this passage is General Navarre's equating pacification with nothing more than expelling, destroying, and cleaning out. It is surely a significant indication of how far into the background pacification had receded during the course of the "big war" up north.

2. Practices and Examples

Some activities in Tonkin and Annam did suggest a kind of pacification. Wherever the tricolor flew, French soldiers-administrators had to concern themselves with trying to see that the people were able to go about their business as free as possible from interference by the Viet Minh. For example, before the French forts on the

39. General Henri Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1957), p. 76.

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Chinese frontier were wiped out by Giap's battalions in 1950, a French lieutenant or captain in that region would typically act as chief of a chau ("district") comprising 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants living in 25 to 30 villages, the defense of which was provided by a force of 700-odd men, 80 percent native, centered around 10 fortified posts or so. Administration of the chau by the lieutenant or captain was direct until 1949; from then until the Viet Minh overran the region in the following year, the French administrator was an advisor to the village chief and council of notables. Some people's self-defense units were organized, some population relocation took place, and Viet Minh harassment was held down; so the situation did have an elementary flavor of de facto pacification, even though no pacification planning as such ever issued.⁴⁰

Most French military staffs at higher levels had a section in charge of civil affairs, but usually only as those affairs bore on the conduct of active operations. More potentially effective in actual pacification were the Mobile Administrative Groups for Operations (GAMOs). The GAMOs were Vietnamese pacification teams whose mission was to move into an area after military units had succeeded in occupying it. First organized in Tonkin during 1951, one of their first major commitments occurred in early 1952, when the French engaged in some intensive operations against Viet Minh who had infiltrated behind

40. Information from interview in Paris on 9 June 1971 with M. Oliver Dussaix, who from 1949 until 1950 was the lieutenant in charge of chau On in the phu ("province") of Lang Son. Dussaix says that only the promise that France would not abandon them kept his natives loyal and cooperative. He therefore believes that the key to successful pacification is to "dig in and don't leave." This view is strongly confirmed by the following statement from Official Indochina Lessons: "'Nothing cost our forces more in Indochina than our abandonment of certain populated areas because our plans had changed or because our operations were beyond our means.' In this connection, the need to evacuate the uplands of the Northeast at the end of 1950 had grave consequences, for it alienated certain minorities." (Page 111; interior quotation attributed to the commander of a subsector in the north.)

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the de Lattre line in the Red River Delta.⁴¹ The passage below recounts the typical sequence that followed:

The pacification was preceded by a military occupation of the area, which was then surrounded and isolated from contact with neighboring villages, while a [GAMO] of Vietnamese technicians and specialists, under the protection of militia troops, completed a security check of the population, appointed local administrators, provided essential relief, restored internal communications, and reopened markets.

Although the Viet Minh were able to keep most of their gains in the delta ... the pacification carried out by these laborious methods was to have a more durable effect than previous "mopping up" operations of a similar nature. These activities, however, were abandoned ... when available troops were withdrawn in order to meet a Viet Minh offensive which had developed [elsewhere].⁴²

In July of the following year, 1953, the French executed "Opération Camargue," an amphibious-airborne assault against a group of heavily fortified enemy villages along the coast of central Annam, between Hue and the province of Quang Tri. The coastal road in this area was Fall's "street without joy," and his account of the GAMO's arrival after the fighting was over is a first-hand account, for he was there:

"Funny," said Major Derrieu from the 6th Spahis, watching some of the new administrators in the village of Dong-Qué, "they just never seem to succeed in striking the right note with the population. Either they come in and try to apologize for the mess we've just made with our planes and tanks; or they swagger and threaten the farmers as if they were enemy nationals which--let's face it--they are in many cases."

"That may be so," said young Lieutenant Dujardin, standing on the shady side of his M-24, "but I wouldn't care to be in his shoes tonight, when we pull out. He's going to stay right here in the house which the Commie commander still occupied yesterday, all by himself with the other four guys of

41. Author's interview in Paris on 10 June 1971 with General Raoul Salan, commander in chief in Indochina 1952-53.

42. Lancaster, Emancipation of French Indochina, p. 254.

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his administrative team, with the nearest post three hundred yards away. Hell, I'll bet he won't even sleep here but sleep in the post anyway."

"He probably will, and he'll immediately lose face with the population and become useless."

"And if he doesn't, he'll probably be dead by tomorrow, and just as useless. In any case, there goes the whole psychological effect of the operation and we can start the whole thing all over again three months from now. What a hopeless mess."

"Well, if the Vietnamese can't lick that, we certainly cannot. After all, it's their country. Let's saddle up." With a shrug, both men walked back to their tanks, climbing into the turrets with the liveness of long practice.⁴³

3. Assessment

Although interesting in detail, pacification in the north received little emphasis and accomplished little, for reasons already covered. One of the last high commissioners and one of the last commanders-in-chief agree on this. The former notes that pacification there was very hypothetical; the latter stresses the hard-nosed character of the northerners as a partial explanation for it; and both stress the too-little-too-late development of Vietnamese military forces and pacifying administrators who might otherwise have contributed toward a better outcome.⁴⁴

As the war moved into its last year or so, the rotting away of French control even in the Red River Delta itself became worse and worse. The commander of the French air force in Indochina wrote at the time that the clandestine infrastructure of the Viet Minh "permits them to levy taxes and raise troops even inside the areas [controlled by us]. Regular Vietminh units move from one base to another, leave the Tonkin delta and re-enter it, execute troop reliefs, without our being able to oppose them effectively."⁴⁵ South of there,

43. Fall, Street Without Joy, pp. 166-67.

44. Author's interviews with Letourneau and Salan; see notes 33 and 41, above.

45. General L. M. Chassin, "Guerre en Indochine," Revue de Défense Nationale, July 1953, p. 7.

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but still in northern Vietnam, the situation had become at least as bad. "Apart from the vast but thinly populated highland held mostly by the French, it is safe to say that close to 80 percent of both the land and people of northern and central Annam were under Vietminh control."⁴⁶

Bernard Fall wrote about the effects on a Vietnamese village of a Viet Minh hit-and-run night attack against a nearby French fortified post in the Red River Delta. The "feel" of populations slipping away comes across well in this extract:

None of the farmers spoke a word of French [any more]. And the local administrator had left two or three days before the attack to go and see his very sick grandfather in Hung-Yên; and the local little lady merchant ... said to the sergeant in frightened tones: "No, no, to-day I have no cigarettes, no bière, and no time for washing...."

The post had lost its usefulness as a link in the chain of forts of the "de Lattre Line," as an obstacle to Communist operations in the area and, most importantly, as a symbol of French authority.⁴⁷

Where more offensive operations remained practicable, the climate was equally inhospitable to pacification. Witness this account of lunch in a regimental mess of the Foreign Legion:

As in most army messes the world over, the conversation turned from women to shop talk. One of the battalion commanders spoke of a group of three villages which had been giving him trouble.

"There's no further sense in telling 'em not to trade buffaloes with the Viets and, to top it all, they're very sassy. We get shot at every time we pass by on the highway and I don't feel like losing a good platoon for the sake of mopping up a bunch of mud huts. Let's get the Air Force into this and just wipe 'em off the map."

The operations officer nodded. With his gray eyes and crew cut, he looked very American.

"We'll get Torricelli this afternoon and see what they can do (Torricelli was the code name for

46. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2:740.

47. Fall, Street Without Joy, pp. 176-77.

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the northern Air Force Headquarters). A flight of B-26's ought to do the job and will get the place properly 'bikinized'."

Various points of detail were still discussed, but the main point had been agreed upon between the dessert and the coffee. Scratch three villages with their sassy civilian population.⁴⁸

E. INCUBATION OF LESSONS LEARNED**1. Overview**

Assembling tidy little manuals of tactical lessons learned and prescribing them for study in service schools is all well and good for an army that has won a war but wants to do better next time. In the wake of its war in Indochina, the army of France was in no such fortunate position. It had sustained humiliating defeat in an extended and complex confrontation that it had not known how to handle. Bitter as it felt toward the intellectual and journalistic "defeatists" and the politicians without policies on the home front, the army--especially a dedicated group of activist military intellectuals in it--realized that its own failures dictated some deep-draft, innovative thinking in order to understand and cope with this new kind of war.

What resulted was a period of meditation. It is almost impossible to segregate the lessons learned in pacification activities during the Indochina war from the far-ranging corpus of intensive military self-examination that emerged from that meditation and that included consideration of pacification as a lesser, though important, part. This broad self-examination soon assumed the form of a typically French attempt to construct logically a theoretical base, which tended to submerge pacification still further. Finally, the war in Algeria broke out in the middle of this meditation, and the circumstances and developments in that arena ineluctably affected the conclusions that were evolving, so that the Indochinese lessons sometimes merged into lessons that were taking account of the Algerian experience.

48. Ibid., p. 279.

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The meditation's point of departure was a study of the doctrine that had guided those who had won--the Viet Minh. This led to the writings of Mao Tse-tung and the elaborations of his Vietnamese votaries, Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap, all of which stressed that the true objective of people's wars was not to occupy ground or fight soldiers but rather to acquire and retain the allegiance of populations by winning their minds in one way or another.⁴⁹ To the French military scholars who were zealously threading their way through these new challenges, this was not "sub-limited" or "subversive" or "insurgent" war; this was "revolutionary warfare," and the only way to prevail in it was to adopt the enemy's approach and turn it against him. The meditation therefore turned into a search for principles that could guide the conduct of future struggles against revolutionary wars like the one in Indochina. Among the aspects to be examined was certainly pacification.

2. The Evolution of Some Major Lessons

As late as 1954, "students at the Ecole de Guerre were still criticized by their instructors for the extent to which their service in Indochina had affected and 'deformed' their judgment."⁵⁰ Already, however, the hard-core group of revolutionary warfare intellectuals was at work. "The conclusions did not blossom forth spontaneously in the brains of the upper military echelons simply as a consequence of Indochina. They evolved after a hard struggle of conviction waged internally in the Army in the years 1954-1956. The Algerian War assured their adoption."⁵¹ It is therefore both logical and convenient to divide into two phases the period during which the lessons of the Indochina war were elaborated: (a) a preliminary phase prior to

49. For the theoretical orientation, see the article by an anonymous "Groupe d'Officiers" in the Revue Militaire d'Information of February 1957, entitled "La Guerre du Viet-Minh."

50. Paret, French Revolutionary Warfare, p. 8.

51. George A. Kelly, Lost Soldiers: The French Army and Empire in Crisis, 1947-1962 (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 53.

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1956, and (b) the main phase, by far the more important and intensive, which occurred in 1956-57.

a. Prior to 1956. Not many really thoughtful articles on the Indochina war appeared in French military journals while the war was under way and immediately after it ended. The emphasis in those years was rather on lessons from World War II and on how the national defense of France might adapt to collective security against Communist aggression in an atomic age. In fact, as far as Indochina is concerned, nothing approached in sophistication the 1949 article, already cited,⁵² by General Pierre Boyer de la Tour, who at that time was just finishing two years as the commander of ground forces in the south. Replete with impressive general insights, the article concluded with a specific six-point schematic outline of how to achieve the pacification of a province. The six points still look pretty good over twenty years later and are therefore worth summarizing:

1. Eliminate enemy armed forces, but do not seek combat because "the objective is not war but pacification." Behave well, remembering the importance of relieving the fears and winning the confidence of the people. Convince them that you are going to stay there until pacification is complete.
2. Hold the key points on main roads and waterways in order to provide for the movement of reserve forces.
3. At the same time, "permit assembling the people into re-organized and relocated villages so as to facilitate their defense...."⁵³
4. "The Vietnamese government will be greatly interested in reconstituting the councils of notables, in carrying out a careful census, and in the necessary purging of the local Viet-Minh who have remained in place."⁵⁴
5. "Recruit, train, arm, and equip self-defense forces. This will be a delicate and difficult task ... a long,

52. See page 74 and footnote 19, above.

53. Compare the later "strategic hamlet" programs. Note the discretion accorded by the word "permit."

54. Compare the later stress on local administration, on censuses, and on eliminating the Viet Cong infrastructure.

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drawn-out affair [requiring] complete understanding between the Vietnamese Province Chief and the troop commander."⁵⁵

6. "France will progressively withdraw its regular battalions, leaving only a reserve striking force intended to bolster local forces."⁵⁶

"It will be most important to turn all of this over to Vietnamese troops as soon as possible."⁵⁷

A few months after the de la Tour article, an air force squadron leader went somewhat beyond the General's theses by addressing what would now be called the development side of pacification, which ought to complement the security side: "construction of roads and trails, building of schools and dispensaries, support of commercial activities (transport, protection of harvests)." He also stressed "the need to resist the temptation to try controlling vast areas in which we risk finding ourselves unable to protect the population later on."⁵⁸

The commander of the French air force in Indochina, General L. M. Chassin, had already published a book called La Conquête de la Chine par Mao Tsé-Toung (1945-1949) when he began writing on the Indochina war. His first article, published in mid-1953, bore down heavily on the need to imitate the enemy by mounting a severe "ideological training of recruits, [which] must precede military training," and on the importance of subsequently concentrating propaganda on uncommitted young people among the target population, since "it is on an indoctrinated youth that all totalitarian governments have leaned, [and] there is no reason why we should not emulate them." By the end of 1954 (and therefore after the war was over), Chassin had shifted his position. Instead of trying to imitate the enemy, he called on "the West" to undertake a moral regeneration and to win wars fast,

55. Compare the later train of events in the 1960s that finally led to the constitution of the people's self-defense force (PSDF).

56. Compare "Vietnamization."

57. Six points and concluding remark are in de la Tour, "Evolution de la Pacification," p. 14.

58. Chef d'Escadron Valentin, "Réflexions sur les problèmes militaires en Indochine," Revue de Defense Nationale, April 1950, pp. 434-35.

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"avoiding the method of penny packets by using from the outset the most powerful means," including herbicides and direct attacks on dams, dikes, and livestock.⁵⁹

The 1955 volume of Official Indochina Lessons published by the commander in chief of French forces in Indochina has already been cited above in a particular context.⁶⁰ In general, the scant 4½ pages of its pacification chapter made two major points: (1) the compelling need to crush the Viet Minh infrastructure as a prerequisite to effective pacification--"The revolutionary apparatus must be destroyed, or at least shattered, before the enemy's techniques can be countered by our own propaganda"; (2) the importance of creating self-defense organizations--"The participation of the communities in their own security must be undertaken from the time that they have given proof of their loyalty...."⁶¹

Just as the flood of writings by the military intellectuals was about to burst forth in 1956, General Navarre, the last commander in chief in Indochina and the "goat" (rightly or wrongly) for the Dien Bien Phu debacle, published his Agonie de l'Indochine. The last chapter was entitled "The lessons of the Indochinese War." Although full of recriminations against policymakers and the lack of home-front support, the chapter did advance some lessons that bore on pacification. In the first place, Navarre listed four major shortcomings of the high command in Indochina: (1) It always underestimated the adversary. (2) It did not press hard enough or early enough for a Vietnamese army. (3) It "relied too much on power, and not enough on flexibility, lightness, deception, and intelligence." (4) It "did not understand the need for a long-range over-all plan, accepted by the government, provided by it with the required means, [and] carried

59. Chassin, "Guerre en Indochine," pp. 9 and 11 and "Réflexions Strategiques sur la Guerre d'Indochine," Revue de Défense Nationale, December 1954, pp. 513 and 517-18.

60. See footnote 27.

61. Official Indochina Lessons, pp. 112-13.

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out systematically and doggedly."⁶² From these mistakes and from his general experience, Navarre drew four primary lessons for the future: (1) "Don't underestimate enemy capabilities." (2) "It is useless to struggle against guerrilla warfare with the methods and means of modern war." (3) "Against an enemy who can succeed only with the support of the population, the basic problem is to keep the latter on our side by watching over it, by reassuring it, and by protecting it." (4) "Unity of command is indispensable at all levels. The leader responsible for [military] operations and the [leader] responsible for territorial tasks must not be different persons."⁶³

b. The 1956-57 Explosion. The period 1956-57 witnessed the widespread publication of professional military views on la guerre révolutionnaire, most of them proceeding from the Indochina experience but often reaching beyond it to formulate general doctrine. French military men overwhelmingly believed that international communism was the real enemy, and that it was out to undermine and eventually destroy the "free world" by waging protracted revolutionary war. Many of them, probably including a clear majority of the most prolific writers of doctrine based on "lessons learned," also believed that this threat made it the duty of the armée⁶⁴ to abandon its traditional role as a political "great mute." Such attitudes later led some of these men to a state called in French intoxication, with the double connotation of "poisoning" and "frenzy." The sequel in the late 1950s and early 1960s is well known. Despite these complications, the effort here will be to survey a few interesting high spots of "lessons learned" as they emerged in 1956, but to concentrate on the "summa" that appeared in the issues of the Revue Militaire d'Information of January and February 1957.

62. Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine, p. 317.

63. Ibid., p. 324.

64. The French word armée means the entire uniformed military establishment, the armed forces. The ground force army is l'armée de terre; navy is la marine or l'armée de mer; air force is l'armée de l'air.

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(1) Some Highlights of 1956. An early article asserted that the French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina had never been able to adapt to the complex "human environment" into which it found itself suddenly thrown; such nonspecialized military forces "were thereby precluded, on the human level, from having any chance of success in their attempt to carry out a pacification effort...." The author noted approvingly the then-current constitution of a "corps" of officers-specialists for pacification duties in Algeria, concluding that this "creates the possibility of establishing human contact. This opportunity really never existed in Indochina."⁶⁵

One of the more senior officers among the group of cogitating military scholars published two articles in 1956 that merit mention. The first posed the discomfiting question, "How, with all that [impressive] military machine still intact [in Indochina], did we ever end up as we have?" After a heavily sociological analysis, the author came up with this answer: "Because the Franco-Vietnamese did not take account of the political and social factors that their enemies knew how to exploit and incorporate into their war potential" --adding for good measure that "the grammar school diploma and the NCO school of the latter won out over the university degree and the war college of the former."⁶⁶ Still pressing along the same line, the author in his second article warned against becoming transfixed by visions of future push-button wars:

In point of fact, it is local conflicts that are breaking out one after another.... Confounding the prophets, they involve plain infantry.... Man-carry and mule transport replace the trucks, the mortar replaces the cannon. Wars last not a few days, but months and years on end, spreading all over and offering no front lines to mark with colored pins on maps. Military men are nonplussed by these recent developments, which they never learned in their schools, never practiced on maneuvers.

65. "Milites" (pseud.), "L'Algérie N'est Pas l'Indochine," Revue Militaire d'Information, 10 April 1956, p. 40.

66. Colonel Nemo, "La Guerre dans le Milieu Social," Revue de Défense Nationale, vol. 22 (1956), pp. 610 and 623.

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And, once again, back to definitions: "War is [now] a combination of military, political, and economic means brought to bear inside a social environment and taking account of the predictable or likely reactions within that environment."⁶⁷

It was also during 1956 that an army captain published an account of how the inroads made in Cambodia by the Viet Minh and their collaborators were dramatically reversed in a 1952 pacification campaign that involved over one million peasants, or over half the rural population of that country. The objective was "to deprive the rebels of the support of the population by protecting the latter from reprisals, [in particular] by regrouping their dwellings into sizeable agglomerations located in areas easy for government forces to oversee." Four elements contributed to the accomplishment of the objective: (1) "The regrouped peasants were able, without too much trouble, to continue working their land," with distances to fields held down to between a few hundred meters and three kilometers. (2) "The new locations were able to provide "the needs of village life." (3) Each new village formed a link in the network of people's self-defense: "Surrounded by ditches and barriers, equipped with a blockhouse ... the village constituted a strongpoint in which all the men belonged to the self-defense militia." (4) The villages also shared in the security provided by a nearby "counter-guerrilla commando," which apparently corresponded closely to a Popular Forces (PF) unit of the 1960s in South Vietnam: "Located centrally in its assigned zone, this trained and fairly mobile unit constantly patrolled outside its base.... Stopping now in one village, now in another, it reassured the people by its presence [and] took charge of instructing the [self-defense] militiamen who, thereafter, could defend their families and their land."

67. Colonel Nemo, "La Guerre dans la Foule," Revue de Défense Nationale, vol. 22 (1956), pp. 723-24 and 734.

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The success of this year-long campaign in 1952 seems to have been remarkable in every respect.⁶⁸ From the viewpoint of the generals in Tonkin, however, it was probably a second-order sideshow. Only later, during the big meditation of 1954-56, was it seen as full of lessons learned.

In December 1956 and January 1957, Commandant (Major) Jacques Hogard published two arresting articles in the Revue de Défense Nationale. Hogard was a contributor to the summa that appeared in the January and February 1957 issues of the Revue Militaire d'Information. Almost everything he said in the two articles was integrated into the summa, so only one point will be noted here. It is that the second article, more than almost anything else that had appeared up to then, definitely reflected a movement beyond fundamentally military or pacification-type lessons learned. For example: "The soldier ... feels to-day the duty of alerting the nation, and of warning it that he can no longer win alone, as he used to." And later: "The soldier of to-day can no longer ... neglect all political considerations. As a Frenchman and as a military man, he believes he has the right and the duty to cry out to his fellow countrymen: 'This struggle is a fight to the death, and we ... can only win if you ... accept the necessary changes and sacrifices'...." Later still: "The day arrives [in a situation like that in Indochina] when a bewildered and empoisoned nation agrees to negotiations that amount to surrender." And, finally:

Thus, under the pretext that war has not been "declared," treason is punished with only a few months in prison, desertion ... with a light sentence.... The press and radio often frustrate the action of our troops. Certain teachers feel free to raise young people to deny their country.... Worse yet! The enemy is "one" from Paris to Saigon,... taking

68. Capitaine André Souyris, "Un Procédé Efficace de Contre Guérilla: l'Auto-Défense des Populations," Revue de Défense Nationale, vol. 22 (1956), pp. 686-94.

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advantage of the leeway we allow him in the name of a "liberty" he wants to take away from us. Such a situation cannot continue...."69

(2) Special Issues of the "Revue Militaire d'Information." The Revue Militaire d'Information was an official publication of the Ministry of Defense. Like many of its counterparts in other countries, in the 1950s it was largely devoted to speeches by government spokesmen, administrative announcements, and newsy notes--altogether a menu of very bland fare. It was therefore significant when its first two issues in 1957 consisted almost entirely of impassioned articles on revolutionary warfare. The lead one, perhaps the most impressive of the lot, was "Guerre Révolutionnaire et Pacification," by the ubiquitous Commandant Hogard. It amounted to a summary synthesis of practically everything the military theoreticians of revolutionary war had been brooding about for two years.

The article first addressed the enemy. It listed and described five phases of his development, beginning with the constitution of agitation-propaganda cells in the first phase and progressing through gradually more formal and extensive activities until, in the last phase, he moves, if necessary, into his "general counteroffensive" with armed forces and the full power of his highly organized political apparatus. His armed forces fall into three categories: "popular forces and guerrillas, regional forces, and main (or regular) forces." These forces "do not try to conquer military or geographical objectives, but rather the population itself." Although a final grand military battle is provided for, "this final battle is usually won before it

69. Commandant Jacques Hogard, "L'Armée Française devant la Guerre Révolutionnaire," Revue de Défense Nationale, January 1957, pp. 77-79 and 86. Hogard's article of December 1956 was entitled "Guerre Révolutionnaire ou Révolution dans l'art de la Guerre." Still another Hogard article, the substance of which also appeared in the summa of January 1957, was "Le Soldat dans la Guerre Révolutionnaire," which appeared in the February 1957 issue of the Revue de Défense Nationale.

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is joined, because [our side] if supposed to come into it already subverted, empoisoned, and demoralized, morally set up for defeat."⁷⁰

Before proceeding to a consideration of how to prevail over such an enemy through "a method of pacification," the article issues a few general warnings. "We must first of all realize that complete victory is difficult.... The only hope we can allow ourselves is to thrust [the enemy] back to his first phase and force him to stay there." Second, "it is hopeless to expect to end a revolutionary war with nothing but political, economic, and social reforms.... Such reforms are certainly helpful, but they are not enough." Third, and on the other hand, military means by themselves will not produce success either. Fourth, it is a "serious illusion to think that negotiations can end a revolutionary war," because the enemy is committed to total victory, to "the disappearance of everything that is ill-disposed or even indifferent toward him." The most important warning of all is never to forget that "the key to revolutionary war, the secret of [the enemy's] effectiveness, depends upon the existence of his infrastructure," which must therefore be "destroyed root and branch."⁷¹

In discussing how to prevail in a revolutionary war, the article first notes that if the army is called in early enough, its emphasis should be on stationing small, decentralized units throughout the countryside. There are no enemy main forces yet, and widespread military "posts," when commanded by dedicated and socially sensitive officers, can do much to keep the population secure, loyal, and happy. If, as is more likely, the army only moves in when the revolutionary war is proceeding through its more advanced phases, there will be four general tasks--not equally important--for it to perform: (1) protection of axes and sensitive points, (2) area control, (3) pacification proper, and (4) destruction of rebel forces. "Protection of axes and sensitive points is a partly unavoidable burden,

70. Commandant Jacques Hogard, "Guerre Révolutionnaire et Pacification," Revue Militaire d'Information, January 1957, pp. 11-13.

71. Ibid., pp. 13-15.

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The destruction of rebel forces is not an end in itself: we know that as long as the enemy's "infrastructure" remains in place, he is able to maintain his control over the people and can replenish his decimated forces. Military operations are therefore only worthwhile insofar as they facilitate winning the people and contribute to the dismantling of the revolutionary politico-military organization. They can be counterproductive if they alienate [the people from us].

Reinforcing the point, the article adds that "large-scale operations ... are in general seldom effective on account of not lasting very long, and they produce a deplorable psychological effect because our troops tend to think of themselves as being in enemy territory...." The article concludes by pointing out that the conditions for successful pacification are partly within and partly beyond the control of the army. The military high command can, hopefully, assign the right kind of pacification missions, but it cannot do much to affect the drawn-out time required for success: "In the last analysis, only the Nation can grant it that."⁷⁴

The February issue of the Revue Militaire d'Information was completely given over to seven articles and a bibliography on revolutionary war. Colonel Lacheroy, director of psychological operations on the army general staff, acted as editor, provided a foreword, and probably authored the two articles attributed to "Ximenes"--including the lead piece on basic fundamentals of revolutionary warfare. Much of the issue merely consolidated principles that had already appeared in print, but the lengthy last article did make a few points which, though now somewhat repetitious, merit mention because (a) they bore squarely on pacification as such, (b) they were attributed directly to the experience in Indochina, and (c) their inclusion in the climactic article of this special issue was in itself important.

The first such reference came out this way: "One of the chief lessons of the Indochinese campaign tells us that ... bands or groups of

74. Ibid., pp. 21-24.

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terrorists ... disappear rapidly from areas [where people's self-defense has been established]."75 The next reference first noted that defectors and ex-members of the enemy infrastructure should be interned in "dis-indoctrination centers" rather than prisons, then added: "And, never mind the skeptics, we find that after a varying period of time--without employing violent methods but, on the contrary, persuasive and humane ones--the great majority of those interned cross over to the 'new' system, especially if the authorities venture to assign them responsible duties."76 The third special reference provided still another stroke of emphasis on a principle already stressed over and over: "The real strength of the enemy does not reside in his terrorist groups or in his combat units, but in his political infrastructure implanted within the population."77 And, finally, this strong view: "The re-conquest of populations ... is a primordial lesson from the Far Eastern campaign. It ought to be completely separated from the multitude of lessons that abound in official reports, for it deserves more than special mention. It ought to be printed in capital letters in the textbooks that will be spelling out how to defeat revolutionary war...."78

F. ASSESSMENT

1. Positive Contributions

The prime finding of the French was that they had been up against a movement the objective of which was the active winning-over of the civilian population to the movement's cause. This led them to their prime conclusion, one from which all lesser lessons flowed: the central feature of any attempt to prevail over such movements must be

75. Capitaine André Souyris, "Les Conditions de la Parade et de la Riposte à la Guerre Révolutionnaire," Revue Militaire d'Information, February 1957, p. 107.

76. Ibid., p. 109.

77. Ibid., p. 110.

78. Ibid., p. 109.

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to beat the enemy at his own game and on his own ground by winning the civilian population to the cause of the government. Military and paramilitary operations, political-social-economic measures, and programs of whatever kind should be judged on their effectiveness in promoting that goal.

In a way, this is saying that the object of the exercise is to "win the hearts and minds" of the people, so it appears to be vulnerable to attack by hard-nosed men of action, who often like to remark that the best way to reach a man's heart and mind is first to grab him by some sensitive part of his anatomy. However, there was nothing soft about the French prescriptions on how to win the people over to the government's cause. They stressed heavily the establishment of security in populated areas at the same time that they emphasized the need for progressively more active and extensive participation by the people themselves in maintaining that security. A few did recommend psychological indoctrination through the medium of associations of youth, women, and so on, but all concentrated heavily on proposing a thoroughgoing extirpation of the enemy's politico-military infrastructure. Any notion that the approach of the French on how to prevail over revolutionary movements was mushily intellectual should have been definitively scotched later on in Algeria, where they were widely criticized, even condemned, not for lack of soldierly aggressiveness but for overly forceful conduct approaching brutality in dealing with the revolutionary problem there.

The French lessons from Indochina concentrated on the security aspect of the security-development combination that makes up pacification. This was partly because the Indochinese experience had simply not afforded the French many opportunities to move into a developmental phase, but also partly because the doctrine they evolved called for the establishment of security in a given area as a prerequisite to developmental tasks. The several proposed program areas (as they might now be called) that emerged from their contemplation of lessons learned therefore all fell primarily into the field of security. They dealt in detail with the oil-spot technique; the creation and

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active use of regular, regional, and popular forces from the native population; the recruitment and arming of self-defense forces at village level; the conduct of an institutionalized program for "rallying," "dis-indoctrinating," and constructively integrating enemy defectors; the selective regrouping of peasant populations into fortified settlements; the evacuation of the population from certain areas so as to constitute "forbidden zones" that could thereafter be temporarily forgotten or, when appropriate, indiscriminately shelled and bombed; and, above all, the vitally important destruction or at least definitive breaking-up of the enemy's politico-military infrastructure without which his whole effort, including that of his armed units, would wither away. Finally, running through the entire consideration of these specific matters was the constant imperative of turning over the conduct of them to the loyal natives as soon as possible, so that the French involvement could gradually be contracted and phased out.

The measures or programs listed in the preceding paragraph have not been selectively abstracted from some far more extensive array in an attempt to achieve dramatic effect. They were actually the central features of the proposals the French published in 1956-57 as their ideas on how to prevail against revolutionary war--primarily in the Vietnam environment against Vietnamese revolutionaries, since that was where and against whom the French had learned their lessons.

2. Shortcomings and Inhibitions

In one superlatively critical respect the cards were stacked against the French in Indochina: they were white foreigners widely presumed to have returned in order to reestablish their colonial rule. A few perceptive Frenchmen in responsible positions came to believe early-on that nothing short of complete independence would satisfy Vietnamese aspirations and that the best to be expected was a negotiated peace providing for a "commonwealth" type of loose tie between Vietnam and France, but such farsightedness was exceptional.

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French officials at the highest levels were of course not completely blind to the unfavorable image of France among the mass of Indo-Chinese. Their reaction was to put together a Vietnamese government under the former emperor, Bao Dai, as a nationalist alternative to the Communist-dominated Democratic Republic of Vietnam. However, three major disabilities plagued the carrying out of this theoretically sound approach. First, it was implemented far too sluggishly, partly because of built-in difficulties but also partly because of French disinclination or inherent inability to bite the bullet. Second, Bao Dai, though bright enough, did not stand up to the French and in other ways proved to be an ineffectual leader, while his successive prime ministers and the governments they headed could not overcome popular suspicion of them as puppet collaborationists with little or no feel for the realities of Vietnamese peasant life.⁷⁹ Third, the constitution of a viable Vietnamese national army, which would have afforded impressive evidence that a non-Communist Vietnamese government could survive without French propping, proceeded with agonizing slowness--as such things always do when a "big brother" who is convinced he can do the job better is still around.

The general insensitivity of the French to the rise of nationalism in the old colonial parts of the world was compounded by the monolithic view of world communism that figured so prominently in the derivation of doctrine from lessons in Indochina. This link to communism was seen as contributing toward drumming up support from France's friends and allies, notably those in NATO, and especially in the United States. Still, there is no doubt that, quite apart from any such "tactical" considerations, the military intellectuals who conducted the great

79. French military men did try to apply in Algeria the lesson learned from this. Instead of going the same route as in Indochina (non-rebel alternative government tied to the French), they pushed the idea of total Algerian integration into France and into "Frenchness" as a psychologically motivating force. It is not possible to say categorically that the attempt flatly failed, because the denouement in Algeria was an infinitely complicated one, but it is safe to say that it certainly did not catch on like wildfire, like a succès fou.

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meditation of 1954-56 were absolutely convinced that local wars like the one in Indochina were integral parts of a centrally directed march of communism against the "free world." The merits of that argument have no place here, but those who embraced it so ardently thereby became less capable of dealing rationally and effectively with insurgencies that did not owe their primary inspiration to global Communist conspiracy--for example, the one they soon confronted in Algeria.

Finally, the intense concentration on Indochinese lessons led the military's intellectual vanguard to conclude that the armée had been sacrificed because the old virtues and verities of The Nation were being viciously undermined by irresponsible journalists, sophistic intellectuals, and spineless politicians. Thus aroused, it was not a very big step to think about appealing to a "higher law" of which the armée would have to act as the guardian in order to save the real country of the silent majority from the scummish, self-appointed élites who were contaminating it. The sequel brought France to the very verge of bloody civil war.

3. US Perceptions

The lessons that the French learned as a result of their war in Indochina proceeded partly from their actual experience with what had happened there and partly from a deep-draft period of post-hostilities reflection on what should have happened. Separating the two perspectives is virtually impossible, and in any case would be irrelevant. What is important is that the product of the lessons-learned exercise, conducted largely by young Turk military intellectuals, became available in the middle and late 1950s to anyone willing to look at it. The general failure to do so prompted this observation in 1969 from a British lecturer on military studies:

[The Americans'] first mistake was a product of military arrogance, i.e., their complete rejection of any lessons that may have emerged from the French experience up to 1954. By 1954, particularly at the colonel

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and major level, the French had realized what kind of war they were fighting, and it was a great pity and a tragedy that the Americans didn't start from that point in their military development.⁸⁰

The Americans definitely did not start from that point, in large part because they felt that the failure of the French against the Viet Minh argued against paying much attention to what they had to say. There is, however, evidence of some theoretical US awareness of the nature of insurgency and counterinsurgency as the French had come to understand it. For example, the report of a 1953 special US military mission to the French in Vietnam headed by Major General John W. O'Daniel mentioned the importance of developing (a) militia forces to release regulars from main-force combat, (b) trained cadres to assert a governmental presence at the local level and to facilitate the creation and growth of local governmental institutions, and (c) a counterintelligence capability for attacking the insurgents' infrastructure. But these theoretical findings were not translated into action recommendations by the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) during the remaining years of the 1950s. Instead, the MAAG's emphasis was overwhelmingly on training large-unit GVN forces for conventional military operations. This the MAAG knew how to do, and military organizations, like specialized bureaucracies in general, will almost always do what they know how to do best until something dramatic happens to turn them around--and perhaps not even then.

80. Remarks by Michael Elliott-Bateman in Lessons from the Vietnam War, report of a seminar held at the Royal United Service Institution on 12 February 1969 (Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, 1969), p. 4.

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II

EARLY VIETNAMESE PACIFICATION EFFORTS, 1954-1961

A. INTRODUCTION

(U) In June 1954 when Ngo Dinh Diem came to power the prospects for the survival of his regime were gloomy. Diem's political base of support was initially confined to a very small number of people living in Saigon, and there was no organized group behind him. The army was controlled by his principal rival, General Hinh, who had long been a protege of Emperor Bao Dai. The police and other security forces were under the control of the Binh Xuyen, a gangster-like mob that had bought them from Bao Dai in the last stages of the Indochina war. Economically, the country showed the scars of eight years of war: "Farmland was abandoned and overgrown with weeds; irrigation and drainage facilities had fallen into disrepair; canals, the indispensable waterways of the South, needed re-dredging; the greater part of the work animals had been killed off; and all of this was reflected in a sharp decline in production and the disappearance of the all-important surplus of rice for export."¹ In addition, the machinery of government was in complete disarray: there were very few bureaucrats capable of making the vast number of decisions necessary to cope with the serious problems facing the country. The mandate of Diem's government, furthermore, virtually stopped at the boundaries of Saigon; much of what was formerly Cochinchina was ruled by the dissident, quasi-religious Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, "which were not only separatist but virtually enclave governments defended by their

1. (U) Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Vietnam," in Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence, ed. Wesley R. Fishel (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961), p. 159.

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own private armies and maintaining only the loosest federated relations with Saigon."² The rest of the countryside was nominally under the control of whatever remnants of village government existed.

(U) To complicate Diem's problems further, refugees from the north--between 850,000 and 900,000 in all--were brought to Saigon by the US Navy from Haiphong and other ports in North Vietnam in fulfillment of the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords. Other Vietnamese cities in the south were already overcrowded with Vietnamese peasants who had fled the ravages of the Viet Minh war for the relative security of urban areas. Thus, Diem was confronted with what were almost insoluble problems. His chances of surviving were considered by most American observers to be dim in the immediate postwar period. But his apparent strength in those days was in his deep patriotism, his staunch anti-Communist attitude, his lack of association with French imperialism, and his own moral and religious beliefs.

(U) Preoccupied with the problems of keeping his government in power, Diem had neither the time nor the inclination to address the question of insurgency in South Vietnam, let alone the broad area of pacification. The lack of a base of political support was probably the first problem Diem tackled. By the fall of 1954 he had been able to outmaneuver his rival General Hinh, eventually sending him out of the country, and to gain control over the army, whose troops he then used to help crush the rebellious opposition of the sects. Using the strategy of "divide and conquer" and aided by France's ultimate withdrawal of financial support to the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, by late 1955 he successfully defused these two groups as a threat to the stability of his government. The Binh Xuyen proved to be a more persistent problem, but by April, after several bloody skirmishes between the two armed groups, Diem got the upper hand and managed to avert full-scale civil war. Following a national referendum in October 1955 in which Bao Dai was deposed and his monarchy abolished, Ngo

2. (U) Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 58.

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Dinh Diem proclaimed South Vietnam a republic and named himself its first president.

(U) Having established a more substantial base of political support, Diem was then able to turn his attention to other problems facing the nation, especially those in the rural areas. High priority had to be given to improving the sorry plight of the northern refugees who came south during the ten months following the Geneva settlement. The majority of this mass of displaced humanity simply squatted in Saigon. Near anarchy reigned in the capital as a consequence of the increased pressures on social services. Although the subsequent resettlement of the refugees and their integration into the life of the country are not matters of specific concern to this study, these efforts are important because some of the techniques employed by Diem and his government were later used in other Vietnamese pacification programs. This was especially true in the case of the land development centers, which, to a certain extent, were a logical extension of the refugee resettlement program. The refugee program was partially responsible for early GVN efforts at land reform--an issue which was to become a feature of later pacification efforts. Finally, although the overwhelming majority of the refugees were peasant farmers, those who were not quickly found their way into the civil service, often in high positions.³

(U) Beginning in mid-1955, Diem also embarked on a campaign to counter the activities of the Viet Cong. All the measures initiated to this end were introduced under the guise of "anti-communism." According to Jean Lacouture, "a new enemy was substituted for the sects ... the Viet Cong, or Vietnamese communism. In 1955 every

3. (U) According to one observer, "The GVN's civil service soon became asymmetrical, too sectarian, too exclusively Northern; Diem was accused of 'loading the Government with Catholics,' which most of the Northerners were; yet refugees were the only significant source of trained personnel." Ibid., p. 59.

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opponent had been denounced as a left-over from the 'feudal rebels'.... After 1956 every opponent was called a communist."⁴

(U) Initially, Diem focused on propaganda measures designed to disinfect the population of its Communist sentiments. The most widely known and most important instrument in this regard was the "Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign" which was begun in mid-1955. "In a typical denunciation ceremony, Viet Minh cadres and sympathizers would swear their disavowal of Communism before a large audience; the repentants would recount the atrocities of the Viet Minh and, as a climax to their performance, would rip or trample upon the Viet Minh flag and pledge their loyalty to Ngo Dinh Diem."⁵ The government further sought to contain communism by organizing the population into what was called Mutual Aid Family Groups (Lien Gia Tuong Tro), whose primary purpose was to function as security cells. Each five-family group was supposed "to control the behavior of its members and to report any irregularities ... to village or city security officers."⁶

(U) In January 1956 the president escalated his anti-Communist program by signing a decree formally providing for the arrest and imprisonment of "any person considered to be a danger to the defense of the state."⁷ Although this act merely formalized and legalized the existence of political reeducation centers, it also had the effect of advertising the growing trend toward political repression existing in South Vietnam. Unknown thousands were jailed under this law--the majority of whom were neither Communists nor pro-Communists. In April 1959 Diem would carry this law one step further. Special military tribunals were created and specifically empowered to sentence to

4. (U) Jean Lacouture, Vietnam Between Two Truces (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 29.

5. (U) Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 167.

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

7. (U) Ordinance No. 6 (11 January 1956) as quoted in Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 272.

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death anyone committing crimes "with the aim of sabotage or infringing upon the security of the State, or injuring the lives or property of the people" (Law 10 of 1959).

(U) In 1956, partially for reasons of security but also to establish centralized government and political control over rural Vietnam, Diem increased the number of provinces to 41 and personally appointed the chiefs. His criterion, of course, was loyalty rather than ability. On paper, the province chiefs were responsible for the district chiefs and village officials; however, in practice, the heavy hand of the Palace was felt in all matters; Diem and Nhu frequently sent down personal orders on even the most trivial matters. Also, ostensibly on security grounds, President Diem decreed that all previously elected village and municipal councils were abolished. New officials were appointed by Diem's hand-picked province chiefs on the recommendation of the district chiefs, who also were appointed by the Palace. According to some observers, this was one of Diem's greatest mistakes. A former press officer in Diem's government stated: "Even if the Viet Minh had won some elections, the danger of doing away with the traditional system of village elections was greater. This was something that was part of the Vietnamese way of life.... it wouldn't have made much difference if the Viet Minh had elected some village chiefs--they soon established their own underground governments anyway. Diem's mistake was in paralyzing himself."⁸

(U) Along with some of the anti-Communist measures outlined above, military and police campaigns were undertaken in rural areas during 1956-57 to seek out and eliminate the Viet Cong. Although very little is known, "there can be no doubt, on the basis of reports of the few impartial observers ... that innumerable crimes and absolutely senseless acts of suppression against both real and suspected Communists and sympathizing villagers were committed. Efficiency took the form of brutality and a total disregard for the difference between

8. (U) Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 134.

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determined foes and potential friends."⁹ The striking thing about these political and anti-Communist activities was that the Diem regime "transformed itself into a light image of its rival"¹⁰ by attempting to counter the Communist tide with largely the same means the Communists used.

B. DIEM'S EARLY PACIFICATION EFFORTS

(U) While dealing with his political and security problems, President Diem simultaneously undertook a program of civic action in the rural areas. Initially emerging from a military effort to stimulate and assist local peasants in rebuilding war-damaged public facilities, the Civic Action program quickly developed into a program of community development. According to one source, an American, Col. Edward Lansdale, worked out much of the program.¹¹ Small teams of approximately ten Civic Action cadres visited rural areas, especially villages formerly controlled by the Viet Minh, and worked with the peasants on a variety of self-help projects, such as rebuilding roads, digging wells, and building schools and dispensaries. The cadres also distributed drugs and seeds, gave inoculations, and taught the peasants how to hold elections. Dressed in the traditional black pajamas, some 1400 to 1800 cadres lived and worked among the peasants. To be sure they also engaged in propaganda efforts for the GVN, explaining new programs such as land reform and discussing the peasants' needs. In addition, the Civic Action cadres also conducted Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaigns, which sometimes were excessive.

(U) Although the Civic Action program apparently showed signs of success in its first full year of operation, it was curtailed at the end of 1956 because of inter-agency rivalries between the Civic Action

9. (U) Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 2:976.

10. (U) Scigliano, Nation Under Stress, p. 91.

11. (U) William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 38.

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Directorate and the Ministries of Health, Information, and Agriculture. The latter organizations apparently felt threatened by the intrusion of the Civic Action program into areas traditionally under their jurisdiction. In spite of objections from the American/AID mission, which modestly supported civic action, after 1956 the program "became more propagandistic and political, with less emphasis on economic and social services to the people."¹²

(U) The next phase in the Vietnamese pacification effort was the inauguration of land development centers (dinh dien or centres d'implantation) by President Diem in late 1956. Having successfully resettled thousands of northern refugees on abandoned tracts of fertile rice lands, located primarily in the delta, Diem saw additional opportunities to apply some of these newly acquired skills in other rural areas and also to expand the political base of his regime. The primary motivation for this new program, however, was the need to improve internal security, rather than economic considerations. In spite of the GVN's efforts since 1954 to suppress armed dissidence in the countryside, security was still a serious problem in several areas. The western provinces of the Central Highlands bordering on Laos and Cambodia were readily susceptible to Communist infiltration from the north. There were still vast unsettled areas in the delta where armed bands were free to establish hidden base camps and gain access to important food supplies. Of these two areas, the Central Highlands was assigned the highest priority for resettlement. It was in Pleiku and Darlac Provinces that Diem envisaged placing a "human wall" of loyal Vietnamese citizens to guard against infiltration of Communist personnel and supplies.

(U) A secondary motivation for the GVN's land development program was the alleviation of the overcrowding and poverty along the central coast where 4 million people were living on only 264,500 hectares (about 654,000 acres) of arable land. By settling some of these

12. (U) Ibid., p. 36. For additional information on the Civic Action program, see Part Three of Volume II.

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people on undeveloped land, it was further hoped that agricultural production would be increased. There were also political considerations behind the land development program. The highlands of central Vietnam, once the private hunting preserve of Emperor Bao Dai, were inhabited by some 500,000 Montagnard tribal people. Relations between them and the Vietnamese had never been particularly friendly, and Diem hoped to integrate these people into Vietnamese society by regrouping them into permanent villages and thus subjecting them to greater governmental and administrative control. It has also been suggested that Diem planned to resettle families in Viet Minh dominated areas who were considered unreliable by the new government. The land development centers for these people were to be little more than armed detention camps.¹³

(U) When the land development program was first conceived in late 1956, the United States agreed to commit over \$10 million in economic aid to it. Although USOM was active in the initial stages of the program in both planning and implementation, wide divergencies of view began to develop as to the program's scope, direction, and tempo. While the GVN had declared agricultural development to be one of the program's long-term goals, USOM believed it should be given primary attention right away. As the GVN placed more and more emphasis on the political and security objectives of the program, other incompatibilities soon came into focus. The United States wanted to concentrate on the delta; Diem concentrated on the Central Highlands. The United States believed each family in the highlands would require three to five hectares of land to subsist; Diem doggedly persisted in claiming one hectare would suffice. Tensions also arose over the management and use of USOM-supplied agricultural equipment. As a result of all this, by late 1957 the United States had withdrawn its financial support for the program, except for providing equipment,

13. (U) Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 247.

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spare parts, and tools. From that point on, the GVN had to pay the costs of the program on its own.¹⁴

(U) The land development centers soon became a pet project of President Diem who, as was his habit, took a great deal of personal interest in its direction and implementation, frequently making all the decisions himself. Although the program was initially under the direction of the Agriculture Development Directorate, in April 1957 Diem created a special agency, the Commissariat General for Land Development (CGLD), which reported to him. The director of the CGLD was Bui Van Long, who had previously earned a favorable reputation as administrator of the refugee program. Since Diem was fully committed to the program and "determined to push forward with all possible speed ... planning and preparations for the implementation of land development quickly gathered momentum.... From the beginning the Commissariat undertook operations at an almost breathtaking pace, and quickly extended the scope of its activities far beyond the original plans and schedules."¹⁵

As originally conceived the land development program was to be implemented step by step in accordance with an orderly and predetermined timetable. This schedule called for careful selection of sites suitable for re-settlement.... Such studies would make possible fairly accurate estimates of the amount of land available for cultivation..., the number of people to be settled..., the fertility of the soil, the supply of water.... Once it was decided to establish a center at a given place, the next step was to prepare for actual reception of the new settlers. This involved ... extensive land clearing operations and leveling of land surfaces to accommodate public and private buildings. Wells had to be drilled, roads cut, and, depending on the nature of the terrain, dams, dikes, canals and bridges had to be constructed. Temporary reception shelters and a great many other structures for headquarters, store houses, dispensaries, and so on had to be built.

14. (U) John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 72-83.

15. (U) William Henderson, "Vietnam's Land Development Program," in Problems of Freedom, ed. Fishel, p. 127.

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Meanwhile the movement of Vietnam's modern pioneers to the new centers had to be coordinated with all of these preparatory activities. The settlers were to be collected at various points ... their transportation arranged ... and provisions made for their sustenance after arrival and for an indefinite period in the future. As quickly as possible they had to be put to work completing the centers for permanent habitation, and, even more important, getting on with the business of farming, which was to furnish their livelihood and eventually make them independent of government support. Families were given subsidies for food, house-construction, various household goods, farm implements, seeds and fertilizers, and provided with cheap credit to facilitate the transition to independence.¹⁶

(U) In practice, however, the land development program did not proceed in quite such an orderly fashion. Although a few land development centers had been established in the delta in the initial stages of the program, by mid-1957 the GVN had shifted the geographic focus of its effort to the Central Highlands (Haut Plateau), which subsequently became a preoccupation of President Diem, as already noted. Second, the GVN was in a hurry to achieve results, and the quickened pace of program implementation left little time for orderly planning and preparation. Third, since the program was being actively pushed by Diem, government officials were almost always reluctant to criticize his decisions or point out shortcomings. For instance, Diem himself frequently selected the sites for the land development centers solely on the basis of military maps or aerial photographs, ignoring the analyses prepared by the Vietnamese and American technicians in the field. Diem's insistence on speed led to the program's over-extension and to charges by USOM officials that the project was "uneconomic." New centers were begun while earlier ones were never completed. In addition,

many sites turned out to have been poorly chosen, and all too often the number of settlers sent to a given center was all out of proportion to

16. (U) Ibid., p. 129.

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its potentialities. Most sites had been insufficiently prepared, and equipment and stores were frequently in short supply. The pioneers in many cases arrived at their new homes at the height of the rainy season, when little or no construction work could be done, and when conditions inevitably tried the patience of even the most optimistic. Morale sagged and often there was much confusion.¹⁷

(U) In spite of such criticisms and shortcomings, by mid-1959 the GVN had resettled over 125,000 people in approximately 90 land development centers. According to available statistics, approximately 44,000 people were resettled in the Haut Plateau, 25,000 in central and southern forest areas, and 55,000 in the delta. Some 22,000 houses were constructed; 48,000 hectares of land cleared; and 31,000 hectares planted, some 23,000 of that in rice. To many people these were certainly impressive achievements. It is also noteworthy that there seems to have been only a minimum amount of coercion used in resettling the people, although it seems unlikely those considered politically undesirable were given much choice. In some of these new settlements the people enjoyed an improved standard of living, especially in terms of the social services provided. Schools and dispensaries were features of each center. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that each family had its own plot of land for a garden and farmed an additional amount of land, even after two years many, possibly most, of these new communities were still dependent on the Saigon government for financial subsidies. Economic viability was a long way off. Furthermore, even if one discounts the lack of progress in the agricultural-economic fields, the land development centers did not prove to be anything like the "human wall" Diem envisaged. Infiltration from the north seems to have been in no way inhibited by these settlements, and many of the settlements actually became easy targets for VC terrorism from 1960 on. It is also quite likely that the centers themselves were susceptible to Viet Cong infiltration, and it is conceivable that whole centers may in reality

17. (U) Ibid., p. 130.

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have been under Viet Cong control. Finally, the program seems to have accomplished little in the way of solidifying Vietnamese-Montagnard relations.

(U) Although the GVN planned to construct additional land development centers in 1960, available sources do not indicate that Diem pursued the program any further. As early as 1959 his attention began again to shift geographically: the delta was the next area on which he chose to focus Vietnamese pacification efforts. Rather than building on the concepts of the land development program and perhaps modifying them in the light of actual experience, Diem created a new program--agrovilles, which was formally announced in July 1959.

C. THE AGROVILLE PROGRAM

1. Background

(U) Before proceeding with a discussion of the agroville program, we should examine briefly the political, economic, social, and security conditions obtaining at the time the program was conceived.

(U) The agroville program was formally inaugurated as the next step in South Vietnam's rural pacification effort on 7 July 1959, the fifth anniversary of Ngo Dinh Diem's accession to power. It was generally acknowledged by most American observers that South Vietnam had accomplished a "miracle" during those five years. Diem had solved his early political problems, and he enjoyed the generous support of the United States whose aid kept the country on its feet and contributed to what many would consider spectacular gains in the field of economic recovery. A constitution had been written and elections for the National Assembly were held. In general terms it would appear that South Vietnam in 1959 was indeed "one of the more stable countries in Southeast Asia."¹⁸

18. (U) John T. Dorsey, Jr., "South Vietnam in Perspective," Far Eastern Survey, vol. XXVII, no. 12 (December 1958), p. 177.

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(U) On the economic side, the statistical evidence for the period 1954-59 presents a rosy picture of economic recovery. The successful resettlement of the refugees from the north was a dramatic achievement, although its success was partially due to American aid. Agricultural production had increased, new schools and dispensaries had been built, and roads and bridges repaired; the country seemed on its way to further economic stability.

(U) One need have only looked below the surface to see that this image was becoming tarnished. Although there were no serious political contenders for the presidency, there was some dissatisfaction and dissent among the urban population. In part, this was due to Diem's increasing reliance on his family--brother Ngo Dinh Nhu was his "Political Councilor" and brother Ngo Dinh Can was the most powerful figure in central Vietnam. In addition, the fact that Diem would tolerate no legitimate political opposition hastened the process of political alienation on the part of many of the country's intellectuals, who were among the people he needed most. The only legal political organizations were those sanctioned by the government--the Personalist Labor Revolutionary Party, known as the Can Lao (Can Lao Nhan Vi Cach Mang Dang), the National Revolutionary Movement (Phong Trao Cach Mang Quoc Gia), and the National Revolutionary Civil Servants League (Lien Doan Cong Chuc Cach Mang Quoc Gia). Created by Ngo Dinh Nhu in 1956, the Can Lao was based on the philosophy of Personalism, which "as espoused by Nhu, was a peculiar mixture of Western and Eastern thought that pretended to stress the development of individual character as the basis of community democracy in Vietnam. It sought to mesh the individual's spiritual growth with the community's social needs, and together these would stimulate the nation's emerging political life."¹⁹ The Can Lao, however, functioned not as a political party in the usual sense of the word, but rather as Nhu's secret political

19. (U) Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, p. 130. For a further discussion of personalism, see John C. Donnell, "Personalism in Vietnam," in Problems of Freedom, ed. Fishel, pp. 26-29.

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intelligence agency to spy on suspected Communists or anyone showing oppositionist tendencies. Its membership consisted of trusted government employees occupying key positions "as well as individuals, carefully selected by Nhu, who moved anonymously through all the echelons of government, down to the level of villages and hamlets, factories, schools, and small military units, tracking down cases of malfeasance and corruption and disloyalty to the regime."²⁰

(U) The National Revolutionary Movement (NRM) in reality was simply another instrument of control over the government administration. It was, so to speak, an adjunct of the regime. Designed to mobilize support for the government and to indoctrinate the population, the NRM's leadership consisted of high-ranking government officials. "In the provinces, it was usually headed by province chiefs, district information chiefs, and village political commissioners--all of them appointed by the government and speaking for the government."²¹ Like the Cao Lao, the NRM was also organized along Communist lines, with ultimate control resting in the hands of Diem's brothers.

(U) The Civil Servants League was the vehicle for the maintenance of the support of the government bureaucracy. Membership in the league was "practically concomitant of government employment," the second largest occupational group in the country.²²

(U) Thus, organizations such as these, designed to control important segments of the population rather than to foster in them a sense of genuine participation in the political life of the country and to give them a stake in its future, merely tended to create conditions of further political alienation. Some of the methods Diem used to deal with his opponents not only widened the gap between the government and the people, but actually gave the Communists causes to champion. Opponents of the Diem regime who were financially unable

20. (U) Ibid., pp. 130-31.

21. (U) Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, 2:948.

22. (U) Scigliano, Nation Under Stress, p. 78.

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to leave the country often ended up in either the government's bulging jails and political reeducation centers or in underground anti-Diem groups.

(U) By 1959 the security situation in the countryside, especially in the rice-rich delta, had deteriorated to the point that sterner measures bordering on police-state tactics were resorted to. In the previous five-year period the situation had alternated between conditions of total chaos bordering on civil war in 1954-55, to relative quiet in 1956-57, and back to increasing insecurity in 1958-59.

(U) Although Diem had quickly gained control of the army in 1954, his methods of dealing with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects and the Binh Xuyen resulted in many of their members turning to informal alliances with the Viet Minh. To be sure, Diem could not have tolerated autonomous rival governments, but after he successfully bought off or crushed their private armies he apparently made no overtures to seek their support.²³ Thus, thousands of their forces had fled to the forests and the mountains, taking their weapons with them. Many of them still remained there, "living by the gun, preying on hapless peasants, or cooperating with the Viet Cong agents to harass the Government."²⁴ But it was an anti-Diemist attitude rather than a pro-Communist one which attracted them to this life.

(U) Although the organized military units of the Viet Minh were withdrawn to the north following the Geneva Conference, many Communist cadres and other non-Communist elements of the Viet Minh remained in the south.²⁵ In certain areas "Viet Minh control of the countryside was hardly less effective than before. In part of the country it grew even stronger, since in many regions the French withdrew before

23. (U) Pike, Viet Cong, p. 73.

24. (U) Wesley R. Fishel, "Vietnam's War of Attrition," New Leader, vol. XLII, no. 45 (7 December 1959), p. 19.

25. (U) These forces were thought to number about 10,000. Pike, Viet Cong, p. 75n.

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Diem's army and administration were ready to establish control."²⁶ Much of the delta, particularly the Camau Peninsula, the provinces of Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh, and the Plaine des Joncs were areas in which Viet Minh control was particularly strong, although they were beginning to expand organizationally throughout the country.

(U) Both the sects and the Viet Minh continued to use acts of violence to harass the GVN. According to Douglas Pike: "Violence in the countryside was not uncommon, although until at least mid-1958 there was no guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam, in the generally accepted definition of the term. The government ascribed most of the terror and violence to remnants of the Viet Minh, but how could anyone know for sure whether an incident in a remote village was the work of the Viet Minh, the armed sects, bandits, or someone engaged in personal revenge?"²⁷

(U) Part of the problem during this period stemmed from the fact that when the United States took over the French mission of training the ARVN in 1955, the US Military Assistance Advisory Group, and President Diem himself, saw the invasion of South Vietnam by the north as the most likely threat. Based on our recent experience in Korea, the US military was confident that the conventional-warfare training techniques applied in Korea would prove equally effective in South Vietnam where the situation appeared to be strikingly similar. Thus, during these early years, when the insurgency was still in its formative stages, the United States concentrated on training and equipping a rather large conventional army to withstand an overt invasion by organized NVA units. The need for smaller, less conventional security forces was not taken seriously at the time by either the MAAG or the GVN. By the time the insurgency was recognized for what it was, the appropriate forces for dealing with the terroristic and subversive activities of the Viet Cong were not available.

26. (U) Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, 2:973.

27. (U) Pike, Viet Cong, p. 75.

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(S) Security continued to remain a problem, and the general trend during 1958 seemed to be worsening. By early 1959 Diem viewed the delta as being "in a stage of siege" and indicated that the security situation was the worst it had been since 1955.²⁸

(S) According to a US embassy report covering the first four months of 1959, although the number of reported assassinations (65) was less than for the corresponding period of 1958 (89), it represented an increase over the last four months of that year (52). The embassy noted that the Viet Cong were becoming more effective in their use of terror because the victims were persons of generally greater importance, holding such positions as village councillors, hamlet chiefs, and district chiefs. There were also 344 kidnappings reported in 1959, an increase of almost 100 over 1958. The delta was confirmed to have the highest incidence of terrorism.²⁹

(S) In order to cope with the situation, the GVN sought more effective and sterner measures. It has been reported that by April 1959,

the President had instructed the National Revolutionary Movement and Dr. Tran Kim Tuyen, Director of the GVN Intelligence Service (Service for Political and Social Studies), to work out details for organizing mobile teams which could dispose of Viet Cong terrorists who, for lack of concrete proof, could not be dealt with through normal judicial procedures. These teams, to be composed of members of the Civil Guard, Police, Surete, and possibly ARVN elements, would reportedly be organized and controlled by the province chiefs in coordination with the regional military commanders, and would use threats, kidnappings, and assassinations to accomplish their goal. In late April ... the Surete Internal Security Action groups were notified that restrictions had been eased regarding the powers of arrest, that clearance from higher authorities need not be obtained before making arrests, and suspects could be arrested for interrogation,

28. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 42, "Summary of Internal Security Situation in Viet-Nam: January-April, 1959, No. 16," 30 July 1959. SECRET NOFORN

29. (U) Ibid.

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investigation and exploitation.... this directive had resulted in increased arrests in mid-May and there appeared to be some competition between units in the number of arrests.³⁰

(U) In addition to such terroristic and repressive methods of seeking out the Viet Cong, the Saigon government instituted a new pacification plan that was ultimately to give way to the agrovillage program. Because this new program lasted but a few months and was largely experimental, it had no formal title. "Agglomeration centers plan" was the term generally applied. Briefly stated, this program was based on the regroupment of peasants into compact communities, and as such was somewhat reminiscent of a similar technique employed by the French in the Red River Delta during the last stages of the first Indochina war.

(U) In February 1959, the Diem government sought to apply the regroupment technique in the more remote and inaccessible regions of the delta where the Viet Cong maintained strong control. The terrain of this area, particularly the south and southwest sections, with their rice paddies and swamps crisscrossed by a vast network of canals and impenetrable jungle, had long been a refuge for the Viet Minh, remnants of the sects, and bandits. Most of the inhabitants lived in small groups of huts clustered together in the middle of rice paddies and often separated by as much as a mile from the next cluster. Communication and transportation between these little islands were difficult, and the peasants were especially vulnerable to Viet Cong propaganda and terror.

(U) To combat this situation, two types of agglomeration centers were envisaged. The purpose behind both was the physical separation of the Viet Cong from the rest of the population. One type of center, the qui khu, would regroup the so-called Viet Cong families into special zones where they could be closely watched by government authorities. Although the criteria for defining Viet Cong families were

30. (U) Ibid.

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vague, the families included in this category were those who were former members of the Viet Minh, those having relatives in North Vietnam, and those who were either suspected of being VC cadres or of sympathizing with them. The other type of agglomeration center was for loyal, patriotic, reliable families who were seen to be actual or potential targets of the Viet Cong. These families were to be regrouped into qui ap where they would receive government protection and would not be in a position, willingly or unwillingly, to lend any support to the Viet Cong.

(U) Initially, it was planned to establish the qui khu and qui ap near each other, probably to make it easier to protect them. In fact, security was the sole justification for the agglomeration centers; the economic and social improvements were virtually ignored. Peasants were forced to move from their traditional homesteads to strange and unfamiliar places where, "often far from their rice fields, they were expected to re-establish their lives with only minimal assistance from the government."³¹

(U) The reaction of the regrouped peasants predictably took the form of unanimous protest. Loyal families felt that they had been mistreated and subjected to economic hardships. The so-called Viet Cong families claimed to be innocent of charges of association with Communists--having relatives in the north hardly justified being placed in what amounted to a concentration camp. Bitter protests were lodged by many high-ranking families who had relatives living in North Vietnam.³²

(U) In March 1959 Maj. Pham Ngoc Thao, who was later responsible for developing the agrovillage program, was appointed by Diem to study the progress of the agglomeration centers and to investigate its problems. In his report to Diem, Thao stressed the difficulties of distinguishing between genuine Viet Minh and nationalist families.

31. (U) Scigliano, Nation Under Stress, p. 179.

32. (U) For example, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Maj. Pham Ngoc Thao both had relatives in North Vietnam.

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Most of the inhabitants of South Vietnam had some connection with either the north or with the resistance (past or present) in the south. Major Thao was also critical of the concentration of these two groups of families into separate areas, observing that "in the qui khu we grouped our enemies and gave them more reason to be against us. In the qui ap we grouped our friends without regard for economic and social considerations. We gave them reason to be unhappy with their lot and turn against us."³³ In concluding his report, Thao suggested that if concentration was to be continued, there should be no segregation of families on the basis of political beliefs. Furthermore, any future regroupment program should also take into account economic and social considerations by providing living facilities, schools, hospitals, maternity clinics, and other social services to help establish better living conditions for the regrouped population.³⁴ According to Thao, his report formed the basis for the later development of the agrovilles.

(S) Although Major Thao's report may have influenced Diem's decision to suspend the experiments with the agglomeration centers, there are indications that Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Can, and other high GVN officials, including Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho and Minister of Agriculture Lo Van Dong, also influenced Diem. These men believed that more emphasis should be placed on positive efforts to gain the support of the rural population rather than relying solely on the use of force.³⁵ In early May the US embassy in Saigon hinted that peasant dissatisfaction and discontent in the southern provinces had produced a split within the GVN over the most effective way of dealing with the

33. (U) Quoted in Joseph J. Zasloff, Rural Resettlement in Vietnam: An Agrovillage in Development, Agency For International Development (Washington, D.C., n.d.), p. 7. An abbreviated version of this report under the title "Rural Resettlement in South Vietnam: The Agrovillage Program," is available in Pacific Affairs, vol. XXXV, no. 4 (Winter 1962-1963), pp. 327-40.

34. (U) Ibid.

35. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 42, 30 July 1959. SECRET

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internal security situation. One group favored taking positive action to help the peasantry and "win" them over to the government's side, while the other group felt that the government should use armed force to suppress dissident activities.³⁶ By June this conflict was apparently resolved. President Diem told Ambassador Durbrow "it is essential to win over the confidence of the people if the dissident problem is to be solved." Diem also remarked that he was convinced "that he must vigorously carry out his plan to move isolated peasants into villages from infected areas as was done so effectively in Malaya." President Diem further commented that while he and the government "had devoted most of their time and energy in the past two years on improving the situation in the High Plateau area," he had decided to "concentrate his efforts on improving the situation in the Delta area." Diem was confident that within a year the delta would be secure.³⁷

2. Agroville Doctrine and Organization

(U) The agroville program was formally announced by President Diem in his nationwide anniversary speech of 7 July 1959.

This year I propose to create densely populated settlement areas in the countryside, where conditions are favorable to communication and sanitation and where minimum facilities for the grouping of farmers living in isolation and destitution in the back country exist. These settlement areas will not only improve the life of the rural population, but they will also constitute the economic units which will play an important role in the future development of the country as a whole.³⁸

Diem further stated that the agrovilles would provide a framework for the social and economic development of the countryside. Each new settlement would provide schools, medical facilities, electricity, and other social services for its inhabitants. New crops would be cultivated, and training would be provided in modern agricultural methods,

36. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Tel. no. 2345, 6 May 1959. SECRET

37. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 1, 1 July 1959. SECRET

38. (U) Zasloff, Rural Resettlement, p. 1.

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artisan activity, and manufacturing.³⁹ Diem envisaged that the agrovilles would provide "the happy compromise between hustling, teaming city life and the placid rural existence.... a French term was coined for the centers--ville charniere, 'hinge city.'"⁴⁰

(U) Although President Diem laid considerable stress on the socio-economic aspects of the agrovillage program, the real purpose behind it was the improvement of rural security. This was acknowledged when, one week after Diem's speech, the Minister of Interior issued the following directive to the province chiefs and other local officials:

Following the President's Double Seven Day speech one of the principal duties of 1959 will be the creation of agrovilles. The reason for this work is that the population, especially in the South, is living in such spread out manner that the government cannot protect them and they are obliged to furnish supplies to the Viet Cong. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate this population, especially the families who have children still in the North or who are followers of the Viet Cong here. The echelons of government are requested to explain this policy to the people.⁴¹

(U) According to Major Thao, who was later put in charge of the security aspects of the agrovilles, the agrovillage program was to be part of a broad security plan for the whole country. The overall plan consisted of four basic elements:

(1) Regroupment of the population into agrovilles. The agrovilles were to be constructed along a new strategic road system in the delta. Two new roads were to be built in the Camau Peninsula, and the canals, which were overgrown with trees and shrubbery, were to be cleaned out and improved. By building agrovilles along these improved transportation routes, increased protection would be afforded the rural population.

(2) Development of competent local administration. It was hoped that improved security and living standards in the

39. (U) Ibid.

40. (U) Ibid. President Diem used the Vietnamese term khu tru mat ("prosperous dense center") to describe the agrovilles. They have also been referred to as cité jardin ("garden city").

41. (U) Ibid.

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agrovilles would stimulate more competent people to serve as village leaders. Apparently many local officials were incompetent, dishonest, and inefficient, and the rural population often would not support them, or be sympathetic toward the Saigon government. It was hoped that paying higher salaries would also attract more-competent local officials.

(3) Economic Development. It was also anticipated that the agroville program would stimulate economic development in the countryside by increasing agricultural production in the rice fields, as well as by developing public lands. The public lands in each agroville were to be given over to raising fruit trees, growing vegetables, and perhaps keeping a few animals. Each agroville would also have a central pond in which the inhabitants could raise fish, and a market center. Thus, it was expected that the agrovilles would provide additional sources of village revenue. The GVN hoped that the increased security provided by the agroville would permit it to collect more taxes--the Viet Cong was then thought to be a major inhibitor of the government's tax collection effort. Yet another economic consideration behind the agroville program was the reduction of certain public expenditures. By regrouping the scattered rural population into larger communities, the GVN believed it would not be necessary to build as many schools and medical facilities.

(4) Organization of the Youth. Young men between the ages of 18 and 35 were to be organized into groups whose initial task would be to assist in the actual construction of the agroville. Later these young men would serve as the agroville's voluntary self-defense force, replacing the traditional paid guards. These groups were expected to stimulate community development efforts to inspire a sense of pride in the agroville inhabitants, and finally to accede to administrative positions within the village or agroville hierarchy.

(U) The key to the basic security plan, however, was the construction of agrovilles. Central to the agroville program was regroupment, and it was this aspect of the program that received the greatest emphasis, almost to the exclusion of the other socio-economic considerations. It appears that the agrovilles themselves were synonymous with security since no provision was made for their defense.

(U) Initial GVN plans called for the construction of approximately 80 large agrovilles (khu tru mat) in the southwestern provinces. It was estimated that each agroville would contain about 400 families, or between 2000 and 3000 people. The Saigon government also planned to

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construct approximately 400 smaller agrovilles known in Vietnamese as ap tru mat ("agro-hamlets" or "agglomerated hamlets"). The agro-hamlets, each of which would house between 1000 and 1500 people, were designed to serve families who lived too far from the primary agrovillage. Four to six agro-hamlets were to be clustered around a main agrovillage as satellites.⁴²

(U) Each agrovillage was laid out according to a master plan developed in Saigon. At the center there was to be a commercial-administrative-service-recreation area. Here, the market place, shops, schools, assembly hall, hospital, government offices, and other public facilities were to be located. The land surrounding the central complex was to be used for residential purposes and partitioned into square plots by building a grid-type network of bisecting canals and roads. Each large plot was then to be subdivided into twelve family plots, each one averaging about an acre, with a communal pond in the center. Families moving into the agrovillage were to purchase their own plot of land from the government, and agricultural loans were supposed to be available to help meet the cost. The GVN provided each family moving into the agrovillage with a "gift" of about 400 piasters (approximately \$5.50) to help defray moving expenses. It was anticipated that each family moving into an agrovillage would build its hut, using materials brought from its previous dwelling. On their individual plots surrounding their homes, families were expected to raise fruit trees (banana, coconut, and pineapple), cultivate a vegetable garden, and perhaps raise poultry or cattle in order to supplement their income. The communal ponds were designed for raising fish. The agrovillage farmer was expected to continue to work his rice fields, which were located outside the perimeter of the agrovillage, while all this activity was going on.

(U) Although the GVN provided the materials for the construction of the agrovilles, the physical labor involved in digging the canals

42. (U) The total number of people to be regrouped into agrovilles and agro-hamlets was somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000.

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and ponds, building the roads and pathways, and constructing public buildings such as the school, assembly hall, and hospital was to be provided by a communal labor force. Peasants were expected to work on such projects in the interests of "community development," that is, without remuneration. In Diem's view, since the average peasant paid no taxes to the government, a few days of free labor was considered an adequate substitute.

3. Program Organization

(U) The elaborateness of the agrovillage program required detailed planning and solid interagency relations in order for it to succeed. As with many programs undertaken by the GVN, however, much of the control was centered within the presidency. Ngo Dinh Diem himself played an important role in the implementation of the agrovillage program; as mentioned earlier, he personally approved all agrovillage locations.⁴³ Also involved were the Ministry of Interior, the Civic Action Directorate, the Directorate General of Construction, and the army. However, since very little information has been published detailing the scope and operations of the agrovillage program, it is difficult to delineate clearly the functional responsibility assumed by these agencies.

(U) At the local level, program implementation was under the nominal control of the province chief, district chief, and other local officials. After the construction schedule had been decided upon in Saigon, responsibility was delegated to the provinces for recruiting workers, assigning tasks, and supervising actual work. Saigon then exerted strong pressure on the province chiefs to complete the agrovilles on or before the deadline, and they, in turn, demanded faster performance from the district chiefs. Military officers supervised much of the physical work involved in constructing agrovilles, but their reporting lines were cumbersome and confusing--they reported to the Directorate General of Construction on technical matters and to

43. (U) Scigliano, Nation Under Stress, p. 180.

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the district chief on administrative matters. Finally, Civic Action cadres were charged with explaining the agrovillage program to the people and preparing them psychologically for the move, and district and village information officers assisted in propagandizing the value of agrovillages to the villagers.

(U) The agrovillage program was financed under the GVN budget, from Civic Action funds, a special contingency and reserve account, and the National Lottery. In contrast to other Vietnamese pacification programs, such as the earlier land development centers or the later strategic hamlets, the United States did not directly support this program, either with money or equipment. However, it must be remembered that at this time the United States was underwriting approximately 60 percent of the GVN's non-defense budgetary expenditures through counterpart-fund financing.

(U) Apparently, the GVN did not discuss the agrovillage program with US embassy officials until well after the decision had been made to initiate the program. One source has commented that Diem deliberately refrained from discussing preliminary plans for the agrovillages with the Americans because of the criticism he had received from USOM over the land development centers.⁴⁴ It is also likely that Diem suspected the Americans would not approve of the agrovillage plan, so perhaps he wanted to build a few on his own and later ask the United States for support if the results were good. Then, too, Diem was not interested in having Americans in any numbers in the provinces. In any event, the US role in the agrovillage program was apparently confined to exhorting President Diem to take account of the peasants' reactions to the program. The United States also seemed to have relied strongly on the Vietnamese for information concerning the agrovillage program, as well as on other developments in the country. The United States had a great stake in the stability of the countryside, yet during this period there were few Americans in the rural areas.

44. (U) Interview with Ambassador Durbrow.

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(U) The first agroville was completed at Vy Thuan, in what is now Chuong Thien Province, on 12 March 1960. Judging from the elaborateness of its appearance, Vy Thuan agroville was not to be a typical agroville. It was primarily a "model," larger and fancier than subsequent agrovilles. For this reason President Diem insisted that the Vy Thuan agroville be constructed on a rush basis, instructing the province chief to complete the work in 50 days. Diem reasoned that the peasants would not be convinced of the advantages of agroville life unless they could either see one first hand or hear reports of one. Thus, according to one observer, the Vy Thuan agroville took on the appearance of "a modern American suburban development and shopping center."⁴⁵ To the GVN authorities, however, the Vy Thuan agroville was an enormous success; peasant discontent arising from the harsh forced-labor measures employed was expected to subside after the inhabitants had moved into the agroville and begun to enjoy its benefits.

(U) Major Thien, who claimed the agroville idea was original with him, admitted to having kept an average of 20,000 peasants at work in Vy Thuan for 50 days. He also indicated "considerable pressure" was used to induce peasants to work on the agroville, but added it was necessary for him to act firmly to meet President Diem's 50-day schedule. (It is interesting to note that Diem had promoted Thien two grades in rank, from a lieutenant to a major, and appointed him province chief "with the express duty of building the first agroville in 50 days."⁴⁶) Although Major Thien had incurred a great deal of popular resentment for his harsh labor practices, he also thought peasant dissatisfaction would decline after the people could see the results of their labor. However, the agroville was planned to accommodate roughly 5000 people, which led to serious disgruntlement on the part of those 15,000 laborers who would receive no benefits from their work.

45. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 426, 6 June 1960.

46. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 392, 10 May 1960.

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(U) This pattern of implementing the agrovillage program was repeated in the remaining score of agrovillages. Orders were transmitted from the Palace to the provinces dictating that an agrovillage would be constructed in a certain length of time in a specific location. As with earlier GVN programs, few local administrators dared question such directives. In their zeal to comply with the president's wishes, many province chiefs and other local officials used rather forceful methods to coerce peasants to provide the colossal amount of physical labor involved in building the agrovillages.

(U) To say that the Diem government was blind to the negative reaction and popular resentment of the affected peasants is simply not true. However, the GVN authorities did persist in deluding themselves that the improvements in the peasants' standard of living would in the long run outweigh their dissatisfaction.

(C) Although the approximate 19 other agrovillages constructed in the southern provinces of the country were not as elaborate as Vy Thuan, the methods employed in their construction were generally the same. Most people working on agrovillages had to provide their own transportation to the agrovillage site, as well as their own food and tools. Occasionally an imaginative district chief or province officer would arrange to show movies at night. Some even "rewarded" workers with bicycles or lengths of fabric.⁴⁷ At the Than Thoi agrovillage, in Kien Hoa Province, it was reported that the peasants were paid approximately 10 piasters a day for their work. One American observer concluded that Diem may have felt it necessary to compensate the agrovillage workers in Kien Hoa Province because of the deteriorating security situation there.⁴⁸ However, it is interesting to note that this agrovillage was constructed largely by members of the Republican Youth, who came from various other delta provinces.

47. (U) Nguyen Khac Nhan, "Policy of Key Rural Agrovillages," Asian Culture, vol. III, no. 3-4 (July-December 1961), pp. 29-49.

48. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 452, 17 June 1960.
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(U) The question of compensating peasants for their labor on the agrovilles remained a problem throughout the life of the program. As peasant discontent increased, Diem was advised by many Americans to consider some form of payment to the workers. But he persisted in his belief that a few days of free labor was not too much to ask since the peasants paid no taxes. As the program evolved, however, the government apparently decided that only those who would actually live in the agrovilles would have to work on them, but it also apparently expanded the potential number of people to be regrouped into agrovilles. At the same time, though, the government made more use of "volunteer" workers, such as the members of the Republican Youth.

(U) Because the previous agglomeration centers program was still in being when the agrovillage program was announced, there seems to have been some confusion as to who would be moved into agrovilles. Whether due to bureaucratic inertia, lack of communication, or some other failing, some provinces were still considering methods of establishing agglomeration centers while others were involved in planning for the first agrovilles. The population of Vy Thuan agrovillage, for example, consisted of the combined populations of previous qui khu and qui ap agglomeration centers.

(U) After the GVN had decided not to regroup people exclusively on the basis of political loyalties, it established additional criteria for moving people into agrovilles. Initially, the agrovilles would serve the people living in the immediate area, and the agro-hamlets would take care of those living farther away--it apparently was decided that a farmer should live no more than two kilometers from his rice fields. Earlier agrovillage plans also called for relocating suspected Viet Cong families so as to maintain surveillance over them. In March 1960, the GVN established the following priorities for resettlements: (1) families living on the agrovillage property, both landowners and tenants; (2) victims of the Communists; (3) poor families actively participating in agrovillage construction; (4) families of the military and the civic guards; and (5) other families selected

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by the agrovillage committee.⁴⁹ Some province and district chiefs interpreted these instructions as they saw fit. For example, the chief of Binh Minh district, Vinh Long Province, instructed the military officer in charge of Tan Luoc agrovillage to regroup families into that agrovillage according to the following criteria: "(1) people owning land or living in the agrovillage area; (2) victims of the Communists; (3) people of the region with patriotic and anti-Communist reputations; (4) people from other villages who are patriotic nationalists and anti-Communists."⁵⁰

(U) Although the GVN claimed that resettlement in an agrovillage was to be voluntary, in some instances the entire population within the general agrovillage area was forced to relocate. This was probably due to the fact that very few peasants actually volunteered to move into agrovillages. In some instances it was reported that peasants tried to bribe local officials to permit them to remain where they were.⁵¹

(C) Although initial GVN plans called for the construction of approximately 80 large agrovillages and 400 agro-hamlets by the end of 1963, it was not long after the first few agrovillages were built that the GVN began to reduce the scope of the program. In the early part of 1960, the government hoped to open 35 to 37 agrovillages by July; in April this figure was decreased to 15; on 4 May it stood at 12; and on 11 May it was 10. At the end of July, 8 agrovillages had been officially opened, but none were really completed. In mid-August, Vietnam Press reported that a total of 29 agrovillages would be finished during 1960, but on 24 August Diem announced that the government would construct only 19. By the end of October, 20 agrovillages had been officially opened, and the program seemed to be finished. In late September, President Diem remarked to Ambassador Durbrow that the agrovillage program was being discontinued for some time. Diem viewed

49. (U) Zasloff, Rural Resettlement, p. 23.

50. (U) Ibid.

51. (U) Ibid., p. 25.

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the program as a complete success; he reported that initial problems of convincing the peasants of the value of agrovilles had been overcome and that the peasants were now 100 percent behind the program. However, he said, the program was very expensive and in view of other budgetary requirements for the coming year (1961) the government could not afford to continue the agrovillage program.⁵²

(C) In addition to the financial "burden" of the agrovillage program, peasant discontent was apparently another reason why the GVN authorities decided to suspend the program quietly. Diem's brother, Nhu, reportedly believed that in view of the upcoming 1961 elections, the government would be wise to curtail the construction of both agrovilles and agro-hamlets so as to not arouse any additional resentment among the rural population. Interestingly enough, however, Nhu revealed that the government did not intend to undertake the agro-hamlet program until late 1961 or 1962.⁵³

(U) Yet another plausible reason why the agrovillage program was dropped was the fact that not only the peasant population but other Vietnamese opposed it. The first evidence of this opposition to the program came in April 1960 when a group of eighteen prominent Vietnamese citizens, including several former cabinet ministers, submitted an open letter to President Diem. The Caravelle group, as they were called, urged Diem to undertake certain reforms in political, economic, military, and social areas. In the letter, the agrovilles were specifically criticized:

thousands of persons are mobilized for exhausting work, compelled to leave their own jobs, homes, and families, to participate in the construction of magnificent but useless 'agrovilles' which weary them and provoke their disaffection, thus aggravating popular resentment and creating an ideal terrain for enemy propaganda.... The government ... should put an end to all forms of human exploitation in the work camps of the agrovilles.⁵⁴

52. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 149, 7 October 1960. CONFIDENTIAL

53. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. no. 93, 2 September 1960. CONFIDENTIAL

54. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, p. 439.

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In August, this group, which had organized itself as the Bloc for Freedom and Progress (Khoi Tu Do Tien Bo), again petitioned President Diem to drop the agrovillage program, which was described this time as a "doleful experiment ... turning upside down the life of the nation."⁵⁵

(U) In October, Dr. Phan Quang Dan, the most prominent opposition leader at the time, in an open letter to President Diem also expressed his concern over the popular resentment created as a result of the agrovillage program. Although Dr. Dan apparently had no quarrel with the basic objectives of the program, he was especially critical of the forced labor methods employed in building the agrovilles, as well as the forced relocation aspects:

the agrovilles represent large-scale public works, comparable to dams, roads, bridges, etc., and go far beyond the framework of community development at the village level. The unpaid labor of thousands of peasants, torn from their agricultural occupations and assigned by force to the construction of these agrovilles recalls the former, hated system of corvees and makes the lot of the population even more pitiful, who even, in normal times, barely scrape along on the edge of misery.... The inhabitants of the agrovilles, in leaving their former homes and fields, suffer ... important economic losses which are far from being immediately compensated by the social advantages which the new community offers. As their removal is not in general voluntary, their bitterness only becomes the more profound.⁵⁶

Recognizing the need for the Diem government to win popular support, Dr. Dan proposed that all laborers on future agrovilles be paid for their work, and he outlined six specific measures to finance the program. Some of these proposals were actually more in the nature of political reforms, but Dr. Dan apparently reasoned that such reforms would create "a new moral climate." Thus, "the advantages of the

55. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, Desp. No. 63, 17 August 1960.

56. (U) Open Letter to President Diem from Dr. Phan Quang Dan, 6 October 1960.

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agrovilles would be more easily understood by the peasants, who would themselves ask to come and live in them, even at the cost of some economic sacrifices resulting from the fact of the abandonment of their former properties."⁵⁷ In conclusion, Dr. Dan emphasized what can be considered the most important failure of the agrovillage program:

It is finally useful to recall that the Delta of North Vietnam, including the densest rural and urban concentrations, was nonetheless lost to the Communists because colonialist policy alienated the hearts and spirits of the people, which proves that regrouping South Vietnamese peasants in agrovilles by itself would not be enough to combat and defeat Communism.⁵⁸

E. EARLY SECURITY-RELATED EFFORTS

(U) In February 1955 a US Military Assistance Advisory Group under General O'Daniel was formed to assume responsibility for training the South Vietnamese forces under the overall control of General Ely, commander in chief of the French Expeditionary Forces. For most of 1955, the army was involved in combat against the armies of the religious sects and scattered groups of Viet Minh irregulars. By December 1955, however, it appeared that the back of sect resistance had been broken and the scattered army forces were regrouped into divisions for centralized training. By May 1956 the United States assumed complete responsibility for training, and in September the US training program for the regular forces commenced.

(U) The problem faced by the MAAG was difficult indeed--while the force was reasonably adequate in strength (142,000 men organized into four field-type divisions, six light divisions, and 13 territorial regiments), it had serious qualitative deficiencies in the officer corps, as well as a complete lack of capability in support matters. During the French-Indochina war, the Vietnamese forces had been

57. (U) Ibid.

58. (U) Ibid.

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heavily encadred with French officers and NCOs, and logistic support was the complete responsibility of the French.

(U) In addition to the regular army forces, Diem had grouped various existing paramilitary units into a Civil Guard (CG) under the direction of the Minister of Interior. This force, approximately 40,000 strong and organized into lightly armed mobile companies, was to serve as a rural law-and-order force. A local defense force of "hamlet militia," the Self-Defense Corps (SDC), was also formed from existing local defense units. This organization, with an approximate strength of 60,000, was deployed in 10-man squads for local village protection.

(U) Basic guidance for the MAAG advisory effort naturally stemmed from the appraisal of the enemy threat. The official estimate during the late 1950s was that the Communist Viet Minh organization in South Vietnam rather than the People's Army of North Vietnam constituted the major danger. Why, then, was the Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) organized and trained to meet a conventional invasion across the DMZ rather than the internal threat posed by the Communist organization in South Vietnam?

(U) As will be recalled, US military strategy in the mid-1950s was based on the doctrine of massive retaliation, but at the same time the US containment policy, as evidenced in its many regional arrangements, including SEATO, called for the development of indigenous forces to act as a deterrent to 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 ARVN forces (in the Chiefs' view) was to maintain internal security and to deter Communist aggression by a limited defense of the DMZ. This view was bolstered by the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Forces on 1 April 1956, which left South Vietnam without military protection. Diem also felt strongly about the necessity of defending the DMZ, and he urged and supported the buildup of the ARVN

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to embrace this mission. Finally, the fact that the US military thinking had been strongly influenced by the North Korean invasion added to the general pressures for expanding the mission of the ARVN to that of defense against external invasion, in spite of the threat assessment which continued to maintain that the internal threat was the only significant danger.⁵⁹ In 1955 the Military Assistance Advisory Group described the ARVN's mission in the following terms:

The organization and missions of the National Army, Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps are supplementary in assuring adequate internal security for Free Vietnam. The National Army retains overall responsibility for internal security in accordance with its assigned mission. The development of the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps as supplementary internal security agencies will, at nominal cost, provide for increased internal security and simultaneously afford necessary relief of army units for necessary combat training, thus greatly increasing the potential of Free Vietnam to resist armed aggression from without, coordinated with guerrilla and subversive action from within.

The Civil Guard will be responsible for a) nationwide civil law enforcement except in those cities having municipal police, b) supplementing the Army Territorial Regiments in maintaining internal security, and c) serving as an operating agency for the Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation in the collection of anti-subversive intelligence. The Civil Guard will possess the necessary mobility to concentrate against strong subversive actions, supplementing and lending breadth to the Army Territorial Battalions....⁶⁰

Even though this mission statement recognized the army's primary responsibility for internal security, training was concentrated on creating an army capability to counter a conventional invasion across the DMZ.

59. (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, pp. 10-15, of section entitled "U.S. Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959."

60. (U) *Ibid.*, p. 20. (Emphasis added)

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(U) By 1959 the ARVN had been reorganized into a force of seven light divisions, each with a strength of about 10,500. Each division was composed of three infantry regiments and one battalion of 105mm artillery, 4.2 mortar engineers, and technical logistic support companies. Two corps headquarters had been established for command and control. As the security situation deteriorated under the impact of the Communist "armed struggle," these divisions were broken down into regimental and battalion task forces and assigned to the provinces. Operations against the Communist forces for the most part took the form of battalion and regimental-size sweeps--which the Communists readily avoided.

(U) During the late 1950s there was considerable diversity of view about the mission of the paramilitary forces:

The Michigan State University Advisory Group, under contract to USOM, Vietnam, to provide counsel and guidance on the development of the Civil Guard (CG), viewed this organization as a national police, civilian in character and function, lightly but adequately equipped with sufficient delegated authority and training to enforce all laws, control subversion, and collect intelligence data in areas not covered by municipal police, as well as establishing close ties with the population. Diem envisaged the CG as a large and powerful military organization accountable to him through his appointed province chiefs--a counter to the army in the struggle for power which would also provide provincial security through mobility from posts outside the villages; in line with this view, he transferred the CG from the Ministry of the Interior to the Presidency in 1956. The USMAAG came to view the CG much as Diem did--not, of course, as an anti-coup safeguard, but as a mobile countersubversion force, an adjunct to the army that would relieve it of internal security duty and free it to learn how to counter the threat from the North. As of the end of 1956 the CG were being trained at the Quang Trung school to assist the army in case of crisis or of overt attack; by late 1957, they were conducting operations with ARVN in unpacified areas.⁶¹

61. (U) Ibid., p. 22.

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(U) In July 1957, Diem, acting on his own conception of the Civil Guard as primarily a military, rather than a police, organization, asked the United States for \$60 million worth of heavy military equipment, but this recommendation was countered by MSU and the MAAG, who proposed reequipping the force with lighter weapons. In 1958 the US advisory effort gave way in part to the GVN pressure for heavy equipment with the understanding that the CG would be removed from the president's office and once again placed under the Ministry of Interior, as proposed by MSU. Diem, however, procrastinated, and the United States, in turn, withheld monetary assistance to the CG. Finally, in January 1959 Diem gave in and transferred the CG to the Ministry of Interior.

(U) In June 1959 the newly constituted Public Safety Division of USOM replaced the MSU team as the advisory agency to the Civil Guard. However, this move proved temporary, since the MAAG was now convinced that the CG, by the nature of its operation, was a military element--not a police force. Eighteen months later, in December 1960, on MAAG recommendation, the CG's organizational home was shifted from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of National Defense, and the MAAG took over responsibility for its training from USOM.

(U) The lack of agreement on roles and missions of the ARVN and the US advisory effort, the resulting shifts in training responsibility, and the rising tempo of the VC "military struggle" had the predictable result of producing an ineffective force. By 1960, when the MAAG took over advisory and support functions for the CG, the strength of the force had fallen to 48,000 as a result of casualties and desertions.

(U) The difference of view among the South Vietnamese officials and the US advisory community as to the role and missions of the CG had a disastrous impact on the creation of a rural law-and-order force. With the transfer of the CG to the Ministry of Defense in December 1960 (even though almost 30,000 members of the CG had received police-type training), a police force ceased to exist in the countryside for all intents and purposes. The only regular police presence was that

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provided by the National Police in the cities and the larger towns. While the Public Safety Division of AID (which had taken over the Michigan State advisory role in 1959) continued to advise the National Police, little progress could be made in the establishment of a police force due to increasing insurgent pressure and the resultant concentration on military operations.

(U) In contrast to the difference of view regarding the Civil Guard, there was a general consensus among US advisers and the GVN as to the roles and missions of the Self-Defense Corps. This force was recruited locally on a voluntary basis for the protection of the village populations. It was felt that the local association with the family and the hamlet would create strong incentives for their protection and lead to the building of strong local defenses. This force, officially established in March 1956, was under the administration and control of the Ministry of Interior and, unlike the CG, which had been bandied from pillar to post, remained under that ministry until December 1960. In spite of its relative organizational stability, it was given minimal attention in resources and training. Under the pressure of the deteriorating situation in the countryside in late 1960, it was transferred to the Ministry of National Defense; an authorized level of 60,000 was established for the SDC, and MAAG became responsible for providing advisory and materiel support.

(U) By mid-1960, when General McGarr relieved General Williams as MAAG chief, the security situation in the countryside had come to be recognized as nearly disastrous both by the GVN and the US advisory community. The ARVN, still plagued by a lack of leadership and essential training in counterinsurgency tactics, was ineffective, and the CG and the SDC, which had been given minimal attention in training and resources, were in danger of total collapse. In the meantime the Communists had begun the process of regularization of their local guerrilla units into Main Force companies and were launching aggressive attacks against the security forces.

(U) General McGarr, former commandant of the Command and Staff College at Leavenworth, brought with him a study of counterinsurgent

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tactics that had been developed during his tenure there. The efforts of the MAAG staff were immediately concentrated on the methods of training which could put this concept into effect. Ultimately, a coherent doctrine on counterinsurgent operations was developed, and MAAG training of the ARVN was gradually reoriented accordingly.

(U) With the transfer of training responsibility for both the CG and the SDC to the MAAG in December 1960, a new training and equipment program was instituted. The strength of the CG was increased through revised recruiting methods so as to reach the newly authorized support strength of 68,000. Training for newly activated CG companies was scheduled at the national training centers, while retraining of existing CG units was instituted at newly formed provincial training centers. Obsolete French arms and equipment were replaced by more modern US models, and a US advisory effort was instituted in the provinces and regions. Concurrently, provision was made for improving the training of the SDC at provincial training centers.

F. VC REACTION TO AGROVILLES

(U) During the period in which the agroville program was in operation, the strategy of the Viet Cong appears to have been partially directed against the disruption of the program. Both propaganda and more violent tactics were employed. In March 1960, for example, two agroville under construction in An Xuyen Province were destroyed; one of them was burned to the ground. In early April, the Ba The agroville, An Giang Province, was attacked by Viet Cong forces who burned down half of the buildings and decapitated seventeen persons. Later that month the Hoai Thon agroville, Kien Tuong Province, was also attacked. An Xuyen Province seems to have been an attractive target for the Viet Cong, for in late May they attacked the Thuan An agroville, which was still in the process of being constructed. As a result of these actions, the government was not able to open any agroville in that province. In June the Viet Cong mounted a strong propaganda campaign against the people of Duc Hue agroville, Ba Xuyen Province, warning them not to move into the agroville under the

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penalty of death. That same month, Major Khuu Van Ba, province chief of Vinh Long, was assassinated by the Viet Cong, presumably because he was responsible for the construction of two agrovilles in his province. On 9 July one of these agrovilles, located at Tan Luoc, was attacked and several houses were burned, but Tan Luoc was later officially opened by the government.

(U) The Viet Cong also attempted to intimidate local officials responsible for implementing the agrovillage program. According to one source, "they cannily selected for special punishment those officials who were active in agrovillage work and also unpopular among the villagers."⁶² Threatening letters were sent to local officials warning them to cease implementing the agrovillage program. An example of such a letter, sent to a hamlet youth leader of My Thuan village who was responsible for recruiting workers at the Tan Luoc agrovillage, is cited below:

While facing failure the Americans and Diem have more dangerous plots. They are building agrovilles everywhere. Agrovilles are big prisons and hells on earth. When these agrovilles are completed, they will concentrate the peace-loving, patriotic families there in order to exploit their wealth [and] to draft young men so that they have enough forces to start the invasion of the North, causing bloody killing among brothers....

You are very efficient in recruiting workers for agrovilles. In this undertaking, you and the hamlet chief accept bribes from the people. If someone wishes to remain home, he pays you privately, such as in the fourth collection of pay in lieu of work on March 27, 1960. You have forced many (93) people to work at Tan Luoc agrovillage. Some of them who have not yet finished with their farming work came to you to ask for a cancellation and you threatened to bring them to the village council to settle the matter and you accepted bribes from those who stayed home. There were people who had to pay you four times in lieu of work. Besides bribes in cash, you and the hamlet secretary accepted bribes in kind such as mangoes, vegetables, tea, etc....

On behalf of the revolution and the people, we, the commanding staff of Company 256 of the Battalion Ly

62. (U) Zasloff, Rural Resettlement, p. 26.

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Thuong Kiet, once again order you to stop your servant job.

If you violate this order, the revolution and the people will not guarantee your life nor your property.⁶³

(U) Because very little is known about pre-NLF history, it is difficult to assess accurately the motivation and purpose of the Viet Cong's anti-agroville strategy. On the one hand it is possible that the Viet Cong feared the agroville would, when fully operational, rob them of opportunities to exploit the rural population. On the other hand, it is possible that the Viet Cong saw that the agroville presented an important vehicle for the exploitation of existing peasant grievances and resentment against the government. Thus, by attacking an unpopular program, the Viet Cong could win support for themselves as defenders of popular freedom. The assassination of unpopular, dishonest, or corrupt local leaders associated with the agroville program served to convince the peasants that the Viet Cong were their champions.

(U) In the early stages of the agroville program, the Viet Cong were most likely unsure of the nature of the program and may have felt threatened. Thus, they engaged at first in rather violent attacks against the agroville, which with their captive population, represented convenient targets of opportunity for selected acts of terrorism. During the latter half of 1960, Viet Cong attacks against the agroville seem to have declined somewhat. This may have been due to the fact that the GVN, as a result of the Viet Cong's earlier anti-agroville activities, was forced to provide military security at each site. Since the Viet Cong at that time were still in the process of organizing themselves militarily, they tended to avoid engagements with larger ARVN units. At the same time, since the GVN was concentrating its military efforts in the delta, the Viet Cong apparently decided to begin offensive operations in the Central Highlands.

63. (U) Ibid. This letter also appears in John D. Donoghue and Vo Hong Phuc, My Thuan: The Study of a Delta Village in South Vietnam, Michigan State University Advisory Group (Saigon, May 1961).

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UNCLASSIFIED**G. CONCLUSION**

(U) By the end of 1960, the GVN had ceased promoting the agroville program as the answer to the deteriorating internal security situation in South Vietnam. Although Diem and Nhu both cited other reasons for the government's decision to terminate the program, it seems apparent that a combination of a continuing erosion of security in the countryside (owing to increased activity by the Viet Cong) and a general failure of the agroville program to achieve its advertised objectives resulted in this decision. Although the GVN never officially dropped the program, it gradually allowed it to lapse. The following section may help to explain why the agroville program was abandoned.

(U) It seems apparent that the GVN confused the ends of the program with the means of achievement, i.e., it concentrated on the regroupment aspect almost to the exclusion of all other aspects of the program. This gave the impression that regroupment of itself was expected to provide security. To be sure, President Diem envisaged the agroville as providing the framework for a social revolution in the countryside, but he expected this would occur spontaneously.

(U) The major failure of the agroville program was the manner in which it was implemented. It has been argued that the agroville concept was culturally unsuited to the people of the delta, who preferred to live in a scattered fashion.⁶⁴ Yet, it can also be argued that if the government had taken account of the peasants' initial skepticism and had shown more of an interest in their reactions, the agroville program may have been able to provide the population an alternative to the Viet Cong. From the very beginning, however, it seemed obvious that the government had never examined the basic assumptions of the program.

64. (U) Zasloff, Rural Resettlement, pp. 29-30.

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(U) From the outset it was clear that the peasants did not like the idea of having to leave their traditional homes near their ancestral graves and the village dinh.⁶⁵ As one observer remarked:

The peasant was disturbed by the prospect of uprooting his home, sheltered by trees which offered shade and fruit, quitting his ancestral tombs, separating himself from his rice fields and his garden. He was compelled to abandon a traditional pattern of life for a fresh start in an uninviting site; he was obliged to build a new home, plant young trees and till a fallow plot which he had not chosen, but was required to buy.⁶⁶

Another weakness of the program was that the GVN forced all the peasants within a certain radius of the agrovillage to relocate, rather than only those who lived in the immediate area, as was originally planned. Since the GVN decided not to build the agro-hamlets, those living rather far from the agrovillage were simply forced to move in.

(U) In addition, many agrovilles were inaugurated and its inhabitants relocated before the promised facilities were completed. Since the government had hoped to "sell" the agrovilles to the peasants on the basis of improvements in their standard of living, the lack of such improvements did little to bolster the peasants' confidence in either the agrovillage program or the government, and in all probability produced greater resentment.

(U) Another problem stemmed from the government's insistence on the use of forced labor to construct the agrovilles. Diem was adamant in his refusal to consider any form of monetary compensation to the peasants or to even provide food, work implements, or transportation to the farmers. Local officials responsible for implementing the

65. (U) The village dinh, analagous to the Japanese shinto shrine, served as the spiritual center of the village and its surrounding hamlets. The dinh was responsible for the "well-being, prosperity and longevity of the local territorial group and its members." Participation in its activities and ceremonies played an important part in the religious life of the community. Donoghue and Phuc, My Thuan, p. 45. See also G. C. Hickey, Village in Vietnam (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 214-32.

66. (U) Zasloff, Rural Resettlement, pp. 29-30.

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program also used rather forceful methods to "get the job done," thus alienating the very people the agrovilles were designed to protect and help. Theoretically, the physical labor required in building the agrovilles was to be performed after the farmers had planted their rice and while they were waiting for the young seedlings to mature. However, in many instances, overzealous local officials insisted that the work be done in conformity with Saigon's arbitrarily decided schedule. Often, this occurred at harvesttime or during the planting season and took the farmers away from their rice fields.

(U) No provisions were made for adapting various aspects of the program to peculiar local conditions. The Saigon government, as has been mentioned, developed a single master plan for the entire program. Direct orders were sent down to the province chiefs who in turn addressed them to the appropriate district chiefs, village chiefs, and the ARVN officers in charge of the agroville construction plan. There seems to have been no active participation of local officials in either the planning or construction phases of the program. Furthermore, there was little coordination between the central government and local authorities regarding implementation--a major weakness of such a complex and elaborate program. In addition, few province or district chiefs fully explained the problems associated with implementing the program to their bosses in Saigon. Diem was apparently unaware of the degree of peasant dissatisfaction and resentment created by the agrovilles. Local officials told him only what they thought he wanted to hear, and since they were under constant pressure to meet the deadlines imposed on them, most did not dare to criticize or report unfavorably on the progress of the program. In spite of occasional US efforts to convince him otherwise, President Diem continued to believe that the rural population supported the agroville program.

(U) That Diem's agroville program was a dismal failure can be seen from the foregoing discussion. The striking feature behind its failure was the fact that the GVN never really understood what was necessary to make it work. The forced relocation, use of corvee labor, and the arbitrary and offensive behavior of most of the officials

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responsible for the program produced greater resentment and antagonism toward the central government among the peasantry than perhaps did the terroristic activities of the Viet Cong. Such results provided the Viet Cong with readily exploitable issues--issues which were vital to the fledgling insurgency. The GVN failed to recognize that the Viet Cong were attracting local support because of the government's policies; many people during this time period joined the Viet Cong or at least gave tacit support to them in protest against the government. The rural population of South Vietnam, which during those early years represented something close to 90 percent of the total population, was the focal point of the enemy's strategy, but not the center of the government's attention.

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III

STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM, 1961-1963

A. BACKGROUND

(U) By 1956, to the surprise of many informed observers, President Diem had succeeded in establishing a firm hold over the government and administrative machinery of the country. South Vietnam had not only become a viable political unit, but it also registered impressive economic gains during its first few years. These developments produced a mood of optimism in Washington, as well as in Saigon. This hopeful outlook, however, reflected an inadequate awareness and assessment of the Communist threat to the country. Both American and Vietnamese leaders viewed an invasion from North Vietnam as the major challenge to the security and viability of South Vietnam. Thus, emphasis was placed on the expansion of the regular army (ARVN) and on training in conventional tactics. The US advisory effort, as well as the military aid program, was geared to the task of thwarting a Korean-type assault.

(U) It was only during 1959 that incidents involving the assassination of local officials and the overt indoctrination of villagers attracted serious attention to the fact that the country faced a threat from Communists trained in guerrilla warfare. In many respects, this was the moment of recognition, if not reckoning, for the Government of South Vietnam.

(U) On 29 January 1961, Radio Hanoi announced the creation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. This organization had as its "sacred historical task," according to later comments, the overthrow of the "US-Diem clique" and the liberation of the south. Soon after this announcement, the Front launched a guerrilla offensive aimed at preventing the April 1961 election.

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(U) Despite their lack of success in disrupting the election (President Diem was reelected without serious opposition), the insurgents demonstrated their increased capabilities by attacking and seizing for a short time the capital city of Phuoc Thanh Province--only 60 miles from Saigon. The deterioration of security in the countryside highlighted by this attack led to a State of Emergency proclamation by President Diem on 18 October 1961. It also led to the publication of a US State Department white paper, "A Threat to Peace: North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam," which presented an assortment of evidence to prove that North Vietnam's leaders were the masterminds behind the growing problem of insurgency in the south.

(U) According to the white paper, regular VC strength had grown to an estimated 9000 men organized into some 30 battalions. An additional 8000 or more troops were operating in the provinces and districts under the leadership of VC officers.¹ The enemy not only had a rival military force but a rival administrative apparatus as well. Directed at first by the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party (North Vietnam) and later by the Central Committee of the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam, this apparatus was led principally by southerners. There were interzone, province, and district committees and village and hamlet cells. There were also specialized groups for liaison, propaganda, espionage, tax collection, and many other activities.²

(U) The growth of this complex and pervasive guerrilla structure led President Kennedy to review US policy toward South Vietnam and to underline the US commitment to the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. The President dispatched the Staley (May 1961) and Taylor (October 1961) missions to South Vietnam; after negotiations with GVN officials, agreement was reached on a sharply increased level of US economic

1. (U) These figures did not include many thousands of village guards, porters, and the like.

2. (U) See "The Nature of the Insurgency" (Part One, Volume II of this study) for a discussion of the evolution of the insurgents' organization and tactics.

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and military aid. Heavy emphasis was placed on building up the country's ability to meet the challenge of the growing insurgency.

(U) Between 1961 and 1963, the GVN and the Viet Cong competed openly for the loyalty and the support of the rural population, both believing that whichever side gained this loyalty and support would emerge victorious. The Viet Cong tried to sever the government's link with the countryside and force it to withdraw into the towns and cities. The GVN, on the other hand, attempted not only to forestall but reverse this process by forcing the insurgents back into their base areas where they could be isolated and destroyed.

(U) In order to eliminate the guerrilla threat, the Diem regime turned its attention and energies to the countryside, where insecurity was widespread and government influence had been neglected. The major responsibility for the day-to-day protection of the rural population (whether regrouped into agrovilles or living in scattered hamlets) fell on the shoulders of the Civil Guard (CG) and the Self-Defense Corps (SDC). The CG and SDC had been formed in 1955 and six years later numbered, respectively, a little more than 50,000 and 60,000. In addition to protecting important installations and population centers, the CG operated as a regional reaction force. The SDC's task was more narrowly defined, its main responsibility being the defense of the villages and hamlets.

(U) Both the SDC and CG were unequal, however, to the challenge posed by the expanding insurgency. Poorly trained and equipped, as well as thinly deployed, they were easy targets for the aggressive guerrilla forces. Even when these units were able to protect a village, the surrounding hamlets were at the mercy of the insurgents. For this reason, the Vietnamese government decided that a new, more effective framework for security in the rural areas was needed.

(U) Ngo Dinh Nhu, the president's brother and principal adviser, favored the introduction of strategic hamlets as a solution to the problem of mounting rural insecurity. The chiefs of several provinces (among them Vinh Long, Quang Ngai, and Vinh Binh) had begun constructing fortified hamlets during July and August 1961--largely, it seems, on

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their own initiative. Nhu visited a number of these hamlets and was greatly impressed with what he saw. They became the inspiration for the Nhu-directed Strategic Hamlet program. It will be seen that the strategic hamlet was essentially a modification of the Agroville program, but it reflected a change of focus away from the village to the smaller and sociologically more cohesive unit, the hamlet. There was also increased emphasis on the security aspect, as witnessed by the construction of elaborate fortifications around the hamlet.

(U) The construction of strategic hamlets was not the only plan to be devised and considered as a means of combating insurgency in the rural areas. It was inevitable perhaps that Nhu's brother and rival for influence, Ngo Dinh Can, would emerge with a plan of his own. As the leading figure in central Vietnam, Can introduced the Force Populaire³ in mid-1961. The pilot program was started in Thua Thien Province and focused on the training of highly motivated teams of political activists. The basic unit of the Force Populaire was a company of approximately 100 men, all indigenous to their area of operations. They would move into a village for a period of up to three months and, in much the same manner as the Communist insurgents, try to establish their influence over the inhabitants of the area.

(U) During 1961, the Force Populaire concept of Ngo Dinh Can vied with the Strategic Hamlet plan for priority in the country's pacification effort. Ngo Dinh Nhu was able to take advantage of his role as Diem's principal adviser to promote the latter program. For example, it was largely through his initiative that the GVN asked the Malayan Government for the loan of a group of counterinsurgency experts. This group called the British Advisory Mission (BRIAM) was dispatched to South Vietnam in September 1961 under the leadership of Sir Robert Thompson, the former Secretary of Defense in Malaya and an expert on, among other things, protected settlements. In his capacity as Diem's adviser, Nhu also called a special meeting of province chiefs at

3. (U) Not to be confused with the Popular Forces (PF) of a later date.

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Can Tho in September 1961 at which time he instructed them to begin building strategic hamlets in their provinces.

(U) By the end of 1961 the Strategic Hamlet scheme had acquired the dimensions of a national program, and a number of events during early 1962 led to its formalization as such. The first was the initiation of a publicity campaign on 3 January 1962--the president's sixty-first birthday--to popularize and encourage the extension of the Strategic Hamlet program. Second, a presidential decree of 3 February 1962 established a high-level coordinating and decision-making body called the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets. Third, and finally, there was the National Assembly Resolution of 17 April 1962, which formally established a national Strategic Hamlet program.

(U) In the following pages, the Strategic Hamlet program will be examined from a conceptual, organizational, and operational point of view. It should be understood that this program was not the sum total of the pacification effort during this period. There were programs which fell outside the structure of the Strategic Hamlet program, such as land reform, the National Police Plan, the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs), and the Self-Defense Corps. These clearly had an impact on the conduct of the struggle for control in the countryside and will be discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless, the Strategic Hamlet program represented the main thrust of the US-GVN pacification drive and will receive principal attention and emphasis.

B. STRATEGIC HAMLET CONCEPT

(U) As part of his publicity campaign to popularize the Strategic Hamlet program, Ngo Dinh Nhu toured the provinces in early 1962 and addressed many meetings of government officials. In explaining the theory and implementation of the program, Nhu stressed that the fundamental aim behind the establishment of strategic hamlets was the isolation of the insurgents, both physically and politically, from the rural population. Within this fundamental aim there were three objectives.

(C) The first of these objectives, a prerequisite for the other two, was the protection of the people. This was not simply a matter

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of regrouping some outlying huts in the center of the hamlet and then building a rampart around it of barbed wire, stakes, moats, and booby traps--the sort of defense measure which was prominent in many hamlets. It required, also, a good radio network between hamlets, villages, and the district capitals, and the training and arming of men from the hamlets as a militia to provide close-in defense. Until this kind of security arrangement was completed, the defense of the hamlets would be provided by the paramilitary forces (Self-Defense Corps and Civil Guard), while the regular army would hold the perimeter to prevent attacks by major enemy units. Both the paramilitary forces and the regular army were to be deployed at this stage so that they might rescue hamlets attacked by more than local guerrilla squads. Another vital aspect of population protection was to be the elimination within the hamlets of the insurgent infrastructure. No hamlet would be secure against penetration and treachery, nor could the people be expected to take positive action on behalf of the government until the insurgent infrastructure had been eliminated. The method by which the loyalty of the hamlet population was to be assured involved, among other things, the process of listing, photographing, and checking the records of each inhabitant.⁴

(U) The second objective of the Strategic Hamlet program was to unite the people and involve them in positive action on the side of the government. As a rule, most of the Vietnamese peasants would have been content to live quietly in their hamlets pursuing their traditional occupations as farmers and ignoring the rest of the world. Indeed, they were left largely to themselves in the first few years of the Diem regime. It was into this political and administrative vacuum that the insurgents had moved with such alarming effect. The aim of the government, therefore, was to substitute its own controlling influence in the hamlets by promoting not only local community spirit but also a sense of national solidarity. The key to this part of the program involved a restructuring of the political and social organization of the hamlet.

4. (U) US Department of State, "Political Organization of Strategic Hamlets," Airgram No. A-318, 13 December 1962. CONFIDENTIAL

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basic purposes of Personalism comprised the "Three Sufficiencies"--self-sufficiency in organization, self-sufficiency in equipment, and self-sufficiency in ideology. The Three Sufficiencies were to be instructed by the "Three Enlightenments"--Morality, Knowledge, and Mettle--which constituted the "Three Motivations" of the Personalist revolution.⁶

(U) The single most distinguishing feature of Personalism, and one that was clearly present in the Strategic Hamlet program, was its emphasis on individual self-reliance. It was Nhu's conviction that the Vietnamese people must do for themselves what they wanted done. This did not mean that they were to be ignored by the government, but that the goal of the program should be to prepare the people as quickly as possible to shoulder the burden of their own defense and development. As a result of this laissez-faire attitude the hamlet's social and economic welfare requirements were given a low priority in the government's order of business. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the official six criteria for a completed strategic hamlet, listed on 19 July 1962, made no reference to economic betterment. A hamlet was completed when the people had: (1) cleared Communists from the area and coordinated population-control measures with the police and hamlet chief; (2) coordinated control of people and resources with the Vietnamese Information Service, indoctrinated the population, and successfully organized all the people; (3) instructed and divided work of all the people as to their obligations when disaster strikes; (4) completed defenses--such as fences, spikes, communication trenches, hidden trenches in all houses; (5) organized two special forces cells in each strategic hamlet; and (6) held the election of an advisory council.⁷

6. (U) Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 316-17.

7. (U) Criteria listed in Viet Cong, p. 67.

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(U) The third objective of the program was to boost development in the economic and social fields. The government realized that any improvement in the welfare of the rural population would seriously handicap the insurgency and its appeal in the countryside. To a large extent, this part of the program was to provide the tangible benefits and rewards of cooperating with the government. It involved the building of schools, clinics, and markets; improved agricultural methods, water supplies, and electricity; radio programs, newspapers, and so on. It was at this point of the program that the forced re-grouping of houses and other hardships associated with the strategic hamlets would be offset by compensating advantages. Although the peasants may have farther to go to work in their fields, they would have greater access to many amenities of life: the school was handy for the children, and the market and shops for the wife.

(U) These three objectives of the Strategic Hamlet program were well understood by Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was mainly responsible for the plan's direction and supervision as well as its formal articulation. Nhu imparted a strong ideological content to the program. He believed that his political philosophy, Personalism, would provide an important ingredient in the program, somewhat analagous to the ideology that helped bind the enemy cadres into a dedicated and effective force. Personalism was a vague and difficult-to-define ideology which sought to combine Western individualism with collectivist ideas and translate the whole into the Vietnamese idiom as an answer to the Communist challenge. In his speeches, Nhu often spoke of "a new life achieved within the framework of personalism ... and the transformation of strategic hamlets into centers of democratic civilization, into generators of combatants and heroes, whose light will flood the entire country."⁵ Imitating the Communist--as well as the classical Confucian--mode of expression in dealings with the masses, Nhu employed a set of three slogans made up of three catchwords each. The three

5. (U) Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 66.

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C. ORGANIZATION

1. GVN

(U) In its early stages the Strategic Hamlet program was administered through the existing channels of government. There was no single executive body responsible for the overall direction and coordination of the program, unless one viewed Nhu's active promotion of the strategic hamlets in such a light. Nhu chose to deal directly with the province chiefs, upon whose shoulders rested the main responsibility for implementing the program. Many of the province chiefs were army officers, and they were expected to act in both a civilian and military capacity. It would seem that they were thus in an ideal position to coordinate the different aspects of the Strategic Hamlet program. A problem was created, however, by the fact that the province chief in his civilian capacity was subordinate to the Ministry of Interior, while as a military officer he looked to the army high command for support, if not instructions. It was not always possible to reconcile this division of loyalty and responsibility, and the result often was confusion and internal conflict. An additional handicap for the province chief was his lack of administrative control over the local representatives of other ministries, such as Education, Civic Action, and Rural Development.

(U) By the end of 1961 it was clear that the Strategic Hamlet program required administrative revamping, especially as it was then assuming the proportions of a major crusade. A great deal of the discussion in Diem's Internal Security Council meetings was directed at this problem. The result was a presidential decree on 3 February 1962, which established the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets. The committee was composed of the heads of the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Education, Civic Action, and Rural Affairs, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The Minister of Interior became the secretary-general, but no chairman was named because Ngo Dinh Nhu, who exercised this authority in practice, did not want to have his position formalized. The new committee was instructed to prepare an overall plan for establishing

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strategic hamlets throughout the country, i.e., to determine, in order of priority, the various areas where strategic hamlets were to be constructed and the techniques and time period of construction; to estimate the requirements for, and distribute, material and human resources among the provinces; to specify responsibilities and coordinate the activities of regional and provincial organizations; and to supervise and control the general strategic hamlet construction program.⁸

(U) The line of responsibility for the Strategic Hamlet program passed from the Interministerial Committee to the regions, provinces, and finally to the districts. At the regional level, there were regional committees for strategic hamlets, headed by the regional tactical commanders. The responsibility of the regional committees was predominantly military, simply because the region functioned as a step in the military chain of command, but not so in the hierarchy of the civilian administration. The Strategic Hamlet program, nevertheless, utilized the regions for one important civilian operation. It established regional inspection teams whose function was to determine what progress was being made on the strategic hamlets in their areas and to report their findings to the Interministerial Committee in Saigon.

(U) In the provinces, there were provincial committees for strategic hamlets, headed by the province chiefs and composed of other provincial and district officials. The provincial committee was primarily responsible for carrying out the directives of the Interministerial Committee and for developing plans for the individual provinces. The planning and execution of the Strategic Hamlet program was most important, however, at the district level. It was the chief of the district who was directly responsible for the realization of the program in his small area. He and the military officers of the

8. (U) Pham Chung, "An Analysis of the Long-Range Military, Economic, Political and Social Effects of the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam," Advanced Research Projects Agency, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Washington, D.C., 1964), p. 12.

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local command would meet with the province chief and the provincial committee for strategic hamlets to discuss plans for the construction of strategic hamlets in the district. After final plans were approved, the resources of the Civil Guard, Self-Defense Corps, the police and security services, and the relevant ministries were mobilized, at least in theory, for the accomplishment of the goals associated with the program.

(U) The civilian and military participants in the program were usually organized into groups called strategic hamlet construction teams. Each team was assigned a hamlet by the district chief (he himself would generally serve as the leader of a team), and orientation sessions were held to establish a clear understanding of the problems and to review measures and methods to be employed.

(U) The only change in the formal structure of the Strategic Hamlet program was made by presidential decree on 12 July 1962; division tactical area committees for strategic hamlets were established, with the division commander as chairman. This, in effect, made the division commander and not the province chief responsible for the Strategic Hamlet program--an acknowledgment of the province chief's dependence on the division commander for operational support and his inability to secure it by channeling his requests upward.

(U) Nhu eventually overcame his reluctance to be associated formally with the Interministerial Committee, and he assumed the chairmanship of the high-level body in the spring of 1962. Despite the elaborate structure outlined above, Nhu tended to ignore the Interministerial Committee and the regional committees and to issue orders directly to the province chiefs. To the extent that he did consult the Interministerial Committee, he so completely dominated the meetings that the result was more or less the same. The problems created by Nhu's sweeping and almost total control of the program will be discussed later in this chapter.

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UNCLASSIFIED**2. US Mission**

(U) A specialized committee was formed within the US mission in late March 1962 as a counterpart to the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets. Called the Interagency Committee for Province Rehabilitation (COPROR), it was chaired by the deputy chief of mission. Representatives of all US agencies--MACV, USOM, USIS, CIA--were involved and, theoretically, problems of coordination as well as liaison with the Vietnamese government were dealt with in this group. The COPROR had no secretariat and coordination more often than not was achieved through informal interagency contacts.

(U) In May 1962, a two-man AID team was sent to Saigon to survey the situation and prepare recommendations for increased AID support.⁹ Rufus Phillips and Albert Fraleigh, the two members of the team, recommended that a special office for rural affairs, or counterinsurgency, be established within the AID mission as the action unit for administering a decentralized program to support the GVN Strategic Hamlet program. According to the plan, a USOM representative would be assigned to each of the provinces to administer a greatly increased nonmilitary assistance program. Thus, it was through the Strategic Hamlet program that the United States became involved in an advisory capacity at the provincial level.

(U) Phillips and Fraleigh estimated that \$10 million in local currency would be required to get the Strategic Hamlet program moving. The money would be used to defray costs incurred by rural families in moving from insecure areas into the fortified hamlets, to support the recruiting, training, and deployment of government personnel who would work in the countryside, to support the training of local militia and hamlet officials, to subsidize self-help projects, and to

9. (U) The following account draws upon information contained in John B. O'Donnell, "The Strategic Hamlet Program in Kien Hoa Province, South Vietnam: A Case Study of Counterinsurgency," in Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations, Peter Kunstadter, ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967). O'Donnell was the USOM provincial representative in Kien Hoa from December 1962 to August 1964.

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support psychological warfare and information activities. The team also recommended that "Food for Peace" (Public Law 480, Title II) commodities and US excess property items be imported for use in the pacification effort. These recommendations were accepted in Washington, and Rufus Phillips was selected to head the Office of Rural Affairs, with Albert Fraleigh as his deputy. The recruitment of provincial representatives was initiated by AID in Washington.

(U) In Saigon, the newly created Office of Rural Affairs started working with the GVN to develop a set of specific administrative procedures for implementing the Strategic Hamlet program. As a first step, Saigon instructed the province chiefs to prepare comprehensive provincial rehabilitation plans and detailed estimates of the funds, materials, and personnel required to carry out the plans. When completed, these plans were reviewed briefly by the Interministerial Committee, the Office of Rural Affairs, and the MAAG's Strategic Hamlets Division. A joint US-GVN team composed of the directors of these three organizations then made a field trip to the province concerned to work out any problems and to prepare a budget for USOM financial and material support and a calculation of MAP (Military Assistance Program) materials required, which would be supplied through the MAAG. The plans and budgets were then submitted to the US Interagency Committee and the GVN Interministerial Committee for official approval.

(U) In the meantime, in each of the provinces a Provincial Rehabilitation Committee was created, with the province chief as chairman and the US provincial representative and US military sector adviser as members. This committee approved specific projects, established priorities in connection with the provincial rehabilitation plan, and was responsible for the successful implementation of the plan. Though the province chief was the executive and made the decisions in the final analysis, the US provincial representative had to counter-sign all expenditures involving US funds. In this manner, a substantial degree of US supervision was maintained over the pacification effort in the countryside.

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UNCLASSIFIED**3. Administration of Program in the Hamlets**

(U) Although the hamlet was the basic unit of Vietnamese society, it had not acquired an important role in the country's administrative structure. The lowest rung on the government's administrative ladder was the village. Thus, an important part of the Strategic Hamlet program was the extension of the government network down to the hamlets. Three categories of elected officials were to make up the hamlet administrative organization. At the top of the pyramid was the hamlet chief. Instead of being in sole charge of hamlet administration, as was formerly the case, the hamlet chief was to have three assistants. The four men formed the Hamlet Administrative Committee. Their responsibilities were divided generally along the following three lines: first, security and youth affairs (including fortifications, defense, and youth organization); second, political matters (including information and civic action); and, third, economic and social problems (land, agricultural and technical advice).

(U) Next came the Hamlet Council. This group, consisting of five to fifteen members, was to be made up of representatives of different age groups and various local organizations. Their role was a purely advisory one.

(U) Finally, there were "interfamily" group leaders. Each small cluster of households was to elect a leader whose function would be to assure an effective link between the Administrative Committee and the individual members of the hamlet. One of the duties of the group leader, for example, was to transmit work assignments from the Administrative Committee to the populace.

(U) To help establish strategic hamlets, each province, as mentioned above, organized and trained strategic hamlet construction teams (called in some cases civic action teams or rural rehabilitation teams). These teams, comprised of from ten to twenty cadres drawn from the civilian and military services in the provinces, worked directly under the supervision of the district chief and the district committee for strategic hamlets, which included the Civil Guard company commander and district representatives of the GVN ministries

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and departments. The construction teams had two major functions: to assist the hamlet in organizing itself administratively and socially, and to help set up hamlet defenses. It should be pointed out that it was the intention of the GVN to utilize the existing hamlet structure as much as possible rather than rely on relocating the population to new hamlets.¹⁰

(U) In the first stage of the effort, the team moved into a hamlet for anywhere from ten to thirty days. The cadres explained the objectives of the program to the peasants, organized communal labor schedules, tried to learn about families with pro-enemy sentiments who might be regrouped near a military post for easier surveillance, and set about rehabilitating the hamlet's social and administrative organs.

(U) After a census was taken, the inhabitants were divided into interfamily groups, sometimes referred to as the "combined-family mutual assistance system." Each of these groups contained approximately five families, the members of which elected a group leader, as mentioned above. These groups were assigned the construction of a portion of the hamlet's defense, generally in front of their own homes. The work to be done was divided among the various families at the discretion of their elected leader. Once this effort was underway, the people were organized into age and sex groups. There were, for example, a male elders' group, a female elders' group, a senior group (men 18 to 50 years old), a woman's group (18 to 50 years old), a male junior team, and a female junior team. Each of these groups also had an elected leader and each group was assigned various tasks in defense of the hamlet (e.g., the women looked after the children in case of attack); the young men were assigned the most important job--serving as the hamlet militia. The members of the hamlet were also encouraged to join local units of political organizations such as the National Revolutionary Movement, the Women's Solidarity Movement, and

10. (U) In practice, however, families were relocated, especially in the delta provinces where homes were scattered rather than concentrated as in the northern provinces of central Vietnam.

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the Republican Youth Movement. The purpose of these many social and political organizations, naturally, was to provide the government with a means of organizing and influencing the members of the hamlet and, thereby, turning them into a weapon to be used against the insurgency.

(U) The core of the hamlet militia was formed by the Republican Youth Movement, the hamlet unit of which was among the first groups to be organized by the visiting cadres. Although, theoretically, the age range in the Republican Youth was 18 to 35, in practice the upper age limit was often as high as 45 or 50 years.

(U) In many cases, two other bodies were created or reactivated. The first was the Council of Elders, generally found only at the village level, which might have from 20 to 200 members, including women. The second was the Council of Patrons, found in both the villages and the hamlets, which was comprised of wealthy and influential men and women. The Council of Elders (which actually included some influential younger men) had some authority to consult with the village and hamlet councils and to criticize their actions. Thus, it provided an added measure of response to local needs and a link with Vietnamese traditional institutions.

(U) Once the elections were held (or appointments made) and the strategic hamlets established to specifications, most provinces and districts attempted to carry out some economic and social development activities within the hamlets.¹¹ A few schools might be built and dispensaries with medical kits established, and so on; but, as pointed out previously, there were limited resources and the general attitude of the Diem government, and notably Ngo Dinh Nhu, was opposed to dispensing such assistance to the people.

(U) If a major flaw existed in the Strategic Hamlet program, it was the excessive weight placed upon self-sufficiency and self-reliance. This is not to imply that these qualities were alien to the

11. (U) See Part Three of Volume II of this study for a detailed discussion of the economic and social development aspects of the US-GVN pacification effort.

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rural Vietnamese. Indeed, the people of the villages and hamlets had exercised a great deal of local initiative and independence for a long time. This tradition, however, had always been influenced by the conditions of autonomy and self-interest. It was either overlooked or ignored by Ngo Dinh Nhu in his effort to impose a new arrangement and new responsibilities on the people. There was in his approach and outlook an insistence that it was the duty of the peasants to shoulder the burden of implementing the Strategic Hamlet program. But there were many disharmonies between the program goals and the needs and requirements of the rural population. Also, there was far too little emphasis and follow through on the responsibilities of the Vietnamese government itself in this same regard.

(U) It is possible that Nhu emphasized the role of the hamlet and its inhabitants because he recognized the serious shortcomings of his own government. If this were the case, his concern about the performance of the GVN was borne out in the course of 1962 and 1963. One of the outstanding flaws in the implementation of the Strategic Hamlet program was the persistent lack of sensitivity toward the rural people, their feelings, and real needs. This was not just the problem of a philosophical approach, but problems relating to the actual application of the program. For example, the heavy contribution by peasants in terms of labor, material, and money to the construction of hamlets created major resentment. In many places, peasants had to contribute 50 piasters or more in addition to working an assigned number of free labor days and contributing an amount of construction material. To the Vietnamese peasant whose income was mostly in kind, a cash contribution of 50 piasters or more really constituted a heavy burden. It did little good to tell him that it was for his benefit in the long run, when the immediate impact was so clearly to his disadvantage. In addition to this, relocated families were inadequately compensated for their old homes, which were burned or otherwise destroyed after they moved to strategic hamlets. While their old homes cost an average of 20,000 piasters to build, they received a relocation allowance from the government of only from 1000 to 2000

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piasters to build new homes in the hamlets. Many times, relocated families received no money, the allowance having been pocketed by local officials.

(U) Then, there was the "tyranny" of the Self-Defense Corps and village officials. In many strategic hamlets, those who were supposed to protect the people resorted to harsh methods to extort money from the people. In one instance, it was reported that Self-Defense Corpsmen shot at peasants when they tried to protect their crops from being eaten by the militiamen's ducks. Under the strict control of the security system imposed on the strategic hamlets, the peasants lost much of their freedom; they were not allowed to assemble (e.g., for family ceremonies) unless by special permission; they were not allowed to move freely from hamlet to hamlet without passes; and they were not allowed to talk freely among themselves. Intended as fortified settlements capable of providing peasants with security and a better life, the strategic hamlets, in many places, turned out to be detention areas not too far removed from the insurgents' claim of "concentration camps."

D. IMPLEMENTATION

(U) New and ambitious goals were soon established in connection with the Strategic Hamlet program. Ngo Dinh Nhu was thoroughly dissatisfied with a previous projection which called for the completion of 7000 strategic hamlets over a three-year period. As a result of his pressure, the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets established new goals. Although there were an estimated 16,000 hamlets in South Vietnam, the process of consolidation during the Strategic Hamlet program was expected to reduce this number to 14,000. The new goals called for converting 7000 of these into strategic hamlets by early 1963, and another 5000 by early 1964. As for the remaining 2000 hamlets, it was reasoned that they would be swept along by the example of the Strategic Hamlet program without the need for inclusion in the formal timetable.

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(C) The Interministerial Committee requested and received an allocation of 100 million piasters from the government to help cover the cost of the program. A request for financial and technical assistance was also transmitted to the US embassy. An initial allotment of 1 million piasters was to be made to each province to subsidize the establishment of strategic hamlets only until they were in a position to support themselves. As a rule, this support was to last no more than 3 months for hamlets in relatively secure areas, 5 months for hamlets in contested areas, and 10 months for hamlets in enemy infested areas.¹²

(U) While the Strategic Hamlet program was to be implemented throughout the country on a more or less uniform basis, the Interministerial Committee decided that priority should be given to certain key areas. Both US and British officials in Saigon stressed the need for a concentrated effort in locations with major strategic significance rather than dissipating limited resources on a broad-based approach. Besides, it would be easier to coordinate the program if it had only a few points of focus. Finally, a concentrated highly publicized drive would more likely be successful in mobilizing and uniting the people behind the government's effort than would a broad-based approach.

(U) Although the principle of priority areas was generally agreed upon, there was considerable indecision about which areas should be given the highest priority. There were two competing claims for this attention. The first of these, BRIAM's Delta Plan, encompassed the ten delta provinces adjacent to and south of Saigon; the second area included a somewhat smaller number of provinces to the north of Saigon, the location of a projected campaign called "Operation Sunrise."

12. (U) Central Intelligence Agency, Information Report, "Establishment of the Central Committee for Strategic Hamlets," No. CS-3/506,080 (29 March 1972). CONFIDENTIAL

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(U) In late 1961 BRIAM, headed by Sir Robert Thompson, had submitted a comprehensive counterinsurgency plan to the Diem government for its consideration. The details were incorporated into a GVN plan that President Diem promulgated on 16 March 1962.¹³ Called the "Plan to Restore Security in the Third Tactical Zone," it was the Diem government's first comprehensive statement of policy combining all aspects of provincial rehabilitation, including hamlet defense, civic action, ARVN and paramilitary action, food denial, and forbidden zones. For reasons which have not been completely or adequately explained, the Delta Plan never really got off the ground.

(U) At about the same time that Thompson and his aides were formulating the Delta Plan, General Cao, the government delegate for the provinces to the north of Saigon, was making plans of his own for a coordinated pacification effort in his region. Ultimately, Cao's plan was adopted by the Diem government and received encouragement and material support from the United States. Referred to as "Operation Sunrise," it concentrated on an area covered by the three provinces of Binh Duong, Tay Ninh, and Phuoc Tuy. The operation was formally launched on 22 March 1962, with a great deal of fanfare on the part of the authorities. Unlike the Delta Plan, in which the construction of strategic hamlets was only one, albeit a relatively important, part of the total pacification effort, Operation Sunrise focused much more fully on the construction of strategic hamlets. This may very well have been the reason that the Cao, rather than the Thompson, plan received the support of President Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu. Also, the fact that Operation Sunrise was largely a Vietnamese creation undoubtedly made it a more attractive alternative to the Delta Plan.

1. Operations Sunrise and Sea Swallow

(U) The next several pages will be devoted to a description of Operation Sunrise in order to provide a detailed look at the

13. (U) U.S. Department of State, "Transmission of Decrees on 'Plan to Restore Security in the Third Tactical Zone,'" Airgram No. 1296, 16 April 1962. SECRET

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implementation of the Strategic Hamlet program. A later, and somewhat different, campaign called "Operation Sea Swallow" will also be examined. It would be impossible, given the limitations of space, to include details of the many other similar operations conducted during 1962 and 1963. At a certain point, in any event, the variations of the Strategic Hamlet program assume a reduced significance in terms of their meaning for pacification.

(U) In his The Two Viet-Nams, Bernard Fall described many details of Operation Sunrise. He pointed out that the province of Binh Duong, north of Saigon, was chosen as the test site because of the insurgents' use of Ben Cat district, with its rubber plantations and wild forests, as a redoubt. In the view of the Saigon authorities, Ben Cat constituted the keystone of what was commonly referred to as the "arc of insurgency" bordering the capital city on the northeast and southwest. It not only qualified as a worthwhile first target for this reason, but also had the advantage of containing only 38,000 people.

(C) Operation Sunrise began with a military maneuver aimed at sweeping the guerrilla forces out of the populated areas of Ben Cat.¹⁴ The people who remained in the hamlets were then rounded up by the security forces. Seventy families agreed to move voluntarily; 140 others, according to Time, were moved against their will. Foreign observers also noted that most of the able-bodied men had abandoned the area before the arrival of the troops.

(C) The Ben Tuong hamlet area, to which the peasants were moved, consisted mainly of cleared ground, except for a concrete infirmary and administration building, around which the people had to construct their own thatched huts and the moats and walls for defense. In the following weeks, a school was built, land was cleared for cultivation, and fertilizer, hand tools, and seed were distributed. Indoctrination and psychological activities were conducted with leaflets, radio programs, and occasional movies and plays. Local security was provided

14. (U) See Part Two of Volume II for a discussion of the roles and missions of the US-GVN security forces.

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by one Civil Guard company, and a Republican Youth group was trained as a hamlet militia. To complete the security system for the hamlet, a US-supplied radio for hamlet-to-district communications was installed. Other US assistance for the overall operation included military aid and coordination provided by USMAAG and an initial sum of \$300,000 from USOM to help compensate resettled families for property lost and damaged in the course of moving. (In the meantime, the peasants' former homes were leveled in accordance with a scorched-earth policy.)

(C) The establishment of Ben Tuong was hailed as a vast success and the government proceeded to extend the program into other areas of Binh Duong Province. The Ben Tuong operation was followed by Ben Dong So, beginning 17 April, Bau Bang, beginning 30 April, and Long Cau, beginning 17 July 1962. Meanwhile, in the remaining provinces of the southeastern region covered by Operation Sunrise, strategic hamlets were being constructed without the elaborate military clear-and-hold operations necessitated by the high degree of insecurity in Binh Duong Province.

(U) By mid-1962, there was considerable controversy among Vietnamese, American, and British planners in Saigon over the progress of Operation Sunrise. Many observers, including some Vietnamese, believed that both the small sum of money given the farmers and the drastic methods employed to regroup them would be bitterly resented, at least in the beginning. Also, the regulations controlling exit and entry to the hamlet necessarily gave the strategic hamlets the aspects of a detention area rather than that of a harmonious community. The Wall Street Journal's local observer, a former member of the OSS who, according to Bernard Fall, was totally sympathetic to the cause of South Vietnam, nevertheless felt that a visit to such a hamlet left one with the impression of having "blundered into some sort of prison camp." Reporters from Europe made comparisons between the strategic hamlets and a similar relocation system used by the French in Algeria. Such articles led the GVN Information Office to issue the following statement:

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Certain journalists--particularly American journalists--have made it appear, either through wickedness or naivete, that "Operation Sunrise" consists in applying totalitarian methods in order to compel people to leave their villages.... It is easily conceivable that the uprooting of peasant families, and particularly the destruction of abandoned villages, is not always accepted with joy, in spite of the explanations given by the government. Nevertheless, "Operation Sunrise" is not a pacification plan similar to that which has been applied in Algeria. The war which we fight against Communism is the opposite of a colonial war ... [it] is a salvaging operation, not affecting the principles of democracy, and a humanitarian action which the government of a free country undertakes because it is afflicted by Communism.¹⁵

(U) In terms of statistical accomplishment, Tu Do, a Saigon newspaper controlled by the government, reported on 13 May 1962 that of the 38,000 inhabitants of Ben Cat district, 60 percent must be reckoned as "Communist intoxicated," and that after six weeks of operations, only 2769 inhabitants (7 percent) had moved voluntarily or by force into Ben Tuong and the smaller hamlets of Ben Dong So and Bau Bang. Obviously, the operation had not yet succeeded in depriving the insurgents of civilian support in the area. This fact was borne out when a guerrilla force in full daylight ambushed an ARVN convoy in mid-June 1962 near the district town of Ben Cat, killing 26 Vietnamese soldiers, several civilian public works technicians, and two American officers. The success of the ambush was in large part due to the fact that the civilian population failed to notify the local ARVN posts of the impending attack. One year later, the situation had not altered. Some strategic hamlets withstood guerrilla attacks while others were overwhelmed, or even betrayed. Among the casualties was Ben Tuong, the pilot strategic hamlet, which was overrun and destroyed by the enemy on 20 August 1963.

15. (U) Quoted in Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 378.

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(U) With Operation Sunrise well underway, "Operation Sea Swallow" was launched on 6 May 1962 in the province of Phu Yen in central Vietnam. Phu Yen extends from the watershed of the Annamite Chain to the coast; its population of 356,000 were under the almost undisputed control of the insurgents. One of the few areas where the government retained control was in and around Tuy Hoa, the provincial capital. The enemy's interference with communications up and down the coast and the ever-present threat that a concentrated insurgent drive might cut the country in two led to the decision to launch the second major operation under the Strategic Hamlet program in Phu Yen.

(U) Although basically similar in broad conception to Operation Sunrise, the campaign in Phu Yen was different in several respects. It embraced the idea of strategic hamlets, but it also set out consciously to give the inhabitants an interest and stake in their own well-being and in the conduct of their own affairs. The United States was largely responsible for this emphasis on winning the support of the people in the rural areas: large sums of US aid were made available for resettlement, medical aid, and security operations. Whereas Operation Sunrise had begun with considerable harshness, the officers responsible for field control in Operation Sea Swallow insisted that the people not be moved until houses were ready for them, and, moreover, that they be compensated for their destroyed homes.¹⁶

(C) Operation Sea Swallow was to be the pilot scheme for a series of clear-and-hold operations in the central coastal region of the country. The idea was to move from the narrow coastal plain by a series of three bounds along the valleys and high into the foothills of the Annamite Chain. In the first phase (90 days), strategic hamlets were to be built in the relatively secure areas around Tuy Hoa. The next step was to push out into the more heavily dominated enemy areas and there to establish strategic hamlets in which the population

16. (U) Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 179.

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would be given direct military protection by the ARVN and Civil Guard. This phase was to take sixty days. In the final phase (150 days) the security forces would take on the insurgents in their own areas, pushing deeper and deeper into the mountains and perhaps threatening even the Ho Chi Minh trail.

(U) Operation Sea Swallow went well in the beginning. The province chief, Major Duong Thai Dong, and his American adviser made the operation a genuine battle for the hearts and minds of the people. Both were anxious to avoid the mistakes and problems of Operation Sunrise. A team of MAAG advisers and instructors were on hand, and there was more materiel for the operation than anyone had seen before in South Vietnam. Ironically, this provoked a certain amount of resentment on the part of the Diem administration. Operation Sea Swallow was regarded as a US effort to show up the deficiencies of the Vietnamese techniques employed in Operation Sunrise. The ARVN military high command disliked the necessity of coordinating their activities with their civilian counterparts, particularly as they were not in charge of the operation. Brother Ngo Dinh Can looked upon the campaign with a certain amount of distrust, and regarded it as an intrusion into his private operations. There was an under-current of tension throughout the operation and nothing seemed too trivial to promote mischief. For example, the Diem administration became displeased with the code name, Sea Swallow, charging that it was designed to steal some of the glory from Father Hoa's famous Sea Swallows in Ca Mau.¹⁷ In deference to this objection, the code name was altered to "Operation Sea Swallow (II)."

(U) Phase I of the coordinated operation in Phu Yen ended successfully on 8 August 1962 with 157 strategic hamlets completed. Following a short period of consolidation, Phase II was started but almost

17. (U) The Sea Swallows were an irregular defense force, about a thousand strong, recruited and trained by the Reverend Nguyen Lac Hoa in Bing Hung hamlet, south of Ca Mau. The unit had a reputation for courage and discipline and was successful in thwarting VC activity in the area.

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immediately was set back when the coastal areas of central Vietnam were hit by devastating floods. Although the operation recovered from this blow and regained much of its momentum, it failed to meet the goals established for Phases II and III. Part of the problem was the inability of the regular ARVN units to clear the foothills of the Annamite Chain of the insurgents and therefore provide the necessary security for the construction of strategic hamlets in neighboring areas. There was also a serious shortage of qualified individuals for the strategic hamlet construction teams. Despite these and other shortcomings, Operation Sea Swallow was generally regarded as a successful venture which gave an important boost to the Strategic Hamlet program.

(U) The third major effort, "Operation Royal Phoenix," was launched in Quang Ngai Province on 1 September 1962, and it was followed by "Operation Let's Go" in Binh Dinh Province on 20 September 1962. Before the end of the year similar operations had been launched in Quang Nam, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, and Darlac Provinces.

(U) These campaigns were confined for the most part to individual provinces and an effort was made to have them conform to a countrywide priority plan that went into effect in the late summer of 1962.¹⁸ The four priority zones were as follows:

- Zone No. I: Eleven delta provinces around Saigon (including the province of Gia Dinh)
- Zone No. II: Ten provinces of central Vietnam (especially the coastal area near the mountainous regions)
- Zone No. III: Ten border provinces
- Zone No. IV: Eight remaining provinces (most of these located in the southwest)

18. (U) The priority plan was outlined in a letter from the Interministerial Committee to its US counterpart, the Interagency Committee for Province Rehabilitation, on 6 August 1962.

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Each province was given a priority within these zones (see Figure 1) for the purpose of controlling the allocation of resources and guiding the development of the national plan.

2. Supplementary Pacification Programs

a. Chieu Hoi Program. (U) In April 1963 the Diem regime launched the Chieu Hoi ("Open Arms") campaign to encourage enemy defections to the government side. The campaign, patterned after successful experiments conducted in Malaya and the Philippines, was designed to attract and rehabilitate disillusioned insurgents. Each strategic hamlet established its own Chieu Hoi committee to welcome those guerrillas who wanted to return and serve the national cause. At the central level, the defectors' program was supervised and run by a subcommittee attached to the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets. A presidential proclamation and various instructions for Chieu Hoi cadres were printed on small leaflets that were distributed throughout the country. The leaflets also served as safe-conduct passes for defecting insurgents.

(U) In addition to the Chieu Hoi campaign, there were several other programs which were supplementary to rather than integral parts of the Strategic Hamlet program. These include the land reform program, the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs), the National Police, the Civil Guard, and the Self-Defense Corps.¹⁹

b. Land Reform. (U) In its early years, the Diem government considered agrarian reform one of its great successes. By the beginning of the 1960s, however, it was apparent that the program had fallen far short of what was required in the context of the revolutionary situation in the countryside. Six years after the land reform ordinance was promulgated on 22 October 1956, less than one-third of the eligible peasants had benefited from it and the GVN

19. (U) For additional coverage of these programs, see Volume II, Part Two and Part III, particularly the chapter on cadre techniques.

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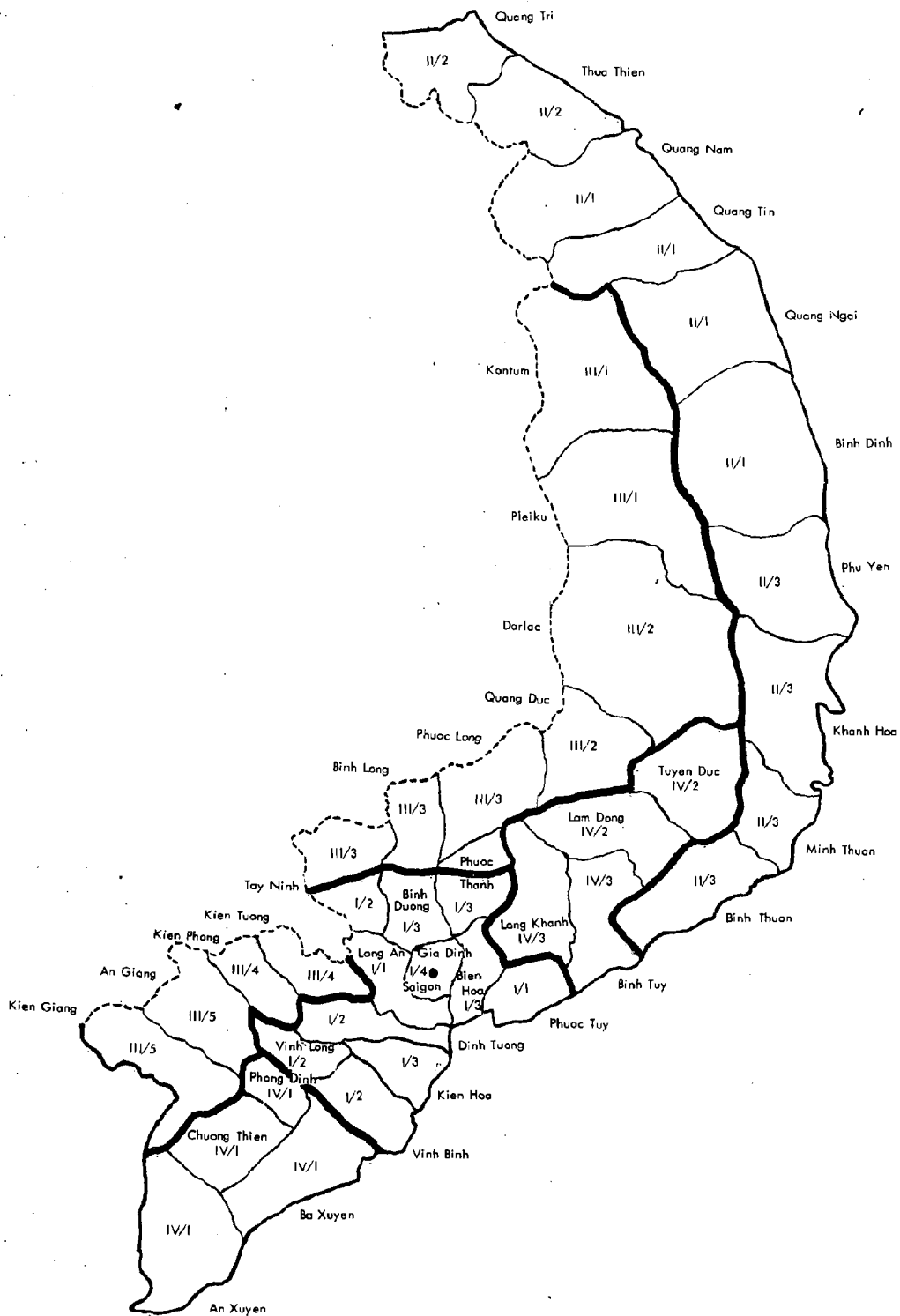
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Figure 1 (C). DELIMITATION OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF STRATEGIC HAMLETS (U)

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still had 150,000 hectares of land to distribute. A separate paper dealing with the subject of land reform has been included in this study, so only brief note will be made of its major shortcomings. To begin with, the reform was altogether too conservative; landowners were permitted to retain as much as 100 hectares of rice land and another 15 hectares for burial grounds and ancestor worship. In addition, the program lacked regulatory machinery to control tenant-landlord relationships, and all sorts of arrangements were devised to defeat its intent. In areas where lack of security had for many years prevented the landlords from collecting rents on their properties, the peasants regarded Diem's land reform as a step backward. Pressure was placed upon them to pay rents retroactively, in addition to which they faced the payment of high prices for land they had once all but regarded as their own. In effect, the land reform program, to the extent that it even operated in the early 1960s, generated more antagonism than support for the Saigon authorities.

c. The CIDGs. (U) The Civilian Irregular Defense Groups were an outgrowth of the US military's pacification effort in the mountainous regions of central Vietnam. Beginning with the Rhade tribe around Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province in early 1961, US Army Special Forces teams joined Vietnamese Special Forces counterparts in training and equipping young men from Rhade villages. The American and Vietnamese team members lived and ate with the tribesmen during the training period. While many of the Americans developed close relations with the tribesmen, the Vietnamese tended to remain more aloof and distant. The Vietnamese traditionally have held the highlanders in low regard and have been reluctant to see them armed. After six weeks of instruction, the well-armed young men were returned to their homes to defend their hamlets and report movements of the enemy.²⁰

(U) By 1963 a large number of US teams were at work creating strike forces of about 200 men for operations in insecure areas. More than 25,000 tribesmen were armed under the CIDG program. In addition to

20. (U) William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 66-67.

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providing security in their areas of operation, the CIDGs undertook comprehensive civic action projects, including medical care, construction projects, and education.

d. The National Police. (U) In 1962 the Public Safety Division of AID, responsible for advising the GVN police forces, had developed a national police plan which would consolidate all police-type units into one national organization composed of the following elements:

- A National Police Force, consolidated from the Saigon Municipal Police, the Gendarmerie, and the local provincial police force, with sufficient strength to provide a police presence at the village level.
- A Maritime Police Force for use in the extensive riverine areas of the delta.
- A Special Branch which would be responsible for counterintelligence, particularly identification of the Communist political and military infrastructure.
- A Field Force branch (combat police) responsible for patrolling and maintaining security between hamlets.

In June 1962 Diem issued a national decree formalizing the National Police Force, organized along the lines recommended by AID, with a strength of about 18,000.

e. The Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps. (U) A basic ingredient of the Strategic Hamlet program was the provision of security through a combination of the forces of the ARVN, the Civil Guard, and the Self-Defense Corps. Unfortunately, the ARVN proved themselves incapable of acting as a screen against the enemy, and the brunt of the Communist attacks fell on the territorial forces.

(U) As a result, the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps suffered serious casualties, with a consequent reduction in morale and an increase in desertion. For example, during the first six months of 1962, the SDC and CG suffered 80 percent of the armed forces casualties. Morale not only suffered from the heavy losses, but inadequate pay and benefits, which were considerably less than those for the ARVN, played their part. Disability pay and death benefits, if paid at all, were often long delayed, and dependent benefits were

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virtually nonexistent. Terms of service were four years as compared with a two-year term for ARVN conscripts. And finally, a most serious constraint was the inexperienced and for the most part incompetent leadership that existed at all levels.

E. ENEMY RESPONSE

(U) The reaction of the insurgents to the Strategic Hamlet program during its first year was muted and low key. This does not mean that they were unconcerned; in fact, documents captured at the time of Operation Sunrise revealed considerable enemy apprehension about the effects of the campaign. Young men were returning to their native villages, intelligence agents were being arrested, tax collections were falling off, and travel from base area to base area was becoming more difficult and dangerous.

(U) It is fairly clear that the insurgents were confronted by something of a dilemma, for any overt assault on the hamlets and their newly formed institutions ran the risk of alienating the people and diminishing their support for the insurgency. The insurgents, therefore, confined themselves to four lines of action during the first year: continual propaganda against the strategic hamlets as "concentration camps"; penetration of the hamlets by VC agents and supporters; the maintenance of pockets and salients under VC control; and the preservation of regular units, which were rarely committed to a major action during this period.

(U) Beginning in July 1963, however, the enemy started to attack the strategic hamlets. This offensive coincided with the Diem regime's clash with the Buddhists and the deterioration of US-GVN relations. The attacks on the strategic hamlets followed a general pattern. As a primary objective, the insurgents struck at the radio transmitters in the hamlets to isolate the inhabitants from government aid. Hamlet militia posts were constantly attacked, and walls and fortifications around the hamlets were destroyed, an action which emphasized the failure of the government to provide the protection that

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it promised. In some cases, hamlet residents were forced to return to their previous homes.

(U) The various social and economic benefits which were supposed to accompany the Strategic Hamlet program often did not materialize in the face of the Communist harassment of government representatives. School teachers were killed and anti-malaria teams were attacked. In addition, the general overextension of the Strategic Hamlet plan played into the insurgents' hands. In some areas government control was so weak that, while the insurgents permitted the establishment of strategic hamlets, the inhabitants allowed the insurgents to pass through the fortifications freely.

(U) A review of the material contained in broadcasts which emanated from North Vietnam is invaluable as an indication of North Vietnamese concern over the possible effects of the Strategic Hamlet program on the insurgency in the south.²¹ In one of the earliest references to the new program, Hanoi criticized the strategic hamlets because they would "serve to cut off contacts between the people's self-defense units and the peasants." This cannot be ignored as an indication of Hanoi's concern over the potential utility of the hamlets.

(U) The themes stressed in North Vietnamese propaganda on the strategic hamlets were quite varied. Possibly greatest attention was given to promoting the view that settlement in strategic hamlets was part of a plan to institute a giant concentration camp in South Vietnam. (An awareness of the various GVN government "political re-education centers" would have lent credibility to this argument.) A broadcast over Radio Hanoi on 15 January 1962 was typical of this type of propaganda. The broadcast reported the demolition of houses to prepare for the movement of peasants into hamlets "for military purposes and the easier herding of the people into concentration camps." A familiar propaganda device may be noted here. Houses were

21. (U) Details of VC reaction to the Strategic Hamlet program are taken from Milton E. Osborne, "Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam: A Survey and Comparison," Department of Asia Studies Data Paper No. 55 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1965).

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demolished during the Strategic Hamlet program. Thus, the North Vietnamese laid their own particular stress on an event which actually took place, with the hope that their bias would be accepted. There were also frequent references to the former Agrovillage program in Hanoi's propaganda. With an awareness of the discontent which had accompanied the agrovilles, the North's leaders argued that the strategic hamlets were "nothing other than miniature agrovilles." Once the people had been concentrated in the hamlets, the Hanoi regime argued, the US-Diem government intended to exploit them as part of its war effort by using them as coolies and soldiers. At the same time the new settlements were to be used for raising more taxes.

(U) North Vietnamese propaganda consistently attacked developments in the south as stemming from the unholy US-Diem alliance. Interestingly, the whole strategic hamlet scheme was condemned as originating at a meeting in Hawaii headed by Secretary of Defense McNamara. Genuine concern for the independence of their country from foreign interference does exist among the South Vietnamese. Appreciation of this concern has been an obvious consideration in propaganda from Hanoi. It is rare to see any mention of the South Vietnamese Government which does not mention the United States in conjunction. Constant repetition of this theme was rewarded by some success. Robert Scigliano noted that it was not uncommon for peasants in the countryside to address government officials as My-Diem (American-Diem). This phrase was not necessarily used with discourtesy, but its usage demonstrates how effectively Communist propaganda succeeded in linking the Diem regime with the United States in the peasants' minds.²²

(U) Much North Vietnamese propaganda consisted of accounts of the destruction of strategic hamlets by "patriotic forces" or of exhortations to the people of the south to destroy the hamlets. There were, in these radio broadcasts, constant references to the manner in which the destruction of strategic hamlets was carried out. The reports

22. (U) Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 158.

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regularly referred to the destruction of fences and barriers around the hamlets and frequently detailed the amount of barrier demolished. In a typical instance, Hanoi reported the destruction of "twenty-seven kilometers of fences" belonging to forty hamlets.

(U) North Vietnamese propaganda also showed an awareness of the southern settlement pattern and contrasted the concentration inherent in the strategic hamlet with the normal pattern. The North Vietnamese National Assembly referred to hamlets as trampling "on the life, customs and freedom" of the people. And in a lengthy commentary beamed to South Vietnam, Radio Hanoi contrasted life in the hamlets with the freer life of the peasants' own homes:

The free life among the fruit trees and under the shady coconut trees is a thing of the past. Paddy fields, gardens and houses that were located near roads leading to strategic hamlets have been destroyed.²³

(U) The destruction of strategic hamlets was considered of sufficient importance to be included in the twelve slogans issued by the National Liberation Front to celebrate its third anniversary. Slogan five read:

Develop the Ap Bac emulation spirit, step up all activities, expand guerrilla warfare to annihilate more enemy forces, resolutely destroy strategic hamlets, break the enemy grip, consolidate and expand the liberated areas.²⁴

(U) The substance as well as the volume of the commentary on the Strategic Hamlet program suggests a very real concern on the part of the insurgents that it might become a significant factor in the struggle for control of South Vietnam.

23. (U) Radio Hanoi, 30 January 1963.

24. (U) Radiopress, "Vietnam News," 14 December 1963.

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F. PROGRESS OF PROGRAM

(U) The first anniversary of the National Assembly resolution which formally established the Strategic Hamlet program was celebrated on 17 April 1963. In a speech delivered on the occasion, President Diem admitted that earlier settlement plans had not been entirely successful. Those who criticized South Vietnam, however, failed to take account of the "creative genius, the capacity of invention and the tenacity of our people." The plan which had emerged and which was solving the country's problems was the Strategic Hamlet program, "the quintessence of our truest traditions ... the pure outgrowth of our ancestral virtues."

After only one year, the irresistible movement of Strategic Hamlets has already gone far beyond the original tactical objective. In constant progression this movement has upset all the subversive maneuvers of the enemies of the nation, and it has, in addition, strongly shaken the foundations of their very organization. At the same time the general security grows, the foundations of the Personalist revolution take root in the countryside bringing the certainty of victory for the Just Cause.²⁵

(U) Diem's speech reflected the widespread optimism felt by not only the members of the GVN but also by US and British officials in South Vietnam. In two reports sent to President Diem in September 1962 and March 1963, Sir Robert Thompson presented a favorable assessment of the program, although he drew attention to some problems that required remedy. It is interesting to note that Thompson called for accelerating the pace of building strategic hamlets, pointing out that it was important to maintain the initiative and to prevent the enemy from planning and carrying out effective countermeasures.²⁶

25. (U) Osborne, "Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam," p. 32.

26. (U) Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966) pp. 130-36.

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(U) In an address delivered on 27 April 1963, Secretary of State Rusk declared that "the strategic hamlet program is producing excellent results." He went on to describe how morale in the countryside was rising. The Communists were no longer, in Mao's phrase, "fish swimming in a sea of peasants."²⁷

(U) It is true that there were difficult-to-ignore setbacks to the Strategic Hamlet program, such as the battle of Ap Bac on 3 January 1963, in which a small group of guerrillas escaped virtually unscathed from an elaborately arranged trap. However, events such as this failed to undermine seriously the general feeling of optimism of the Vietnamese authorities and their allies.

(U) What was the state of progress of the Strategic Hamlet program on its first anniversary? It will be recalled that the construction goals established for the program had been set at over 12,000 strategic hamlets by early 1964. By mid-April 1963, according to the progress report of the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets, 5917 hamlets had been completed--nearly 50 percent of the strategic hamlets planned. This meant that nearly 8.2 million people out of the country's 13.8 million population were living in strategic hamlets. (Another 2259 strategic hamlets were in the process of being constructed.)

(U) The Strategic Hamlet program registered more progress in the provinces of central Vietnam than in the southern area (see Table 1). This was undoubtedly due to two factors: first, the security situation was relatively better for the GVN in central Vietnam than in the delta region; and, second, the pattern of settlement in the central provinces lent itself more easily to the establishment of strategic hamlets. A few more details would perhaps be helpful in providing a better understanding of the progress of the Strategic Hamlet program. In the 17 provinces of central Vietnam there reportedly were 3021 completed hamlets, representing 58 percent of the planned total of hamlets (5167), in comparison with 2896 hamlets

27. (U) Department of State Bulletin, 13 May 1963, p. 730.

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Table 1 (U)

DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGIC HAMLETS AND POPULATION (U)
(Mid-April 1963)

| Areas | Number of Strategic Hamlets | | | Total Population (in thousands) | Population in Strategic Hamlets (in thousands) |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| | Planned | Completed | Under Construction | | |
| <u>Southern Area</u> | | | | | |
| Saigon | 430 | 285 | 90 | 1,275 | 974 |
| Eastern | 1,340 | 802 | 363 | 1,986 | 1,332 |
| <u>Provinces</u> | | | | | |
| Western provinces | 4,206 | 1,809 | 696 | 5,659 | 2,626 |
| <u>Total</u> | 5,976 | 2,896 | 1,149 | 8,920 | 4,932 |
| <u>Central Area</u> | | | | | |
| Delta | 3,863 | 2,576 | 701 | 4,238 | 2,955 |
| Highland | 1,304 | 445 | 409 | 655 | 283 |
| <u>Total</u> | 5,167 | 3,021 | 1,110 | 4,893 | 3,238 |
| <u>Grand Total</u> | 11,143 | 5,917 | 2,259 | 13,813 | 8,170 |

Source: Times of Viet Nam, vol. V, no. 16 (21 April 1963), pp. 10-11, and Viet Nam Press, Special Issue Commemorating the First Year of the Strategic Hamlet Policy, 17 April 1963, pp. 12-14.

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completed in the southern area's 23 provinces, representing 48 percent of the planned total (5976).

(U) The overall number of inhabitants living in strategic hamlets in the central area was officially judged to be 66 percent of the area's total population, while in the southern area the corresponding figure was only 55 percent. Six provinces in central Vietnam had the highest percentage of population living in strategic hamlets: Ninh Thuan, 98.75 percent; Quang Tin, 96.65 percent; Binh Thuan, 86.30 percent; Quang Ngai, 84.00 percent; Phu Yen, 83.50 percent; and Khanh Hoa, 83.00 percent. In the southern area, Gia Dinh ranked first with 83.20 percent, followed by Vinh Binh, 72.00 percent; Vinh Long, 71.00 percent; and Long Khanh, 70.00 percent. Six months later in October 1963, President Diem, in an address to the National Assembly, claimed that of the 12,000 projected strategic hamlets, 8600 were already built and 10.5 million people were grouped in them.

(U) It should be stressed, in concluding this statistical review, that these figures must be handled with caution. They vary from one official document to another, and there is a great deal of room for questioning their meaning in the real sense of pacification. In too many places, local officials, in order to meet the strict achievement targets posted by Ngo Dinh Nhu, quickly threw up bamboo fences and barbed wire, forced people to relocate, and announced that their hamlets were completed. In many places the deception may have gone further and involved purely imaginary hamlets and people. Nhu repeatedly exhorted the provincial chiefs to accelerate the process of building hamlets and to meet their quotas in advance of the deadlines. His fanatic zeal left his subordinates with no alternative but to meet his goals statistically if not in actuality. The effect this had on the quality of the Strategic Hamlet program and its implementation scarcely needs to be explained. The limited resources available to the program were spread so thinly that the insurgents were presented with inviting targets for attack. It was virtually impossible to train cadres in sufficient numbers to keep pace with the demand for them. To the extent that the GVN was able to train

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cadres, the quality was dangerously low. Ngo Dinh Nhu pushed the program too fast, with the result that the groundwork for success was not laid properly. In his headlong pursuit of the vision of a re-constructed society based on his political philosophy of Personalism, it was inevitable perhaps that the quantitative rather than qualitative aspects of the program received the greatest attention. The rapid expansion of the Strategic Hamlet program was accompanied by deceptively euphoric reports of progress. Americans, as well as Vietnamese officials, were outspoken in their favorable appraisal of the program and its potential for blunting the Communist-led insurgency in the countryside. These reports were accepted in Washington as an accurate reflection of the progress in the struggle against the insurgency.²⁸

(U) The optimism felt in early 1963 was dealt two major and lasting blows during the summer of 1963. The first was the political clash between the Diem regime and the Buddhists. The crisis produced an increasingly volatile situation during which the main issues of the war were forgotten or obscured. It also led to an emotional "confrontation" between the regime and the American administration and to US threats to withdraw or reduce its aid. The US reaction particularly affected Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was responsible for the Strategic Hamlet program. In his resentment, he even went so far as to sack province chiefs who were cooperative towards the Americans, and he pressed on with the program in the hope of achieving a quick victory which would justify the government's policies and at the same time reduce its dependence on the United States.

(U) The second blow to the program was the enemy decision to attack the Strategic Hamlet program more openly than in past months. The targets of their attacks were particularly those hamlets which were hastily built under Nhu's accelerated program.

28. (U) See the chapter on "Reporting and Evaluation" problems in Part Four of Volume II.

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(U) Then, in November 1963, the Strategic Hamlet program virtually collapsed with the downfall and death of President Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu. The insurgents immediately took advantage of the confusion that surrounded the coup to step up their attacks on the hamlets. Only the hamlets which had been well constructed and organized under the more able province chiefs in 1962 were able to withstand the pressure for any length of time.

(U) There is a tendency to regard the failure of the Strategic Hamlet program as a foregone conclusion even well before the events of 1 November 1963. However, it must be stressed that there was a direct causal relationship between the downfall of Diem and Nhu and the abandonment of the Strategic Hamlet program. Coordination and cooperation among civilian and military members of the GVN had been difficult in the best of times, and it had been largely through Nhu's influence and leadership that any kind of unified plan had emerged. The loss of his leadership, despite its many flaws and complications, proved to be a lethal blow to the Strategic Hamlet program. It had a far more profound impact than the increasing rate of insurgent attacks against newly completed hamlets or the overextension of the program and its generally thin quality in many parts of the country. While these problems may very well have undermined and, ultimately, destroyed the Strategic Hamlet program, it is possible that adjustments might have been made to improve the program and its impact in the countryside. The United States and the GVN had very little time to try to remedy these problems before the ouster of Diem and Nhu. There is really no way of knowing for certain, of course, how the Strategic Hamlet program would have fared in the absence of the November 1963 coup d'etat. Yet, in retrospect, it would seem that a number of successful features of the program were unfairly discredited and discarded in the general mood of disillusionment that characterized the post-Diem period.

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IV

CHIEN THANG-HOP TAC PACIFICATION PLANS, 1964-1965

A. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

1. Political

(U) During 1964 and 1965, South Vietnam was plagued by chronic political instability. Following the assassination of President Diem in 1963, the leaders of the coup suspended the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly and other institutions of government. The civilian political elite was fragmented and divided, as a consequence, the military was the only element of organizational strength, and leading military figures constantly vied for political power.

(U) Following the Tonkin Gulf crisis in early August 1964, General Khanh, who had named himself premier in February after another coup, declared a state of emergency and suspended all laws and regulations. On August 16, with the support of the Military Revolutionary Council, Khanh ousted General Minh, the chief of state, with whom he shared power. The Council then elected Khanh president, under a new constitution, but in less than two weeks Khanh and his government were forced to resign following student demonstrations over his assumption of power. The Council resolved this crisis by repealing the new constitution and installing a triumvirate of generals (Khanh, Van Minh, and Tran Thien Khiem) to rule until a national assembly could be convened to elect a provisional leader.

(U) On September 4, General Khanh dissolved the triumvirate and restored General Minh to his former position. Ten days later a coup was launched by a group of young Turks in the military, but Khanh was able to retain his position, with the support of Air Marshal Ky. A wholesale purge of corps and divisional commanders then ensued, the second such shakeup in six months. In late September, a civilian

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High National Council was formed and charged with drawing up a new constitution and preparing the way for a civilian government.

(U) The establishment of viable government was thwarted by the continuing opposition of the Buddhists to the Saigon regimes and by religious conflict between Catholics and Buddhists. Following a series of immolations, riots, and demonstrations, this opposition reached its peak during August when the Buddhists led a massive protest parade in Saigon. (Buddhist opposition was to continue throughout the period until it was finally suppressed by the more viable Ky-Thieu government in 1966.) In September, opposition to the government also surfaced in the Central Highlands in the form of a Montagnard uprising at a US Special Forces training camp and an attempted take-over of the city of Ban Me Thout. The back of the rebellion was finally broken when US forces succeeded in releasing US and Vietnamese hostages. In October, a labor movement, marked by riots and disorder in the capital, contributed to the trials of the government.

(U) Following the promulgation of a new constitution in October, the High National Council elected two civilians, Phan Khac Suu and Tran Van Huong, as chief of state and premier, respectively, in another attempt to achieve political viability. But the new government had a short lease on life. In late December the military staged another purge and dissolved the High National Council. Several months of negotiations between civilian and military leaders followed in an effort to resolve the political crisis. Finally, the Armed Forces Council installed a civilian government; Dr. Phan Huy Quat became premier in late February 1965, and Phan Khac Suu was reappointed chief of state. Several days later, a group of military dissidents staged an unsuccessful coup against General Khanh. The day after the rebels capitulated, the Armed Forces Council, citing a lack of confidence in Khanh, voted to remove him as armed forces commander, and Khanh was thus forced to withdraw from the political struggle.

(U) Three months after he took office, Premier Quat announced that he had decided to hand back the reins of government to the military following the refusal of the chief of state to approve

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recommended cabinet changes. By the end of June, a new military government with Ky the central figure, supported by General Nguyen Van Thieu, took over the reins of power.

(U) As a direct consequence of the political chaos, the effectiveness of government institutions and the morale of civilian officials were seriously eroded. As one coup followed another, the leadership was in a constant state of flux; with each shift in power key officials in the entire administrative apparatus were replaced. Loyalty to the new leadership was paramount, ability secondary. Some elements of the civil apparatus, particularly those of intelligence and the police, completely disappeared. Continued political deterioration in Saigon inevitably had a paralyzing effect on the pacification effort in the countryside. Some provinces had as many as four different province chiefs during 1964 and early 1965; in others there were no province chiefs for several months. The turmoil even seeped down into the districts, where the main burden for implementation of pacification rested. Without vigorous, continuous direction from the center, coupled with adequate resources, provincial officials were reluctant or unable to take the initiative. In the more remote areas, some district and village officials and the supporting popular and regional forces reached tacit agreements with the Communists. The upheavals in the civilian apparatus were paralleled by similar shake-ups in the military; corps and divisional commanders were shifted or replaced in order to ensure loyalty to the new regime.

(U) Fortunately, the Ky-Thieu regime marked a turning point for the GVN by first arresting and then reversing the slide toward complete political collapse. Whether its success was due to its ability to solidify its position through sheer capability or whether the military and political elite realized that the new regime represented their last chance is open to conjecture; nevertheless, the regime did establish an environment of gradually improving political stability within which pacification could go forward.

(U) The political deterioration in Saigon had been paralleled by ever-increasing tension between the United States and North Vietnam.

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In August 1964, North Vietnamese naval sorties against US destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf triggered retaliatory air attacks against North Vietnamese naval craft and shore facilities. The US Congress quickly passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which authorized the President to take all necessary action to ensure the security of South Vietnam, including the use of armed force. In February 1965, in response to Communist attacks against US installations in South Vietnam, President Johnson directed air attacks against the north. Later in the month, the United States and South Vietnam announced that a decision had been taken to open "continuous limited air strikes against North Vietnam to force Hanoi to undertake negotiations."

2. Communist Strategy

(U) With the erosion of South Vietnamese political and military institutions, the Communists closed in for the kill. In 1963, in the face of increasing US advisory and materiel assistance to South Vietnam, Hanoi had abandoned the strategy of the general uprising in favor of a strategy of seizing power through increasing militarization of the struggle. In 1964, Hanoi decided to move to the mobile warfare phase of revolutionary warfare and to seek victory through military operations.¹

(U) The process of creating Main Force conventional military units from the combat guerrilla elements of the Popular Army was intensified. 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 (PAVN) into the Central Highlands commenced. By the first quarter of 1965, the Communist-GVN Main Force comparative strengths had reached a ratio of 1:2.4. From the evidence now available, Hanoi's two major goals appear to have been to capture Saigon and to sever South Vietnam by carving

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

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out a Communist enclave extending from the Laotian border across the Central Highlands to the coastal province of Binh Dinh.²

(U) To implement this strategy, Communist operations against border posts in the Central Highlands were intensified in mid-1964 with increasing effectiveness. Later a regimental force overran a Special Forces camp in Pleiku Province. In the fall, while Communist 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, killed, 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. The Communists seemed well on the way to their goal of control of a swath across South Vietnam and the establishment of a "liberation" presence.

(U) Similar gains were made in the encirclement of Saigon. Late in December, 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 stand-up battle. It was obvious that the disorganized forces of South Vietnam could not match the Communist military pressure. By the spring of 1965, the Army of South Vietnam was losing a district capital a week and the equivalent of approximately one battalion. If disaster was to be averted, US military combat forces would have to be introduced.³

3. US Military Intervention

(U) A recommendation from General Westmoreland to President Johnson, also endorsed by Ambassador Taylor, led to the introduction of US troops in South Vietnam. During March-April 1965, elements of the

2. (U) Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), Chapter II.

3. (U) Ibid.

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Third Marine Division landed at Da Nang to provide security for the US aircraft there, followed by the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which had a similar mission of providing security for the US aircraft at Bien Hoa and Vung Tau.⁴

(U) In June, Guam-based B-52s struck a VC base northwest of Saigon. During the remainder of 1965, additional US divisions, supplemented by units from Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, were introduced into Vietnam. The strict security mission for US installations initially assigned to the US units rapidly gave way to offensive operations against Main Force VC and PAVN units under the pressure of further Communist successes on the battlefield. These offensive operations succeeded in preventing the insurgents from obtaining their probable goal of establishing a "liberation" presence in the Central Highlands and seizing Saigon.

B. THE CHIEN THANG PLAN**1. Concept**

(U) In early March 1964, General Khanh announced a new plan--Chien Thang ("Struggle for Victory")--a program of economic, social, and governmental reforms to be carried out in an environment of security. The combined effort represented by these various programs was called pacification, which was defined as "the restoration of public security and improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants of that area in all fields, political, economic and social."⁵ The development of the plan was spurred by the GVN's recognition of the

4. (U) US combat aircraft had been introduced into Vietnam in 1964 to guard against possible NVA raids in retaliation for US air attacks on North Vietnamese naval bases following the Tonkin Gulf crisis. In January 1965, General Westmoreland had been authorized to attack Communist forces in South Vietnam in an emergency. In February, the response to VC raids against US installations led to the authorization of limited US air and naval attacks against North Vietnamese targets.

5. (U) "Technique of Pacification Operations," Annex E to the Chien Thang Plan, 22 February 1964. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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sharpening decline in government control over the population since the November 1963 coup and its fear that this decline would result in a loss of national morale. In spite of the near political chaos attending the power struggle in Saigon, those in authority were concerned enough to seek US advice and assistance in drawing up a new plan to replace the defunct Strategic Hamlet plan of the Diem regime.

(U) The underlying concept of the Chien Thang plan visualized the gradual expansion of government control from secure areas to those controlled by the Viet Cong--the so-called "spreading oil spot" theory adopted by the French. The plan specified that

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.⁶ (Emphasis added)

(U) The plan consisted of three phases:

- Preparation
- Security Restoration--in two parts:
 - Military mopping-up period (clearing)
 - Real pacification period (securing)
- New Life Development⁷

2. Preparation and Clearing Phases

(U) The preparation phase was described as the gearing-up period in which pacification plans would be drawn up by subordinates in the chain of command and the required materiel and paramilitary and military forces would be assembled.

(U) The military mopping-up, or clearing, phase called for the operation of regular military forces on the periphery of secure areas to eliminate the VC Main Force and guerrilla units from the pacification areas and, after they were eliminated, to prevent their return.

6. (U) Ibid., p. 2-E.

7. (U) Ibid., p. 1.

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(U) The tactics to be used by the regular forces in the clearing phase were based on the lessons learned during the Strategic Hamlet program. During that time, the Viet Cong had made significant gains in population control, and many US officers became convinced that large-scale sweeps were not as effective as small-unit patrols that saturated an area.⁸

(U) While command of the regular military forces was to remain with military commanders, in principle, the divisional commanders were to assign forces to the province chiefs. The rationale for this decision was expressed as follows:

Because of the interrelationship of military and political factors, clearing forces should be deployed in accordance with political (district/village) boundaries and normally placed under control of a province (or district) chief. However, political boundaries must not be permitted to restrict pursuit of VC elements....⁹

As events were to prove, a number of problems were to arise in the implementation of this organizational concept.

(U) It should be noted that the military strategy for employing the ARVN--the nearly permanent assignment of regular forces to the periphery of the areas selected for pacification--was based on the assumption that the Communists would continue to remain in the second stage of revolutionary warfare, i.e., they would avoid combat with regular forces in order to build up their strength. The MACV estimate on which this assumption was based stated in part:

8. (U) This lesson was also learned in the Malayan and Philippine insurgencies.

9. (U) US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, The Concept of Pacification and Certain Definitions and Procedures, February 1965, p. 3. The same rationale was applied to the assignment of the securing forces: "Because of the dominance of social-economic-political factors, securing forces will be under the control of a province (or district) chief." (Ibid., p. 4.)

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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 organization.... (5) Intensify and increase their guerrilla type activities in essentially the same pattern as currently conducted.¹⁰

As we have seen, however, the Communists had decided to go over to the third stage, or counterattack phase, in which combat would be deliberately sought with the regular forces.

3. Securing Phase

(U) The necessity of providing security for the villagers was reinforced by the cultural characteristics of the peasants themselves. Fundamentally, the peasant viewed the insurgency as a contest between two outside forces (the Communists and the South Vietnamese government), which would be decided ultimately by Heaven. In the meantime as the contest raged, the peasant stood aside; his role was one of a bystander, not a participant. He believed that whichever side gained the ascendancy would have received the Mandate of Heaven, at which point he would move to support the winning side. Thus the ability of the GVN to provide security for the peasant was a most important indicator of success--tangible evidence that the GVN had received the Mandate of Heaven.¹¹

10. (U) US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, J-2, VC Strategy and Tactics, January 1964.

11. (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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(U) At the inception of the Chien Thang plan, the paramilitary forces available for providing security for the villages after the regular forces had cleared the area were the Regional Forces (RF), the Popular Forces (PF), the Hamlet Militia (or Combat Youth), and the National Police. The Regional Forces, consisting of rifle companies under the control of the province or district, were to be responsible for security until such time as they could be relieved by the Popular Forces. (Later in the development phase National Police were to relieve the Popular Forces.) The Combat Youth mission was set forth in the Chien Thang plan as follows:

Our national defense policy is designed to build a guerrilla infrastructure, in which the Combat Youth of the New Life Hamlets are the backbone....

When such a powerful infrastructure is established, the regular forces will not be held back in the countryside and therefore will be restored to their primary and unique mission of a national main force.¹²

(U) Under the Chien Thang plan, the responsibility for recruiting, training, and operating paramilitary forces was delegated to each province chief. However, since the GVN lacked the financial resources to support these forces, the requisite funds were to be provided by the United States following US-GVN agreement on force roles, missions, equipment, and authorized strengths. Only then could funds be allotted to the provinces for expansion of paramilitary forces. While agreement had been reached on the authorized strength of the Regional Forces, US and GVN officials were not able to reach a similar agreement on hamlet-village defense forces.

(U) Having outlined the missions assigned to the security forces, and before going on to a discussion of the development phase of the Chien Thang plan some review of the evolution of the paramilitary

12. (U) "Comment on New Life Hamlets," GVN Directive 0660, 5 April 1964, pp. 12-13. It is interesting to note that the restoration of the regular forces to a "national main force" role was to be picked up by President Thieu after the Communists' Tet offensive in 1968.

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forces appears useful as a basis for understanding the problems these forces were to encounter in executing their missions.

(U) By early 1964, the organizational concept and structure of forces for local security had undergone a series of evolutionary steps as a result of their near collapse under Communist military pressure brought to bear during the Strategic Hamlet period. Following the coup in December 1963, the armed forces had been combined into one organization, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). In May 1964, the Civil Guard was renamed the Regional Force (RF), and its commander was raised to a level comparable with that of the ARVN, Navy, and Air Force commanders. At the same time, the Self-Defense Corps became the Popular Force (PF), with a position in the RVNAF similar to that of the new Regional Force. However, in January 1965 the RF and PF were organized into a single force in order to reduce overhead, and headquarters elements were established in the regions and the provinces. Then, in October 1966, pressure on the part of the ARVN resulted in the consolidation of these forces into the ARVN, an arrangement that remained in force thereafter.

(U) Coincident with the changes of command authority, the 44 provincial CG battalions were abolished and organized into 132-man RF companies, with an overall authorized strength of 110,000 by the end of 1964 and a projected strength of 135,000 to be attained during 1965. As in the past, these companies were assigned to the provinces on the basis of the number of districts in the province, and the province chiefs exercised operational control. Armament continued to be limited to US small arms of the M-1 rifle and carbine types, 30 cal. machine guns and 60mm mortars.

(U) The changes in the SDC and Combat Youth forces, however, were more far-reaching. During a visit to South Vietnam in March 1964, Secretary McNamara expressed his concern over the number of paramilitary forces then in-being, and he is reported to have pressed the Khanh government to consolidate the Combat Youth (which then numbered about 180,000, of which about 85,000 were armed) into the Self-Defense Corps.

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(U) In May 1964, coincident with the shift of the SDC to the RVNAF, the GVN decided to abolish the Combat Youth and to integrate its resources into the SDC. In June the Minister of Defense ordered the consolidation of 75,000 Combat Youth into the 110,000-man Popular Force, for a total Popular Force strength of 185,000 by the end of 1964 and 310,000 by the end of 1965. This reorganization was undertaken without MACV (and US) support beyond a PF strength of 110,000, although MACV did agree to furnish arms to the Combat Youth increment in accordance with previous arrangements.

(U) The elimination of the Combat Youth, an unpaid volunteer force, had important political as well as military overtones and was opposed both by MACV and the Commissioner of Youth and Civil Defense in the Ministry of Revolutionary Development. MACV's views on village and hamlet security were set forth as follows:

The existence of an organized, uniformed, trained military force at the village level should be continued. It would have the mission of the mobile defense of the village as a whole. This force should be controlled by the President of the Village Administrative Council through the military (Popular Force) commander.

The Popular Force should be relieved from the hamlet security mission. That mission should be assumed by the hamlet population.... Direction of the Hamlet Civil Defense effort would be vested in the Hamlet Chief who would exercise his control through an Assistant for Youth and Civil Defense.

Hamlet Civil Defense personnel should be utilized on a part-time basis, given rudimentary training in arms and tactics, should not be uniformed, should not be paid from national funds, and should not be rigidly organized. A maximum number of people should be trained. This would allow for the continuation of civilian vocational pursuits concurrent with the performance of the security mission.

Provision should be made for military coordination and assistance from the village Popular Force Commander to the Hamlet Civil Defense Activity.

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The current expansion of the Popular Force should be stopped at 185,000 and a readjustment be made in strength allocations. Future increases would be authorized only if fully justified.¹³ (Emphasis added)

(U) The Commissioner of Youth and Civil Defense argued that the defense of the village and hamlet required the participation and support of all the people and that the most effective method of achieving this objective was through civilian control of the military elements in the hamlets. He maintained that the youth at the hamlet level were the primary force in any defense against the Viet Cong and accordingly should be under control of the Village Youth and Civil Defense commissioner rather than in the military-security chain of command.

(U) While MACV's position that an unpaid volunteer force should be retained at the village-hamlet level was approved by the Mission Council, it was not supported in Washington. The upshot was that the GVN moved ahead with its plans for consolidating the Combat Youth into the Popular Forces, thus abandoning a concept of political, as well as military, involvement of the hamlet population as a whole and its potential for extending GVN influence at the expense of the Communists.

4. The New Life Hamlet Development Phase

(U) Implementation of the development phase was to be based on the New Life Hamlet (NLH) program which aimed at establishing government control, eliminating VC influence, and improving the lot of the villager and acquiring his allegiance. The objectives of the program were stated as follows:

13. (U) US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Pacification Tasks" (Spread Sheet), August 1964. SECRET It is interesting to note that the MACV concept for a hamlet militia was implemented after Tet 1968.

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Detach the people from enemy influence;
 Destroy the enemy infrastructures;
 Build up our infrastructures to restore security and
 develop a new life for the people.¹⁴

(U) Capitalizing on the experience of the Strategic Hamlet period, the NLH program was based on the following criteria:

- (1) An emphasis on the quality of pacification, rather than on the quantity of hamlets under pacification.
- (2) A contribution by the hamlet population in accordance with their resources, rather than at levels prescribed by the GVN.
- (3) Full consultation with the hamlet population on public works and improvements, rather than programs planned by the district, province, or central government without regard to local conditions.
- (4) Resettlement of population in accordance with local desires, rather than forced relocation.
- (5) Advanced planning for relocation of hamlet populations.

(U) According to the GVN directive:

In the areas still under VC influence, we will not immediately activate New Life Hamlets, but will conduct military activities.... New Life Hamlets will be built in these areas only when we have the inhabitants' sympathy and when the areas are within our support capabilities.

Regarding the New Life Hamlets to be activated, according to the program planned, reinforcement of existing hamlets is required prior to progressive construction of other hamlets, as prescribed by the above-mentioned 'spreading oil stain' method to prevent construction of an excessively large number of New Life Hamlets without solid foundations.¹⁵
 (Emphasis added)

(U) Two basic types of civilian cadres were to be formed to assist in the securing and development phases: mobile action cadres, recruited and trained locally, and specialized cadres, recruited and

14. (U) "Comment on New Life Hamlets," p. 5.

15. (U) Ibid., pp. 6 and 9.

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trained nationally. The mission of the mobile action cadres was codified in August 1964 as follows:

Recruiting of mobile action cadre from local areas, and their training, is commenced as soon as possible in order that sufficient numbers of high quality personnel are available to do their part in getting the securing phase underway....

High quality mobile action cadre are the key to the commencement of the New Life program. Principles observed regarding these cadre are:

1. They are recruited locally.
2. They are trained within the province.
3. They live in the hamlets where they work.
4. They provide physical labor and initiative which sparks the physical construction of the hamlets by the people.
5. They temporarily assume hamlet administrative responsibilities until permanent officials are appointed or elected, and provide the link between the people and the special cadre of the public services in identifying and providing for the needs of the people.

Mobile action cadre have a definite intelligence mission. They cannot be successful in a hamlet until they have succeeded in eliminating the enemy agents. In their daily contacts with the people they should constantly be seeking information and should do so in complete cooperation with more professional police efforts.

Mobile action cadre assist in recruiting paramilitary forces by identifying and proselyting likely candidates.

It is envisioned that as the securing phase progresses in a village or hamlet the responsibilities of mobile action cadre who carry the burden of work initially, will be phased out as the village and hamlet officials are appointed or elected, and become able to perform their normal functions.¹⁶

(U) The provinces were responsible for recruiting, training, and employing the cadres; a considerable degree of latitude and initiative resulted and a large number of cadre types, under the sponsorship of various US agencies, emerged during this experimental period.

16. USMACV, "Pacification Tasks."

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The Political Action Teams, sponsored by CIA, consisted of 40-man teams whose mission was to establish hamlet defenses, participate in propaganda and civic action programs, conduct a census of the village, and identify the VC infrastructure. The CIA also sponsored Armed Propaganda Teams, each with a strength of up to 20 men. Because of the relatively high pay received by these teams, the programs tended to attract high quality personnel. This, together with the superior training they received, made the CIA teams the most effective of all the cadres.

(U) The Mobile Administrative Cadres, sponsored by AID, were made up of six men charged with establishing hamlet and village administration, organizing elections, and assisting in identifying the VC infrastructure. Rural Political Cadres, also sponsored by AID, had a mission similar to that of the Political Action Teams, that is they participated in propaganda activities in the village. All of these cadres were recruited and trained locally, except the CIA teams, which were centrally trained. In addition, there were a number of technical cadres recruited by the various GVN ministries. For example, the Ministry of Information sponsored at least five types, and the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Youth and Education also contributed to the proliferation.

(U) By 1965, there were 27 types of cadres in existence. The various cadres suffered from a variety of ills, including poorly qualified and motivated personnel and inadequate training. The fact that the cadres were susceptible to the army draft added to the problem of maintaining the cadre organizations.

(U) In the fall of 1965, both the GVN, under the lead of General Thang, and the Mission Liaison Group, under General Lansdale, recognized the need for the elimination of some of the proliferation and for drastic improvement in the quality, motivation, training, and operation of the cadres. By November, plans had been formulated to effect the following improvements in the cadre programs:

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(1) Consolidation of the various cadres into one organization, the Rural Construction Cadre (RCC), under control of the Ministry of Rural Construction, headed by General Thang.

(2) Formation of 59-man RCC teams, consisting of three political action teams of 11 men each; census grievance, civil action, and economic teams of six men each; and intelligence, psychological warfare and medical specialists.

(3) Consolidation of the training program for re-trainees and recruits, and provision for elimination of unsatisfactory cadres. The revised program was to be based on the CIA training syllabus for the Political Action Teams and to utilize as a core the CIA instructional staff and facilities. The 13-week course was to stress revolutionary theory, political and psychological techniques, military training, and identification with the peasant and his problems, with emphasis on the "three withs": eat, sleep, and work with the peasant.¹⁷

(4) The provision of more effective administrative and logistic support, including a common salary, and immunity from the army draft.¹⁸

(U) Another element of the Chien Thang plan aimed at denying the resources of government-controlled areas to the Viet Cong. These programs, which were to be the primary responsibility of the National Police, were set forth as follows:

Resources Control: An effort to regulate the movement of selected resources, both human and material, in order to restrict the enemy support or deprive him of it altogether and to interrupt or destroy all non-military communication.

Population Control: The control of civil disturbances, riots and other massive activities on the part of the civil population.¹⁹

(U) The concepts of resource control stressed techniques for controlling movement. There were to be four major resource control activities:

17. (U) US Embassy Military Liaison Group Papers, "Rural Construction Cadre," 9 November 1965.

18. (U) William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1966), p. 126.

19. (U) The Concept of Pacification and Certain Definitions and Procedures, p. 9.

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Mobile and static checkpoints--To deny the enemy freedom of movement and the ability to transport supplies, static checkpoints will be established to block all major routes & mobile checkpoints will operate in areas which the enemy will use to avoid the static checkpoints.

Curfew--Uniform curfews will be imposed which prohibit movement during specified hours of darkness. Provisions will be made for emergency movement. Persons found moving during curfews outside hamlets will be fired on; those moving inside hamlets will be arrested and investigated.

Commodity controls--Movement of materials and supplies controlled by publication of a list of restricted (controlled) items which will then become subject to manifesting, purchase controls, inventories, limited stock levels and controlled movement.

Census and identification cards--All persons above the age of 18 will be issued individual identification cards & all persons will be registered in family census books. These systems will be used in determining the presence & movement of unauthorized individuals, & will provide the basis for determination of status at the checkpoints and during searches & investigations.²⁰

5. Pacification Priorities

(U) The Chien Thang plan designated national priorities for pacification: first priority was assigned to the provinces immediately surrounding Saigon (Military Region III); second priority went to the delta area (MR IV); and the MR I and II areas were given last priority. The provinces of Tay Ninh, Dinh Tuong, Vinh Long, Go Cong, and a portion of Kien Hoa were given top priority with MR III and IV. Later in May, the Embassy and MACV prepared a plan for the pacification of the first priority area in the environs of Saigon, reportedly to have a more detailed plan ready for the consideration of the newly designated ambassador, General Taylor. In any event, the so-called PICA Plan (Pacification Intensification Capital Area) or Hop Tac, meaning cooperation, appears to have been a purely US-generated plan.

20. (U) USMACV, "Pacification Tasks."

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(U) The concept for pacification in the Hop Tac area conformed to that of the Chien Thang plan--that is, the theory of the expanding oil spot. Concentric rings centered on Saigon served as phase lines for the expansion of pacification activities. Zone A immediately surrounding Saigon, an area of reasonable government control, was to move directly to the development phase; Zone B, surrounding Zone A, was to be secured in order to prepare for the development phase of pacification; while Zone C, still more distant from Saigon, was designated as the area to be cleared of VC Main Force and guerrilla units. Search and destroy missions by regular forces were to be carried out against VC forces in the outer zone, Zone D, to prevent their threatening the interior zones.²¹ (See Figure 1.)

6. Measuring Pacification

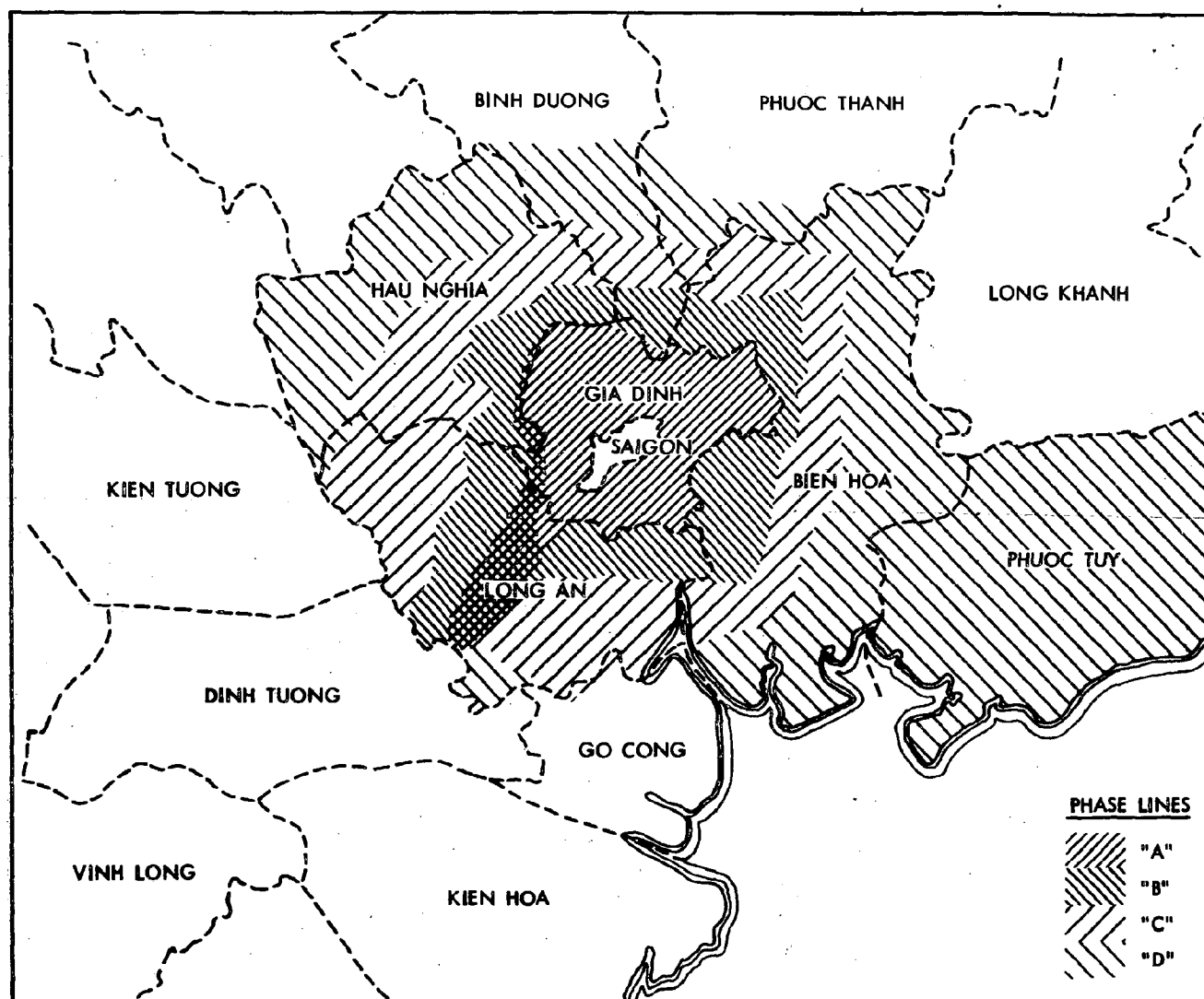
(U) Six criteria were established as a measure of pacification:

- 1) The hamlet residents have been screened and existing VC infrastructure discovered and eliminated.
- 2) Hamlet Combat Youth have been selected, trained, and armed.
- 3) An obstacle system, as well as other fortifications, has been established for defense against VC guerrillas.
- 4) A system for communication and for requesting reinforcement has been set up.
- 5) Hamlet inhabitants have been organized into age-groups and assigned specific tasks for hamlet security and for new life improvement activities.
- 6) A hamlet committee has been elected by secret ballot in accordance with a democratic spirit. (Montagnard hamlets may waive this requirement if a committee has been appointed in lieu of the elected committee.)²²

21. (U) "Hop Tac Operation Order," 12 August 1964. SECRET

22. (U) USMACV and USOM, "Criteria to Evaluate New Life Hamlets," Joint Directive Number 2-64, 8 October 1964. CONFIDENTIAL

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SOURCE: HOP TAC OPERATION ORDER, 12 AUGUST 1964. SECRET

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Figure 1 (S). HOP TAC PHASE LINES (U)

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C. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

1. At the Saigon Level²³

(U) The GVN organized a Central Pacification Committee to administer the Chien Thang plan. Headed by Premier Khanh, the committee was composed of representatives of the various ministries and departments concerned with pacification. The executive agent for pacification was the RVNAF High Command. In order to facilitate this organization, the Commissariat for New Life Hamlets was transferred to the staff of the High Command.

(U) The US counterpart of the Central Pacification Committee was the Mission Council, which was comprised of senior representatives of the embassy, MACV, USOM, USIS, and the CIA. The MACV Strategic Hamlet division and the USOM Rural Affairs section were collocated with the High Command pacification organization, again to facilitate a coordinated effort. In addition, COMUSMACV functioned as the US executive agent for pacification and headed the Executive Committee, which served the Mission Council and also included representatives of USOM, USIS, and other US agencies.

(U) The lack of coordination among GVN ministries involved in pacification led the Ky-Thieu regime to establish a new organization for pacification in 1965 under a Commissioner General for War and Reconstruction--in the person of the Deputy Premier, General Thieu. This new organization grouped the major civil and military agencies of Interior, Youth, Psywar, Defense, and Rural Construction (the newly designated term for pacification and public work). However, the Ministries of Education, Health, Social Welfare, and Agriculture, which were responsible for pacification development programs, were not included. Since this new organization brought at least some of the ministries involved with pacification under one roof, it was an improvement over the Khanh mode.

23. (U) This paper excludes the evolution of an effective organization for direct supervision and coordination at the US national level. This subject is covered in detail in Part Five of Volume II.

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(U) After the appointment of Ambassador Lodge in July 1965, a Mission Liaison Group, under General Lansdale, was established and became the principal agent for US coordination with the GVN. Representatives from all US agencies were included in the Liaison Group. Another US organizational change during 1965 grouped the information and psychological warfare elements of MACV, AID, and USIS into a new Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) under the operational control of the USIS chief.

(U) It is also probable that the key individuals involved in these organizational changes were more important than the organizations themselves. Maj. General Thang, who was appointed head of the Rural Construction Ministry, was to prove himself an able and dynamic administrator with qualities of leadership and innovation. In addition, mutual collaboration between the Mission Liaison Group under General Lansdale and the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction under General Thang was quickly established. The appointment of the Deputy Premier, General Thieu, was also critically important since it tended to indicate the importance of the pacification effort in the GVN scheme of things, an essential for success in the cultural and political environment of South Vietnam.

(U) The organization for implementing the Hop Tac plan consisted of the Hop Tac Council, which was directly subordinate to the High Command in Saigon; its members included the commanding generals of the MR III and IV areas, representatives of the National Police and civil administration and intelligence agencies, together with senior US officials from MACV and the military regions. In addition, a permanent secretariat with representatives from all GVN and US departments and agencies involved in pacification was responsible for operations and coordination on a continuing basis.²⁴ In October, a realignment of military regions and regular force assignments was implemented to support the Hop Tac plan more effectively. Long An Province, a part of the MR IV area, was transferred to MR III to facilitate control, while the 25th Division under MR II was

24. (U) "Hop Tac Organization," Hop Tac Council, 16 October 1964.

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transferred to MR III to strengthen the regular forces available for Hop Tac operations.

(U) The AID organization also went through a series of changes. In 1962, under the pressure of the deteriorating situation in the countryside, AID had reoriented its approach from long-range growth to short-term programs designed to create a rapid impact in the countryside and had established the Office of Rural Affairs to organize and supervise the effort. However, following the Diem coup, the AID Director resigned and was not replaced until June 1964. In the meantime, George Tanham had been assigned to AID as Director of Field Operations, a new position which entailed considerable responsibility for directing rural programs. Shortly thereafter a new AID Director, James Killen, was assigned. Killen's ideas on organization and the role of the US advisory effort in the field differed from those of his predecessor. He downgraded the central authority of the Rural Affairs Office, cut back the number of US advisers in the field, and ultimately reduced the leverage of advisory personnel in the provinces by failing to renew the agreement which gave US provincial representatives a veto on projects requiring US funds for implementation. Coincident with the appointment of Ambassador Lodge to Saigon in July 1965, another AID Director took office. In the fall of 1965, the buildup of AID advisory personnel was resumed and the agreement requiring USOM-MACV approval of GVN pacification programs funded by the United States was reinstituted. In early 1966, the office of Field Operations was given responsibility for the direction and coordination of economic programs in the countryside.²⁵

(U) Unfortunately the US organizational changes instituted by Ambassadors Taylor and Lodge failed to bring about a coordinated US effort. Included in the Warrenton Report was a statement of the US problem:

25. (U) Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam, Chapter 12.

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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 concept. However, some concern was expressed that too drastic organizational changes within the US Mission would create problems with the counterpart GVN organization and would not ensure success of rural construction programs. No agreement was reached on the precise form for organization changes in the US Mission but there was a general consensus that the focal point of control and management had to rest just below the Ambassador and that there must be a senior Mission official solely concerned with this subject. Disagreement was registered as to: (1) whether the Deputy Ambassador, assisted by a staff, should serve this function or whether another senior official (perhaps a second Deputy Ambassador) should be appointed; and (2) what extent individual agency personnel, funds and operations devoted to rural construction could and should be broken out of agency organizations and placed under the direction of the single focal point. Several separate proposals for organizational changes were submitted.²⁶

The resolution of the disagreements reported above was to take more than a year.

2. In the Military Regions

(U) The execution of pacification was delegated to the corps commanders of the four military regions in their capacities as regional governors. This involvement of the corps commanders in civil government was criticized on the basis that this additional link in the political chain of command needlessly complicated administration, particularly since these military officers were not technically

26. (U) The Warrenton Report of January 1966 was the result of a meeting of senior representatives from the US mission in Saigon, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee in Washington, AID, the JCS, CIA, USIA, CINCPAC, and OSD/ISA for the purpose of reviewing the joint GVN-US pacification program. The committee sought to promote the program's effective operation and to address the problems of shortages and bottlenecks in manpower, materials, and transport. (Quote from Appendix D, p. 4. SECRET)

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qualified to deal with civil problems. This criticism appears valid, at least in theory. However, the arrangement was probably dictated by the political realities of the situation which required the Saigon administration to gain the support of the key military commanders through patronage.

(U) Responsibility for the preparation and execution of pacification plans was assigned to the various province chiefs, subject to the approval of the regional commanders. In addition, the commanders of regular divisions were also included in the chain of command between the regional commander and the province, ostensibly on the basis that military support of the pacification process was dependent on the availability of military forces. While coordination of the military aspects of pacification with the civil components was essential, this arrangement was a source of much friction between the military commanders and the province chiefs.

(U) Theoretically, regular forces engaged in clearing and securing operations should have been placed under the operational control of the province chief, or, at a minimum, should not have been withdrawn from pacification without the concurrence of the province chief. In practice, this measure of coordination was seldom achieved. In some instances, VC pressure forced the withdrawal of regular forces from pacification efforts; however, in other cases it appears that they were withdrawn without appropriate coordination between the provincial and military authorities.

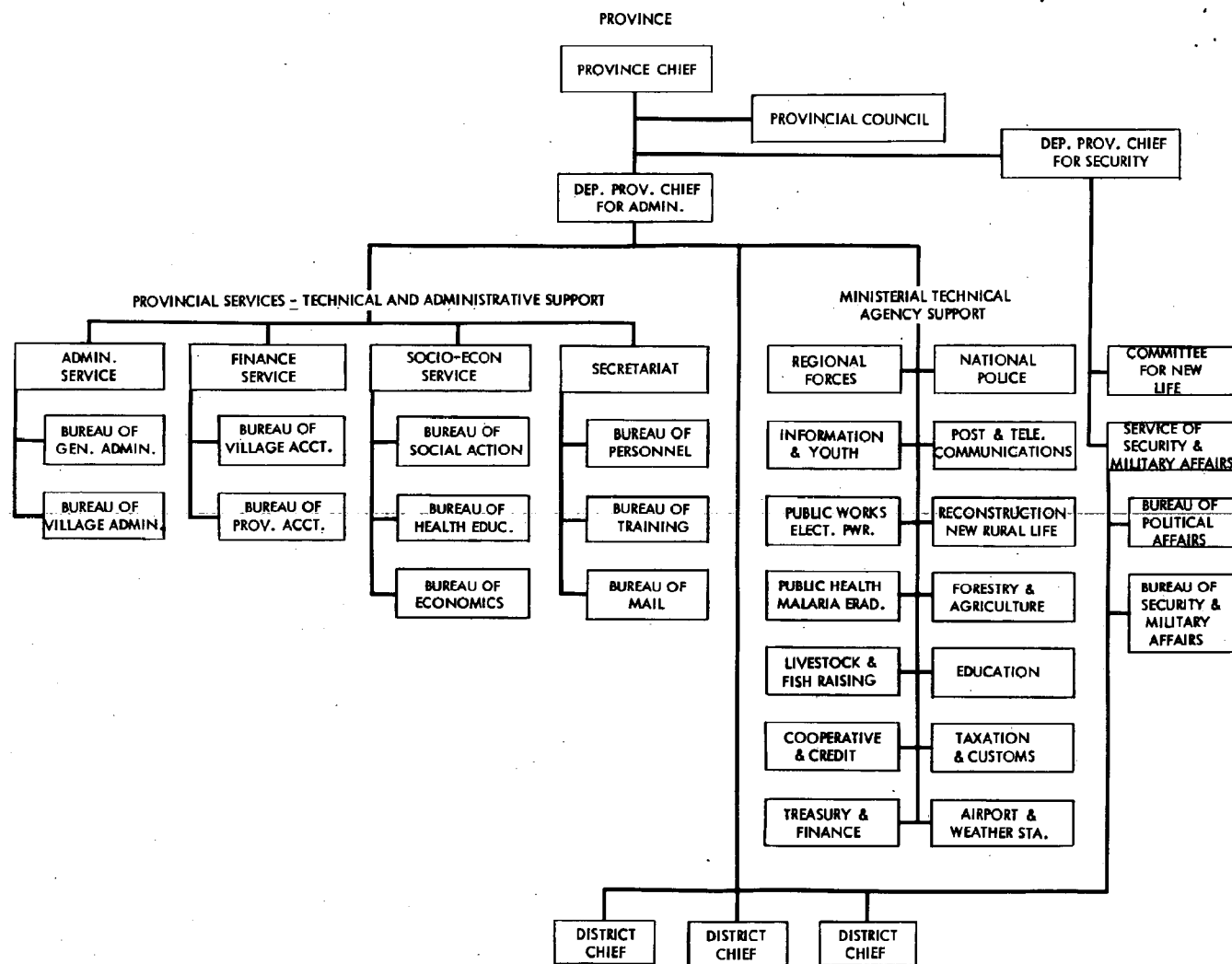
3. In the Provinces

(U) A typical provincial organization of the period is illustrated by that of Quang Nam Province. (See Figure 2.) The province chief was a member of the military; his key subordinates were the chief of the Provincial Council, a civilian deputy for administration, and a military deputy for security. Coordination of the GVN-US pacification effort was achieved, theoretically at least, through the US-GVN members of the Provincial Coordinating Committee.

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Figure 2 (U). TYPICAL PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION (U)

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(U) In some provinces, including Quang Nam, development councils were established, as a result of an AID initiative, to facilitate and coordinate economic and social welfare planning by the technical services. In Quang Nam, a pacification bureau was established to support the field operations of pacification cadres. In 1964, the province employed about 1900 civil servants, excluding pacification cadres.

(U) The US component at the provincial level consisted of the MACV sector team and the AID provincial staff, which occasionally included representatives from USIS and CIA. These staffs were gradually expanded during 1964-65 and reached a total of 30 to 40 advisers for intelligence, the Regional and Popular Forces, civil affairs, and medical aid. By mid-1964, AID representatives (specialists in various technical areas such as agriculture, education, health, and the like) were assigned to all provinces on a full-time basis. These personnel were supplemented by other AID technicians on a part-time basis. The various advisers were equal in authority, which often inhibited the emergence of coordinated US advice.

4. In the Districts

(U) The next level of government organization is the district, of which there are some 238 in all, with from 2 to 11 in each province. Since the district is the link between the government and the people in the villages and hamlets, it was of particular importance in the pacification effort. The execution of pacification plans and programs fell on the shoulders of the district chief and his staff, and effective administration was essential for success. The district chief, an appointed official, was assisted by specialists for youth, police, paramilitary forces, and by representatives of ministries concerned with development, such as Agriculture, Youth and Education, Public Works, Finance, and the like.

(U) In late 1964, the United States decided to place US advisers in the districts, but the shortage of available US civilians necessitated drawing advisers from the military. These military officers

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were responsible for monitoring the progress of all the pacification programs undertaken in the district.

D. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHIEN THANG-HOP TAC PLANS²⁷

1. Clearing and Securing Efforts

(U) Implementation of the Chien Thang plan got off to an early start in the MR I area with the initiation of two large-scale operations in February 1964 aimed at gradually extending control from the western coastal lowlands to the piedmont area. Encountering little opposition to clearing operations in the coastal lowlands, the 1st and 2nd ARVN Divisions were then committed to clearing operations in the piedmont area. The occupation of the Phuoc Chau Valley, 40 kilometers west of the coast, in Quang Tin Province, was considered one of the first successes of the pacification effort. However, as events were to show, success was dependent upon the continued presence of the regular units; the paramilitary forces did not have the quantitative-qualitative capability of securing the area so as to permit the release of the ARVN forces in accordance with the pacification concept.

(U) The Communist strategy of moving to the counterattack phase, using increased VC Main Force guerrilla and PAVN units to seek combat with ARVN regular and paramilitary forces, collided head on with the Chien Thang strategy. The Communists had the initiative and were able to concentrate superior forces against the ARVN at the time and place of their choosing. By July 1964, Communist units had penetrated to the coastal areas in Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, and Quang Tin. Since the paramilitary forces in the coastal area could not stand up to the VC forces, regular forces had to terminate pacification activities farther west and regroup in the coastal areas to attempt to prevent the loss of those areas and to keep the main highway (Route 1) open. New pacification objectives were established for those hamlets and villages flanking the main line of communication, Route 1.

27. (U) Unless otherwise indicated this section is based on State-MACV documents too numerous to cite individually.

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A similar setup of the Communist offensive operations occurred in the MR II area of Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen Provinces, which severely hampered pacification efforts.²⁸

(U) While the Main Force VC activity in the Hop Tac area surrounding Saigon was not as serious as in the northern provinces, pacification was delayed until plans could be prepared and forces and personnel assembled and trained. Consequently, pacification as such could not be initiated until late summer.

(S) In August 1964, the Embassy gloomily reported that "the present pacification plan is not adequate to maintain morale or ensure success." This pessimism was echoed in a September appraisal by DIA:

From February through April the Khanh government revised and reorganized the pacification program. In May and June it appeared to be gaining momentum slowly, although administrative and logistics apparatus were deficient. However, there is nothing to report in the way of progress in July and early August, the occasional bright spot being offset by VC activity. Much of the ability of the VC to undo government gains was the failure to maintain security. The recent political crisis dimmed prospects even more. Local officials disturbed by the instability in Saigon have adopted a traditional wait-and-see attitude. It is questionable that the Khanh government can devote the time and effort required to lift pacification out of the doldrums. It is more likely that government control will continue to deteriorate.²⁹

The deterioration predicted by DIA in September did in fact continue. Heavy pressure by Main Force VC units in the coastal areas of the MR II provinces of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, exacerbated by mammoth floods and large numbers of refugees pouring into the coastal towns, brought pacification to a halt.

28. (U) Quang Ngai was a part of the MR II area until October 1964, when it was transferred to MR I.

29. (U) Defense Intelligence Agency, Assessment of Pacification Progress, 17 September 1964.

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(S) In February 1965, VC Main Force units defeated the regular ARVN regiment in Binh Dinh, and the government hold on the district towns was increasingly challenged. At the same time, attrition in ARVN regular units and the requirements for static defense of district and provincial towns led the MR II senior US adviser to report that no further pacification efforts could be expected until additional regular and paramilitary forces could be assigned.³⁰

(S) In Phu Yen, the lack of security led to the resignation of government officials and the desertion of a significant number of the pacification cadres. The situation was summarized by the USOM representative in Phu Yen as follows:

The VC have succeeded in cutting off the province by disrupting road and railroad travel. The deteriorating security situation seriously impedes all government-sponsored programs and activities. For example, construction projects had to be suspended, cadre movements were limited to secure areas only, communications problems became more acute than ever and a sudden increase in commodity prices created a bad psychological situation. The province rep feels that before the mission can be accomplished in the province, the security situation must be vastly improved. The province chief and the MACV sector advisor and the USOM rep are unanimous in the opinion that additional troops should be assigned to operate in Phu Yen.³¹

(U) By March the situation had deteriorated still further. In Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen, government control had shrunk to the areas in the immediate vicinity of provincial capitals. The number of refugees had risen to over 100,000, leading USOM to predict that its principal assistance would have to be diverted from pacification to refugee relief. ~~Both pacification and~~

30. (U) In February, the ratio of government forces of all types to Communist forces was as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------|-------|------------|-------|
| Quang Nam | 3.8:1 | Quang Ngai | 1.2:1 |
| Quang Tin | 3.9:1 | Binh Dinh | 3:1 |
| | | Phu Yen | 3.9:1 |

31. (U) USOM, "Reports for USOM Provincial Representatives for the Month Ending 28 February 1965."

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refugee assistance, however, were hampered by the cutting of coastal rail and road communications, which increased the isolation of the government-controlled areas.

(U) In the Hop Tac area surrounding Saigon, some progress was reported in spite of the rising level of Communist operations against GVN forces which had culminated in the serious defeat of elite ARVN units of the Mobile Reserve by the VC 5th Division in December. In early January 1965, the GVN claimed that the first phase of pacification operations had been successfully accomplished, that is, Zone C had been cleared of the enemy, Zone B had been secured, and development was proceeding in Zone A. Of the 1146 hamlets in the area, 286 were said to meet the six-point criteria for pacification (see p. 215). On the strength of this reported success, the second phase of the operation, the development of hamlets in Zone B, was undertaken; the target date for completion was 30 September 1965.

(U) American observers, however, were less sanguine about progress in the Hop Tac area. In response to a request from the Secretary of Defense, MACV reported the results of a field survey in the Hop Tac area in which new criteria and standards were adopted as a measurement of progress. The application of this new criteria led to MACV's conclusion, with Embassy concurrence, that certain criteria had not been met in Zone B; that is, the necessary Popular Forces for maintaining local security against an enemy force of platoon strength or less had not been recruited, hamlet surveys to determine villagers' attitudes had not been completed, local government supporters had not been identified, nor had informants been established in the hamlets as a basis for intelligence. Similarly in Zone A Popular Forces were not sufficient to ensure protection, and as a consequence regular forces had to be retained in the zone.

(C) Inspection reports in Long An Province (which was regarded as the critical province in the first priority zone of Hop Tac) supported these conclusions:

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Pacification progress in Long An is lagging behind the current Hop Tac goals. Within the A Zone about half of the hamlets scheduled for pacification have achieved that formal status (9 of 22), but the Senior Advisor, 50th Infantry--the unit responsible for A Zone pacification--estimates that approximately one-quarter of the nominally pacified hamlets have regressed to the point where long stretches of their fences are cut periodically either with the inhabitants' compliance or with an acquiescence such as to preclude even the volunteering of information concerning these acts. Although enemy initiated activity within the zone has generally been limited to harassments, communications sabotage, and individual acts of terrorism, this fact does not indicate a state of security such as is properly associated with the term "pacified." ... Sightings of enemy units have been made, up to battalion size, both within the A Zone and along its boundaries. The insecurity indicated by these facts is clearly reflected in the retention of regular forces either in the Zone or on its immediate borders; five ARVN companies are considered necessary for the security of the Ben Luc Bridge, the 50th Infantry headquarters and three hamlets "undergoing pacification." Consequently, the conclusion here is that Long An's A Zone should rightfully be considered in the "securing" rather than the "development" phase.³²

(C) A similarly pessimistic evaluation of progress in Bing Duong as of early March reported that

given a continuance of the current level of VC strength and activity, it is hard to believe that by 1 July the forces currently available in the [Hop Tac] C and D Zones will have established those conditions which would warrant for Zone C a cleared status--namely, the elimination of organized enemy units from the Zone itself and the prevention of penetration into the Zone of enemy elements larger than platoon. US advisors on the scene are unanimous in believing that 1 July is an unrealistic target date for the completion of securing operations in Zone B....³³

32. (U) "Report of Inspection of Long An Province," p. 1.

33. (U) Hop Tac Secretariat, Letter 24 March 1965, Subject: "Report of Inspection" (Binh Duong Province), p. 2. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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(C) While the offensive operations of Communist units in the delta/area of MR IV were not as successful as similar efforts in other military regions little progress was made in pacification there, except in the Hoa Hao areas of An Giang and Chau Doc. Typical of provincial reports indicating deterioration of pacification was that of the US provincial representative in Go Cong who reported that

during the period the VC began their anticipated campaign to block the pacification program there has been an exodus of people from the areas under pacification, indicating that there is a growing lack of faith in the GVN's ability to provide security. The pacification crust is under considerable stress and cracks are appearing. The prov rep reports that those remaining in the VC threatened areas are becoming less willing to cooperate with the government for fear of VC retribution. The local officials are definitely concerned over the turn of events but a number had expected this. They generally conclude that the government must provide a greater degree of effective security for indefinite lengths of time if it is ever to make any permanent progress in pacification.³⁴

(U) In spite of the adverse reports, MACV considered pacification plans and progress in the Hop Tac area to be superior to those of the other provinces. Accordingly, MACV directed that senior US advisers in MR I and IV review their pacification plans and prepare new ones, based on the Hop Tac model, for discussion with their GVN counterparts. MACV believed that the application of Hop Tac principles would demonstrate the desirability of coordinating and focusing resources in the critical areas of each military region. Ultimately this initiative led the ARVN High Command to direct the development of similar plans for MR I, II, and IV. The Hop Tac Secretariat was charged with organizing a two-day seminar in order to pass on the Hop Tac experience to civilian and military planners. In the May meeting of the High Command, the regional commanders presented their plans as directed. The I Military Region planned to

34. (U) USOM, "Provincial Representatives Reports," 28 February 1965.

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select the Da Nang area as a point of departure for pacification; MR II, Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province; and MR IV, the Can Tho area.

(C) Representatives from MACV pointed out, however, that pacification problems in MR I, II and IV would differ from those in the Hop Tac area in MR III:

a. Special organizational arrangements do not have such great importance as has been the case in the original Hop Tac area. Under the new organization for rural reconstruction, the Corps Commander has the requisite authority to follow through and correct any matter that might be slowing or blocking action. The corps are considering using the CTZ Rural Reconstruction Council, which has the appropriate GVN membership, to guide the effort. It will be necessary for the US advisors to recommend the appropriate US counterpart organizational relationships. I would hope that the USOM, USIS, and CAS regional representatives will join the corps senior advisors in developing effective and cooperative support arrangements on the US side. It is critically important that the U.S. advice and support be consistent and attuned to the corps civilian-police-military plan.

b. Ministerial support in the CTZs will likely be more tenuous. The civilian Deputy on the Hop Tac Council has ready access to high-level ministry officials in Saigon and is in a fairly good position to coordinate ministerial support. In I, II and IV Corps, the ministries are for the most part represented by low level inspectors. To insure timely and adequate support, some arrangement will be required whereby the corps can get rapid and coordinated response from ministries in Saigon. The Rural Reconstruction General Directorate should have this responsibility and will have to be ready to serve as the Saigon point of contact for the CTZs.

c. The scope of the Hop Tac-type operations will be more restricted. Because I, II, and IV Corps have fewer resources and are starting from rather small secure areas, the portion of the corps' effort devoted to Hop Tac operations will be much less than the amount III Corps gives to Hop Tac. Moreover, the overall changes in the corps activities will be much less noticeable.³⁵

35. (U) USMACV, "Talking Paper," Additional Hop Tac Programs, April 1965. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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(C) MACV noted the Corps commanders' attitudes toward this new planning initiative, saying "the I Corps Commander has indicated that he favors the Hop Tac concept. However, it seems quite clear that the II Corps Commander is not convinced that the plan is feasible and the IV Corps Commander is totally disinterested."³⁶ The II Corps commander's questioning of the feasibility of continuing pacification plans in the face of the heavy VC initiative and the lack of security would appear to have had some justification in view of the fact that he was having extreme difficulty in retaining a few district and the provincial capitals under the onslaught of VC and PAVN forces.

(U) One new note of hope did appear in February 1965, with the landing of a Marine brigade at Da Nang, which marked the beginning of a significant buildup of US and allied forces. However, it was to be some time before the effect of these forces would be felt and in the meantime pacification remained at a complete standstill.

(U) In July, following the resignation of Premier Quat and the return of political power to the military under General Ky, MR II lost six district towns to the Viet Cong, and security in the Hop Tac provinces of Long An and Hau Nghia was slipping. These unhappy events were coupled with the rise of the refugee population to nearly 600,000, the majority of which were in the coastal provinces of MR I and II. At the same time, another break in continuity of effort occurred with the resignation of Ambassador Taylor and his replacement by Henry Cabot Lodge.

(U) Nevertheless, as time went on, there were favorable domestic political signs. The new Ky-Thieu government seemed to be received favorably and the military appeared to be uniting behind the new leadership. At the same time, the new government was calling for a mobilization of resources, new ideas, and meaningful reforms. Premier Ky showed interest in stepping up pacification and decentralization, but noted that Hop Tac appeared to him to be more paper work than action.

36. (U) Ibid.

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(U) By early September it became apparent that because of the heavy VC military pressure, the Hop Tac pacification goals originally scheduled for completion by 30 September could not be met, at least not until the end of the year. Beginning in April there had been a significant step-up in VC incidents in the area. From the evidence available, the Viet Cong had built up their forces to a strength of at least eight battalions to counteract the Hop Tac pacification efforts. As a result, hamlets under development were increasingly overrun and assassinations took place even in the Capital Military District of Saigon itself in December. Similarly, pacification in the coastal provinces was either at a standstill or deteriorating, while the number of refugees had risen to nearly 750,000. For example, in Quang Tin Province it was apparent that the government had firm control of only about ten square kilometers. In Quang Nam, the pacification program launched from Da Nang in October, which aimed at pacification of thirty-eight hamlets in nine villages, had made little progress in spite of the commitment of two battalions of US Marines, a RF battalion, five Political Action Teams, and 340 Mobile Action cadre. By the end of December, only nine of the thirty-eight hamlets appeared to have been secured. Nevertheless, the Marines did introduce a new approach to improve the effectiveness of the locally recruited Popular Forces responsible for village and hamlet security--integration of a squad of US Marines into the Popular Force platoon--reportedly with good results.

(S) An optimistic sign as 1965 ended was the increasing effectiveness of US forces. In December the defeat of a PAVN division by the newly introduced 1st Air Cavalry Division in the Central Highlands, combined with the security afforded by the Korean Capital Division and the Korean Marine brigade in Binh Dinh Province, probably prevented a Communist takeover of a liberated area extending across the Central Highlands to Qui Nhon in the coastal province of Binh Dinh. Similarly, the presence of the Marines in Quang Nam, highlighted by their offensive operations against a VC regiment in

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Operation Starlight, blunted the Communist offensive in MR I.³⁷ Nevertheless, in spite of the rising level of US and allied military units, the ratio of friendly to enemy battalions decreased from 2.4:1 in the first quarter of 1965 to a ratio of 2:1 in the third quarter of 1965.³⁸ At the same time, the Ky-Thieu regime and the US advisers showed signs of having digested many lessons from the pacification effort to date and were moving to put some of those lessons into effect.

2. Development Efforts

(U) Beginning in late 1964, the national ministries had fielded large local field staffs for agriculture, animal husbandry, and other technical services to carry out ambitious new development programs. This effort was paralleled by the assignment of large numbers of US and other allied technicians to development activity. As a result of the increased staffing and availability of resources, a variety of programs in village self-help, public works, education, health agriculture, and the like were instituted. The kind and scope of these programs are illustrated by the pacification programs underway in Quang Nam Province in 1964 (see Figure 3). Of all these programs, the self-help type offered the greatest payoff since they required

37. (U) Report on the War in Vietnam, Chapter III.

38. (S) The data for "infantry-type battalions in South Vietnam" is as follows:

| | <u>RVN</u> | <u>US</u> | <u>Third Nation</u> | <u>VC</u> | <u>PAVN</u> | <u>Ratio Friendly to Enemy</u> |
|----------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1965, 1st qtr. | 128 | 2 | 1 | 53 | 0 | 2.4:1 |
| 1965, 3rd qtr. | 132 | 34 | 1 | 74 | 9 | 2.0:1 |

The ratios exclude PAVN and Third Nation battalions in order to demonstrate the capability of the VC alone to offset the US force buildup. However, the rate at which the Viet Cong built their forces probably could not have been sustained without the infiltration of trained cadres from North Vietnam. During 1964, when the VC buildup was taking place, probable total yearly infiltration was 12,424, an increase from 7906 in 1963. US Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency, Special Intelligence Supplement: Military Factbook on the War in South Vietnam, SIS 141-66, January 1966, pp. 28 and 35. **SECRET**

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

Figure 3 (U). QUANG NAM PACIFICATION PROGRAMS, 1964 (U)

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the involvement of the peasantry with the government in a joint venture in which the government provided materials and technical know-how while the people furnished the labor. Figure 4 shows the status of the USOM-sponsored self-help projects throughout South Vietnam in mid-1964.

(U) As a general rule, development activities during the Chien Thang-Hop Tac period fell far short of expectations. In the first place, development was attempted in areas where basic security was lacking--in direct contradiction with the national plans which specified that development should take place in an environment of security. As a consequence, the Viet Cong destroyed many of the schools, dispensaries, and other facilities that were constructed--thereby demonstrating the inability of the government to protect what it had built. Much of the development-assistance materials, such as cement, lumber, and the like, was simply seized by the Viet Cong. In addition, the administrative ills of the GVN apparatus, i.e., lack of qualified technicians, ineffective organization at all levels, and corruption, contributed to the overall ineffectiveness of the development programs.

(U) Another problem of great magnitude that neither the United States nor the GVN was prepared to face was the plight of the refugees (there were over 800,000 by late 1965). The refugees were of two kinds: those temporarily displaced for a few months, and permanent refugees. The latter tended to be women, children, and old men, for the great majority of the young men were either in the VC or the Vietnamese army. The problem of simple relief (food, shelter, and clothing) was enormous:

Imaginative attempts to rehabilitate these refugees and motivate them toward enthusiasm for the government cause was not attempted. Even though it is a difficult problem, it could be thought of as a great propaganda and humanitarian opportunity.³⁹

39. (U) Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam.

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| PROJ. NO. | PROJECT CATEGORY | APPROVED | COMPLETED | UNDER CONSTRUC. |
|-----------|---|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1 | Schoolrooms | 1684 | 527 | 897 |
| 2 | Bridges | 424 | 153 | 193 |
| 3 | Roads | 649 | 331 | 213 |
| 4 | Markets | 434 | 158 | 139 |
| 5 | Public Halls/Hlt. & Vill. Offices | 872 | 645 | 151 |
| 6 | Maternities/Dispensaries | 692 | 374 | 113 |
| 7 | Sericulture Centers | 5 | - | 4 |
| 8 | Smoke Houses | 274 | 8 | - |
| 9 | Warehouses | 289 | 111 | 163 |
| 10 | Blacksmith Shops | 274 | 4 | 1 |
| 11 | Sewing Centers | 28 | 1 | 20 |
| 12 | Tool Storage Sheds | 276 | 61 | 105 |
| 13 | Pig Pens | | | |
| 14 | Chicken Coops | 307 | 88 | 41 |
| 15 | Duck Hatcheries | 1510 | 3 | 1504 |
| 16 | Fish Ponds | 706 | 193 | 66 |
| 17 | Wells (Hand-dug) | 2095 | 1138 | 805 |
| 18 | Irrigation Canals | 48 | 25 | 19 |
| 19 | Drainage Canals | 73 | 13 | 60 |
| 20 | Dams/Reservoirs/Cisterns/Dikes | 249 | 58 | 87 |
| 21 | Culverts | 745 | 223 | 267 |
| 22 | Barber Shops | 272 | 108 | 39 |
| 23 | Gardens (School, Community) | 868 | 36 | 51 |
| 24 | Rice Drying Courts | 1280 | 511 | 500 |
| 25 | Windmills | 57 | 14 | 14 |
| 26 | Hamlet Lighting Systems | 33 | 9 | 12 |
| 27 | Privies | 766 | 277 | 438 |
| 28 | Livestock Raising | 869 | 298 | 273 |
| 29 | Agric. Machine Projects | 558 | 11 | 11 |
| 30 | Tree Planting/Orchards | 358 | 70 | 11 |
| 31 | Training & Demonstration Centers | 28 | 15 | 1 |
| 32 | Land Clearing | 108 | 88 | 19 |
| 33 | Brick Facility | 13 | 7 | 4 |
| 34 | Fish Nets | 21 | 20 | 1 |
| 35 | Kilns (Brk, Charcoal, Lime, Tile) | 10 | - | 4 |
| 36 | Dock/Landing Facility | 26 | 18 | 7 |
| 37 | Playground Courts | 518 | 385 | 1 |
| 38 | Water Pumps | 57 | 21 | 14 |
| 39 | Loan Funds (Hamlet, Village) | 56 | 16 | - |
| 40 | Sawmills (Lumber) | 2 | - | - |
| 41 | Fish Boats/Fish Boat Motors | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 42 | Thrashing Floors, Cement | 27 | 3 | 21 |
| 43 | Libraries | 13 | 8 | - |
| 44 | Compost Fits | 50 | 35 | - |
| 45 | Slaughter Houses | 1 | 1 | - |
| 46 | Sewage Lines | 1 | - | 1 |
| 47 | Repairs or Improvements to Public Bldgs, Bridges, Roads, Offices, Halls | 646 | 372 | 260 |
| TOTALS | | 18277 | 6440 | 6533 |

Figure 4 (U). STATUS OF USOM SELF-HELP PROGRAMS, AUGUST 1964 (U)

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The failure to capitalize on the opportunity to gain the allegiance of the refugee population would seem to be a significant omission in the pacification effort.

(U) Another important aspect of the development phase of pacification was the gaining of intelligence on and the elimination of the VC infrastructure in the villages and hamlets. Practically all of the regular and paramilitary forces and a large number of the cadres were assigned to this mission. However, only the Special Police branch of the National Police and perhaps the Political Action Teams received reasonably adequate training; the Special Police, like the National Police as a whole, were severely handicapped by a lack of personnel; such additional personnel as were assigned during the period were mainly allocated to the Hop Tac area for the resources and movement control programs. National Police were not assigned to the villages under pacification; only locally hired and untrained rural policemen were present there. A few Special Police were assigned to the provinces and districts, but they could not cope with the problem of detecting the VC infrastructure.

(U) The organizational approach to intelligence was sound enough; district and provincial intelligence operations centers, manned by regular and paramilitary forces and the National Police, were established in some provinces and districts during the period. However, these centers emphasized acquiring order of battle intelligence rather than the less glamorous but important intelligence on the VC political organization and membership. Then, too, the lack of security in the hamlets and villages prevented the peasants from volunteering information on VC personnel and activities. It is not surprising under these circumstances that little progress was made in the detection of the VC infrastructure.

E. CONCLUSION

(U) The basic concept for pacification in 1964-65 was based on the spreading oil-spot theory and was to be executed in three phases. First came the clearing phase, in which the regular forces would

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clear the periphery of the oil spot of Communist forces and once having cleared those forces from the assigned area would prevent their return. In the second phase, the cleared area was to be secured by paramilitary elements composed of Regional and Popular Forces. Once the area was secured, the development phase would commence; village and hamlet administration would be established, the VCI identified and apprehended, and social and economic programs undertaken to improve the lot of the villager and to win his support of the government.

(U) One cannot quarrel with the oil-spot theory of pacification, that is, the gradual expansion of pacification from secure to insecure areas. However, the strategy for the employment of regular forces in support of the theory is controversial, if our Vietnam experience is any indication. One school of thought, which might be characterized as the "other war" school, took the position that since effective pacification required that the support of the villagers be won, all pacification activity, including that of the military forces, should be directed at the villagers, with the regular military forces providing security. In short, this school held that search-and-destroy missions were not productive; some even held them to be counterproductive. The other school of thought, the "big war" school, held that pacification could best be accomplished by concentrating on military operations leading to the defeat of Communist forces, with minimal attention paid to political, social, and economic reforms to gain the support of the people. (In the view of the writer neither of these schools of thought is the final answer; rather the appropriate strategy must be based on an appraisal of the overall situation, and particular attention must be paid to the military balance of forces.)

(S) General Thang, the Minister of Rural Construction, espoused the "other war" theory in stating his concern with what he termed the overmilitarization of the pacification process:

The US and the Vietnamese should agree on a definition of pacification, since "we lack clear doctrine and definition of pacification; all we have now is a military definition; we design military plans to back up pacification plans that do not exist ... there is no

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technique clearly defined for pacification ... there is a general lack of confidence in pacification strategy on the part of both military and civilians--even the Prime Minister always encouraged military victories but did not encourage pacification--ARVN was therefore committed to primarily search and destroy missions and the country was abandoned to the VC."⁴⁰

(U) While we can agree with General Thang's conclusion that there was a lack of a clear doctrine for pacification, we cannot agree that the army was committed primarily to search-and-destroy missions. The record shows that the army was for the most part tied down to guarding important population centers and installations and to clearing operations on the periphery of the selected oil spots. In 1964-65, this strategy was based on the US assumption that the Communists lacked the strength to interfere seriously with the pacification effort. As we have seen, this assumption proved faulty. The Communists were in the process of building up their forces through infiltration of regular PAVN units, on the one hand, and the rapid expansion of Main Force battalion and regimental units, on the other, to the point that they were capable of seizing the initiative by taking the offensive against the ARVN units engaged in the clearing mission. Since the ARVN units were tied down to clearing operations in the vicinity of the various oil spots, the Communists were free to concentrate superior forces without interference against the ARVN and regional force units. These forces were defeated in detail, and pacification was brought to a standstill. In light of these facts, then, the overall strategy adopted during 1964-65 must be considered as invalid.

(U) What should have been the strategy then? The lessons emerging from other insurgencies⁴¹ shed considerable light on this problem and indicate that the appropriate military strategy is dependent on an analysis of the balance of military forces. In Vietnam during 1964-65, the balance of forces favored the Communists; therefore,

40. (U) US Embassy telegram to Department of State, 4 September 1965. SECRET

41. (U) See Part One of this volume.

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the military strategy adopted should have been an offensive one featuring the employment of regular forces concentrated in such a manner as to produce local superiority against Main Force Communist units in order to regain the initiative and gradually fragment and attrite the opposing forces. Such a strategy if successfully implemented would have created an environment for pacification in which security could have been established in selected areas and development could have proceeded.

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V

1966 AND 1967 PACIFICATION PLANS

A. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

1. Political

(U) The relative political stability which characterized the last half of calendar year 1965 was shattered by renewed Buddhist opposition to the government. In early March 1966, the Ky-Thieu regime concluded that the policies of General Nguyen Chanh Thi, regional commander of Military Region I, were not in consonance with those of the government and removed him from his post. This dismissal led to Buddhist protests against the government in Da Nang, Hue, and Saigon, and to demands for a civilian leadership to replace the military. Following the government's refusal to make concessions to the Buddhists, general strikes and massive protests erupted in Hue, Da Nang, and Saigon and soon spread to other population centers. In early April the government threatened to use troops to put down the opposition. Some conciliatory measures were also taken by the government, but they failed to put an end to the demonstrations. Finally, in May, units of the SVN General Reserve were airlifted into Da Nang to disarm regular ARVN units that continued to support the Buddhists. Concurrently, Army and police units broke up massive Buddhist demonstrations in Saigon. Following this show of force, the government agreed to enter into talks with the Buddhist leaders in the hope of cooling the political crisis. In an effort to meet some of the Buddhist demands, the Ky government enlarged the ruling National Leadership Committee's membership (primarily military) with an equal number of civilians. Once again the government's efforts failed to placate the Buddhists, and the protests continued, marked this time by a fast by the Buddhist leader, Tri Quang. In June, the government again moved loyal troops

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into Hue to cope with continued Buddhist disorders, and into Saigon to seize a Buddhist center there. The firm measures taken by the government apparently convinced the Buddhists that further opposition was useless, for no new challenges to the government were launched.

(U) While the Buddhist protest activities were not as politically destabilizing as the series of military power plays during 1964 and early 1965, they did adversely affect pacification efforts, particularly in MR I, where the Buddhist opposition had been most serious. (Still, the disorders did have the positive effect of hastening the move toward a more broadly based government--a firm US objective.)

(U) In October 1966 President Johnson, along with the leaders of other governments assisting South Vietnam, participated in the Manila Conference on Vietnam. At this meeting, Premier Ky pledged to press forward on a program of political and economic reform in order to reinforce the pacification effort.

(U) In the meantime, efforts to establish a constitutional government were continuing. On 11 September 1966, a 117-man Constituent Assembly was elected to draft a new constitution and prepare for a civilian government. The new constitution was approved by the GVN in March 1967, and shortly thereafter the GVN set 1 September as the date for presidential and senatorial elections, and 1 October as the date for lower house elections. In June 1967, the Constituent Assembly, acting as a provisional legislature, promulgated laws for the elections. The Assembly had ruled in May that military personnel could run for office without resigning from the armed forces, and there were strong indications that both Ky and Thieu might compete for the presidency. Prolonged political maneuvering on the part of both Ky and Thieu ensued. Finally, under pressure from the ruling Armed Forces Council, Ky agreed to withdraw from the presidential race and to seek office as the vice president, presumably in order not to split the military vote to the point that one of the civilian candidates might receive a plurality. Thereafter events moved smoothly toward the national elections. In July, the Constituent Assembly approved eleven candidate slates, but rejected seven; the "Big" Minh-Tran Van Don

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ticket was rejected on the basis that Don was a French, rather than a Vietnamese, citizen.

(U) In order to allay the suspicions of some in the US Senate who questioned the GVN's determination to conduct honest elections, President Johnson appointed a twenty-man commission to observe campaign and election procedures. In addition, Belgium, New Zealand, Japan, Laos, and the Philippines accepted the GVN's invitation to observe the elections.

(U) In September General Thieu was elected president, with 35 percent of the vote. Thieu's election, under what was generally agreed to be fair elections, strengthened the hand of the GVN and was a fundamental factor in improving the stability of the governing process. Nevertheless, President Thieu moved slowly as he attempted to consolidate his position as head of state, and as a consequence pacification did not proceed as rapidly as US officials hoped.

2. Communist Military Strategy

(C) The strategy of the Communists during this period was a continuation of the counteroffensive phase (Stage III of the revolutionary warfare doctrine) which had characterized their operations during 1965. The essence of this strategy, confirmed in the Lao Dong Party Resolution (No. 12) of December 1965 and reconfirmed in Resolution 13 during 1966, was a military defeat of US forces "under any circumstances." The resolution asserted that even if the United States increased its forces to 400,000, the Communist forces could inflict such heavy casualties in men and materiel that the United States would be forced to withdraw from Vietnam.¹ There is evidence that some of the Communist leaders began to question this strategy in light of the US superiority in fire power and mobility, holding that attacks should be directed against US logistic installations and lines

1. (U) Communist Strategy as Reflected in Lao Dong Party and COSVN Resolutions, Directorate of Intelligence Production J-2, US Military Assistance Command, p. 329. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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of communication rather than against combat units.² However, those in favor of adhering to the strategy, which they believed would bring about victory "in a relatively short period of time," won the day. Accordingly, infiltration from the north during 1966 was increased to 58,000, the equivalent of five divisions; at the same time the build-up of VC Main Force units also continued. During 1967, 99 PAVN and 98 VC battalions were estimated to be operating in South Vietnam. While the Communist strategy called for a continued offensive against US combat forces, the Communist regular units confined their operations mainly to areas in close proximity to the borders, to heavy jungle and mountainous country, and to the DMZ; major attacks were directed only at outposts near the borders; no Main Force units entered areas close to Saigon for a period of fifteen months.³

(C) In late 1966 the Communists decided to open a new theater of operations in the northern provinces adjacent to the DMZ, where only one ARVN and one US Marine battalion were stationed. General Westmoreland believed that this campaign represented an attempt to draw off allied forces from the more heavily populated priority areas and possibly to detach the northern provinces of Quang Tri and Thua Thien from South Vietnam.⁴ The buildup of PAVN forces in the north continued to mount into 1968, reached a peak of about six divisions, and forced redeployments of forces in MR I, as well as the bringing in of US reinforcements from MR II and III.

3. US-GVN Strategy

(C) The US military strategy was shaped by the comparative strengths of the opposing forces on the one hand, and the necessity of protecting vital population centers, main routes of communication,

2. (U) Communist Policy Toward Southeast Asia, 1954-69 (CORONA HARVEST), Battelle Memorial Institute (Columbus, Ohio, 1 October 1970).

3. (U) Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), Chapter V.

4. (U) Ibid.

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and important military installations on the other. While the ratio of maneuver battalions shifted somewhat in favor of the Communists throughout the period (197 Main Force VC and PAVN battalions to 281 allied battalions--a ratio of 1.4:2 as compared with 1:2 in early 1966), the aerial mobility and the superior fire power of the allied forces, coupled with the gradual expansion of the Regional and Popular Forces and National Police to about 300,000, enabled the free world forces to adopt a defensive-offensive strategy.

(U) During 1966 the protection of such population centers as Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue, the defense of air bases and logistic installations, and efforts to keep lines of communication open limited offensive operations to "spoiling" attacks against enemy Main Force units. The deployment of allied regular forces reflected this strategy; first priority was given to defense of Saigon and its environs, second priority to the defense of the critical coastal provinces of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, and third priority to the heavily populated coastal provinces in MR I (Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai). By mutual agreement between the United States and South Vietnam, US forces, with their superior aerial mobility, conducted the bulk of the offensive spoiling attacks against the Communist Main Force units, while the ARVN concentrated on providing area security.

(C) The main offensives of the allied forces were conducted in the critical areas. "Operation Attleboro," involving over 22,000 US-ARVN troops, drove the VC 9th Division (reinforced with a PAVN regiment from the area northwest of Saigon) across the Cambodian border and inflicted heavy losses. American, Korean, and ARVN forces cleared the enemy from the northern portion of Binh Dinh Province and inflicted heavy casualties on a VC division in the process. In the northern portion of MR I, the interdiction of guerrilla base areas and the expansion of control from Quang Nam to Quang Ngai and Quang Tin were attempted. In the Central Highlands of MR II, the border areas were screened with small forces.

(U) By 1967, the growing strength of the allied forces, combined with their increased mobility and fire power, facilitated the

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adoption of a more offensive strategy against Communist Main Force units and the commitment of about 50 percent of the ARVN forces to pacification in the clearing-securing role. Operations were targeted against relatively inviolate Communist base areas, such as in Zones C and D in MR III, and against incursions of Communist Main Force units across the western borders of MR II, III, and IV and across the DMZ in MR I. Defense of population centers and important military and civilian installations continued. The allied strategy was successful in isolating the populated areas from Main Force incursions. Thus, the Communist strategy of drawing allied forces away from populated areas so as to clear the way for guerrilla operations against the pacification effort, while successful in part, did not denude the populated areas of allied forces. This failure was to lead the Communists to revise their strategy in 1968.

(U) In sum, in 1966 the balance of forces dictated a defensive-offensive strategy aimed at keeping the Communist regimental and divisional forces off balance. Such a strategy could not prevent interference with pacification by Communist battalions and smaller-size guerrilla units. Pacification was therefore subject to significant interference during 1966.

(U) The balance of forces and the resultant military strategy adopted during 1967 created a more favorable climate for pacification by confining Communist Main Force units largely to the unpopulated areas, thereby isolating Communist guerrillas and reducing interference with the pacification effort. Thus, 1967 marked the first year that conditions for pacification were favorable, that is, major Communist military interference could be blunted, and a climate of political stability permitted concentration on the pacification effort.

B. PACIFICATION, 1966**1. Concept**

(U) The 1966 pacification plan, like its predecessors, was based on the oil-spot theory; pacification was to start in the secure areas and then spread out to other areas in three steps of clearing,

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securing, and development. However, presumably for emphasis, the clearing and securing phases of the previous plans were grouped into a new "peace restoration phase," and the development phase was given the title of "new life development." As in previous plans, the regular forces would be used in the clearing phase to drive VC regional and Main Force units from the area to be pacified, and the paramilitary forces would protect the cleared area from interference by VC units larger than a platoon. In order to clear up a misunderstanding which had developed in the implementation of the 1965 plans, securing was more carefully defined as the protection of the hamlets in the cleared area plus the elimination of the VCI, the creation or consolidation of village administration, and the instillation of "a sense of responsibility among the people to maintain the restored security by themselves." The new life development phase was to be aimed at "meeting the sincere and legitimate requirements and aspirations of the people" in the political, social, and economic fields. The Rural Construction cadres were to be the principal action unit for this phase. The Rural Construction plan for 1966 featured the construction of schools and the provision of teachers, building and staffing dispensaries, self-help programs on those projects desired by the villagers, plus a host of public work, agricultural, and technical assistance projects.

(U) Some of the basic flaws in the concept and implementation of the Chien Thang pacification effort were summed up by Maj. General Thang, director of the key GVN agency for pacification, the Rural Development Ministry. Thang charged that the GVN did not have an agreed definition, doctrine, and techniques of pacification and that there was a lack of clear direction and a chain of command. He emphasized that pacification had to be aimed at the people and the improvement of their political, economic, and social welfare.⁵ The National Rural Reconstruction Plan of 1966 sought to correct the deficiencies noted by

5. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, telegram to Department of State, 4 September 1965.

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setting forth Three Fundamentals for Pacification Development Effort:

- (1) Unity of military, administrative, and civil personnel.
- (2) A well-defined and practical new life development plan.
- (3) Destruction of the VC infrastructure and substitution of a GVN infrastructure.⁶

(U) One of the four vital missions laid down in the pacification plan was the articulation of a uniform and appropriate conception of rural construction. To this end the plan prescribed that the concept of reconstruction be promulgated to "the people, the cadres, the

6. (U) The Three Fundamentals were described as follows in the National Rural Reconstruction Plan for 1966:

(1) Fundamental 1: The Rural Construction can only be achieved through the unity of military, administrative and civil personnel.

The important and deciding element for the success of rural construction is the People. Military and administrative personnel only have the responsibility to assist, provide guidance and motivate the people so that the people will recognize the necessity and importance and carry out rural construction by themselves as their initiated work.

(2) Fundamental 2: The Government must formulate a well-defined and practical new life development policy in rural areas and publicize this policy to the people. When carrying out this policy in rural areas, cadres must know the sincere aspirations of the people so that their work not only fit the policy of the Government, but they also meet the legitimate aspirations of the people.

(3) Fundamental 3: The rural construction will only obtain everlasting results, if the enemy's infrastructures are destroyed and constantly followed up and our infrastructures, that is our regional administrative agencies and people's defense groups created and supported by the people must be constantly protected and controlled. The follow up of our infrastructure and the infrastructures of the enemy must be indefinitely carried out. In other words, the rural construction will only produce everlasting results, if VC underground cadres and cruel rural officials are eliminated and democratic, uncorrupted and effective administrative agencies are activated.

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government, and armed forces," that seminars involving military and civilians involved in pacification be held, and that "suggestions from the people and the experience of the cadres" be submitted to the government for the improvement of pacification doctrines and techniques.⁷

(U) General Thang had also recognized that the pacification goals of previous plans had been overly optimistic. In late 1965 he stated that pacification in 1966 should be aimed at the areas around Da Nang in Quang Nam Province, Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh, and the Hop Tac provinces surrounding Saigon, since "if the area is to be pacified and then we have to go back and repacify it, there is no success."⁸ The 1966 plan reflected these geographical priorities and cautioned the provincial authorities to set realistic goals:

The Central Rural Construction Board has reminded all provinces to prepare practical plans, that is, these plans must be based on actual capabilities of low level cadres, capabilities of the enemy, military support capabilities of DTA's, and sincere and legitimate aspirations of the people. The policy of the Central Rural Construction Board is that work must be slowly carried out, but they must be successful. Once an area is pacified, it must be able to defend itself. Pacifications must be gradually and continuously carried out from secure areas to insecure areas, from densely populated developed areas to thinly populated underdeveloped areas. Security in an area must be restored before work will be carried out at another area.⁹

(U) Despite these admonitions, the 1966 plan established the ambitious goal of achieving development in 969 hamlets (over 1 million inhabitants), securing 1083 hamlets (1.1 million inhabitants), and continuing development in 3620 newly pacified hamlets and towns (7.8 million inhabitants). In addition to numerical targets for resettlement, targets for self-help programs, classrooms, public

7. (U) National Rural Reconstruction Plan, 1966.

8. (U) US Embassy, Saigon, telegram to State Department, 4 September 1965.

9. (U) National Rural Reconstruction Plan, 1966.

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works, and agricultural assistance were specified. Provincial officers were ordered to certify that no less than 75 percent of these goals would be achieved during the year.

2. Organization and Administration

a. GVN. (U) Recognizing the inadequacy of the pacification organization and the lack of coordination resulting therefrom, the GVN initiated a far-reaching set of organizational changes. These changes were designed not only to improve coordination among civil agencies administering pacification programs but also to ensure coordination of civil and military programs as well. (The United States was to take a similar step in 1967 with the institution of CORDS.) These reorganizational moves raised the extremely competent and dynamic Maj. General Thang from his position as head of the Ministry of Rural Development to that of Commissioner General for Revolutionary Development and gave him responsibility for supervising the Ministries of Youth, Agriculture, Public Works, and the Commissariat for Administrative Affairs, in addition to the Ministry for Rural Development. The Ministry of Rural Development was reorganized along functional lines, and an Inspection Directorate was added to improve evaluation of the pacification programs.¹⁰

(U) General Thang's new assignment also carried with it the position of Secretary General of the Central Revolutionary Development Council, which was comprised of the senior members of the government, and for which the Minister of Revolutionary Development served as executive agent. The council embraced all civilian elements of government and was paralleled by similar councils in the regions, provinces, divisions, and districts. (See Figure 1 for the composition of these councils.)

10. (U) US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, GVN-US Organization for Revolutionary Development: South Vietnam, for Calendar Year 1966 (undated).

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| <u>Level</u> | <u>Members</u> |
|---|--|
| Central RD Council | <p>Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Central Executive Committee</p> <p>Commissioner General of Revolutionary Development (Secretary General)</p> <p>Commissioners General for: Economy and Finance, War, Culture and Social Affairs, National Security, Information and Open Arms; Commissioners of Defense, Administrative Affairs, Social Welfare, Public Works, Youth and Communications</p> |
| Regional RD Council | <p>Corps Commanders and Assistants</p> <p>Deputies for Civilian and Territorial Affairs</p> <p>Chief of RD Permanent Bureau (Secretary General)</p> <p>Division and Special Zone Commanders</p> <p>Deputies of Ministries at Regional Level</p> |
| Division Tactical Area, Special Zone (DTA-SZ), RD Council | <p>Division-Special Zone Commanders and Deputies</p> <p>Chief of RD Permanent Bureau (Secretary General)</p> <p>Province Chiefs and Mayors</p> <p>Representatives of Ministries at DTA-SZ Level</p> |
| Province RD Council | <p>Province Chief and Assistants</p> <p>Chief of RD Permanent Bureau (Secretary General)</p> <p>District Chiefs</p> <p>Chiefs of Services</p> |

Source: MACV CORDS Supplemental Data Sheet,
20 February 1967.

Figure 1 (U). COMPOSITION OF REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (U)

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(U) In December 1966, General Thang was appointed to the newly created position of Assistant for Territorial Affairs and Pacification to the chief of the Joint General Staff of the RVNAF. His responsibilities included the important functions of developing concepts and policies for military activities in support of Rural Development, inspecting military units involved in pacification, and, more importantly, supervising the training and employment of the RF-PF. Since General Thang already had responsibility for the RD cadre, these new assignments, theoretically at least, gave him authority over the instruments of pacification, with the single exception of the police and some technical cadre. However, events during 1967 were to demonstrate that General Thang was unable to direct both the military and paramilitary activities in support of pacification, primarily because of the unresponsiveness of the high command to such direction.

b. United States. (U) While the need for improved coordination on the US side was at least partially recognized in Washington and Saigon, no significant change was made in the US mission-MACV organization until late 1966, with the single exception of assigning a Mission Liaison Group, under General Lansdale, the responsibility for high-level liaison with the GVN. The military effort under MACV and the civilian effort under the mission (AID, JUSPAO, and the Agency) remained without coordinated direction. At the provincial level, a single manager concept was tested in a few provinces; elsewhere US advisers were still co-equal in authority. Coordination between the United States and the Saigon government at the provincial level was continued through Joint Provincial Coordination Committees.

(U) In late November 1966, the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) was established by President Johnson to improve coordination of US civil contributions to the pacification effort. The chief of OCO, a senior official responsible in turn to the Deputy Ambassador in Saigon, was given broad responsibility for the direction and command of all US civil activities supporting pacification in Saigon and in the field. Subordinate offices with similar functions were established

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in the regions, provinces, and districts. Single managers were also designated to head these subordinate OCO staffs, thus providing for coordinated US advice at these levels. To facilitate coordination of civil and military programs, MACV established a Directorate for Rural Development.¹¹

c. US-GVN Coordination. (U) While strengthening the US and GVN organizational structures had obvious benefits in improving pacification planning and execution on both sides, the complex and delicate problem of "selling" the Vietnamese officials on various programs which the US side considered essential created difficulties. Associated with this problem was the question of the exercise of US leverage either to force acceptance of US-sponsored programs or to improve execution at subordinate levels. The normal practice followed, for the most part, through 1966 was for the United States to take the lead in the development of plans.

(U) It can be argued that this technique was necessary, particularly during the chaotic period of 1964-65 when the GVN was so preoccupied with the problems of political survival. A reflective analysis of the problems of "leverage" prepared in Washington by a State Department Study Group in 1966 emphasized the necessity of joint US-Vietnamese planning not only to strengthen the plan itself but, of equal importance, to gain the trust and confidence of Vietnamese officials in the integrity of US support for the Vietnamese.

4. Program Implementation

a. Regular Forces. (U) During 1966 US forces concentrated on conducting "spoiling" attacks against large Communist military formations, leaving the ARVN to clear the selected pacification area of Communist formations larger than a platoon. Unfortunately, except for a MACV agreement to support an additional 20,000 troops, the

11. (U) The organizational improvements in South Vietnam were paralleled in Washington with the assignment of Mr. Komer as the Washington manager for Vietnam Programs under NSAM 343 of 28 March 1966.

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quantitative and qualitative deficiencies of the ARVN that had become apparent during 1964-65 continued into 1966.

(U) General Westmoreland's deputy, General Heintges, and the US advisers to the ARVN concentrated on eliminating qualitative deficiencies in ARVN training, tactics, and logistics. Administration of the forces was reportedly improved, training facilities were expanded, and a command leadership committee was formed to improve the promotion system for officers and NCOs.

(U) There were encouraging indications in 1966 that the ARVN was increasing its small-unit patrol actions--something the US advisers had long urged. However, it seems unlikely that the ARVN's attitude and relationship with the peasants could be affected by the US advisory effort; such a change in attitude required action by the Vietnamese themselves. As General Thang remarked after an inspection trip in February-March 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 make 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.¹²

12. (U) General Lansdale's report to the Department of State, March 1966. It should be noted that the ARVN did not have general messes for enlisted men; instead the soldier was paid a living allowance which, because of his inadequate pay, he usually gave to his family. In order to feed himself, he took the natural and easy course of living "off the country."

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b. Territorial Forces. (S) Quantitative-qualitative deficiencies in the Regional and Popular Forces also persisted in 1966. A US Inter-Agency Task Force summed up the US opinion of their performance as follows:

At present, Regional and Popular Force units bear a substantial share of the burden of war in many areas, often without the necessary logistical support and without command interest in their well being. Despite lack of leadership, low morale and poor esprit de corps in many units, RF/PF are contributing a major share of the GVN war effort without receiving the credit or rewards that are rightfully theirs; and despite commendable US advisory efforts to improve the status of RF/PF, they remain the step-children of the GVN. It appears unlikely that significant improvement and support will be attained so long as RF/PF remain under and depend upon the Ministry of Defense for guidance and command supervision.¹³

Some increases in manpower were authorized during 1966 to meet quantitative deficiencies. The strength of the Regional Forces was increased from about 80,000 to 113,000, against the authorized goal of 144,000; similarly, the number of Popular Forces rose from 121,000 to 140,000. However, because of a shortage of plasters, the PF force objective was reduced from 170,000 to about 150,000. (See Table 1.) The Inter-Agency Task Group recommended several steps to eliminate qualitative deficiencies in the Popular Forces: decentralization of control directly to sector commanders (province) rather than through the regional commanders, the integration of ARVN officers, adequate dependent housing, pay raises, and the organization of PF squads and platoons into companies to improve training and raise morale.

(U) While the bulk of the Task Group's recommendations were not accepted, some improvements were made, including the construction of dependent housing in the MR IV area, motivation-indoctrination training, and a more effective program of inspection and liaison.

13. (U) Report of Inter-Agency Roles and Missions Study Group, Part III, US Mission Vietnam, 24 August 1966, p. 9. SECRET

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REGIONAL AND POPULAR FORCE STRENGTHS--1966 (U)

| Forces | March 1966 | | December 1966 | |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| | On Board | Authorized | On Board | Authorized |
| Regional Forces: | | | | |
| MR I | 8,970 | 13,153 | 14,116 | 19,746 |
| MR II | 18,543 | 25,562 | 27,346 | 35,455 |
| MR III | 18,654 | 25,221 | 28,060 | 37,177 |
| MR IV | <u>33,077</u> | <u>42,584</u> | <u>43,402</u> | <u>52,351</u> |
| | 79,244 | 106,520 | 112,924 | 144,729 |
| Popular Forces: | | | | |
| MR I | 20,710 | 28,986 | 23,551 | 24,938 ^a |
| MR II | 27,701 | 44,086 | 33,533 | 39,748 ^a |
| MR III | 19,517 | 31,227 | 23,640 | 28,866 ^a |
| MR IV | <u>53,177</u> | <u>65,512</u> | <u>59,860</u> | <u>55,898^a</u> |
| | 121,105 | 169,811 | 140,592 | 149,450 |

a. Authorized strength reduced 14 percent because of piaster limitations.

Source: Analysis of the Revolutionary Development Program--
Calendar Year 1966, SACSA/JCS, undated. SECRET

In MR I, the combined action platoon concept of employing joint US Marine-Popular Force teams was expanded.¹⁴

(U) In addition to their normal role of preserving "law and order," the National Police continued to participate in the resources control and national identity programs that were begun under the Chien Thang plan; the police also operated the Village Radio network system, the basic communication system linking the villages with the districts and provinces. In late 1965 the first increment of the Police Field

14. (U) The idea of combining a Marine squad with a PF platoon in order to capitalize on the PF local knowledge of conditions, on the one hand, and the professional training of the Marines, on the other, was initiated in 1965 in Phu Bai, near Hue. The increased security resulting from these combined units came to the attention of Lt. General Walt in the MR I area. With General Walt's support, the program was expanded manyfold and reached a peak of 114 units in 1969.

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Forces had been activated to replace the defunct Civil Guard (which had been integrated into the Regional Forces) with combat police, on the French gendarmerie model. However, the Police Field Forces were employed in the same manner as the Regional Forces and, even in some situations, as part of the ARVN. In view of the fact that there were no police in the villages and hamlets, it would appear that the resources assigned to the PFF would have been better used to establish a police presence in the villages--which were served by locally hired individuals, responsible only to the village, with little or no training for the police function. (It was not until after Tet 1968 that National Police began to move into the villages.) While the Special Police division of the National Police was primarily responsible, theoretically, for intelligence activities aimed at identifying the VC infrastructure, it was in fact the only agency among the paramilitary and military forces not assigned this mission in the national pacification plan of 1966.

(U) The National Police suffered the same deficiencies as other GVN forces, including inadequate strength, inferior morale, low standards, corruption, and lack of support on the part of the GVN and MACV (who favored a constabulary). Some progress was made during 1966, however; NP strength was increased to about 66,000, and efforts on the part of AID's Public Safety advisers to upgrade NP capabilities continued.

(U) Nevertheless, while AID was supporting a police buildup, a US mission task group concerned with the proliferation of paramilitary forces was recommending organizational changes which, among other things, would have eliminated the Police Field Forces. The task group's solution was to form the RF-PF into a constabulary (under the Ministry of Rural Development), which after a period of 12 to 18 months would take over from the Police Field Forces and Provincial Reconnaissance Units the mission of apprehending the Viet Cong and would augment the National Police forces engaged in population and resources control. While the pressure for a constabulary was considerable on the part of many members of the US mission, as well as

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of MACV, the recommendations for a constabulary were never implemented. (Later, CORDS apparently rejected the idea of a constabulary and instead pushed for continued support of the National Police.)

(S) During 1966 the Ministry of Interior revived the idea of a hamlet militia (People's Self-Defense) to supplement the Regional and Popular Forces. This proposal envisioned that the RD cadre would take the lead in organizing the entire village membership in security activities. Naturally, this concept was controversial--many believed that weapons issued to the militia would simply fall into the hands of the Viet Cong--but the key idea behind the proposal was political, that is, by the very involvement of the villager with the government in the program, VC control would be weakened and GVN influence and control strengthened. A US reaction to this proposal stated in part:

Although the Study Group believes the PSD program to be worthwhile, we are not convinced that active participation by all residents of a given area is a necessity for the success of either PSD or RD. On the contrary, if reluctant persons are coerced into joining PSD activities for the sake of an all-embracing program, resentment against the GVN may be great and definite harm may be done to the overall RD program. Therefore, slow and selective establishment of PSD is recommended with careful attention given to pilot areas. Weapons could be supplied to hamlet PSD organizations, but not in areas where there is a probability that the VC might be capable of capturing the weapons. In areas where PSD is established, any existing hamlet self-defense units, such as Combat Youth and Hau Bi Quan, should be integrated into PSD to reduce the number of groups with the same purpose. Although US Advisory elements throughout the country may have some dealings with PSD because of its all-encompassing nature, no additional American field advisors are considered necessary for this program.¹⁵

(U) Nonetheless, the GVN went ahead and formalized the revival of the hamlet militia by decree in late 1966. The "Handbook of the Revolutionary Development Cadres," promulgated in December 1966,

15. (U) Report of Inter-Agency Roles and Missions Study Group, Part III, p. 33. SECRET

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assigned the mission of organizing the struggle against the Viet Cong to the cadres and charged them with specific tasks related to integrating the hamlet population into a defensive unit.¹⁶

c. The Cadre. (U) As we have seen, by the end of 1965 the proliferation of cadre types stemming from various initiatives in the provinces led to a reorganization of the cadres into homogeneous groups of 59 men. At the same time, training was centralized at the

16. (U) Tasks assigned under the mission of organizing the struggle against the Viet Cong included:

Work 5a: To select, establish contact, organize, train and test a number of capable and influential persons to take up leadership positions in the anti-VC organizations.

Work 5b: To organize combat cells, police cells, liaison cells, first aid cells, etc. To organize inter-family groups and combat sections.

Work 5c: To assist in the training of these cells, both politically and militarily, to build defense works and barricades, to select locations and methods of setting up same.

Work 5d: To assist the Hamlet's Revolutionary Development Committee to discuss and make assignments to people to clear the grounds, remove the bushy areas, set up barbed wire fences, bamboo fences, etc., around the hamlet.

Work 5e: To guide the combat cells in their activities and have meetings at least once a month....

Work 5g: To set up a hamlet liaison system (by radio, flares, etc.) with the village headquarters, the friendly groups, the military units in the neighboring regions and the districts.

Work 5h: To select, establish contact, organize, train and test a number of capable young men to arm them later.

Work 5i: To organize combat cells and the Armed Youth for Revolutionary Development Groups....

Work 5k: To give military training to the combat cells and build defense works and barricades.

Work 5l: To give them practice, and hold meetings at least twice a month.

Work 5m: To assist for an indefinite period of time these cells to obtain good results.

Handbook of the Revolutionary Development Cadres.

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former Political Action Team Center at Vung Tau and a standard three-month curriculum was established. A total of about 5000 personnel passed through the center each term. Concurrently, the responsibilities of the cadre had been codified and were used as a basis for instruction at the center. Eleven missions, each with numerous sub-tasks, were laid down as guidance for the cadre's field work in the villages:

- Annihilation of the Communist Underground Cadres (with eleven associated tasks)
- Annihilation of the Wicked Village Dignitaries (with four associated tasks)
- Abolishing Hatred and Building Up a New Spirit (with twenty associated tasks)
- Establishing the Administration and People's Democratic Organization (with eight associated tasks)
- Organizing the Struggle Against the VC (with fourteen associated tasks)
- Illiteracy Campaign (with four associated tasks)
- Health Campaign (with four associated tasks)
- Land Reform (with eight associated tasks)
- Development of Agriculture and Handicraft (with eleven associated tasks)
- Development of a Communications System (with four associated tasks)
- Meritorious Treatment of Combat[ants] (with six associated tasks).¹⁷

(C) The actions of the cadre, as visualized by US and SVN officials, in carrying out these extensive and important missions are important to an understanding of the problems associated with the cadres. A US mission study summarized their activities as follows:

[The cadre] provides from the beginning an armed government presence remaining in and around the hamlet capable of protecting themselves and helping to protect the people....

17. (U) Quoted from the Handbook of the Revolutionary Development Cadre.

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The Security Element contributes to the protection of both team and hamlet, helps the people in their work, and eventually helps those who genuinely volunteer to organize a hamlet militia with a limited self-defense capacity. The Census Grievance team ... seeks to discover in detail (in support of National Police) the identity of VC, VC-connected families and sympathizers; and above all, learns on a continuing basis the felt needs and grievances of the people, passing these on to the District and Province Chiefs, to guide the development work and improve local administration.

It is among the missions of the cadre to demonstrate the GVN's desire and ability to serve the people and to provide initially a positive substitute for VC controls....

To this end, the Civil Affairs elements temporarily take over, if necessary, the village/hamlet administration, or at least strengthen and improve the existing governments....

Meanwhile, the New Life Development team shows the people the ways in which the government can respond to their felt social and economic needs, arranging for self-help projects, organizing economic development projects such as road improvements and markets, bringing in technicians, improved seeds and fertilizers and assisting in providing social services such as schools and clinics. The emphasis at this point is on meeting pressing needs, arousing interest, hope, and increasingly, confidence and participation.

... The aim of the process is to guide the people toward a new rural life, one they will feel impelled to help protect and improve, by their own efforts, by cooperating with the GVN, and by refusing collaboration to the VC.

... When villagers' attitudes make it possible, it [public cooperation] can come to include certain self-defense functions: generally limited to warning, or to repelling a handful of armed intruders. (The burden of maintaining local security would generally still fall on government representatives such as Constabulary, Police, and Cadre, backed by ARVN....

... Increasingly, the cadre should be joined in the hamlet by other field representatives of government, the more specialized "technical cadre" from such Ministries as Health, Agriculture, Education and Public Works, who alone can act to satisfy the longer-run hopes raised by the RD Cadre and the RD process. If these do not follow through with the assistance the national government is capable of providing, the RD Cadre message and example rebounds

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eventually against the GVN; when they do, the RD Cadre eventually become unnecessary.

The RD Cadre should, however, stay in a hamlet ... at least until: (a) there is an elected local government working effectively; (b) it has a working relationship with the district government and technical cadre; and (c) the RD Cadre presence is no longer needed for adequate local security.¹⁸

(U) The comprehensive nature of the duties of the cadre required high selectivity, motivation, and superior training if success was to be achieved. As might be expected, the cadre program suffered from a number of serious deficiencies that had become apparent by the end of 1966. These included the following:

- Lack of selectivity in screening applicants. Many cadremen came into the program to escape the draft or were assigned because of personal relationships with appointing officials in the districts and provinces.
- Rapid expansion of the training center led to an over-taxing of the instructor personnel.
- The inability of the training center to meet the demand for trained cadre teams during 1966--of about 430 cadre teams in the field in 1966, only 160 had been trained at Vung Tau.
- Lack of understanding of the complex and sophisticated program on the part of some cadremen. (In fact, the programs may have been beyond their capabilities.)
- Failure (or unwillingness) of provincial and district officials to first understand the role of the cadres in development, or if they understood it, to supervise and support the efforts of the cadre.
- Unrealistic pacification goals resulting in deployment of cadres into insecure areas, or redeployment of cadres before achieving the goals of development.
- The deleterious impact of heavy-handed activities by the military, paramilitary, and police on the people--the target of the cadres.
- The heavy attrition in cadre teams due to capture, death, desertion, or separation, and the concurrent failure to provide an individual replacement system for the teams.

18. (U) Report of the Inter-Agency Roles and Missions Study Group, Part III, pp. 7-10. SECRET

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(C) In February 1967, the US mission reported that 552 hamlets had been secured during 1966 as compared with the goal of 1083.¹⁹ The cumulative number of reportedly secure hamlets totaled about 4700, out of about 12,000, while the number of people under government control reached 10 million, out of a total population of about 16 million, or about 62 percent. Many US observers questioned the validity of these claims, pointing out that in many cases the criteria established for a "secure" hamlet had not been attained. Perhaps the most damaging indictment of pacification was General Thang's observation that the New Life Hamlets had not provided a new life for the people and that there had not been a social revolution or elimination of the VC infrastructure.

(U) In light of the 1966 environment for pacification and the qualitative-quantitative deficiencies of the instruments for pacification, it seems probable that the goals set for 1966 were beyond the GVN's capabilities. As we have seen, the political climate for pacification was particularly unfavorable in light of the massive Buddhist challenge to the GVN in the first half of 1966. This crisis diverted the attention of key GVN officials from pacification, thereby reducing the supervision over subordinate officials in the provinces so essential for progress. Then, too, in the fall of the year, the national elections scheduled for September and October drew the attention of many GVN officials in Saigon, as well as in the provinces and districts. Virtually no progress in pacification was possible during this period.

(U) Another factor inhibiting progress was the fact that the cadres, an essential element in the development phase, did not become available until early June after their graduation from the Vung Tau

19. (U) Department of State Telegram, 6 February 1967. It should be noted that these goals do not reflect those laid down in the 1966 Rural Construction plan. However, it is known that General Thang on his own initiative had reduced the goals during mid-1966 in light of the difficulties encountered in the field.

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Training Center. Many district and province chiefs diverted the cadres from development to paramilitary missions, indicating a lack of understanding of the program. Both General Thang and Premier Ky attempted to convey this understanding by organizing seminars for local officials devoted to the concept for employing the cadres.

(U) Another key constraint on pacification was the continued ability of the Viet Cong to prevent ARVN and paramilitary forces from establishing the requisite atmosphere of security for pacification; the guerrilla units of battalion and company size were not so deterred by ARVN operations. Although some of their base areas were overrun, significant casualties sustained, and supplies sometimes cut off, the guerrillas were able to maintain a high degree of activity against Regional and Popular Forces and the areas undergoing pacification. As the RD cadre began to make their operations more effective, the guerrillas increasingly directed their attacks against them; by the end of 1966 about 600 RD cadre had been killed. Assassinations and abductions of village officials were also stepped up to block the government effort to break the VC hold on the villages. In addition, special efforts were made to disrupt village elections. In spite of attempts to intimidate the prospective voters, however, the turnout was significant and the paramilitary forces were able to prevent the disruption of the election process.

C. PACIFICATION, 1967

1. Concept

(U) Because of the generally agreed conclusion on the part of the GVN and the US mission that the concept for pacification outlined in the 1966 plan was essentially a correct one, the concept remained unchanged in 1967. Changes were made, however, in goals and priorities as a result of experiences with the 1966 plan. First, the goals were made more realistic--about half that of the 1966 target. Under the 1967 plan, 1103 hamlets were to be constructed or consolidated.

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Of these, 327 were hamlets that had been classified as secured during 1966, while 766 were to be secured for the first time.²⁰

(U) Priorities were also altered; for example, greater emphasis was placed on densely populated areas and economic centers in all provinces. Priority was assigned to the major rice-producing provinces in the eastern delta--these were new priorities--while those provinces around Saigon, the old Hop Tac area, the central coastal provinces of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Quang Ngai, and the Hue-Da Nang-Quang Nam complex were priorities carried over from 1966.

(U) The most significant change in priorities was the concentration of resources on selected hamlets (Ap Doi Moi or "Real New Life Hamlets")²¹ in order to produce fundamental changes in the community and

20. (U) The total number of hamlets was 12,167, of which 4401 were rated as secure by the end of 1966 and 7766 were insecure. If the 1967 target was realized, 7000 hamlets would remain to be secured.

21. (U) The GVN RD guidelines for 1967 described the target hamlet categories as follows:

(1) Ap Doi Moi ("Real New Life Hamlet"): An Ap Doi Moi (ADM) is a hamlet designated in a provincial RD plan for a program of development under the supervision of a RD team to achieve the 11 objectives for cadres in the framework of the 1967 RD program, the ADM will represent a prosperous community, capable of further political, social and economic growth on its own.

(2) Ap Binh Dinh ("Pacification Hamlet"): An Ap Binh Din (ABD) is a hamlet designated in a provincial RD plan for a program of construction to achieve the first two of the 11 objectives for cadres.

(3) Ap Tan Sinh ("New Life Hamlet"): An Ap Tan Sinh (ATS) is a hamlet which has achieved the six-point criteria and is designated in a provincial RD plan to be maintained under the supervision of a RD team or other authorized GVN personnel. [Six criteria for pacification are listed on p. 215.]

(4) Ap Cung Co ("Consolidation Hamlet"): An Ap Cung Co (ACC) is a hamlet which has achieved the six-point criteria, has regressed in one or more of these criteria, and is designated in a provincial RD plan for a program of consolidation to raise it to the status of an ATS hamlet. Once an ACC hamlet has been consolidated, it will be redesignated an ATS hamlet.

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to cluster the selected hamlets into GVN target areas. As in the 1966 plan, the cadres were to be the principal instrument of development in the countryside. Another significant change was the assignment of about 50 percent of the ARVN battalions in direct support of the pacification effort.

2. Organization and Administration

a. United States. (C) Perhaps the single most important pacification development in 1967 was the establishment of the US Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support organization. While the Office of Civil Operations had only been established in November 1966, powerful forces in Washington and Saigon were moving toward the single manager concept for both civil and military pacification programs. In February 1967, the decision was taken to establish a single manager for pacification. The president's decision was promulgated on 9 May 1967 in National Security Memorandum 362, which stated in part:

US civil/military responsibility for support of Pacification (Revolutionary Development) in Vietnam will be integrated under a single manager concept to provide added thrust forward in this critical field.

Because the bulk of the people and resources involved are military, COMUSMACV will be charged with this responsibility in Vietnam, under the overall authority of the Ambassador.

To carry out these responsibilities under COMUSMACV, Mr. Komer will be appointed Deputy for Pacification (Revolutionary Development) with personal rank of ambassador. He will report directly to COMUSMACV....

One purpose of unifying responsibility for Pacification (RD) under COMUSMACV is to permit logistic and administrative economies through consolidation and cross-servicing. I expect sensible steps to be taken in this direction.

... COMUSMACV will report through CINCPAC and JCS on the military aspects of pacification and through civil agency channels to Ambassador Leonhart on the civil aspects.

Any inter-agency jurisdictional or other issues which may arise in country will be referred to the US Ambassador. Any such issues involving parent agency relationships will be resolved by Ambassador

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Leonhart with the relevant Washington agencies, unless the Secretaries of State and Defense choose to deal with them directly or refer them to the President.

This new organizational arrangement represents an unprecedented molding of civil and military responsibilities to meet the overriding requirements of Vietnam. Therefore, I count on all concerned--in Washington and in Vietnam--to pull together in the national interest to make this arrangement work.

(C) On 28 May a MACV directive implemented the provisions of NSAM 362. Ambassador Komer was charged with "supervising the formation and execution of all plans, policies, and programs, both military and civilian, which support the GVN's RD program and related programs." In addition, the directive provided for the integration of OCO and the MACV Revolutionary Development Directorate into a single MACV staff element known as Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. Similarly, the civil and military support activities were integrated in the military regions, provinces, and districts. Senior provincial and district advisers were subsequently appointed as CORDS representatives and reported to the assistant deputy for CORDS in each military region. In twenty-five provinces the advisers were military personnel and in nineteen they were civilians. The districts, for the most part, had military advisers.

(U) The CORDS organization immediately undertook a comprehensive assessment of pacification in an effort to identify those programs that required priority action and then to focus GVN attention on those programs. As a result, eight action programs were identified, as listed below, and a program manager was appointed to monitor the progress of each:

- Improve 1968 Pacification Planning
- Accelerate the Chieu Hoi Program
- Attack the VC infrastructure
- Expand and improve RVNAF support
- Expand and supplement the cadre effort; employ substitute techniques
- Increase capability to handle refugees
- Revamp police and Police Field Forces
- Press land reform (in connection with AID).

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It is noteworthy that CORDS, apparently agreeing with the necessity for coordinated national development planning, selected improved planning for 1968 as the number one priority and specified that joint planning with the GVN should be improved, as well as coordinated US planning.

(U) Additional programs for subsequent consideration were also identified:

- Push anti-corruption program
- Revamp psyops
- Improve local government
- Stress training and motivation of officials at the national and local levels.

(U) The subsequent performance of CORDS was to demonstrate that the single manager concept for US organization improved effectiveness and coordination, both among US agencies and with the GVN, though there is some evidence that coordination between AID and CORDS was not adequate.

b. GVN. (U) The organization of CORDS led immediately to GVN consideration of a parallel organization which would have put Rural Development under the Ministry of Defense. However, the government was persuaded by the United States (and perhaps by its own reservations as well) to retain the organization then in effect. In September 1967, General Thang left the Ministry of Rural Development and moved to the RVNAF Joint General Staff (JGS) where he became responsible for RF-PF operations. General Thang apparently retained responsibility for RD cadres and for pacification, but it is not clear at this writing how long he retained such responsibility.²²

22. (C) General Thang had been a Ky supporter prior to the presidential elections. General Lansdale reported that at one time President Ky had considered having General Thang as his campaign manager, but this did not come to pass. Nevertheless there was some suspicion that the RD cadre were being used in the election for Ky. In any case, Thang's move to the RVNAF may have been forced by Thieu after his election as president. There is also some evidence that Thang's resignation from MORD was triggered by his inability to influence ARVN and paramilitary pacification operations and that this could be best accomplished by moving to the JGS.

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(U) While the GVN organization for pacification, particularly at the Saigon level, had been improved by the organizational reforms instituted in 1966-67, the fundamental constraints on effective administration growing out of Vietnamese tradition and the impact of the French system continued to weaken execution of the programs. These administrative weaknesses have been discussed previously and will only be summarized here.²³ They include the following:

- Involved procedures and excessive delays
- Capricious handling of scarce manpower (misassignment of personnel)
- Inability to correlate delivery of men, money, and material
- Unrealistic schedules at the expense of quality
- Lack of flexibility in meeting contingencies
- Lack of initiative at all subordinate echelons of management
- Widespread corruption.²⁴

Nevertheless, some improvement in administration came to pass because of the dynamic leadership and drive of Maj. General Thang. Not only was his leadership felt in the capital, but also in the countryside. During 1966, General Thang had conducted inspections of pacification progress in every province and in so doing improved the administration of programs by on-the-spot directions and perhaps, more

23. (U) For a detailed discussion of administrative constraints, see Volume II, Part Five, Chapter III of this study.

24. (U) The best capsule definition of Vietnamese administrative weaknesses which the writer has seen can be summed up as follows: The US attitude toward the solution of problems is summed up in the phrase "Don't just stand there, do something"; on the other hand, the Vietnamese attitude is "Just stand there, don't do anything"--a reflection of the unimportance of the individual in the face of an omnipotent heaven which arranges man's affairs for him.

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importantly, by making decisions on allocations of resources which otherwise would have involved lengthy delays.²⁵

(U) An important step in improving GVN administration of pacification programs was the establishment of an Inspection Directorate in the Ministry of Rural Development. The mission of this directorate organized into a central team and four regional teams, was to supervise all regional agencies in the execution of RD activities, to monitor expenditures of RD funds and materials, and to prevent embezzlement.

3. Regular Forces

(U) For the first time in pacification history, the Combined Operation Plan for 1967 committed ARVN units in direct support of the Rural Development Program. By the end of the year, 51 battalions out of a target of 60 had been so employed. Nevertheless, this new role was considered by many of the ARVN troop leaders as secondary to the more glamorous "big" operations being conducted by US forces; as a consequence, reluctance to assume this mission, coupled with the endemic deficiencies previously described, limited the effectiveness of the effort.

(U) As in the past, the principal bar to pacification was a lack of security, and it was clear that in order to improve security the elimination of ARVN deficiencies would have to be vigorously pressed. Accordingly, strenuous efforts were taken to improve ARVN performance. Over 90 percent of the ARVN units were given special training during 1967 in their new pacification mission, and inspection teams were established to appraise performance. In a move to improve the morale of the individual soldier, as well as to limit the necessity of his

25. (U) While effective leadership is important even in a more dynamic resourceful Western society, it appears to be fundamental in Asian societies where subordination to authority is typical. Thus Magsaysay in the Philippines by his leadership and force, as well as his intelligent appraisal of the Huk insurgency, was the driving force in the government's successful counterinsurgency effort.

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living off the countryside, the United States supported the establishment of general messes in all ARVN units. In spite of rather ineffective logistic support, 57 percent of the units had established unit messes by the end of the year. A program of weapons modernization was also begun, and three of ten divisions were equipped with new infantry weapons. Tactics were improved, an increasing number of small-unit and night operations were conducted, and desertions were decreased by one-third over the previous year. Perhaps more important than these improvements were President Thieu's efforts to impress upon ARVN commanders the importance of the army to the pacification program.

4. Paramilitary Forces

(U) In 1967, the performance of the RF-PF forces was the basis for some optimism. Not only were more units tasked to support pacification, but their tactical efficiency improved, as attested by casualties inflicted on the Viet Cong. Plans were made to increase the RF-PF strength by 50,000 in 1968, thereby largely eliminating quantitative deficiencies. In addition, these units played a vital role in the national elections by providing close security for the polling places.

(U) As we have seen, one of eight priority programs adopted by CORDS was the upgrading of the police. This program included an expansion of the National Police from 66,000 to 74,000 and increasing the Police Field Forces units from 6,000 to 15,000. Also included were pay increases to reduce corruption, the implementation of a new National Identity Card and Records system, and a reorientation of the NP mission from the military field to a concentration on law and order and elimination of the VC infrastructure.

(U) These objectives were realized, at least in part. Salaries were raised and the NP strength was increased (under pressure of a National Mobilization Order promulgated by the GVN). The Police Field Forces strength was increased to sixty-nine companies, and the reorientation of the NP mission toward elimination of the VC infrastructure commenced. Resources control was reoriented from control of food movements to that of more war-related commodities, thus reducing harassment of the

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peasants moving food to markets and decreasing opportunities for graft in the process.

(U) Significant strides were made during the year in eliminating or mitigating the deficiencies of the RD cadres. The number of RD cadre teams grew from 361 to 555, with nearly 8000 undergoing training in Vung Tau. In addition, 108 cadre teams were specially constituted for work among the Montagnard tribesmen in the Central Highlands. Further, the military regions were authorized to raise provisional cadre teams until such time as the supply of graduates from the training center could catch up with the demand. Efforts to increase the number of cadre, however, were hampered by the concentration of VC attacks against the cadre teams. In 1966 over 600 cadre were killed, and in 1967 the figure rose to nearly 900. The weeding out process to raise quality also took its toll; nearly 2000 were discharged in 1967, over 1000 resigned, and more than 4000 deserted under the pressure of operations.

(U) The qualitative level of the RD cadre was also raised. Quality of performance was improved by a combination of factors, including the weeding out process, a better curriculum at the training center, more selectivity in recruiting, improved GVN-US leadership and supervision as experience was gained, and a growing understanding on the part of province and district officials as to what pacification was all about.

(U) One of the most impressive performances of the RD cadre was their key role in organizing village elections held under the direction of General Thang, as head of the Interministerial Election Committee. These elections, held during April of 1967 in 970 villages and 4500 hamlets, elected village councils and village chiefs--an important step in breaking with the past system of appointed officials and in involving the peasants with the government.

5. Pacification Results

(U) The search for more objective reporting on the status of pacification that had been begun in 1966 culminated in the implementation of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) in 1967. The system used a

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series of 191 questions relating to the following six criteria that had already been evolved for measuring pacification progress:

(1) A census of residents has been completed; the VC infrastructure has been discovered, identified, and destroyed or neutralized; and an intelligence net has been established to deter its recurrence.

(2) Adequate popular forces and-or military forces have been recruited, trained, armed, and are qualified and available for operations.

(3) Hamlet security is effective with an integrated defensive system to include methods of requesting reinforcements.

(4) Hamlet inhabitants have been questioned and have expressed their grievances and aspirations, and some economic and social development projects have been initiated to satisfy people's desires.

(5) Hamlet inhabitants have been organized for self-defense and development tasks.

(6) A hamlet chief has been elected or appointed, trained, and is supported by the majority of the people in the hamlet.

(U) In February 1968 the US mission reported that 638 hamlets had been secured, as compared with the goal of 1103, while population control had been increased from 62 to 67 percent--representing an increase of about 1.3 million people. The failure to achieve the 1967 target would appear to reflect the lack of realism characteristic of 1966. It is probable, however, that the evaluation of secure hamlets reflected a more objective and accurate picture of the progress made than heretofore. The mission was, however, able to report a number of improvements in the implementation of fundamental programs concerned with pacification.

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VI

PACIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 1968-1969

A. PACIFICATION ENVIRONMENT

(U) During 1968-69, much of the "environment" in which the GVN's pacification programs were carried out was colored by the effects of the Communists' Tet offensive in early 1968. Tet not only had a severe impact on pacification, per se, it had a tremendous psychological effect on the GVN, the South Vietnamese people, and the United States. It created serious economic and social problems that stemmed from a general loss of public confidence in the central government. Even the most optimistic US officials have acknowledged that the Tet offensive caused significant setbacks in the pacification program; the momentum of pacification created in part by the establishment of CORDS in 1967 and by the progress achieved in security during that year was generally lost following Tet. It was not until mid-1968, after the losses caused by Tet were recouped, that pacification efforts once again could be brought into focus.

(U) In addition to the Tet offensive, the environment for pacification was further colored by the whole question of peace negotiations. As will be discussed subsequently, the period from 3 April 1968, when the offer of the talks was accepted by the North Vietnamese, to 25 January 1969, when substantive discussions began in Paris, was a critical one for all parties concerned. Both sides in the conflict, unsure of what might come out of the talks, were anxious to control, or physically establish a presence in, as much of the countryside as possible in the event a cease-fire in-place was arranged. Then, too, there was a great deal of tension within the Saigon government and between the government and the United States, for there was some talk among Vietnamese that the United States was preparing for a "sell-out."

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UNCLASSIFIED**1. Political Developments and Trends**

(U) The election in September 1967 of Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky as President and Vice President, respectively, of the Republic of Vietnam, served, according to many observers, to bring political stability to the country for the first time since the days of Ngo Dinh Diem. One of the first tasks facing President Thieu was staffing his government with persons loyal to him. Stated in negative terms, Thieu had to remove Nguyen Cao Ky's supporters from positions of power within the government. From the standpoint of internal Vietnamese politics, 1968 and the first half of 1969 were characterized by frequent attempts on the part of President Thieu to consolidate his own power and curb the authority of Ky. The appointment of Tran Van Huong as prime minister, replacing Nguyen Van Loc, on 17 May 1968 tightened President Thieu's political control. A little over a year later, in August 1969, Thieu announced the resignation of Prime Minister Huong and his cabinet and named Tran Thieu Khiem, a close and powerful friend to replace Huong. The appointment of Khiem and the creation of a new cabinet put an end to almost two years of internal political strife. This is not to say that there was no political opposition, but the machinery of government was brought under the control of President Thieu.

(U) While Thieu was changing prime ministers and reshuffling the cabinet during 1968 and 1969, he was also consolidating his control at the local level. By September 1968, for example, 21 province chiefs and 250 district chiefs were dismissed as part of the GVN's campaign against corruption and inefficiency. Village and hamlet elections were continued in 1969, bringing with them a form of representative local government to the countryside for the first time in many years. (It will be remembered that President Diem had abolished local elections in 1956.)

(U) In addition to removing many local officials, President Thieu modified the chain of command from Saigon to the provinces by placing the province chiefs (who previously reported through civilian and military channels) exclusively under the control of the military

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regions and thus in the civilian reporting channel to Saigon. This removed them from the control of ARVN commanders. Thieu assumed responsibility for appointing the province chiefs, and the Minister of the Interior was to appoint the district chiefs. These officials previously had been appointed by the senior ARVN commanders.

(U) Another important political development was President Thieu's decision in April 1969 to restore some of the autonomy traditionally enjoyed by South Vietnam's villages. He granted the Village Council greater control over its local budget, taxes, and land transfers, as well as authority over the PF platoon and RD team assigned either to the village or to the hamlets of the village. This move toward decentralization of the Saigon government's power is considered to be a significant development. It should also be noted that Thieu's increased attention to the village was related to the political fragmentation in South Vietnam and his need to establish a political constituency of his own. It seems clear that Thieu felt the rural people would be receptive to his efforts to build up a popular base of support.

2. The Economic Situation

(U) At the beginning of 1968, many officials were optimistic over the prospects for economic progress; inflation was being held in check, the port of Saigon had been cleared of the serious congestion that plagued it during 1967, prosperity was reaching into the rural areas, and efforts were underway to increase rice production through the introduction of new varieties, such as IR-8 "miracle" rice. The Tet offensive in February, however, completely halted this economic momentum. In addition to the industrial damage caused by Tet (approximately \$50 million worth), South Vietnam's transportation system was almost completely stalled, food was in scarce supply, and prices skyrocketed. Over 140,000 homes were destroyed and a little over 750,000 additional refugees were generated.¹ The so-called "mini-Tet"

1. (U) Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Saigon 121440, December 1968.

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offensive in May caused the number of refugees generated during 1968 alone to rise to over 1 million, and the total "official" refugee population in South Vietnam reached 1.8 million.

(U) Through the efforts of Operation Recovery and the 1968 Accelerated Pacification Plan, the lines of communication were reopened, the damage to public buildings and private dwellings was repaired, and efforts were made to resettle some of the refugees. Nonetheless, serious economic problems persisted during 1969--most notably inflation. In October 1969, in an effort to bring in additional revenue, President Thieu approved a series of austerity taxes to be levied on certain imports.

(U) Also during 1969, the GVN, with the assistance of AID, moved forward with its efforts at land reform which were to culminate in the passage of President Thieu's "Land-to-the-Tiller" law in 1970. During 1968 and 1969 the GVN distributed 225,000 acres of government-held land--this in sharp contrast to the 6,000 acres distributed annually between 1962 and 1967.²

3. The Military Situation

(U) The following section outlines briefly the strategies followed in 1968-69 by the US-GVN, on the one hand, and the NLF-DRV on the other, as they relate to pacification. (A complete treatment of this subject can be found in Volume II, Parts One and Two.) At the outset, however, it must be acknowledged that in looking in broad perspective at the total war it is hazardous to say that there was a single US-GVN strategy, or for that matter a unified NLF-DRV strategy. Each party in the conflict has from time to time "marched to a different drummer."

2. (U) Statement of Donald G. MacDonald, US Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970, Hearings, 91st Cong., 2d sess., February and March 1970, p. 577. See the chapter on land reform in Part Five, Volume II, for a discussion of land reform as an element of the overall GVN counterinsurgency effort since 1954.

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a. The Enemy Strategy. (U) By the fall of 1967, the North Vietnamese viewed the war--especially the ground war in South Vietnam--as essentially a stalemate. Militarily, it appeared that neither side was winning. Two alternative strategies were reportedly considered by the DRV at that time: (1) it could launch a major offensive to achieve a "climactic year," or (2) it could seek a negotiated solution. There was some evidence of dissent within the North Vietnamese Politburo over whether to negotiate or carry on the war militarily. This may have been due in part to the competing pressures of Moscow and Peking on the Hanoi leadership. The strategy finally chosen was a blend of the two alternatives. As with many Communist strategies, it was a two-pronged effort--one military and the other political.

(U) In addition to the stalemate on the ground in South Vietnam, several other important factors influenced this decision. In the first place, it was becoming evident that the American public was far more opposed to the war than ever before, and President Johnson's poll ratings were falling accordingly. Second, some observers have suggested that the continued bombing of the north by the United States, coupled with the efforts necessary to continue the war, were beginning to impose a political and economic strain on the country. (The Hanoi leadership had linked negotiations to a bombing halt since 1965 and in late 1967 had begun to indicate privately that it did not expect to be able to endure the intensive bombing for much longer than a year and thus would trade negotiations for a bombing halt.

(U) The basic strategy adopted by Hanoi during the latter part of 1967 was to launch a significant offensive operation designed primarily to weaken both the American and South Vietnamese resolve to continue the war and thus to force the opening of negotiations. This offensive was begun in the winter-spring of 1967; the Tet offensive was planned to be its decisive phase.

(U) Every Communist strategy has both its maximum and minimum objectives--one must be prepared to settle for the minimum and, possibly, if everything goes perfectly will be able to achieve the maximum. The maximum objective, of course, is the one promulgated

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to the troops. The Communists' Tet offensive was no different. Its minimum objectives essentially were (a) to show the GVN and the people of South Vietnam, especially the urban poor, that the Viet Cong were still a strong force, (b) to demonstrate that no area of the country was secure--not even the urban centers, and (c) to shatter the confidence of the United States in its ability to continue the war at the present level. The maximum objectives of the Tet offensive, as laid down in COSVN Resolution 6, were described in terms of achieving a popular uprising, overthrowing the Thieu-Ky government, causing the ARVN to collapse, and forcing the withdrawal of US troops. Although the offensive failed to achieve its maximum objectives, it remains doubtful whether Hanoi really expected to achieve them at all.

(U) Regardless of the degree of success one ascribes to the Tet offensive, it must be acknowledged that it was almost brilliant in conception and faultless in planning. Never before had the enemy mounted such a well-coordinated, secretly planned, surprise attack against the major urban areas of South Vietnam. Beginning on the night of 29-30 January, regular VC forces, supported to some extent by NVA forces, attacked major cities, almost all the provincial capitals, and allied military bases throughout the country. The timing was excellent: many of both the regular and paramilitary forces were on leave from their posts and the cities were crowded with people preparing to celebrate the Lunar New Year. Under such conditions, it was easy for the Viet Cong to move into the cities unnoticed.

(U) Despite the failure of the enemy to achieve a general uprising or total victory over the US and GVN military forces, the Tet offensive did have the following immediate results:

(1) The urban population was dealt a traumatic shock, and they were served notice that no area was safe. In addition, it appears that the enemy may have been successful in intimidating them in view of the renewed attacks on the urban centers in the May and August offensives.

(2) Public confidence in the GVN was shaken. Clearly the government could not protect the urban areas. Furthermore, Tet created serious problems in terms of the additional 750,000 refugees generated and the large number of homes

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destroyed; both these results were due in part to the actions of US and GVN military forces in trying to clear out these populated areas by employing artillery, gunships, bombs, and tanks.

(3) A vacuum was created in the rural areas and the previously heralded pacification efforts came to a complete halt. Many of the ARVN battalions assigned to provide security in support of the pacification program were withdrawn to defend the cities and towns.

(4) The United States began a major reappraisal of its policy toward the war following General Westmoreland's request for 206,000 additional US troops in the wake of Tet. This reappraisal culminated in President Johnson's 31 March 1968 announcement of a partial bombing halt in the north and his offer to begin talks with Hanoi.

(U) Although the enemy reportedly suffered tremendous casualties as a result of allied operations to clean out the urban areas, he proceeded to mount another urban offensive in May. This offensive, known as mini-Tet, was smaller in scope than the earlier series of attacks. Its primary function was to maintain pressure on the GVN to enable Hanoi to consolidate its gains in the rural areas and to continue to strengthen its negotiating position in Paris. In August 1968, a similar round of attacks (primarily rocket and mortar) was directed against several major cities and allied military installations. By October, however, the enemy began to withdraw his Main Force units to North Vietnam and to his Cambodian and Laotian border areas and sanctuaries. However, infiltration from the north continued; some sources reported it was as high as 100,000 men during 1968.

(U) In addition to the above military components of its strategy, the NLF-DRV also began to focus on the political aspects. In the wake of the Tet offensive, the NLF announced the formation of the "Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces," an urban-based coalition of various political elements, ostensibly designed to take part in any future SVN coalition government. In addition, Liberation or Revolutionary People's Committees were allegedly established in rural areas that were either contested or were under VC control. Their purpose was simply to be able to claim territory should a cease-fire eventuate.

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(U) In 1969 the enemy strategy became primarily political, although Lao Dang and COSVN Resolutions directed a disruption of "Vietnamization" in order to force a total US withdrawal from South Vietnam. Realizing that total victory in a short time was impossible in the face of US force strengths, the Hanoi leadership decided to emphasize the political objective of capitalizing on the antiwar sentiment in the United States, rather than large-scale military operations. Military attacks were launched, but on a much smaller scale, since many of the Main Force units had been withdrawn to the border areas. A gradual return to guerrilla warfare seemed apparent from the increased incidence of terroristic acts, such as assassinations of local GVN officials. In May Hanoi advanced its 10-point peace proposal in Paris, and in June a Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam was created in preparation for an eventual coalition government.

b. The Allied Strategy. (U) The main thrust of the allied strategy prior to the Tet offensive was to assign a clearing role to the US forces and a securing role to ARVN forces. Through the now well-publicized "search and destroy" missions, the United States hoped to drive enemy units away from selected population areas. The ARVN would then be able to enter the area and provide the security necessary to support the revolutionary development program. In areas considered secure, the Regional and Popular Forces were expected to help maintain security. Many US forces were also assigned to provide security for important US military installations, especially the airfields, as well as to hold on to what were considered strategic outposts, e.g., the fire base at Khe Sanh, located in Quang Tri Province just south of the DMZ and east of the Laotian border. During the first half of 1968, General Westmoreland had committed large numbers of troops to the defense of Khe Sanh.

(U) Prior to the Tet offensive, General Westmoreland redeployed the vast bulk of allied forces in or near the urban areas. These forces were then used to rout the enemy after Tet and mini-Tet. The basic strategy following these attacks appears to have been designed

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to push enemy units away from the populated areas and toward the border sanctuaries.

(C) By mid-1968 the authorized troop ceiling for US forces stood at 549,000. The RVNAF forces at the end of 1967 numbered 643,000 men; however in January 1968 President Thieu instituted a partial mobilization to increase this force level. The Tet offensive provided additional impetus to a further buildup of the RVNAF, primarily through general mobilization. President Thieu signed South Vietnam's first general mobilization law on 19 June. The law provided for the conscription of all males between 18 and 43 into the regular armed forces; men 16 to 17 and 44 to 50 were to be conscripted into part-time defense units. The major portion of this additional manpower was to be assigned to the RF and PF. Indeed, much of the focus of the GVN's military buildup after Tet was directed at upgrading the RF and PF. During 1968, for example, these forces reached a strength of 433,000.³

(U) An additional military development (though one with obvious political overtones) was the revival of the concept of self-defense forces. This occurred in the wake of the Tet offensive when Vietnamese citizens and civic organizations, primarily in the urban areas, appealed to the GVN for arms to defend themselves. Although the United States appeared reluctant to consider such a proposal (there was a widespread fear that South Vietnam would become an "armed camp," that some of the weapons might fall into the wrong hands, and that the weapons might not always be aimed at the enemy), this psychological barrier was overcome. The concept was formally included in the general mobilization law, and in July President Thieu placed responsibility for the development of the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF) under the Ministry of Interior. In July the total number of these forces totaled approximately 200,000. Further increases were planned as part of the GVN's pacification programs during 1968 and 1969.

3. (U) SACSA, "Wrap-Up of Pacification, 1968," working paper.
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(U) Other developments affecting the military strategy employed by the United States and the GVN arose from the Nixon administration's announced objective of achieving "Vietnamization" of the war. Following this, in talks with President Thieu on Midway in June 1969, President Nixon announced the first in a series of US troop withdrawals from South Vietnam. These announcements may have served to convince Thieu of the need to improve the GVN's overall military and political position, although the Tet offensive undoubtedly had a similar effect. In any case, during 1969 President Thieu embarked on what one observer has called a program of self-sufficiency:

Thieu's strategy is designed to replace US forces with the ARVN. To do this he plans to use the PSDF to replace the Popular Forces, the Popular Forces to replace the Rural Forces, the Rural Forces to replace the ARVN, and the ARVN to replace the US. This is Thieu's scenario and it requires his personal direction.⁴

4. The Question of Negotiations

(U) The US partial bombing halt of 31 March 1968 and the offer to begin talks with North Vietnam ostensibly opened the door to peace in Vietnam. A brief summary of developments leading up to and including the formal inauguration of the expanded peace talks or negotiations in Paris in early 1969 seems useful at this point. Stated in very general terms, each side wanted to be able to maneuver itself into a position of political strength should the peace talks result in either a cease-fire or a broader political settlement of the war. During 1968 and 1969 each side appeared to be jockeying for a better position in South Vietnam in order to increase its leverage at the bargaining table in Paris. Given such a situation, one can see how the environment for pacification and the programs themselves related to developments or the lack of developments in Paris.

4. (U) Allan E. Goodman, et al, "South Vietnam and the Politics of Self-Support," Asian Survey, January 1971, p. 13.

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(U) President Johnson's 31 March offer to the North Vietnamese to sit down to peace talks was accepted on 3 April. Some observers have wondered why Hanoi responded so favorably to a partial bombing halt when a total halt had been rejected some months before. However, in retrospect it appears that Hanoi considered it an opportunity which would serve several purposes. These may have included the following (not necessarily stated in any order of importance):

- Dissent within the DRV's Politburo, to the extent it was still significant, would be reduced.
- American public opinion would continue to press for a complete bombing halt. Hanoi could be expected to continue to appeal to the American "peace movement" by making it appear that the Johnson administration was standing in the way of progress toward meaningful negotiations.
- The DRV and the NLF both would have bought additional "time" to secure their political position within South Vietnam and to make up for some of their losses.

Thus, the period between 3 April and 31 October, when President Johnson announced the complete cessation of all bombing against the North, was characterized by a great degree of stalling and haggling first over the site of the talks and second over the bombing question and the related issue of DRV infiltration.

(U) On the GVN side, the 31 March speech of President Johnson was negatively received--indeed the GVN refused to take part in the talks. During the 3 April to 31 October period, the GVN apparently was concerned that the United States might press on with, or accept, a negotiated solution to the war--and one that might grant a greater degree of NLF participation than the GVN was prepared to accept. Thus, the GVN continued to advance the line that it would never sit down to talks with the NLF. Following the announcement of the complete bombing halt on 31 October (the day before the Accelerated Pacification Campaign was officially launched) and the subsequent decision to get down to serious talks, the GVN was forced to enter the picture. It, too, played the stalling game. First there was the dispute over the "our-side, your-side" representation question. After that issue was

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resolved on 26 November, the GVN then attempted to capitalize on such procedural questions as the shape of the table. It was not until 16 January 1969, just a few days before Nixon was to take office and before the Accelerated Pacification Campaign was to be officially over, that the GVN agreed to a solution of the procedural issues of the Paris talks.

B. POST-TET PACIFICATION EFFORTS

(S) Although there exists little agreement among various experts on the effects of the 1968 Tet offensive on the pacification program in South Vietnam, it can be said that pacification generally suffered a severe setback. At the beginning of the year, according to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), it was estimated that 42 percent of the rural hamlets in South Vietnam were controlled by the GVN, 31 percent were controlled by the Viet Cong, and the remaining 27 percent were "either contested, had not been included in the HES, or were non-existent (i.e., abandoned or planned)."⁵ In terms of the total population of South Vietnam, it was estimated that 67 percent of the people were under GVN control, 17 percent were under VC control, and 16 percent were contested. At that time it was assumed that the urban population was "fully controlled by the GVN."⁶

(S) The 1968 pacification plan, which had been prepared by CORDS and the GVN, was basically a continuation of the 1967 plan and emphasized the construction of New Life Hamlets, Consolidation Hamlets, and Pacification Hamlets. The areas of greatest priority were those of high-population density, economic importance, and strategic position. Since many of the goals of the 1967 program had not been achieved, it was decided that the 1968 program would continue where the 1967 program left off. On 18 January 1968, the following objectives and guidelines for pacification were issued, with the concurrence of MACV.⁷

5. (U) SACS, "Pacification Program," 1 March 1968. SECRET

6. (U) Ibid.

7. (U) MACJOIR, "Pacification Guidelines 1968." SECRET

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(1) Territorial Security: In conjunction with allied military strategy, the RD cadres and the Popular Forces (PF) would provide territorial security, i.e., local security, in the targeted hamlets. The role of the Regional Forces (RF) was one of extending the secure areas by conducting offensive operations against the Viet Cong.

(2) Elimination of the VC Infrastructure (Phoenix or Phung Hoang): A goal of 12,000 VCI neutralizations was established for 1968. Phung Hoang committees were to be established down to the district level--a 30 percent completion rate was to be achieved by June 30. At the local level, the Phung Hoang campaign was to be conducted primarily by the NP Special Police branch, RD cadres, Census Grievance Teams, ARVN, RF, PF, and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU) and other intelligence agencies.⁸

(3) Refugees: The guidelines called for the resettlement of 200,000 refugees in 200 special resettlement camps and the resettlement of another 50,000 in special resettlement zones. An additional 200,000 refugees were to be returned to their native villages and hamlets. Considering the fact that there were approximately 800,000 officially acknowledged refugees at the end of 1967, the 1968 objectives if fulfilled and if no new refugees were generated would still leave approximately 350,000 refugees still under government support.

(4) Consolidation of Secure Areas: To prevent areas considered to be under government control from reverting to either a contested or VC status, village and hamlet elections were to be continued, and social and economic benefits provided. The target number of "pacified" hamlets to be so consolidated was 5646.

(5) Economic Revival: As has been previously mentioned, the economic situation at the end of 1967 was considered to be fairly good. One of the economic goals for 1968 was to increase the production of rice, primarily through the introduction of the miracle rice strains so successfully grown in the Philippines.

(S) Other goals of the 1968 pacification program, but of lesser importance, were the following:

- (1) Increase the National Police strength to 86,000.
- (2) Induce 30,000 to 35,000 Hoi Chanh (VC returnees) to rally.

8. (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), p. 234.

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(3) Reduce the attrition rate in the RD cadre program from 35 percent to 20 percent.

(4) Expand the RD cadre to a total of 820 groups (56,900 men) with a minimum group strength of 50.

(U) As a result of the Tet offensive, however, the pacification plans had to be revised. According to General Westmoreland, in the immediate post-Tet period a decision was made to "concentrate our pacification resources and managerial skill to address the most pressing problem--restoration of government control in the largest population centers."⁹ The focus during the immediate post-Tet period was to be on "quick-fix solutions" that would demonstrate a positive impact in three to six months.¹⁰

(U) In order to deal with some of the problems created by the Tet offensive, the GVN, with US insistence and support, launched "Operation Recovery" in February. To oversee the tasks associated with this program, the GVN formed the Central Recovery Committee (CRC) under Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky. At the national level, the CRC was composed of almost the entire cabinet and had an operational staff comprised of high-ranking members of the relevant ministries; similar arrangements were made at the regional headquarters and at each province headquarters. Because of friction between President Thieu and Vice President Ky, the CRC did not function well at first. When Tran Van Huong became Prime Minister in May, he took over the chairmanship of the CRC. However, Houn^g apparently did not exert as much forceful leadership as President Thieu wanted, and thus Thieu himself, with the full support of CORDS, "adopted the simple expedient of having the central committee meet with him," thereby assuming personal command of Operation Recovery.¹¹

9. (U) Ibid., p. 235.

10. (U) COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, "Post-Tet Pacification Assessment," 290740, March 1968. SECRET

11. (U) Goodman, et al., "South Vietnam and the Politics of Self-Support," p. 11.

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(U) The primary goals of Operation Recovery were generally related to the relief and resettlement of the refugees, restoration of security in both urban and rural areas, and the resumption of the 1968 pacification program. Initially, however, the GVN was extremely defensive-minded, and it was difficult to regain any of the pacification momentum of the pre-Tet period. For the first few months following Tet, it appears that very little real attention was devoted to the rural areas. The CRC was at first preoccupied with Saigon, where the majority of the new refugees were located. In addition to caring for and resettling these refugees, the GVN had to assist in rebuilding and repairing heavily damaged or destroyed homes. To this end, rather simple solutions were adopted. For example, refugee families were given cement, sheet roofing, and 5000 piasters to rebuild their own homes. The GVN also had to repair vital lines of communication and attempt to restore security to them.

(C) Although CORDS reporting during the post-Tet period was generally optimistic, recovery was initially slow, but picked up during the summer. The following table, based on HES reports, summarizes the security situation for the total population from January to November 1968. Note that it was not until October that the pre-Tet security level was achieved.

(U) According to CORDS, the basic problems associated with the recovery effort were of a psychological rather than a physical nature. Official reporting from the field continued to reflect the view that the situation was not as bad as some people feared. Although it was acknowledged in March that the impact of the Tet offensive had been "severe" in 19 provinces, "moderate" in 17 provinces, and "slight" in 8 provinces, it was exceedingly difficult to get the GVN to take the steps necessary to establish a presence in the countryside. Furthermore, although the so-called "pacification assets" (i.e., RD cadres, RF-PF, and ARVN pacification battalions) were gradually moving back into the rural areas, there was a tendency on their part to assume a completely defensive attitude. In April, CORDS Director Robert Komer reported that many SVN military commanders were reluctant

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Table 1 (C)

SECURITY AMONG TOTAL SVN POPULATION, 1968 (U)

| Month | GVN Controlled | Contested | VC Controlled |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| January | 67.2 | 16.3 | 16.4 |
| February | 59.8 | 22.0 | 18.2 |
| March | 61.0 | 20.7 | 18.3 |
| April | 61.9 | 20.2 | 17.9 |
| May | 62.1 | 20.3 | 17.6 |
| June | 63.3 | 19.4 | 17.3 |
| July | 64.9 | 18.2 | 16.9 |
| August | 65.8 | 17.4 | 16.8 |
| September | 66.8 | 16.4 | 16.8 |
| October | 69.8 | 14.9 | 15.3 |
| November | 73.3 | 13.3 | 13.4 |

Source: CORDS, Monthly Status of Pacification, Reports,
January-November 1968. **CONFIDENTIAL**

to take the offensive, and village and hamlet officials were intimidated by the Viet Cong, who told them they would return.¹² However, by the end of the summer much of this defensive attitude had been dissipated, in no small part due to the energetic and forceful leadership of President Thieu.

(U) Prior to the Tet offensive, pacification was not taken very seriously by the GVN in certain respects. There was no single, comprehensive, national pacification program or even much coordination between the various national pacification efforts. The Tet offensive had the positive impact of revealing to the Thieu government just how fragile its hold was over the entire population. Faced with what at first appeared to be almost overwhelming problems, President Thieu adopted a "take-charge" attitude, and, with the close support of the United States, he was able to prepare the ground for much more ambitious and vigorous pacification activities in the coming months.

12. (U) Robert Komer, CORDS News Conference on Pacification, 18 April 1968.

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UNCLASSIFIED**C. THE ACCELERATED PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN**

(U) In October 1968, President Thieu moved to take advantage of what appeared to be more favorable conditions for renewed pacification efforts. According to Ambassador Komer:

The US command [under General Abrams] was pushing hard to get the Vietnamese and Americans back out into the countryside to capitalize on the opportunity created by heavy VC and NVA losses. The CORDS contribution was to urge on the GVN a three-month special effort--the first Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC), which began on 1 November 1968. I am prouder of having devised and pressed the APC--over considerable opposition--than anything else.¹³

According to Komer's successor, William Colby, who took over CORDS just as the APC was getting underway, this program represented "the first integrated civil-military program to move into the country, establish security, attack the Vietcong apparatus and begin the process of national mobilization under a comprehensive and integrated pacification plan."¹⁴

(U) The basic thrust of the APC was to establish a momentum for pacification and to provide a framework that could be used for further expansion of security during 1969. Rather than concentrating on the more secure areas as had been done in the past, the APC focused on the insecure areas in an attempt to achieve a GVN presence rapidly in the areas from which it had been driven during the Tet attacks. The overriding objective of the APC was, specifically, to pacify over 1000 contested (HES categories D and E) and VC-controlled hamlets,

13. (U) Robert Komer, "Clear, Hold and Rebuild," Army, vol. 20, no. 5 (May 1970), pp. 20-21.

14. (U) Statement of William Colby, US Senate, Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970, pp. 12-13.

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i.e., raise them to a level of C or better.¹⁵ Other important objectives of the APC included the following:

- Destroy organized enemy military units and drive any remnants away from populated areas.
- Accelerate the Phung Hoang campaign by neutralizing 3000 VCI per month.
- Increase the Chieu Hoi program by rallying a minimum of 5000 Hoi Chang.
- Expand the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) to an organized level of 1 million and arm at least 200,000.
- Mount an expanded information and propaganda campaign to persuade the Vietnamese people and the enemy that the GVN holds the initiative and that the war is moving toward its conclusion.

(U) In terms of the execution of the APC, the territorial security forces (RF and PF) were to be the decisive element. After the individual corps commanders had selected the D and E category hamlets

15. (U) In a CORDS Briefing Paper dated 5 July 1969, the following description of the HES categories was given:

- A - Adequate security forces exist in the hamlet, the VCI has been eliminated, public projects are underway, and economic programs are improving.
- B - A VC threat exists, but security forces are organized and are partially effective. The VCI has been partially neutralized, self-help programs are underway, and economic improvement programs have begun.
- C - The hamlet is subject to VC harassment, the VCI has been identified, the hamlet population participates in self-help programs and local government.
- D - VC activities have been reduced, but an internal threat still exists. There is some VC taxation and terrorism. The local populace participates in hamlet government and economic programs.
- E - The VC is effective, although some GVN control is evident, the VCI is intact, and the GVN programs are non-existent or just beginning.
- VC - Under VC control. There are no government officials or advisers in the hamlet, although military may occasionally enter. The population willingly support the VC.

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to be "pacified,"¹⁶ the RF and PF were deployed to those hamlets to restore security. After completing that task, they were to concentrate on destroying the VCI, organizing the PSDF (each hamlet was to have at least 50 PSDF members and 10 weapons), reestablishing local government administration either through elections or appointments if elections were not possible, and initiating minor self-help projects. One major difference between this approach and that of earlier pacification efforts, however, was that a platoon of RF-PF was to remain permanently in the hamlet during the campaign rather than moving on to another area. For the purposes of the APC, at least, the territorial security forces were to assume the role previously assigned the RD cadre.

(U) The RD cadre were not directly involved with the APC. Whereas in previous pacification programs, specifically those of 1966 and 1967, the RD cadre and revolutionary development, per se, represented the major thrust of pacification, the function and importance of the cadre appear to have been downgraded. According to a CORDS statement of 17 December 1968, revolutionary development became synonymous with self-help projects. Rather than being deployed to hamlets to be pacified during the APC, the RD cadre were to be concentrated in hamlets considered under HES to be "relatively secure," i.e., category A, B, and C hamlets. In part this change was due to the fact that it had been impossible under earlier conditions to maintain security for the RD cadre or even to expect them to maintain their own security. Thus, during the APC, the RD cadre were to remain in the secure areas and continue with the political tasks associated with what remained of the 1968 Revolutionary Development program. They were ordered not to leave those hamlets until all the tasks had

16. (U) The choice of these category D or below hamlets was to be made on the basis of the following factors: proximity to transportation routes, economic importance, and density of population (over 500 people). Accordingly, the following goals were established for each military region: I, 202 hamlets; II, 285 hamlets; III, 281 hamlets; and IV, 567 hamlets, for a total of 1335 hamlets.

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been completed, unless specific approval of the regional commander had been granted in advance.

(C) When the APC was officially concluded on 31 January 1969, most observers considered it to have been generally successful. According to one descriptive report, "the main campaign objectives of the APC to expand GVN presence rapidly and to increase the impetus of pacification programs were achieved in large part. Most goals which were set for the purpose of achieving the desired momentum essentially were met."¹⁷ It is interesting to note that most of the official assessments of the APC cited the following reason for the success of the APC: "Lack of systematic enemy opposition, more than any other factor, accounted for the marked progress achieved."¹⁸

(C) The January 1969 HES report showed that 79.2 percent of the total population lived in relatively secure areas (A, B, and C categories), 9.4 percent lived in contested areas (D and E categories), and 11.4 percent were in areas under VC control. The comparable percentages from the October 1968 HES report were 69.8, 14.9, and 15.3, respectively. In terms of the specific hamlets included in the APC, 79 percent had achieved a C or higher HES rating by the end of the campaign. The greatest gains were made in Military Region III.

(C) Since the reestablishment of local government was an extremely important indicator of progress up the security ladder, at the conclusion of the APC it was announced that "all of the villages in which target hamlets were located were considered to have functioning administrative committees, either appointed or elected. Many new hamlet administrations were organized. Some were actually elected."¹⁹ The number of elected and appointed officials in the target hamlets was reported as follows:

17. (U) JCS/SACSA, "Revolutionary Development," 18 February 1969. CONFIDENTIAL

18. (U) Ibid.; see also COMUSMACV's 120440, February 1969, "Accelerated Pacification Campaign Wrap-Up." CONFIDENTIAL

19. (U) "Accelerated Campaign Wrap-Up." CONFIDENTIAL

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| | <u>Target Hamlets</u> | <u>Elected</u> | <u>Appointed</u> | <u>None</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| I CTZ | 202 | 64 | 138 | 0 |
| II CTZ | 285 | 168 | 107 | 10 |
| III CTZ | 281 | 100 | 161 | 20 |
| IV CTZ | <u>567</u> | <u>212</u> | <u>324</u> | <u>31</u> |
| Total RVN ²⁰ | 1,335 | 544 | 730 | 61 |

It should be noted, however, that many of these officials were former officials living outside the hamlets who were apparently "returned" to the target hamlets.

(C) The results of some of the other objectives of the APC are summarized in statistical form below:

| <u>Program</u> | <u>APC Goal</u> | <u>APC Achieved</u> ²¹ |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chieu Hoi | 5,000 | 8,646 |
| PSDF | 1,000,000 organized | 1,107,000 |
| | 400,000 trained | 659,000 |
| | 200,000 armed | 170,000 |
| Phung Hoang | 9,000 | 7,000 |

The Chieu Hoi program far exceeded its goal of 5000 returnees. It achieved the greatest success in IV CTZ, partly because the third party inducement plan added new impetus to the effort. The PSDF program, spurred on by the APC, was expanded considerably; province and district chiefs were eager to implement the program and usually cooperated in passing out weapons. However, in some areas weapons were not available. It was reported that the primary benefits of this program were political and psychological. The Phung Hoang campaign (Phoenix), which had only been formally established by President Thieu in July (although it had been in existence for over a year), continued to be plagued with many problems. The 7000 VCI allegedly "neutralized" during the APC, though less than the planned goal, represented a substantial increase over the average monthly rate of 1200 during 1968.

20. (U) Ibid.

21. (U) Ibid.

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(U) In addition to the progress reflected in the above statistics, another important result of the APC deserves special mention. Since the APC did represent an attempt to integrate the heretofore uncoordinated pacification programs into one single program, it served to focus the attention of the Saigon government on its own lack of integration and coordination. Thus, one of the important effects of the APC was President Thieu's decision in November 1968 to revamp the former National Revolutionary Development Council. The new organization, known as the Central Pacification and Development Council (CPDC), was chaired by the Prime Minister and was comprised of the entire cabinet and a working staff of high-level representatives of the ministries concerned with pacification programs.²² Local versions of the CPDC were established in the military regions and the provinces. Thus the GVN had instituted a single manager concept to deal with its pacification problems in much the same way the United States had created CORDS. The CPDC was responsible for the management of the APC and worked with CORDS on formulating the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan.

(C) Before turning to a description of pacification and development in 1969, it should be noted that the APC was not the only pacification program in operation during 1968. Efforts were made to continue with the previously established 1968 pacification goals. Thus, for example, refugees continued to be resettled or cared for. The expansion of the RD cadre teams and Son Thun (Montagnard) cadre teams leveled off during 1968 at 774 and 108, respectively. The RF-PF strength had been increased to a level of 433,000 by the end of the year, and as leadership increased the capabilities for better training also increased. By the end of 1968, 353 US Mobile Advisory Teams had been formed to accelerate further the upgrading of the RF-PF.

22. (U) Because of personal friction between President Thieu and the then Prime Minister Tran Van Hoang, Thieu named Tran Thieu Khiem to be Deputy Prime Minister for Pacification and Development. Thieu served as chairman of the CPDC until Khiem was named prime minister in August 1969.

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The Phung Hoang campaign had completed its basic organizational phase, and by the end of the year more than 14,000 VCI had been neutralized. As has been previously mentioned, the GVN moved forward with its program of village and hamlet elections, and the revival of the rural economy was considered a major priority program.

D. 1969 PACIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(U) The Accelerated Pacification Campaign provided the impetus for the GVN to undertake a pacification program in 1969 that was more extensive and perhaps more ambitious than any program previously adopted. The 1969 Pacification and Development Plan (PDP) represented the first attempt the GVN had made to combine all the elements of pacification into one package. To a certain extent, the 1969 PDP was a continuation and an extension of the APC, but several new concepts were introduced.

1. Basic Objectives

(U) The first major conceptual difference between the 1969 plan and almost all preceding pacification efforts was that the primary focus of the plan was definitely on the village rather than the hamlet. The village in South Vietnam has traditionally been the basic administrative echelon. The 1969 plan sought to restore the traditional authority of the village in order to make it responsive to the needs of its inhabitants and to enable the people to receive the proper attention of the central government.

(C) Under an overall principle described in terms of community spirit, the plan emphasized three mutually reinforcing principles: self-defense, self-government, and self-help. The 1969 PDP also established certain specific, quantifiable objectives:

(1) "Bring security to 90 percent of the country." At the outset, this involved upgrading D, E, and VC category hamlets to C or better, while simultaneously maintaining security in the A, B, and C hamlets. At the start of the 1969 campaign this latter group comprised 79 percent of the total population.

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- (2) Eliminate 3000 VCI per month under the Phung Hoang campaign.
- (3) "Establish local government in all villages throughout the country; elect Village Administrative Committees at all secure hamlets and villages; organize a large training program for village and hamlet officials."
- (4) Increase the PSDF to 2 million members and arm 400,000 members.
- (5) Rally 20,000 Hoi Chanh (returnees).
- (6) "Decrease the number of refugees to less than 1,000,000 and resettle at least 300,000 persons."
- (7) Increase the information and propaganda effort by training and making effective use of Village Information Members and Hamlet Information Deputies.
- (8) Stimulate the rural economy by increasing the production of rice (from 5 to 6 million tons) and other farm crops, securing farm-to-market roads, providing agricultural loans and equipment, and by eliminating unnecessary restrictions placed on the movement of goods and produce.²³

(C) In addition to these eight objectives, the GVN also established priorities for determining the villages and hamlets to be targeted. According to the 1969 guidelines, "resources, manpower, talents and objects will be supplied to the village for the general consolidation of the hamlets in the village," in accordance with the following geographic priorities: (a) densely populated areas, (b) areas near important lines of communication, (c) areas near important political centers, and (d) areas near economic installations. To select among various hamlets in the above areas, these priorities were given: (a) restore security in the remaining D and E category hamlets, (b) restore security in Category VC hamlets after priority (a) is fulfilled if any free resources exist, and (c) secure B and C category hamlets.

(U) The burden of implementing these programs fell primarily on the RF, PF, RD cadre, the National Police, and various specific organizations associated with the Phung Hoang and Chieu Hoi programs.

23. (U) Government of South Vietnam, Central Pacification and Development Council, "Guidelines 1969 Pacification Campaign."

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The latter included such groups as the Provincial Reconnaissance Units; Military Security Service (MSS); Chieu Hoi Service, especially the APTs; Vietnamese Information Service (VIS); and the Static Census Grievance cadre.

(C) At the end of 1968, the strength of the RF was 220,000, while the PF numbered 173,000. During 1969 the strength of the RF was increased to a total of approximately 260,000 men, while that of the PF rose to about 215,000 men. The RF were organized into rifle companies of 123 officers and men, while the basic unit of the PF was a 35-man rifle platoon. During the year emphasis was placed on increasing the effectiveness of these units through US Mobile Advisory Team training and by providing them with more sophisticated weapons, specifically the M-16 rifle.

(C) During 1969 the RD cadre program underwent a basic revision. Since the RF-PF had taken on the security mission of the RD cadre, the 59-man cadre teams were broken down into 30-man groups consisting of one six-man control group and three eight-man work cells. This change thus doubled the number of RD cadre teams and permitted their deployment to a greater number of villages. By the end of 1969 there were approximately 47,000 cadre assigned throughout the country. One of the objectives of the 1969 PDP was to assign one RD cadre team to each village on a permanent basis. The RD cadre team was placed under the operational control of the Village Administrative Council, and its mission was to help organize and train the PSDF, conduct local elections, and assist with self-help projects.

(C) The National Police were also to be given greater attention during 1969. At the beginning of the year, the total strength of the National Police stood at 76,330; by December this figure had been increased to 85,218, of which 45,558 were uniformed police, 15,454 were Special Police, and 15,113 were Field Force Police. Plans during 1969 called for the assignment of 50 percent of the uniformed police to the district level and below, and the placement of National Police Field Forces (NPFF) at the district level. The uniformed police were responsible for regular "law and order" functions, while the Special

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Police operated almost exclusively in conjunction with the Phoenix program.

(U) In order to indicate how the GVN proposed to implement the 1969 plan, each of the eight basic objectives will be discussed briefly below.

a. Increase Security to 90 Percent of the Population. (U) Local security forces (PF), reaction forces (RF), and the police were to establish and maintain security in the target areas. The RF-PF mission was to defend the area by engaging in patrolling operations, especially at night. The National Police were to maintain security and public order in the secure areas (which were also the population centers).

b. Eliminate 33,000 VCI by the End of 1969. (C) The Phung Hoang campaign was conducted by the police (especially the Special Police) in cooperation with the ARVN, leaders of hamlet and village PSDF, RD cadre leaders, Hoi Chanh Armed Propaganda Teams, and PF platoon leaders. At the local level, Phung Hoang operations were coordinated by the district chief, who was also the chief of the District Intelligence and Operations Coordination Center (DIOCC). To meet the 33,000 goal, a minimum monthly goal of 3000 was established. It was hoped the Phung Hoang campaign would concentrate on high-level members of the VCI. The goal of 33,000 represented approximately 50 percent of the estimated total strength of the VCI.

c. Local Government. (U) Institution of local government administration at the village and hamlet level was to be accomplished with the assistance of the territorial security forces and the reorganized RD cadre, backed up by the province and district chiefs. These forces were responsible for conducting elections for Village Administrative Committees or Councils. In areas where local security was considered inadequate to permit the holding of such elections, officials were to be appointed by the province and district hierarchy. Local government was to be instituted in the newly controlled hamlets and villages, and in areas considered secure the local government was to

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be strengthened. This was to be accomplished by sending local officials to a training course at the Vung Tau Training Center.

d. Increase the PSDF to 2 Million Members. (C) An increase of one million members was planned in order to bring the PSDF forces to a total strength of two million. The territorial security forces were responsible for organizing PSDF in newly entered hamlets and villages, and PSDF training was to be conducted by the RF-PF, RD cadre, National Police, and any other available resources. A training goal of 1.6 million was established. In addition, 200,000 additional PSDF were to be given "modern" weapons, bringing the total of armed members to 400,000. Those not armed were to engage in first aid, fire fighting, and other civil defense activities.

e. Rally 20,000 Hoi Chanh. (C) Based on the results of the 1968 Chieu Hoi program, the GVN decided that a minimum of 20,000 Hoi Chanh must be rallied to the government side. Although the Chieu Hoi program had generally shown good results, it was to receive added emphasis in 1969. In part this was due to the fact that there was some lag in attaining Chieu Hoi goals prior to the APC. The measures to upgrade the program included the following:

- Increased attention was to be devoted to psychological and propaganda programs aimed at VC military personnel, VCI, and VC families.
- An incentive awards program established specific amounts to be paid to anyone inducing an enemy to rally.
- Increased use was to be made of the Armed Propaganda Teams (APTs).
- A "Turn Around Program" was introduced to induce Hoi Chanh to return voluntarily to their former areas of operation and persuade their comrades to rally.
- There was to be better coordination between the various groups implementing the program--Kit Carson Scouts, APTs, ARVN, RF, PF, and so on.
- The families of known VC were to be told of the benefits of the Hoi Chanh program in order that they in turn could persuade their relatives to rally.
- Improvements were to be made in the reception, rehabilitation, and resettlement of Hoi Chanh.

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f. Decrease the Number of Refugees. (U) Despite the efforts of Operation Recovery during 1968 to assist in resettling and caring for the large increase in the refugee population, there were approximately 1.3 million known refugees still being supported by the GVN. Additional refugees continued to be generated during 1968. To deal with this problem, the 1969 PDP stressed the return of refugees to their native areas. As more areas in the countryside became secure, the GVN encouraged the refugees to return to their former homesites and rebuild their homes. Thus the Ministry of Social Welfare and Relief authorized the following allowances to refugees wishing to "return to the village":

- A six-month supply of rice for each member of a refugee family.
- Ten bags of cement.
- Ten sheets of aluminum roofing.
- A grant of 5000 piasters upon completion of the home.

While the "return to the village" concept was clearly the most desirable feature of the refugee program, the government also stressed the need to provide relief and assistance for the remaining refugees.

g. Information and Propaganda Efforts. (U) Under the direction of the Ministry of Information, an attempt was made to make better use of Vietnamese Information Service (VIS) resources. The 1969 PDP specifically charged the VIS with the task of explaining recent GVN policy changes and the goals of pacification and development to the people. The VIS cadre were expected to encourage and motivate the people to participate in local affairs and to cooperate with the government against the enemy. The 1969 PDP provided for the appointment of village and hamlet information officers and the establishment of mobile information teams (including two VIS cadre) to assist the RD cadre in a variety of hamlet and village programs. The 1969 plan also called for the creation of a new propaganda effort, the "Determined to Win" campaign.

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h. Revival of the Rural Economy. (U) A positive improvement in the rural economy and, thus, in the lives of the people was also sought in 1969. This objective was centered around the Rural Economy Development Plan, which included programs of the Ministries of Economy, Finance, and Interior. Some of the aims of the program are listed below:

- Increase rice production from 5 to 6 million tons paddy.
- Improve and defend roads and waterways, especially farm-to-market routes.
- Increase the availability of low-interest loans to peasants.
- Make available for purchase greater quantities of agricultural equipment and supplies.
- Strengthen and develop such groups as farmers associations and cooperatives.
- Encourage agricultural diversification and the raising of domestic animals.
- Reform the rice distribution system and eliminate middle-man exploitation.
- Encourage artisan activities.
- Simplify procedures to promote freer movement of goods.

2. Implementation

(U) With the plan's basic objectives and guidelines established, the GVN divided the 1969 PDP into two phases; the first ran from 1 February to 30 June and the second ran from 1 July to 31 December. (Phase II was later designated as the 1969 Special or Accelerated Pacification Campaign, which ran from 1 July to 31 October.)

(C) The goals for Phase I of the 1969 PDP are shown below.

(1) Upgrade 1835 D, E, and VC category hamlets to a level of C or better. These were broken down by corps area.

| | <u>Hamlets</u> | <u>Population</u> |
|---------|----------------|-------------------|
| I CTZ | 343 | 277,487 |
| II CTZ | 378 | 227,247 |
| III CTZ | 286 | 219,520 |
| IV CTZ | 828 | 734,436 |
| Total | 1,835 | 1,458,690 |

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| | <u>Hamlets</u> | <u>Villages</u> |
|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| I CTZ | 727 | 130 |
| II CTZ | 749 | 171 |
| III CTZ | 576 | 96 |
| IV CTZ | <u>1,065</u> | <u>172</u> |
| Total | 3,117 | 569 |

(3) Minimum goals for VCI to be neutralized (Phung-Hoang Campaign)

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| I CTZ | 3,780 |
| II CTZ | 4,470 |
| III CTZ | 5,850 |
| IV CTZ | <u>6,530</u> |
| Total | 20,630 |

(4) Chieu Hoi Program (Rally Hoi Chanh)

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| I CTZ | 2,000 |
| II CTZ | 2,300 |
| III CTZ | 4,300 |
| IV CTZ | <u>7,000</u> |
| Total | 15,600 |

(5) Organize PSDF

| | <u>Organize Members</u> | <u>Weapons</u> |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| I CTZ | 98,750 | 19,750 |
| II CTZ | 102,500 | 20,500 |
| III CTZ | 225,625 | 45,125 |
| IV CTZ | <u>198,125</u> | <u>39,625</u> |
| Total | 625,000 | 125,000 |

(C) According to President Thieu, Phase I of the 1969 PDP got off to a slow start:

The month preceding the Tet holidays was not productive because it followed the completion of the [1968 APC], during which everyone was pushed to such strenuous efforts that rest was needed thereafter. Following the month of letdown were the Tet holidays, and for one month thereafter we were unable to regain the fervor that had characterized implementation.

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of the [APC]. Moreover, the Regional Forces had not completed training and military support was inadequate.²⁴

(C) Progress was made in some areas during the Phase I, some of the goals were achieved or even exceeded, and others were close to completion. The most notable lack of progress was in the Phung Hoang Campaign and in the refugee program. In order to create some momentum and to take advantage of the relative quietude on the battlefield,²⁵ President Thieu directed that Phase II would be known as the 1969 Special Pacification and Development plan. The completion date was set for the end of October; the last two months of the year were to be used to complete unfinished objectives and to "begin implementation of the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan so that Tet will not fall in the middle of the Plan and thus not cause a loss of momentum as it did in 1969."²⁶

(C) The 1969 Special Plan included some new objectives and revised others. The goals of the regular 1969 plan and those of the Special Plan are presented in summary form below.

| | <u>1969 Plan</u> | <u>1969 Special Plan</u> |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|
| Control and Secure Population | | |
| A, B, C category | 90% | 90% |
| A, B category | | 50% |
| Phung Hoang | 33,000 | 21,600 |
| Local Government (village elections) | 2,599 | 1,953 |
| PSDF | | |
| Members | 2,000,000 | 2,000,000 |
| Armed | 400,000 | 400,000 |
| Chieu Hoi | 20,000 | 29,600 |

24. (U) Government of South Vietnam, Prime Minister's Office, CPDC, Circular 1275/PTHT, BDXD/KHM, 9 August 1969. **CONFIDENTIAL**

25. (U) The impact of the enemy's 1969 post-Tet offensive was considered to be light, although the February HES showed some decline. However, the enemy did not make pacification a specific target.

26. (U) GVN, Circular 1275. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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| | <u>1969 Plan</u> | <u>1969 Special Plan</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Refugees | | |
| Reduce number to | 1,000,000 | 1,033,099 |
| Resettle | 300,000 | 162,745 |
| Rural Economy | | |
| Increase Rice Production | 6,000,000 tons | 6,000,000 tons |
| Land Distribution | --- | 78,510 ha |

(C) In addition to the general goal of expanding the GVN presence throughout the country, the Special Plan also focused on consolidating that presence in the more secure areas. Although the CPDC assigned a secondary priority to this consolidation goal, President Thieu declared it would be the first priority, although the 90 percent (A, B, C) goal was still to apply. Since approximately half of the hamlets in the A, B, C groups were rated C, the 1969 Special Plan emphasized that half of these C hamlets should be upgraded to A or B. President Thieu's criteria for the satisfactory completion of this objective were effective security, administration, and enforcement of law and order. To him effective security meant the existence of capable PF soldiers and organized, armed, and trained PSDF. In regard to administration, the emphasis was not only on the election process but also on training for all local officials. His "law and order" criteria demanded not only the presence of National Police in the village but an active presence.²⁷

(U) Other programs which President Thieu considered to be of prime importance were Phung Hoang, the Information Program, and land reform. He specifically singled out the province chiefs as having the responsibility for the success or failure of these three programs.

(C) When the 1969 Special Plan was concluded at the end of October, many of the goals had been achieved or over-fulfilled. The security situation, as measured by the November HES, had improved greatly. Both the 90 percent A, B, C hamlet goal and the 50 percent A and B hamlet goal were exceeded. According to the HES figures,

27. (U) Government of South Vietnam, The Presidency, Directive No. 939/PTT, "Special Pacification and Reconstruction Plan 1969," July 1969. CONFIDENTIAL

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92.5 percent of the total population was rated within GVN control (A, B, and C categories), 4.7 percent was contested (D and E categories), and 2.8 percent was under VC control. Comparable figures for the rural population were 89.3, 7.0, and 3.7 percent, respectively.

(C) In addition to expanding and consolidating GVN control over the population, other achievements of the 1969 Special Pacification Campaign included the rallying of 47,000 Hoi Chanh, decreasing the number of refugees to 536,827 (as of October), organizing 2.75 million PSDF, electing local governments in more than 90 percent of RVN villages and hamlets, and training over 12,000 local officials. The Phoenix program began to show signs of progress, although the established goal was not met, and the buildup of the police also continued to lag. Table 2 compares the 1969 goals with the results of many of these pacification programs.

Table 2 (C)

STATUS OF PACIFICATION--1969 (U)

| Program | Overall 1969 Goal | Overall 1969 Result (31 Dec 1969) |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Expand Security | | |
| Population | 90% ABC | 92.7% |
| (est. 17,551,400) | 50% AB | 57.5% |
| Hamlets | 9,699 ABC | 9,053 |
| RF | 254,778 | 260,455 |
| PF | 182,725 | 214,303 |
| RD Cadre | 47,200 | 47,200 |
| National Police | 92,200 | 85,218 |
| VCI (Phoenix) | 21,600 | 19,534 |
| PSDF | | |
| Organized | 2,000,000 | 3,219,084 |
| Armed | 400,000 | 399,535 |
| Local Government | | |
| Village elections | 1,991 | 2,048 (96.4% of villages) |
| Hamlet elections | 9,435 | 9,859 (92.5% of hamlets) |
| Training: Vung Tau | 17,000 | 16,820 |
| Province level | 40,000 | 34,607 |
| Chieu Hoi | 29,600 | 47,023 |
| Refugees Resettled | 1,200,000 | 1,074,558 |
| Information & Propaganda | No goal set | Poor performance |

Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, SACSAs, "Overall Status of Pacification," undated. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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VII

COMMUNITY DEFENSE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, 1970-1971

A. ENVIRONMENT

(U) According to the former Director of CORDS, Robert Komer, by 1970, the GVN had grown much stronger--militarily, economically, and administratively--in its struggle against the North Vietnamese. The weight of evidence, he has written, shows that the enemy position in 1970 had drastically declined in all areas of South Vietnam and was a major threat in only about eight or so provinces.¹ These provinces, it might be interesting to note, were Quang Nam and Quang Ngai in Military Region I; Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Pleiku, and Kontum in MR II; and Kien Hoa, Vinh Binh, and An Xuyen in MR IV.

(U) Dramatic physical improvements in most areas of South Vietnam were reported to be highly visible, and the upward trend was further confirmed by the CORDS measurement systems. According to the revised Hamlet Evaluation System (HES-70), by the middle of 1970, over 92 percent of the population was living in areas not under VC or NVA control. In this connection, it appears that the Cambodian expedition in the spring of 1970, following the downfall of Norodom Sihanouk, had a dramatic impact. A sharp improvement in local security was particularly evident in areas in MR III and IV adjacent to the Cambodian border. There were, reportedly, no villages in MR III under enemy control. The same official statistics claimed that, countrywide,

1. (U) R. W. Komer, "Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam," paper delivered at 66th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California, 8-12 September 1970, p. 19.

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8 out of 10 persons lived in hamlets rated "relatively secure," as opposed to 3 out of 10 in 1968.²

(U) Within this context of expanding security, there occurred a process of political decentralization and democratization. To the surprise of many people, the President maintained his dominant political role despite what was generally regarded as his failure to win widespread popular support. In the judgment of one authority, he achieved the closest approximation of executive control since the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem.³ Numerous challenges from Vice President Ky, the members of the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court, notwithstanding, Thieu continued to consolidate his position of leadership and influence.

(U) The reasons for Thieu's success have been the subject of much speculation. In an article in the August 1970 issue of Asian Survey, Samuel Popkin postulated that President Thieu had decided to abandon any major effort to conciliate and win over the many different political factions that have kept Vietnamese politics in turmoil, and to seek support at the grass roots instead. The main focus of his efforts to build up a constituency of his own were the village and hamlet chiefs. To win the support of these lower-rung officials and, actually, to increase their role and influence in the political process, he tried to enhance their responsibility and power.

(U) In 1970 elections were held for 1118 village council members and 4462 hamlet chiefs and deputy chiefs. About 94 percent of the 2151 villages had elected local officials, as had 96.8 percent of the 10,522 hamlets. Continuous emphasis was placed on the key role that these local officials were to play in local administration. The village chief, often in the past the subservient factotum of the district and province chiefs, was encouraged to be more assertive and independent. Among other things, he was to control the Popular Forces

2. (U) Charles A. Joiner, "Political Processes in the Two Vietnams," Current History, December 1970, p. 357.

3. (U) Ibid.

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and the People's Self-Defense Forces and to screen those among the inhabitants of his village who had been tentatively identified as members of the VC infrastructure under the Phung Hoang program.

(U) This trend toward decentralization and democratization was an important, although not highly visible, part of the Vietnamization process. The most visible feature of Vietnamization in 1970 was the phased, and reportedly irreversible, withdrawal of US ground forces from South Vietnam. From a high of 542,500 US troops during February 1969 the number had dropped to well below 400,000 by the end of 1970 and was scheduled to drop to 260,000 by the spring of 1971. Support groups, training contingents, and supplies were expected, of course, to continue to be a part of the American effort in the region.

(U) There was considerable uneasiness in South Vietnam about the US policy of Vietnamization, but not so much from the fear of military vulnerability. The Cambodian intervention by ARVN soldiers and their generally high level of performance during that campaign were reassuring in that respect. The main reason for concern was the anticipated economic impact of the US withdrawal. The entire Vietnamese economy, particularly in the expanding urban centers, depended on the United States to provide a continuing support level or base. Without that base, there was the specter of severe dislocation, especially unemployment and inflation.

(U) Inflation, in fact, is a major problem for the Thieu government at the time of this writing, and it was a major problem throughout 1970. There was an average annual price rise of 30 percent between 1967 and 1969, and in the twelve months prior to October 1970 prices rose 50 percent and precipitated a devaluation of the piaster from 118 to 277 to the dollar. The impact of inflation was felt particularly by the urban population, and the fact that that segment of the population was rapidly increasing--the estimate in 1970 was approximately 50 percent of total population--made this locus of discontent a matter that the government could not ignore. And, indeed, one of the main objectives of the 1970 pacification plan was to ensure prosperity for urban dwellers, as well as for the peasantry.

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CONFIDENTIAL**B. 1970 PACIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN****1. Conceptual Framework**

(C) The major aim of the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan was, first, to complete the task of securing the countryside against the enemy and, second, within the framework of expanding security, build a new vitality among the people of South Vietnam.⁴ As expressed by the drafters of the plan themselves:

The expansion of a basic level of security to nearly all the people now provides the opportunity for us to strengthen the quality of that security and to concentrate on getting all the people actively involved in the national struggle.⁵

(C) The 1970 plan operated within a conceptual framework of One Basic Principle, Five Guiding Principles, Five Operational Principles, and Eight Objectives. The One Basic Principle held that community cooperation was the basic tenet for all pacification-related activities. The principle was to be realized through cooperation (1) among the people, (2) between the people and the government, and (3) among the various government agencies.

(U) The Five Guiding Principles and Five Operational Principles were a somewhat amorphous and overlapping collection of guidelines covering areas of aspiration, such as decentralization of responsibility and political mobilization, and universally desirable qualities, such as initiative and perseverance. The most useful point of focus for this survey is the Eight Objectives, which, as pointed out in the plan's introduction, were an extension of the eight objectives emphasized in 1969. Each of these objectives will be discussed in some detail in the next section and evaluated in terms of its success

4. (U) The 1970 plan was to be implemented in three phases. Phase 1 extended from 1 January to 30 June 1970; Phase 2 from 1 July to 31 October 1970; and Phase 3, or the Supplementary Phase, covered the remaining two months of 1970.

5. (U) Government of South Vietnam, "Pacification and Development Plan, 1970," p. 1.

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or failure during the course of 1970. The latter task has been made somewhat difficult by the currentness of the plan; written evaluations containing more than tentative observations have been difficult to locate.

(C) The 1970 plan also placed special emphasis on eight supplementary programs which were to be interwoven closely with the eight basic objectives. These objectives and programs are listed below as they were presented in the plan.

EIGHT OBJECTIVES (1970)

1. Territorial Security
2. Protection of the People Against Terrorism
3. People's Self Defense Force
4. Local Administration
5. Greater National Unity
6. Brighter Life for War Victims
7. People's Information
8. Prosperity for All

Supplementary Programs

- a. National Police
- b. RD Cadre
- c. Village Self Development
- d. Provincial and Municipal Development
- e. Land Reform
- f. Development of Ethnic Minorities
- g. Urban Programs
- h. Youth Programs

2. Organization

(U) In connection with the 1970 plan, there do not appear to have been any major changes in the organization, or the overall administrative framework, of the pacification effort. The Central Pacification and Development Council (CPDC) continued to exert its influence and control over GVN pacification activities locally through the regional and provincial councils. On the US side, CORDS remained the key mechanism for formulating and implementing US pacification activities.

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3. Funding

(U) To complete this general description of the 1970 plan, a few words should be said about the funding of the pacification effort. Of interest to us is not only the overall expenditure for the year, but also the extent to which the burden was shared by the United States and Saigon and the distribution of the funds among the various programs.

(U) The United States provided a total of \$891 million to the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan, according to official US testimony.⁶ Of this amount, the Department of Defense appropriation was \$729 million and the AID appropriation was \$162 million. The GVN allocated \$627 million for the same period. The combined US-GVN outlay (approximately \$1.5 billion) was almost three times the amount (\$582 million) spent on pacification in 1965.⁷ The great bulk of the support was for military expenditures--arms for the Popular and Regional Forces, salaries for US advisers, and so on. More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that a little less than half of the real cost of pacification in 1970 was borne by the GVN, and this share of the cost of pacification was, apparently, significantly higher than in previous years. In any event, it appears that President Thieu and his colleagues had given a high priority to the pacification plan and were willing to channel increasingly larger sums of money into its various programs.

C. EIGHT MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. Territorial Security

(C) As in previous plans of its kind, the 1970 plan regarded security as a prerequisite of a successful pacification effort.

6. (U) US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970, Hearings, 91st Cong., 2d sess., February and March 1970, p. 17.

7. (U) Komer, "Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam," p. 7.

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Security provided the proper climate for social, economic, and political programs which aimed at effecting an attitudinal change among the people from passive recognition of GVN control to active support of the government's continued existence. Through the combined use of the regular US-GVN armed forces, Regional Forces (RF), Popular Forces (PF), People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF), and the National Police (NP), the plan sought to provide an A or B level of territorial security to 90 percent of the population and an A, B, or C level of security to 100 percent.⁸ The comparable goals and results achieved in 1969 are shown below; it should be pointed out that these categories and figures are keyed to the pre-1970 HES.

| | <u>1 January 1969</u> | <u>1969 Goal</u> | <u>Achieved</u> | <u>1970 Goal</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Population-- | | | | |
| Within ABC Hamlets | 76.3% | 90% | 92.7% | 100% |
| Within AB Hamlets | 35.2% | 50% | 65.3% | 90% |

(S) The main responsibility for providing territorial security fell to the RF and PF. There is no mention in the plan itself of any expansion in the number of these forces above the previous year's level (RF--260,000; PF--215,000). However, by the end of 1970 there had been a moderate increase of about 20,000 for the RF and 35,000 for the PF. In briefing Secretary of Defense Laird in early 1970, Ambassador Colby pointed out that the US-GVN had made substantial investments in the RF-PF over the past year or two. He acknowledged that the performance and effectiveness of the RF-PF were uneven. He considered that a little over one-half of them were fairly good troops; the others had quite a lot of work to do. He felt, however, that it was largely an advisory training job that was needed.

8. (U) See description of security categories on p. 292.

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"If you look at equipment and material," he said, "you are in fairly good shape for most things. Not lavish, but adequate in most areas."⁹

2. Protection of the People from Terrorism

(U) This program was actually the Phung Hoang, or "Phoenix," program of previous years under a new name. It reflected a decision taken in 1969 by both US and Vietnamese leaders to open up the program to public view instead of keeping it a semi-clandestine affair. President Thieu made a public announcement of the program on 1 October 1969 in order to enlist popular support.

(C) In the 1970 plan the quantitative objective was to neutralize 1800 category A and B members (see below) of the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI) each month. This same quota had been established the preceding year. A further objective of the 1970 plan was to identify during Phase I (1 January to 30 June 1970) at least 30 percent of those enemy cadre who were estimated to exist, but had not yet been identified. These would then become the primary targets for neutralization during Phase II (1 July to 31 October 1970).

(C) The unique feature of the 1970 plan in regard to neutralizing the VCI was its emphasis upon (1) clearly classifying VCI personnel; (2) prescribing minimum sentences to simplify judicial procedures; and (3) requiring long sentencing before neutralization credit could be claimed. Apparently, one of the problems with the earlier program had been the temptation for local Phung Hoang committees to fill their quotas on a somewhat indiscriminate basis. For example, they would pick up suspects drawn from the lowest levels of the enemy organization and, sometimes, detain suspects on very insubstantial evidence. To prevent this kind of abuse of the system, rules were established to upgrade target selection. To begin with, an ABC classification system was adopted for use by the local committees. Class A elements included full or probationary members of the People's Revolutionary Party (FRP) and all who had command and operational

9. (U) Briefing of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird by Ambassador William Colby (CORDS), Saigon, 11 February 1970. SECRET

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functions. Class B included those elements who did not have any command function or significant position in the Communist ranks, but were VCI cadre, at any echelon from central to hamlet level. A cadre was defined as a trained individual capable of assuming command and training of others. A cadre was further defined as a voluntary and active member of any section of the Communist infrastructure or any affiliated organization.¹⁰

(C) The first two elements (Classes A and B) were the only ones strictly defined as VCI, and they were the chief targets of the Phung Hoang program. Class C included all other elements engaged, voluntarily or involuntarily, in activities beneficial to the enemy. As explained in the plan outline, these elements do not hold any executive position, nor do they perform any VCI cadre function.

(C) In addition to classifying the elements of the VCI, the 1970 plan also stipulated very carefully the punishment that was to be meted out to the captured enemy. The local committees were to sentence Class A offenders to an automatic minimum detention of two years. Class B offenders were to be detained for a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. Upon expiration, these sentences might be extended by the local committee. All other suspect detainees (Class C) were to be treated with leniency and could be released outright or sentenced to a maximum of one year. The final step taken to prevent indiscriminate apprehension of suspects was a regulation stating that no credit could be assumed for the so-called neutralization of a captured VCI unless, and until, the suspect was sentenced and incarcerated.

(C) By the end of 1970 the Phung Hoang program had produced a total of 22,341 VCI sentenced, rallied, or killed, which was above its original goal of 21,600.¹¹ This was a substantial accomplishment in view of the more stringent standards set during 1970 for this effort. Reports from the US mission refer, however, to the

10. (U) "Pacification and Development Plan, 1970," p. II-3.

11. (U) Department of State Telegram No. 807, "Status of Pacification--Looking Back at 1970," February 1971. CONFIDENTIAL

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persistence of weaknesses in some aspects of the Phung Hoang program and in the legal and imprisonment procedures for those apprehended.

3. People's Self-Defense Force

(U) Increasingly the GVN-US have been looking to the hamlet militia as the key mechanism for providing local security and thereby releasing the regional and regular military units from this responsibility. The 1970 plan envisaged a further expansion in the strength and training of the PSDF. In October 1969 the PSDF had been divided into Combat Groups and Support Groups. The Combat Groups included all males in the 16 to 17 and 39 to 50 age brackets. Women were permitted to join the Combat Groups on a voluntary basis. The Support Groups consisted of all other members of the hamlet, generally divided into an elders' group, a women's group, and a children's group. The goal for 1970 was to increase the number of members in the Combat Groups to 1.5 million and in the Support Groups to 2.5 million, for a total strength of 4 million members. To complement this expansion, over 100,000 individual weapons were to be distributed, raising the number of weapons in PSDF hands to 600,000.

(U) Emphasis was placed on training the PSDF Combat Group members. An innovation during 1970 in this regard was the creation of PSDF inter-teams. As explained by Ambassador Colby during a briefing in early 1970, an inter-team was an elite 35-man platoon which was given special training and responsibilities. The leaders of these inter-teams (involving as many as five per team) were to be given five weeks of solid training in the PF training centers. The GVN hoped to train about 60,000 people in this way. One of the problems that confronted the government, however, was the question of what the families of these inter-team leaders would live on while the men were away. The basic thrust of the program has always been that the GVN does not pay salaries to the PSDF. But, it was clear to Colby that some kind of assistance had to be given to the team leaders who went away for five weeks of training.

(U) Ambassador Colby was of the opinion that the PSDF program would pay off in terms of strengthening and hardening local security.

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According to Colby the GVN believed that by developing PSDF platoons, PF units could be relieved to extend their operations a little farther afield. The RF, in turn, could begin to operate more or less as the ARVN battalions had been doing in many of the provinces.

President Thieu indicated that he would like to remove the ARVN completely from thirty provinces and shift them to the country's border areas, where they would replace US ground forces.¹²

(S) By the end of 1970, the number of inter-teams had risen to 12,729, against a goal of 14,290 for the year. While countrywide these forces could be said to have made a substantial contribution to the security of the rural areas, their very success apparently made them a special object of attack by the Viet Cong. There was concern, in fact, among US and Vietnamese officials lest the promising future of this program be endangered by such enemy counteractions.¹³

4. Local Administration

(U) The 1970 plan was an extension of, and supplement to, the previous year's program in local administration; particular emphasis was put on improving the quality of leadership. At the end of December 1969, there were still a few villages and hamlets under GVN control that did not have elected governments. Two thousand out of 2224 villages had held elections for village councils, and 9800 out of 11,709 hamlets had elected hamlet chiefs and deputy chiefs. One major object of the 1970 plan was to complete the process of elections in 100 percent of the villages and hamlets in GVN-held areas. This figure, it should be pointed out, also involved the election of new officials in villages and hamlets where elections had been held in 1967.

(U) A great deal of emphasis was placed in the 1970 plan on the training and indoctrination of village and hamlet officials. The goal was to train some 9000 newly elected village and hamlet officials

12. (U) Briefing of Secretary Laird by Ambassador Colby. SECRET

13. (U) DOS Telegram No. 807. CONFIDENTIAL

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at the Vung Tau National Training Center, while at the Province In-Service Training Centers an additional 40,000 local officials were to be given training. Further, provincial governments were directed to plan refresher courses for officials who had been trained at Vung Tau in 1969.

(S) The value of these training programs was stressed by Ambassador Colby in his briefing of Secretary of Defense Laird in early 1970. It is worth quoting his statement in full.

This training effort has been really quite fascinating during the past year. The GVN went out and got these village and hamlet officials and chiefs and so forth and brought them to the National Training Center at Vung Tau. They have them a 5-week course and they were talked to by President Thieu. It was quite a political move, because he had most of the village chiefs and hamlet chiefs in the country.... They gathered these guys together and told them that they were important, that as elected officials they were an authority in their villages. They had charge over security, they were to run the PF platoons, manage the RD Cadre unit.... They were told they had control over the policemen in their village and some were amazed by this.¹⁴

(U) Despite this stress on the new authority of the village leaders, there was evidence in 1970 that the old pattern of relationships with the district would not disappear overnight. According to a report on local administration, the district chiefs continued to play a significant role in the choice of candidates for the Village Councils and, even after the voting, they were able to influence the choice of village chiefs.¹⁵ This continuing influence of the district and provincial chiefs in village affairs was due mainly to their de facto control of the GVN security forces which, of course, made it important for village leaders to maintain good relations with them. It was also due to the village tradition of looking to the district

14. (U) Briefing of Secretary Laird by Ambassador Colby. SECRET

15. (U) Jeanette Koch, "The Development of Democratic Institutions at the Village Level in South Vietnam," unpublished Masters Thesis, George Washington University, September 1970, p. 165.

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for leadership and guidance. Presumably, as the village officials learn to use their newly gained power, they will be able to exercise greater independence and initiative.

5. Greater National Unity

(C) The Chieu Hoi program achieved its best record in 1969. The goal for the year had been established at approximately 30,000, and the actual number of ralliers was 47,023. As explained by one US official, they were not all Ho Chi Minh's bodyguards, but it was, nevertheless, a very successful performance. The method of inducing these defections had not changed a great deal over the years. There was propaganda work in terms of leaflets, broadcasts, and so forth. Armed propaganda teams were also used; these were former returnees who worked for the GVN and whose job it was to go out and contact old associates, relatives, and others who might be in sympathy, to one extent or another, with the Viet Cong.

(C) The goal established in the 1970 plan was for the GVN to receive 40,000 Hoi Chanh ("ralliers"). For Phase I, the target was 25,000 Hoi Chanh, apportioned among the Military Regions¹⁶ as follows:

| | |
|--------|--------|
| MR I | 3,000 |
| MR II | 3,100 |
| MR III | 5,100 |
| MR IV | 13,800 |

(C) The overall goal of 40,000 Hoi Chanh reflected a drop from the number reported to have been persuaded to defect in 1969. The reason the GVN lowered its sights was that the impressive achievements of the preceding year had been tied to the rapid expansion of GVN control in the countryside, particularly in the populous delta provinces. The more easily influenced defectors would have already been persuaded to return to the government's side, and the going was expected to get tougher. Ambassador Colby felt that even the 40,000 goal was unrealistically high.

16. (U) "Pacification and Development Plan, 1970," p. V-2.

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(C) By the middle of 1970, it was clear that the projection had indeed been off the mark. The results were running from 15 to 20 percent behind those for 1969. Nevertheless, the number of defectors was still significant and somewhat of a surprise. By the end of the year, the number of returnees had reached 32,661. The overall breakdown of the Hoi Chanh was as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| military returnees | 17,145 |
| political returnees | 11,406 |
| other elements | <u>4,110</u> |
| Total | 32,661 |

The largest drop occurred in the military category. This was apparently a reflection of the growing dependence of the enemy forces on NVA soldiers as a result of the drying up of the VC recruiting sources and the ever-limited areas of operation open to the enemy.

6. Brighter Life for War Victims

(U) As the result of an intensive US-GVN effort in 1969, the refugee population had been reduced from an estimated 1.4 million to about 268,000 by the beginning of 1970. The 1970 plan aimed at completing the resettlement of these displaced persons and providing qualitative improvements to them and other war victims. As territorial security was increased throughout the country, the number of refugees correspondingly decreased; thus, more attention could now be given to other victims of the war, particularly disabled veterans, orphans, and war widows.

(U) In 1970 there was a brief setback in the refugee relief situation when the Cambodian operation led to the influx of over 200,000 ethnic Vietnamese from that neighboring country. According to end-of-the-year reports, however, these new refugees were expeditiously received, processed, and resettled. The October-November 1970 floods in central Vietnam, also, created dislocation among the inhabitants of the region, but the GVN, with US assistance, managed to provide prompt and effective relief. These efforts were in addition to the regular refugee program, which saw 388,003 people paid

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return-to-village benefits and 139,709 people paid resettlement-in-place benefits.¹⁷

7. People's Information

(U) The information program of the 1970 plan attempted, first, to motivate all people to respond to, and participate actively in, the GVN's effort to achieve the Eight Objectives of the Pacification and Development Plan by applying the principle of community cooperation. Second, it attempted to popularize and explain the 1970 plan to the people, especially the rural folk, in order to give them a clear understanding of its importance.

(U) The various methods and techniques which were adopted to implement this program remained largely unchanged from those used in previous plans. There were to be indoctrination courses for civil servants, cadres, and PSDF members and group discussions and individual conversations with villagers. Newspapers, radio, and television were to be used to the maximum extent possible consistent with the maintenance of quality. Wall posters, leaflets, slogans, news bulletins, and films were all to be employed in an effort to educate and inform the people.

(C) The key to the People's Information Program, insofar as direct contacts with the people were concerned, was the Psywar Information Team composed of Information-Chieu Hoi Cadre, RD Cadre, and Army Psywar Cadre. Also active in the countryside on behalf of the program was the Central Mobile Cadre Group. These various groups organized monthly study meetings for the village and hamlet population. The themes to be stressed were set by the GVN, in order of priority, as follows:

A. IN SECURE AREAS

1. The success of the Republic of Vietnam in all fields: military, political, and foreign affairs.
2. Increased combat effectiveness of the Armed forces.

17. (U) DOS Telegram No. 807. CONFIDENTIAL

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3. Achievements of the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan.
 4. The 1970 Pacification and Development Plan; its significance and the purpose of action.
 5. Neutralization of enemy infrastructure (Phung Hoang).
 6. Resettlement of refugees in new hamlets and their return to their old villages.
 7. Land reform policy, development of agriculture and fishery, organization of associations and cooperatives, etc.
 8. Intensively develop popular organizations such as PSDF, Farmer's Groups, Women's Groups, Young Men's Groups, etc.
 9. Improve and build up urban areas where construction is needed; rebuild damaged areas, root out corruption, etc.
- B. IN UNPACIFIED AREAS
1. Denunciation of communist oppression and exploitation maneuvers.
 2. Condemnation of communist intransigence in Paris peace talks.
 3. Appeal to VC soldiers and cadres to rally to the just cause.
 4. Call on the population to fight courageously against the communists and to assist the authorities when our troops come to pacify their hamlets.¹⁸

(U) As a rule, the People's Information Program has been rated as one of the poorest in the GVN's pacification effort. Among the program's many weaknesses, poor management, low quality cadre, and lack of funds are most frequently cited.

8. Prosperity for All

(U) In the 1970 plan the GVN recognized the need to pay more attention to the economic and social problems of the people. The successes registered in the two previous years in the political and security fields permitted the Vietnamese leaders to devote more of their resources to improving the general welfare of the people. The name of the GVN's campaign to this end was "Look Forward to a Better Life for All, 1970." The program was divided into three component

18. (U) "Pacification and Development Plan, 1970," p. VII-6.

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parts. The first two were basically concerned with the economic welfare of the rural people, on the one hand, and the urban population, on the other. The third segment of the program was aimed at improving the social welfare of all people, particularly in regard to education, public health, and community life.

(U) The rural campaign included five elements, the most important of which was land reform. (Because of its great importance, the new "Land-to-the-Tiller" program will be examined in detail in the section covering supplementary programs of the 1970 plan.) The other areas of GVN initiative were agriculture and fishery development, expansion of rural credit, encouragement of farmers' cooperatives and other organizations of mutual benefit, and improvement of logistical and marketing systems.

(U) As for the urban areas, there were four elements to the GVN's program. The first of these was the extension to the cities and towns of the development funds that had been made available to rural areas. Second, the GVN emphasized the need to establish private urban groups, such as parent-teachers' associations, cooperatives, chambers of commerce, and the like. Third, emphasis was placed on low-cost housing, and, fourth, the government stressed the importance of property ownership by workers, soldiers, and civil servants.

(U) The third major component of the GVN's plan to improve the life of the people in both rural and urban areas involved what it called its "Social Campaign." The three areas of need which received special attention in the 1970 plan were health, education, and community life. An overview of the GVN's performance in trying to help the Vietnamese achieve prosperity may be derived from the figures cited under the appropriate headings in Table 1. The table, it should be pointed out, is a condensed, statistical presentation of the major objectives of the 1970 plan and the reported results at the end of the year.

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CONFIDENTIALTable 1 (C)**PACIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN 1970 (U)**

| <u>Objective</u> | <u>1970 Goal</u> | <u>Attainment (31 Dec)</u> |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I. EXPAND TERRITORIAL SECURITY | | |
| A. HES to A B C hamlets | 100% | 95.1% |
| B. HES to A B hamlets | 90% | 84.6% |
| II. PROTECT THE PEOPLE AGAINST TERRORISM | | |
| A. VCI neutralized | 21,600 | 22,341 |
| B. Reduce terrorist incidents by 50% | 4,295 | 11,680 |
| C. Expand national police | 108,000 | 87,884 |
| D. Redeploy NP to district level and below | 50% | 50.7% |
| III. EXPAND PSDF | | |
| A. Organized & trained: | | |
| Combat force | 1,500,000 | 1,317,335 |
| Support force | 2,500,000 | 1,596,580 |
| B. Arms: issued to province logistic centers; distributed to members | 600,000 | 560,699 |
| | - | (Nov) 379,999 |
| C. Key inter-teams formed | 14,290 | 12,779 |
| IV. IMPROVE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION | | |
| A. Elected village governments | 2,151 | 2,094 |
| B. Village re-elections | 1,091 | (Nov) 1,091 |
| C. Elected hamlet governments | 10,522 | 10,187 |
| D. Hamlet re-elections | 4,063 | (Nov) 4,001 |
| V. GREATER NATIONAL UNITY | | |
| A. Hoi Chanh | 40,000 | 32,661 |
| VI. BRIGHTER LIFE FOR WAR VICTIMS | | |
| A. Resettlement benefits | 203,681 | 139,709 |
| B. Return-to-village benefits | 373,514 | 388,003 |
| VII. PEOPLE'S INFORMATION (Not Quantifiable) | | |
| VIII. PROSPERITY FOR ALL | | |
| A. Land reform | | |
| 1. Land-to-the-Tiller | 200,000 ha | 50,935 ha |
| 2. Former French land | 76,115 ha | 34,425 ha |
| 3. Squatter land | 29,650 ha | 16,879 ha |
| 4. Survey/distribute land to Montagnards | 40,000 ha | 22,171 ha |
| B. Village | 2.150 bil. VN\$ (allocated) | 1.901 bil. VN\$ (obligated) |
| C. Miracle rice cultivation | 500,000 ha | 306,174 ha |
| D. Sorghum cultivation | 6,000 ha | 1,500 ha |
| E. Rural banks established | 29 | 6 |
| F. Rural credit (ADB loans) | 6.6 bil. VN\$ | 5.9 bil. VN\$ |

Source: Department of State, memorandum to Mr. Engle, Subject: "Status of Pacification: Looking Back at 1970," 11 February 1971. (Derived from DOS Tel. No. 807.)
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CONFIDENTIAL**D. SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS**

(U) As mentioned earlier, in addition to the eight main objectives, there was a set of eight supplementary programs which were to be interwoven throughout the 1970 plan. Three of those programs have been selected for discussion here: the National Police, the RD Cadre, and Land Reform.

1. National Police

(U) The 1970 plan provided for a continuation of the previous year's emphasis on the role of the National Police (NP) in the implementation of the country's pacification effort. As in 1969, the principal thrusts were: (1) expansion of the number of NP; (2) assignment of NP to the villages; and (3) training to improve the quality.

(C) By the end of 1969 the numerical strength of the NP had reached 85,218, against an authorized strength of 92,000. The goal for 1970 was to expand the National Police force by 30,000 to a total of 122,000. One of the problems in this regard was the continuing one of how to satisfy competing demands for manpower. The NP has had to rely to some extent on the transfer of RVNAF personnel to the NP ranks. In 1969 the GVN agreed to the transfer of 13,000 men, but only a little more than 9000 were actually transferred.

(U) The 1970 plan emphasized the need to use the additional NP forces to fill posts in village substations. Province chiefs were instructed to establish police substations in the villages within 45 days after village elections were conducted. The personnel required for the establishment of substations were to be taken from staff personnel in province and districts. The village substations were to be staffed according to the following pattern:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| villages of over 10,000 | 18 policemen |
| villages of 5,000 to 10,000 | 12 policemen |
| villages of under 5,000 | 6 policemen |

(U) The activities of the National Police at the village level involved more than the maintenance of law and order. They also included a major role in the implementation of the Phung Hoang program,

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assistance in the organization of local elections, administration of the ID card system, and cooperation with the local Chieu Hoi program.

(U) One of the most serious drawbacks of the NP over the years, and one that continued to be a problem during 1970, was the generally low quality of its personnel. In an attempt to remedy this problem, the 1970 plan stressed the need for basic training of new recruits, as well as a program of technical in-service training. Evidence suggests, however, that there was some dragging of the feet in implementing this part of the 1970 plan. For example, by the end of the year, the program to expand the number of police had fallen short of its goal of 30,000 additional police--less than 10 percent of that figure was realized.

2. RD Cadre

(U) By the end of 1969, the total RD cadre strength had been built up to approximately 48,000, and teams were operating in about 65 to 70 percent of the villages in which a GVN presence had been established. In 1969 the 59-man teams had been divided into 30-man teams and the thrust in 1970 was to make them still smaller. This was possible as a result of the improved security in the countryside and the diminishing need for armed cadre. The function of providing security for the teams, as well as for the villages and hamlets in which they operated, had been taken over by the Regional and Popular Forces.

(C) Acting as the chief arm of the GVN in motivating the people to unite behind the pacification and development effort, the RD cadre teams were to be deployed (by the provincial development committees) to the villages according to the following priorities:

- (1) In C villages in order to raise them to B or A villages.
- (2) After C villages had sufficient cadre, the remaining RDC teams were to be deployed in D and E villages in order to raise them to C category.
- (3) When all C, D, and E villages had sufficient numbers of RD cadre, the remaining teams were to be deployed in B and A villages.

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In the case of the last priority, the size of the RDC teams was to be limited to 8 men, which was a new policy for 1970. Other guidelines were also established for deploying the RDC; for example, they were not to be sent into villages with populations under 500, and they were not to be deployed in villages that did not have at least one platoon of PF to ensure security in the hamlets where they worked.¹⁹

(U) From their inception in the mid-1950s, the RD cadre have represented the GVN's first wave of shock troops in the campaign to expand government control in the countryside. They were, and continued in 1970 to be, charged with certain primary functions as they deployed to the hamlets and villages:

- Conduct intelligence activities
- Take a census of the people
- Explain government policy to the people
- Assist local officials in motivating the people
- Strengthen and consolidate local government
- Organize and train combat PSDFs
- Assist in the village self-development programs
- Eliminate corruption
- Help to improve public sanitation and health
- Develop educational facilities
- Develop Vietnamese culture; annihilate superstition²⁰

(U) Because of their exposed position, attrition among the RD cadre has been a continuing problem, as has low motivation. In 1970 differences of view arose in regard to the RDC's relationship with village authorities, although under a 1969 Decree (No. 045) they were under the control of the Village Chief. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the general consensus among US advisers was that the RD cadre served an important function in bringing the elements of the rural development program to the people and that they represented the vanguard in the social, political, and economic development of the rural areas.²¹

19. (U) Ibid., p. X-2.

20. (U) Koch, "Development of Democratic Institutions," pp. 169-70.

21. (U) Ibid. See Volume II, Part Three, Chapter IV for a discussion of the "Development of Cadre Techniques."

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3. Land Reform

(U) An important step taken by the GVN to consolidate its gains in the countryside was the passing of new land reform legislation. After studying the problem in early 1969, the GVN submitted a "Land-to-the-Tiller" bill to the National Assembly on 1 July 1969. Eight months later, on 16 March 1970, the bill was passed and sent to President Thieu for approval. It has been described as, perhaps, the most ambitious and progressive non-Communist land reform of the 20th century.

(U) MacDonald Salter, in an article appearing in Asian Survey, has spelled out the major provisions of the program. He notes that under the law not only are privately owned lands affected, but also village communal lands are to be redistributed to the tenant farmers working those lands. Land is to be transferred free of charge to the tenant farmer, and the government will provide compensation to the former owner. The ceiling on land ownership has been reduced from the former 100 hectares (250 acres) to 15 hectares (37 acres) of rice-land, and then only if the owner or his family directly farms the land. In addition, a person may retain only five hectares (12.5 acres) of land for ceremonial use--ancestor worship.

(U) Insofar as the acquisition of land under the land reform program is concerned, the law limits the individual family to 3 hectares (7.5 acres) in the south or Mekong Delta area, and one hectare (2.5 acres) in the coastal areas of central Vietnam. All lands in excess of the ceiling are to be redistributed according to the following priority: the tiller; family of war dead; retired or discharged soldiers; civil servants or government cadres; those civil servants and government cadres who had abandoned land because of the war; and farm laborers.

(U) Compensation to the former landowner is more generous than that previously provided and includes a 20 percent cash down payment and the remainder in transferable bonds, bearing 10 percent interest, due in equal installments over an eight-year period.

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(U) Under the new law, the concept of decentralization is to be invoked. Decisions on land transfers are to be made by the village administrative committee; only recording and the formality of title issuance are supposedly left to the central government. This law does not require the government to expropriate and take possession of land and subsequently redistribute it, as did Diem's Ordinance 57; instead it seeks to have the government's authority used only to facilitate the direct transfer of lands from owners to tenants or others eligible to receive them. Persons obtaining lands under this law may not transfer ownership for a period of 15 years, in contrast to the earlier law in which the limit was 10 years. Those who fail to cultivate their lands or otherwise obstruct the implementation of the law will have their lands expropriated--without compensation--and immediately redistributed. A special provision is incorporated in this law that exempts from further payment any farmer who has received expropriated lands under Ordinance 57 or former French lands and has not completed purchase payments.

(U) The Vietnamese government will bear the entire cost of the program, which is estimated variously from 40 to 90 billion piasters, depending upon the valuation of lands, over a minimum of nine years. The United States strongly supports the program and has already provided over \$3 million of technical assistance to help advance it. The United States has also responded to requests for financial assistance by agreeing to help offset the inflationary impact on the economy of the large piaster expenditures by the government for the cash down payments to former landholders. This will be done by helping the GVN meet the foreign exchange requirements arising from these expenditures (estimated at about \$40 million).

(C) The prospects for a successful program were considered good at the time the law was implemented. Less than a year has passed since then, however, and it is too early to assess the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law and its impact on the population with any degree of accuracy. There has been some grumbling about the slowness with which the program has gotten off the ground. For example, the 1970

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goal for redistributed land was set at 200,000 hectares, but, by the end of the year, only 50,935 hectares had been transferred to new owners.²²

E. HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM, 1970

(U) The Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) has been the means by which the US-GVN has measured the degree of territorial security. It has never been regarded as a foolproof system, and efforts have been made from time to time to improve its accuracy and reliability. A revised Hamlet Evaluation System was under study in late 1968, and in July 1969 the US-GVN began to use the new system, in parallel with the old one, on a trial basis. Finally, on 1 January 1970, the new system, HES-70, was officially adopted and put into effect.²³

(U) Although it was a useful tool, the original HES had serious disadvantages, most notably its heavy reliance on the subjective judgments of the district senior advisers and the fact that it did not address several significant elements of pacification (e.g., political conditions and specific programs, such as the PSDF after it was instituted). The HES-70 tried to remedy these drawbacks by monitoring pacification on three broad fronts, namely security, political participation and orientation of the people, and socio-economic well-being. These three broad areas are divided into nineteen separate topic areas, as shown below:

22. (U) DOS Tel. No. 807. CONFIDENTIAL For more on this subject of land reform, see Volume II, Part Five.

23. (U) This description of HES-70 is extracted from a special issue of Combat Analysis Bulletin (September 1970).

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| SECURITY | POLITICAL | SOCIO-ECONOMIC |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Enemy Military Presence | Enemy Political Presence | Public Health |
| Enemy Military Activity | Enemy Political Activity | Education |
| Friendly Military Presence | Administration | Social Welfare |
| Friendly Military Activity | Information/Psyop | Development Assistance |
| Law Enforcement | RD Cadre | Economic Activity |
| PSDF Activity | (PSDF Activity) | Land Tenure |
| Impact of Military Activity | Political Mobilization | |

(U) Each of the 19 topic areas consists of a question set with from three to seventeen questions (the average is about nine). Thus, there are 139 basic questions, which assures good topic coverage. To reduce the adviser's workload only 25 of the basic questions had to be answered monthly; 114 were answered quarterly. To demonstrate the extent of village influence on the hamlet, the questions were further divided by geo-political level (see below).

BREAKDOWN OF HES-70 QUESTIONS

| | VILLAGE | HAMLET | TOTALS |
|-----------|---------|-------------|------------|
| Monthly | 4 | 21 | 25 |
| Quarterly | 58 | 56 | <u>114</u> |
| | | Grand Total | 139 |

(U) Perhaps the most significant characteristic of HES-70 is its objectivity. The adviser chooses objective responses to objective questions. For example, to the question, "Have local security force operations resulted in contact with enemy forces during the month?" the adviser must choose among the following answers: (1) no; (2) yes, once; (3) yes, more than once. This technique provides an additional benefit in that each adviser is using the same detailed "checklist"

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when he visits a hamlet. This focuses attention on important elements of pacification that may otherwise have been missed or overlooked and ensures that all hamlets will be evaluated uniformly. Furthermore, because objective responses are more easily verified and are not as subject to judgmental variations, the opportunity to respond to command or counterpart pressure by "awarding a good grade" is minimized.

(U) There is no intention in this paper to go into the complexities of the new scoring method used in HES-70.²⁴ By almost all accounts, it is a great deal more accurate and reliable than the old method. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that there are no limitations to the system, revised or not. Most significant, perhaps, in this regard is that HES statistics continue to be most responsive to the level of enemy activity. Thus, the relative quiet of the enemy military forces after the spring of 1970 was the prime cause of progress as registered by HES-70. Important intangibles such as the impact of terrorism and threats on popular attitudes, enemy proselyting efforts, and VC penetrations are not measured to any acceptable degree, even though they might have a decisive impact on the long-run success or failure of pacification.

(C) Taking this into account, the HES statistics for 1970 showed consistent, and even spectacular, progress on a countrywide basis. The figures reveal that at the beginning of the year the percentage of hamlets in the ABC category was 87.9 percent. This was roughly 5 percentage points below the figure achieved at the end of 1969 under the old HES (92.7 percent), and reflected, to a large extent, the general tightening up of the standards used for measuring territorial security. By the end of 1970, the number of hamlets in the ABC category had risen to a new high of 95.1 percent. Perhaps even more significantly, AB hamlets had moved from 69.5 percent to 86.6 percent. By the end of December 1970, HES-70 estimates conceded VC

24. (U) See the chapter on "Reporting and Evaluation," Part Four of Volume II.

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control of only 103 hamlets and 37,800 people--0.2 percent of the national population. This is in a sharp contrast with January 1970's estimate of 599 VC hamlets, containing 384,900 people (2.2 percent).²⁵

F. 1971 COMMUNITY DEFENSE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(U) The title of the current 1971 pacification effort is the Community Defense and Local Development plan. Instead of beginning on 1 January as did previous pacification plans, it began on 1 March 1971 and extends to 28 February 1972. This new time phasing was adopted, apparently, in order to permit a natural integration of the plan with the Vietnamese Lunar Year and the realities of the GVN budgetary cycle.²⁶

(U) Since the plan has been in operation less than a month at the time of this writing, little or nothing can be said about its implementation or its effectiveness. This discussion is, perforce, restricted to a review of the plan's major objectives and a discussion of the ways in which it varies from its predecessor. In this regard there are some important changes in emphasis, if not in substance.

(C) The 1971 plan has been simplified by replacing the eight objectives of 1970 with three broad objectives: (1) self-defense, (2) self-government, and (3) self-development. Under these broad objectives are 24 individual programs (listed below) which, while corresponding to those of the previous year in many cases, include certain new ones.

1971 COMMUNITY DEFENSE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A. Local Self-Defense

1. Territorial Security
2. People's Self-Defense Force
3. National Police

25. (U) DOS Tel. No. 807. CONFIDENTIAL

26. (U) Government of South Vietnam, "Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1971," p. 1. CONFIDENTIAL

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4. Protection of the People Against Terrorism
5. Chieu Hoi

B. Local Self-Government

6. People's Administration
7. People's Information
8. People's Organizations
9. Youth Program

C. Local Self-Development

10. Land Reform
11. Agriculture and Fishery
12. Local Economic Development
13. War Veterans
14. A Brighter Life for War Victims
15. Public Health
16. Education
17. Manpower Development
18. Public Works
19. Post and Communications
20. Rural Credit
21. Province/Municipal Development Program
22. Village Self-Development Program

D. Special Programs

23. Urban Programs
24. Ethnic Minorities

(C) As stated in the document: "The programs have been organized under these objectives in order clearly to place the focus on these primary purposes of the entire effort, i.e., maintenance of a permanent security for the population, participation of the population in government, and development of a better life for the population." We are also told that while the plan is written in the context of continued conflict with the Viet Cong and the NVA, it reflects the fact that the level of this contest has changed in many areas from Main Force or territorial military attack to internal security and political and economic contests. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker told Saigon's American Chamber of Commerce on 21 January 1971 that the pacification program in South Vietnam had made such progress that the term "pacification" had become outmoded and was being abandoned.²⁷

27. (U) Washington Post, 22 January 1971, p. A-11.

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Hence, we must suppose, the desire to change the title from "Pacification and Development" to "Community Defense and Local Development."

(U) The main goal of both the 1970 and 1971 plans has been the consolidation of the gains registered in 1968 and 1969, or in the immediate post-Tet 1968 period. In 1970 the emphasis, quite naturally, was directed at strengthening security and the administrative framework in those areas recently brought under GVN control. While the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development plan continues to press forward in these two areas, its distinctive feature seems to be the emphasis placed upon economic and social development in the countryside.²⁸

(U) In 1971 the vast majority of Vietnamese, especially in the Mekong Delta area, enjoyed peaceful conditions to an extent almost unprecedented in over twenty years. This was due to a combination of the US-GVN pacification program and the Cambodian operation of the previous year. The cumulative effect was to create a situation uniquely favorable to the allied side. In fact, in COSVN Resolutions 9 and 14 the VCI were instructed to return to a lower level of insurgency aimed at undermining US-GVN gains in the countryside. There is question, however, about the receptivity of the local people to this reversion to old ways. There is widespread weariness among the people with the war and its killing and destruction of property. The grievances that were once exploited so well by the Viet Cong to gain support in some cases no longer exist or have played into relative insignificance in the face of the suffering caused by years of fighting. There is probably very little that the average peasant wants more at this moment than peace and the opportunity to rebuild his life; and it is in this area that the GVN has a substantial advantage over its rival.

(U) The GVN not only has its own considerable resources, but those of its allies (primarily the United States) to devote to the economic

28. (U) The importance and potential significance of this shift is suggested in an article by Allan E. Goodman, et al., "South Vietnam and the Politics of Self-Support," Asian Survey, January 1971, pp. 1-24.

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and social advancement of the people. Also, it can operate openly through the administrative machinery that has been established in rural areas during the last few years. There is little or no way that the enemy can compete against this, except by trying to undermine and destroy the GVN's link with the countryside. In trying to do this they run the risk of alienating the population for reasons described above. Nevertheless, the twin objectives of the enemy, and its only hope of ultimate victory, are (1) building up and strengthening the VCI, including infiltration of the GVN administrative and military structures, and (2) the exploitation of mistakes committed by the Saigon government. It is, of course, the aim of the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development plan to meet this challenge head on by (1) continuing to emphasize the importance of the Phung Hoang program and (2) pressing forward energetically with programs in the area of economic and social welfare.

(C) The 1971 plan states quite explicitly that the first priority is to be given to the Phung Hoang program, which is designed to coordinate, guide, and supervise all efforts of military and civilian intelligence and operating agencies in the neutralization of the VCI. The importance of the program is explained in clear terms:

The Phung Hoang plan is long-range and continuous. It is designed to operate not only in wartime but will continue to be operational when peace or cease-fire is attained, because the VCI cadre will still conceal themselves among the people to carry on sabotage, insurrection, harrassment of innocent people.²⁹

(U) The principal operational role of the National Police in the Phung Hoang program is stressed in the plan. Although the police problems discussed in regard to the 1970 plan persisted throughout the year, the US-GVN seemed determined to centralize responsibility for the program in the NP Directorate.

29. (U) "Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1971," p. 1-D-1. **CONFIDENTIAL**

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(C) A major goal for 1971 is to complete the establishment of village Phung Hoang committees, and already existing committees are to be strengthened by improving their operational techniques. This means the expansion and refinement of dossiers on suspected VCI, stepped-up training of Phung Hoang officials throughout the country, and improved coordination among the various agencies involved. Following the policy adopted in 1970, the GVN has worked to publicize the Phung Hoang program and its activities, rather than trying to keep it a semi-clandestine operation as it was in its first years. It is hoped that this will not only educate the people about the VCI threat and the government's efforts to eradicate it, but also encourage their support and cooperation.

(U) The most distinctive feature of the 1971 plan, however, is the shift in emphasis toward economic and social welfare programs. These were by no means ignored in past years, but they received relatively little attention compared to programs concerned with establishing security and a government presence. Considering the unstable and threatening conditions in the countryside, this may not have been an unreasonable decision with respect to the orientation of the program. However, with the improvement of the government's position in the rural areas, the GVN is now moving with greater force and initiative into the development field.

(U) The overall number of programs given prominence in the current plan is 24 as compared to 16 (8 objectives and 8 supplementary programs) in the previous year. The eight additional programs all fall under the heading "Local Self-Development." There would be little value at this stage in describing the objectives of each and every program in detail; however, a brief comment on one or two may help to illustrate the US-GVN interest in this special area of effort. The lot of war veterans, for example, particularly those who have suffered some form of permanent disability, has been a sorry one for many years. In 1971 the GVN decided to move ahead in an effort to correct this neglect by assisting veterans, especially in the areas of health, welfare, education, and means of existence. As for other

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programs under "Local Self-Development," new attention is being directed at manpower development, self-sufficiency in agriculture, availability of rural credit, implementation of the 1970 "Land-to-the-Tiller" program, and so on.

(C) We have examined rather cursorily the Phung Hoang program and the various programs in the 1971 plan devoted to the economic and social advancement of the rural people. As pointed out earlier, these represent the areas of major thrust in the current plan as distinguished from its predecessor. There are, of course, many other areas of activity which are being given attention by the GVN leaders. For the most part, however, these reflect an effort to improve moderately upon the same set of goals established in 1970. For example, there is continued emphasis on the role of the PSDF. The numerical strength of the hamlet militia is not to be increased above the 1970 level of 1.5 million Combat PSDF members and 2.5 million Support PSDF members. Rather, emphasis is to be placed on the consolidation and improvement of their quality through training and the increased distribution of arms.³⁰

(U) With respect to the National Police program, the goal for 1971 is to recruit 30,000 additional personnel to bring the total NP strength in 1971 to 122,000. Recruitment priority is to go to local inhabitants who after training are to return to their native places for assignment. Following the trend established in 1970 and as mentioned above, the NP is being given increasing responsibility for the implementation of the Phung Hoang program.

(U) In the area of local self-government, the People's Administration program is aiming at 100 percent participation of villages and hamlets in the election of local officials as compared to the 95 percent achieved in 1970. As in other programs, increased emphasis is to be placed upon the training of local officials in order to improve the quality of their leadership.

30. (U) Ibid., p. I-B-1.

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(C) As might be expected, the People's Information Program is expected to support all sections of the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development plan. However, in terms of national goals, there are five priority programs for the People's Information activities: (1) Phung Hoang, (2) PSDF, (3) Land-to-the-Tiller program, (4) Chieu Hoi, and (5) Veterans and War Widows.³¹

(U) In the case of the People's Organizations and Youth programs, the goal is to expand the participation of the local people in various groups based on age and occupational identification in order to generate a spirit of community cooperation and the development of a healthier and stronger society. Continued emphasis is also being placed upon the problems created by the increasing shift of the country's population into urban centers and by the presence in South Vietnam of ethnic minorities.

(U) It may be useful, by way of concluding this paper, to try to sum up as concisely as possible the changing focus of the GVN-US annual pacification plans in the last few years. In 1969, following a year of mainly military contests with the enemy forces, the GVN-US moved to extend as rapidly as possible its presence and influence throughout the countryside. The Pacification and Development plan for that year emphasized the rapid extension of security and government presence into the thousands of villages and hamlets of South Vietnam. The following year, 1970, was a period of consolidation aimed primarily at strengthening the relatively thin layer of security and administrative control. This involved, among other things, the refinement and alteration of programs in order to improve their efficacy in the struggle against the VC-NVA. In 1971 the GVN-US has turned to the task of winning the active support of the rural population in addition to maintaining the momentum in other areas of pacification. Only when the government has the backing of the people in the countryside can it feel reasonably assured that it has successfully countered the insurgency.

31. (U) Ibid., p. II-B-3.

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ANNEX

LIST OF PEOPLE
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| 13. ABSTRACT (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. (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. (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. (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. | | |

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