

The on-the-job training program was primarily designed for ARVN technical and logistical units which, under the Vietnamization program, would take over the operation and maintenance of US logistical facilities, including ports, terminals, bases, communications systems, and transportation assets. Under the code name "Operation Buddy," the program was initiated by the US Army 1st Logistical Command and its subordinate support commands and units. To ARVN logisticians at that time, however, the code name was unknown. Faced with the redeployment of US units, they were only preoccupied with the transfer of assets and the problem of how to provide adequate technicians and specialists to operate and maintain the modern facilities.

Operation Buddy was built on the principle that each US technical or logistical unit would sponsor a counterpart ARVN unit and train its specialized personnel until they were fully qualified. Under this program, selected ARVN personnel were sent as apprentices to US units where they would be provided on-the-job training by US specialists. For those ARVN units which were to take over operational responsibilities such as signal operating battalions, their personnel were allowed to stay on the US premises where they practiced their future jobs until they were able to handle them effectively. Later, when each facility was transferred, it often appeared as if it had always been under ARVN control. The smoothness with which the transition was accomplished from US to ARVN control testified to the success of this program. Due to the magnitude and importance of the program, an on-the-job training division was jointly established by the CTC/JGS and MACV Training Directorate to monitor, coordinate and evaluate OJT activities being conducted by US units. The program was terminated in late 1972. By this time the RVNAF had become almost totally self-reliant, operationally and technically.

To enhance the combat effectiveness of ARVN units to the extent that they could assume more of the tactical burden and eventually replace US forces, MACV initiated the concept of combined operations and increased this emphasis as soon as Vietnamization was officially proclaimed. This concept was implemented by US Field Forces under different names but the programs they sponsored were essentially the same. The US I Field Force,

for example, launched combined operations with II Corps units under the "Pair-Off" program while the US II Field Force cooperated with III Corps in the Dong Tien (Progress Together) program. Regardless of program names, combined operations were the most pragmatic and most effective technique for training through actual combat on a large scale.

The concept behind these programs consisted of pairing off US and ARVN major tactical units within the same area of responsibility where they jointly planned and conducted operations in mutual support of each other. The operational headquarters of US and ARVN units were either co-located or located in close proximity to each other. Their subordinate elements either operated alongside each other or were cross-attached, sometimes even down to the platoon level. Through constant exposure to US conduct of operations and combat tactics, ARVN units were able to learn much in the areas of operational planning, estimates of the situation and combined arms tactics, especially heliborne operations and tactical air support. The results brought about through these programs were self-evident. In 1970, III Corps units were able to operate successfully in Cambodia without US advisers.³ Again, in early 1971 I Corps forces launched Operation Lam Son 719 into lower Laos with only heliborne and tactical air support from US XXIV Corps.

The mobile training concept was implemented by the MACV Training Directorate under an extensive program for the benefit of Regional and Popular Forces whose principal mission was to ensure territorial security, a prerequisite for the process of pacification. As of 1967, when the pacification program was pushed vigorously forward, the role of RF and PF became even more important and in view of their basic weaknesses, there was an urgent requirement to improve them in all aspects, to include administration and logistic support. Because of the sizable number of RF and PF units, whose aggregate strength in time made up about 55% of the total RVNAF force structure, and their scattered deployment throughout the country, mobile training and advisory teams were the most affordable means to obtain desirable results within a limited time.

³Some US advisers accompanied ARVN units in initial phases of the Cambodian operation, but all were withdrawn prior to 1 July. ARVN units remained in Cambodia until November 1971.



Advisers Looking On As Ranger Student Successfully
Guided Helicopter On Landing Pad (Oct 1970)

was struck by admiration and an ardent desire to imitate. This alone produced a good effect on the students. Another good habit of US training advisers was their punctuality which directly accounted for the cutback in tardiness among ARVN instructors.

Most training advisers were endowed with broad professional competence; they were entirely knowledgeable in their special areas of interest. The difficult points in instruction or questions raised by ARVN instructors were all explained carefully by advisers who always made a point of being precise and never ad-libbing. If they were in doubt of something they always took time to consult manuals or associates and invariably came back with the correct answers. This intellectual probity exerted a good influence on our ARVN instructors who gradually ridded themselves of the poor habit of improvising answers in classrooms, apparently to save face.

In my opinion the most resourceful and effective training advisers were those of the US Special Forces who developed the CIDGs and advised the ARVN Ranger forces. Expedient, organizational-minded and experts in small unit tactics, US Special Force advisers were also highly capable in training and staff work. During over a decade of deployment, they single-handedly organized and trained various groups of Montagnards in the central highlands and contributed significantly to the defense and control of the border areas, a perilous and most difficult task.

As US forces began to redeploy from South Vietnam in 1969, MACV increased its emphasis on the quality of US officers assigned to training centers. Since there was no longer a requirement for replacements in US units, more combat-experienced personnel were diverted to advisory duties, many of them having served several combat tours. Being familiar with the war, and having lived in various combat situations, they were thoroughly conversant with problems faced by tactical units. Their assignment to ARVN schools and training centers tremendously benefited not only ARVN students but also our instructors.

When arriving in country for the first tour of duty, every US training adviser had a difficult time familiarizing himself with the new environment, local culture and manners and the ARVN unit to which he was attached. It took him at least a month, frequently longer, to make himself feel at home in the new environment and job and to be productive. An adviser's usefulness, therefore, was short-lived, given his normal one-year tour. His personal experience could not be completely transferred to his successor. It was as if everything had to start anew every year as far as his counterpart was concerned. Obviously, the annual turnover of US advisers brought about many inconveniences for ARVN units. For one thing, Vietnamese commanders were never sure how they would approach a new adviser and whether the new relationship would be as good as the old one.

Some ARVN school commandants recommended that US training advisers should be assigned for longer tours with their schools. After all, they argued, there was no problem of insecurity or hardship since almost all service schools and training centers were located in the Saigon area, in cities or secure areas. By comparison with their colleagues in tactical units, US training advisers often had a much more comfortable life and a less demanding job. In terms of self-interest, naturally these arguments were valid and it appeared that the longer an adviser stayed with a school or a training center, the better his services would be. However, these arguments failed to take into account the strain imposed on these US officers and enlisted men living in prolonged separation from their families. If only this problem could have been resolved in some convenient way, the prolonged tour would have been easier for most US advisers. And as far as the RVNAF were concerned, it would have been a most welcome event.

Should a US training adviser try to be intimate with his Vietnamese counterpart or keep him at a certain distance? Some argued that too much intimacy might lead to disrespect or disdain which adversely affected a good working relationship. It was true that all excesses were harmful. But to the extent that I knew of this problem, there was never too much intimacy between US officers and ARVN counterparts. It was equally true

that if an adviser was too reserved he was not only artificial but it also created undue difficulties for both sides, not to mention a tendency to suspect and misunderstand each other. Both extremes had to be avoided if a good working relationship was the objective to be attained. To Vietnamese officers of all grades in general, neither excessive intimacy nor too much distance was acceptable. What was important to them was sincerity, compassion and mutual respect. To them, a respectable adviser was someone who would not go beyond his advisory area, kept to his duties and never interfere with command responsibilities. A sincere adviser was someone who never put on an affected personality, abstained from showering his counterparts with superlative words of praise and always behaved true to his feelings and nature. A good, understanding adviser always tried to think as if he were in his counterpart's shoes, measured his own opinions and got things done by induction and persuasion, never by threats of leverage. Professional competence and experience alone would not necessarily make a well-heeded adviser, but tact and compassion helped him accomplish his difficult mission. Vietnamese in general were sentimental and sensitive. Rudeness, vulgarity, abrasive words were apt to hurt and alienate them. During the incipient period of US advisory effort when language was still an important barrier and the problem of culture largely ignored by both sides, most Vietnamese could not understand these American jokes and certain gestures and words were considered insolent. But these cultural misunderstandings gradually diminished as we learned the English language and familiarized ourselves with American culture through offshore courses and as US training advisers learned more about Vietnamese culture.

Important as it was, language was not an absolute requirement for an adviser's success. This was increasingly true during the later years of the US advisory effort in Vietnam. The ability to speak Vietnamese was certainly valuable if a high degree of proficiency was attained. Even a smattering knowledge of conversational Vietnamese helped break the ice faster than anything else. But this was not a must as far as an adviser's usefulness was concerned. He could always communicate through the intermediary of a good interpreter and his effectiveness was

in no way affected by his inability to speak Vietnamese. Most Vietnamese, in fact, thought that it was better for them to learn English since this helped widen their horizons of knowledge. So US training advisers complied by giving English lessons and gradually, with the establishment of the RVNAF Languages School and the mushrooming of private English courses, many Vietnamese servicemen became in time proficient with the language. By the time US combat forces arrived in Vietnam, language was no longer a major problem. There were few US advisers who could speak Vietnamese as a native but those who did, mostly district advisers, really enjoyed great popularity among the local officials and population.

The contributions of training advisers to the enlightenment and improvement of the RVNAF were indeed monumental achievements. Their tenacious efforts spanned two long decades of war and hardship. If there was a proper epitaph dedicated to the US training adviser of the Vietnam war, this epitaph ought to be: "The First to Arrive and the Last to Depart."

CHAPTER VIII

Observations and Conclusions

The Paris Agreement of January 1973 ended eighteen years of American military advisory effort in South Vietnam. Looking back on the evolution of the system and the achievements of the effort, no one can escape the feeling that this was indeed the most ambitious program the US Army and its sister services had ever undertaken for the benefit of an allied military force. That this effort had been a success, there was no single doubt. By the time the last US advisers departed, the RVNAF had become a formidable instrument of peace enforcement with its 13 well-equipped, well-trained army divisions, a strong and modern air force, and an efficient logistical support system. Under better leadership and with continued American support, this modern military force could well have been an invincible opponent against any invasion.

In terms of system and mission evolution, the US advisory effort appeared to have developed in four distinct phases or periods which all reflected the changing US policies toward Vietnam. From 1955 to 1960, this effort was modest but far-reaching in consequence. This was a period of reorganization and retraining during which the nascent Vietnamese Army was molded into what could be called the mirror-image of the US Army, structurally and doctrinally. While there appeared to be a strong strategic sense in the creation of a division-based army with ancillary combat and service support units, this conventionally trained and organized military force was ill-prepared for the type of counter-insurgency warfare it was called upon to fight in the late 1950's. If the lessons of the First Indochina War had been of any use, it would have been much better to develop at the same time the kind of territorial

forces that were to play such an important role during the latter stages of the war. But support for these forces was late in coming and not until 1961 was there any conscious effort to expand and train the Civil Guard and People's Militia (later to become Regional and Popular Forces).

The period from 1961 to 1965 was devoted to developing counter-insurgency capabilities on the one hand and to providing combat support assistance to the regular forces on the other. The role of the US Special Forces was most significant at this juncture in the training of the CIDGs and strike forces. Despite the usefulness of these organizations, they were an irritation to the GVN which did not find its image enhanced by the presence of US-paid and supported auxiliaries. Some RVN leaders even suspected American motives behind the program, and when the Rhade rebellion broke out in 1964, they were convinced that it had been condoned by some Americans. US Special Forces also provided training and advisers for the ARVN Ranger forces whose creation met with initial opposition from the Military Assistance Advisory Group which apparently suspected a political motive behind it. American concern over counter-insurgency further led to the assignment of US advisers to work with Vietnamese province chiefs and assist them in the training and employment of territorial forces. But this effort was at first viewed by the Diem government as a move to control GVN activities in exchange for extended support. Therefore, the expansion of the US advisory effort to the district level in 1964, albeit occasioned by circumstantial needs, would have met with GVN opposition had Mr. Diem survived as President. In the area of combat support, US Army aviation units, although not operating in an advisory capacity, did familiarize ARVN troops and commanders with heliborne tactics and gave them the additional mobility required by counterinsurgency warfare.

The next period, 1965-1969, saw the role of US advisers almost completely overshadowed by the presence of US combat units and their active participation in the ground war. Despite a gradual force structure increase, the RVNAF were relegated to the role of pacification support in view of their limited capabilities. During this period, the advisory effort seemed to be reduced to maintaining liaison and obtaining US

logistical and tactical support for the benefit of ARVN units. The generosity with which this support was dispensed could be attributed to the US advisers' eagerness to oblige and to be useful. Its adverse effect was felt only much later when the RVNAF had to rely on their own means. Training continued but was impeded and sometimes suspended altogether by operational requirements. But it was during this period that the US advisory effort expanded considerably in another direction: pacification support. It was this expansion that made available direct advisory benefits to the growing territorial forces for the first time and the gradual upgrading of these forces began. This training advisory effort alone, to include all the MATs and MALTs, absorbed a sizeable portion of total US advisory strength in the field, but it was an effort well expended.

The advent of Vietnamization brought back to US advisers their proper role and to the advisory effort, a new sense of dedication. Improved selection of US field advisers coupled with various programs to enhance the RVNAF tactical and logistical capabilities quickly yielded remarkable returns. The RVNAF, on their way to full growth, welcomed the effort but were overwhelmed by the speed with which the programs accelerated. It appeared as if the US was more concerned about getting out than willing to take the time for the entire process of Vietnamization to produce solid, lasting results; although it was true that by the time the last US adviser departed, the RVNAF had been left with substantial amounts of assets and had grown into a military giant. The trouble was that the flood of equipment in the few months before the cease-fire engulfed the RVNAF logistical and operational system which still lacked the technicians needed to store, control or maintain the more sophisticated materiel. Disaster was averted, however, by the provision of the large contractor-operated technical assistance system under the USDAO.

In general, except for the first few years, almost all US advisers seemed to have been well prepared for their role which they usually performed with dedication and effectiveness. Depending on the level and specialized area of interest, there were certain dissimilarities in approach and techniques but the objectives to be achieved remained essentially the same. In this regard, it was difficult to tell the difference

from one adviser to another for they were all dedicated to a similar cause. However, it appeared that the higher the echelon, the less emphasis was placed on advising. In fact, only at the division and lower levels did US advisers truly act as advisers in the sense that they directly assisted in day-to-day operations and completely devoted their time and energy to advisory duties.

At the top level, the relationship between the JGS and MACV was both advisory and cooperation. The successive MACV commanders and staff division chiefs and members were professional diplomats, tactful and respectful of the authority and professional competence of their counterparts. Advice was usually provided during informal meetings and discussions. Combined planning activities were always conducted by combined committees under combined chairmanship. The relationship, therefore, resembled a partnership between co-workers in which neither side assumed the predominant role. It was as if in the eyes of MACV commanders, the JGS needed little advice as a control body for the entire RVNAF. But it was true that during the period of US active participation, MACV became a theater command and was more concerned about the conduct of the war and the control and support of US forces. Therefore, only a small fraction of MACV staff members were actually involved in advisory duties. Despite this and because of their extended tours, MACV commanders and staff division chiefs always had a deep insight into RVNAF problems, their strengths and weaknesses, and were thoroughly familiar with every major ARVN unit.

In its advisory relations with the JGS, MACV seemed to be bound by certain security regulations and restrained by US policies. As a result, the JGS was not always fully informed even though the information was desired for planning purposes. Also the JGS was never allowed to participate in or even comment on certain planning and programming actions of which it was the primary beneficiary and executor. The Military Assistance Program recommended funding was a case in point. Other JGS-initiated recommendations deemed vital to the improvement of the RVNAF, such as requests for the M-16 rifle, M-48 tank, 175-mm gun, etc., were satisfied only when such requirements had become all too evident. But these

shortcomings apparently resulted from the dictates of US policies and procedures.

At the field level and in combat units, the usefulness of tactical advisers was not acutely felt during the period prior to the US participation in the war since their role was mostly confined to training assistance, and end-use and maintenance inspection. During the formative years of the RVNAF, the presence of tactical advisers was sometimes a source of irritation for a few ARVN commanders who felt that their own combat experience was far superior to the advice they could expect from a young American officer. As of 1965, however, stepped up combat activities and the increased reliance on US combat support assets such as airlift, heli-lift, tactical air and artillery support made the US advisers indispensable in ARVN combat units. At the battalion and regimental level, in addition to serving as intermediaries in obtaining US combat support, tactical advisers compensated for the basic weakness of ARVN units in operational planning not only by assisting and advising but sometimes by actually doing the work. In a few extreme cases, US advisers were also compelled to make decisions for their counterparts. Although not generalized, this tendency to overtake and patronize seemed to edge ARVN commanders toward a passive role, chiefly when modern warfare required so much skill in the employment of US-controlled combat support assets. At the division and corps levels, US advisers were also extremely useful in assisting ARVN staffs in developing plans and studies, a field in which ARVN officers were usually not strong. While the division senior adviser was able to devote his full time and effort to his advisory duties, the corps senior adviser was not, for the simple reason that he also commanded US troops. As a result, the corps staff benefited most from the work of the advisory group attached to the corps. Not being exposed to a counterpart US staff in action, ARVN staff officers naturally could not learn the fine points of American planning and coordination in combat situations.

In general, in ARVN combat units, US advisers stayed for only six months. The fact that an ARVN battalion commander had to accommodate several different advisers during this time of command did not help build the kind of working relationship conducive to steady progress and improvement.

If the tactical advisory effort were to be more effective, then it appeared that not every ARVN battalion needed an advisory team for the mere sake of it. This effort should have been selectively made and perhaps would have been more beneficial if confined to higher levels of command where the need for US advisers was more strongly indicated in order to help build a solid command, control and planning system for the entire RVNAF.

With regard to training, the task of US advisers was particularly difficult during the early years. In a certain sense, training the Vietnamese Army during that time was not unlike preaching a new gospel, but US advisers acquitted themselves admirably. The early effort of sending Vietnamese cadres to US service schools and making them instructors proved to be a sound policy since it alleviated the training burden placed on a limited number of US training advisers. At ARVN schools and training centers, in addition to providing training support, US advisers closely monitored individual and unit training results, the utilization of graduates, and carefully evaluated practical performances as compared to text book teachings. This evaluative contribution was most useful for ARVN service schools to update their training programs. Training manuals and materials made available through the advisory system were up-to-date and valuable for the training of a conventional military force to fight a conventional warfare. They should have been complemented by comprehensive literature on unconventional warfare and tactics.

The most tangible contribution of the US advisory effort to the RVNAF training base was the expansion and modernization of service schools and training centers. Some of the facilities were so modern that they ranked among the best in Southeast Asia. The RVNAF were particularly proud of the Dalat National Military Academy and the high caliber of its graduates.

In the area of intelligence, the US-RVNAF relationship took the unusual form of both advising and co-working. This relationship made both the adviser and the advisee feel close together since it implied an exchange which benefited both. Due to the close working relationship and better understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses,

the adviser was able to offer more practical advice and the advisee was also able to contribute something useful in return. ARVN intelligence officers did learn a great deal from US advisers, particularly in the highly sophisticated areas of signal and technical intelligence. They also benefitted from American experience in human intelligence which was a particularly difficult task of collection in Vietnam. In return, US intelligence officers gained deeper insight in their knowledge of the Vietnamese Communists through association with their ARVN counterparts.

US intelligence advisers performed their role extremely well in all areas of endeavor and at all levels, except for the sector and subsector where they had to handle problems not usually related to intelligence. A major constraint of the intelligence advisory effort was the one-year tour of duty. Although it applied equally to all branches of service, the one-year tour was most disadvantageous for intelligence since a new adviser usually required a longer time to familiarize himself with the intricate Vietnamese intelligence organization and the equally complex and extremely fluid enemy situation. The US intelligence adviser was, therefore, really useful only after his third month in the country. In general, the growth and maturity of ARVN intelligence was largely attributable to US advisers.

In the area of logistics, the importance and value of US advisers seemed to grow in proportion with the increase in US military aid and the ever enlarging stock of modern equipment. In daily contacts and working sessions, US logistical and technical advisers all proved to have a solid professional background, and were dedicated to their duties. They utilized every procedure and technique for providing advice, from written memoranda to joint visits, private meetings, review conferences and joint staff studies. During the period of US active participation, US advisers were the essential intermediaries between ARVN and US logistical units. They helped provide the additional support ARVN logistical units required to fulfill their mission. Over the years, ARVN logisticians were able to learn many modern operational concepts from US advisers, such as functional organization, automated materiel management, cost programming, etc. Under the sponsorship and tutelage of US

advisers, they also worked out significant plans and programs for the improvement and modernization of the ARVN logistic system, such as Path Finders I and II, the Depot Upgrade Program, etc. All in all, US logistical and technical advisers succeeded remarkably in their missions. They had helped the RVNAF build a modern, functional, cost-effective logistical system and were instrumental in improving every aspect of its operations.

A significant aspect of the US advisory effort in the Vietnam war was pacification support. This support was more demanding because it involved many non-military areas as well. The role of the pacification adviser was, therefore, a dual military-civilian one requiring numerous skills and endurance. In view of its impact on the population, this role was also more difficult and more delicate than that assumed by purely military advisers. Although advisers began operating at the district level in 1964, the pacification support effort really made significant headway only as of 1967 with the advent of CORDS which gave it more cohesive direction and provided more systematic advisory assistance to the RF and PF, the mainstay of territorial security. The spectacular achievements obtained during the following years were largely attributable to US advisers, military and civilian, who helped push the program to success. Their contributions were monumental and affected every aspect of the program, from planning to execution, monitoring and evaluation. Without their efforts and the sizable American financial and materiel support, the pacification program would have progressed much more slowly.

There was no doubt that US pacification advisers performed their role with dedication and resourcefulness. But it seemed that in the context of an ideological conflict in which a solid popular base was the key to ultimate success, US advisers could have contributed much more had they been in closer contact with the population, and known more about their true aspirations and problems. It was no secret that the most successful and popular advisers were those who came back for a second or third tour and spoke the native language well. For a task as demanding and as people-oriented as pacification, those who were involved should have been carefully prepared for it and should have learned to speak the

language and to live among rural natives as well. In no other areas were language and cultural adaptation so vital as in pacification because the sensitivity of the local population toward Americans stemmed primarily from differences in way of life and most particularly, the wide gap between American and Vietnamese modes of living.

Despite the constraints imposed by linguistic and cultural differences and a relative short tour of duty, most US advisers were successful in the performance of their role regardless of the level of assignment and the area of specialty. This success was chiefly due to preparation and the fact that every adviser was most conscious of his delicate and difficult mission. In the eyes of the Vietnamese servicemen, there were three things about US advisers and the advisory effort that were most important: the adviser's personality, his procedures and techniques, and his professional competence.

The issue of professional competence raised another often-asked question about the suitability of US Army professionalism to the kind of war fought in Vietnam. Predicated on technological and material superiority, perhaps it was not suited for the ideological aspect of the conflict. Perhaps because of this, no US adviser was ever assigned to assist in RVNAF political warfare activities. But the Vietnam conflict, despite its ideological overtones, was still very much of a military war which was fought with increasingly modern armaments by both sides. During the later stages, it was primarily a showdown of sheer military might. This was where and when US military assets and professional know-how mattered and even became decisive. Of particular importance for the RVNAF to fight this war was the technological advance gained from the US Army in signal and technical intelligence, long and short range communications, heliborne tactics, and logistic support operations. If US Army professionalism seemed ill-fitted to the early stage of the war, it proved to be indispensable as soon as warfare escalated to the division level.

When US advisers first came into direct contact with the Vietnamese armed forces eighteen years earlier, their problems were much less complicated. Then they were primarily concerned about the language barrier

and how to get along with their counterparts on a personal basis. In time, they learned to cope with both problems but only after going through a painful period of trials and errors.

The ability to communicate in Vietnamese or French was never a must for an adviser except in some specialized areas. In the early days, some US advisers spoke French and could communicate fairly well with Vietnamese officers of the older generation if the conversation did not involve military or technical terminology. But then only a few US advisers and not all Vietnamese officers could speak French, which was also banned as the official language in late 1955. The trend then was clearly indicated: it was either English or Vietnamese. It so happened that in view of the strong anti-colonialist feelings of that time, most high school students opted for English which had officially replaced French as the primary mandatory foreign language in their curriculum; and in time, the majority of these students became military officers. The same determination to learn English caught on with the military, who saw in it the immediate advantage of attending US service schools. And so, without formal planning and even unconsciously, the trend toward learning English picked up momentum on a national scale.

Learning Vietnamese proved to be difficult for the few US advisers who endeavored to master the language. Although syntactically simple, Vietnamese as a tonal language proved phonetically hard for Westerners. Even those who methodically took lessons for many months could only produce toneless, hence unintelligible, utterances. Then there was the problem of regional accents and vocabulary which differed to the point of incomprehensibility even among the natives. Experience indicated that very few Americans ever achieved a useful degree of fluency and even if fluency was attained, the colloquial vocabulary they used was hardly sufficient for professional communication. It was also true that Vietnamese had not yet developed a comprehensive and consistent technical terminology in such advanced areas as electronics, mechanical engineering, aerodynamics, etc. So the efforts of learning Vietnamese as an instrument of professional communication, even through the process of intensive training, was largely defeated not only by phonetic difficulties, but also by the limitations of the language itself.

Besides, since the Vietnamese were eager to learn English which somehow was easier for them to master linguistically and since all technical manuals were in English, there was added inhibition for US advisers to pursue language learning. To most Vietnamese, the value and usefulness of an adviser did not require his ability to communicate in Vietnamese. He could always communicate effectively through interpreters. Besides, more and more Vietnamese became proficient in English and language, in time, ceased to be a barrier altogether. In the areas of human intelligence and pacification, however, the ability to understand and communicate in Vietnamese was paramount to the effectiveness of US advisers. Thorough knowledge about the Vietnamese Communists required direct exposure to their language and culture which could not be obtained through interpretation. In pacification work, even a smattering of colloquial Vietnamese could earn a US adviser instant rapport with the local population. And if he knew the language well enough to communicate directly with them, then he could be assured of certain success. This was particularly true with the case of district level advisers.

How to get along with a Vietnamese counterpart and have him receptive required the whole art of human relations and depended on how well the US adviser knew the Vietnamese character and temperament. Too much intimacy or the total lack of it was unadvisable. Both were extremes to be avoided. But too much intimacy was definitely better than a total lack of it. What really mattered in the eyes of Vietnamese was a correct attitude, sincerity and mutual respect. A warm personal friendship would not necessarily lead to disrespect or disregard if it was based on mutual affection, mutual compatibility and mutual respect; it need not involve too much intimacy which, culturally, was repulsive to most Vietnamese, nor did it detract the partners from the pursuit of their business if both did not seek it as an end in itself.

The inability of some Americans to adjust to local living conditions naturally led to the recreation of American environments. This was a cultural trait that distinguished Americans from the French who mixed more easily with the Vietnamese. It seemed that no American could survive without his PX, his compound and his daily bath. In time,

American compounds and PXs became monumental institutions of American culture in Vietnam. To the underprivileged Vietnamese, these constituted a whole world apart, a world so distant that Vietnamese seldom really felt close to Americans in a cultural sense. Exposure to American material opulence induced envy and greed that led to the practice of illicit business. This, added to the insecure psychology of wartime, the miseries of economic life and the largesse of American aid, contributed to corruption. "American money corrupts" the Vietnamese press used to say. Although there was some slanting insinuation in it, the fact should be admitted that the presence of Americans and their conspicuous display of materialistic wealth created the conditions for, and not infrequently invited, corruption. There were never any written procedures on how to obtain goods through the adviser but the good-natured and dedicated adviser was usually eager to assist his counterpart if asked.

The American propensity for living well was a cultural trait that Vietnamese officers freely admitted as a difference they could do nothing about, nor did they feel annoyed by it. In a determinist sense, they were resigned to their economic condition and never expected that Americans should live otherwise. But exposure to an unattainable good life somehow instilled, on their part, a certain complex of inferiority and sometimes bitterness, which accounted for the distance they always tried to keep from American advisers in order not to be hurt. And this was not good for the pursuit of a common goal. An ARVN officer, if criticized for not keeping pace with American drive, was usually heard retorting, "If I lived that kind of life, I could do the same." To give a proper advisory example, not every adviser was required to live a spartan Vietnamese way of life since this was not only unnatural but also conveyed some hypocritical undertone. But it certainly helped reduce the cultural gap if the American way of life could be kept as inconspicuous and low-keyed as the environment permitted.

There was no doubt that US Army advisers did an excellent job and the US advisory effort in South Vietnam indeed helped the RVNAF attain remarkable achievements in terms of combat effectiveness and technical

and managerial skills. But there was one thing that this effort seemed never able to achieve: the inculcation of motivation and effective leadership. This was, after all, neither the fault of US advisers nor a shortcoming of the advisory effort, but a basic weakness of our political regime. The US adviser, as an individual, did all he could to fulfill his mission, and he did it well.

The majority of US Army advisers came out of their tour of duty with a better, more sober, understanding of the problems the RVNAF had to face in the war. More importantly, they invariably came away with profound compassion and a heart felt affection for their counterparts with whom they had shared the hazards and spartan conditions of combat. Many such relationships had developed into lasting personal friendships. This was perhaps the least publicized human aspect of the US advisory effort that had brought two entirely different nations together for some period of their histories.

APPENDIX A

MEMORANDUM

State of Vietnam
Ministry of National Defense
General Staff
The Chief of Staff
Telephone: Aubepine 10
No. 1891/TTM/MG
APO 4002, 10 April 1955

PRINCIPLES AUTHORIZING TRIM ADVISERS WITH UNITS AND FORMATIONS OF THE VIETNAMESE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES.

I/- GENERAL

The Vietnamese, French and American Governments, in a common agreement, have decided to create "A Liaison Mission" (TRIM) to train and instruct the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

Composed of American and French Officers assigned according to their particular abilities, TRIM will be personally directed by the Chief MAAG (US Military Assistance Advisory Group) under the authority of the Commander in Chief.

This organization includes a Staff and subordinate Advisory Teams placed at the principal echelons of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

II/- TRIM GENERAL ADVISORY MISSION

The TRIM advisers' mission is to assist and advise, on strictly technical aspects, the Vietnamese military authorities to whom they are assigned, to rapidly and effectively rebuild the Vietnamese Armed Forces on a new basis.

III/- TRIM ADVISERS' AUTHORITY

TRIM advisers are empowered to:

- Represent the Chief TRIM among the Vietnamese organizations to which they are assigned to the exclusion of all others.
- Advise, in the event of need, and assist, when requested by the Vietnamese officers to whom they are attached, in the preparation and execution of tasks which are their responsibilities.
- Visit the Vietnamese organizations of interest in the presence of their commanders or delegated representatives, upon request.

- Be kept informed of current regulations, orders and documents not strictly confidential or secret which are deemed absolutely indispensable for the execution and effectiveness of their mission.

- Submit written reports to the Chief TRIM on the organization status of the units they advise, particularly from an instructional point of view, their training, equipment, morale, combat effectiveness aptitude on the condition that the same copies be forwarded to the interested Vietnamese unit commanders. These reports will be identified by a special numbering marker (such as single or double underline).

IV/- TRIM ADVISERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

a. TRIM advisers have no command or supervisory authority over the Vietnamese Armed Forces organizations or activities.

b. On the other hand, the senior adviser of each team is responsible only to his TRIM supervisor for the organization and use of his subordinates. In addition, he has the particular duty of having his personnel respect the regulations established by the Vietnamese Armed Forces concerning organizational security, for which the Vietnamese Military is responsible.

V/- VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THEIR TRIM ADVISERS

a. Only Vietnamese Armed Forces officers will assume command authority, and are entirely responsible for the performance and results obtained in the Vietnamese organizations.

b. It is their responsibility to assure TRIM advisers of:

- Security
- Satisfaction in their operational requirements, billets, office space, vehicles, drivers, mess personnel, interpreters, signal and emergency medical services.

Specific instructions pertaining to this subject will be published by the General Staff, Vietnamese Armed Forces.

c. With regard to TRIM advisers, Vietnamese Armed Forces Officers are required to:

- Facilitate to the maximum of their ability, the performance of their tasks, particularly on the following points: the routing of documents essential to their mission, whether coming from higher, subordinate or lateral echelons, orders issued consequently, activity programs, visits to units, assistance at firing range, maneuver instruction sessions, etc.

- To invite necessary counsel, particularly in the areas of new and misunderstood techniques, instruction, training, logistics and organization.

- To examine with care the recommendations made by TRIM advisers, and using their own judgement, to make use of those that appear to be the most propitious to develop the effectiveness of the organizations under their command.

d. Relations between Vietnamese Armed Forces officers and TRIM advisers will naturally develop through daily contacts and official ceremonies, and particularly, through an inter-allied spirit, cooperative, courteous and appropriate for maintaining the Vietnamese Armed Forces Officer Corps' prestige.

LE VAN TY
Brigadier General
Chief of Staff
Vietnamese Armed Forces

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

APPENDIX B

MEMORANDUM

Republic of Vietnam
Ministry of National Defense
General Staff
Bureau of
General Studies and Plans
Telephone: 30.857
No. 1442/TM/TNDKH/KH/MK
APO 4002 dated April 24, 1958

SUBJECT: The Assistance of American Advisers

REFERENCE: Memo No. 1891/TMT/MG April 10, 1955

I. In their organization process the RVNAF need the continued assistance of American advisers. They are our truthful friends who wish to use their accumulated experience to guide and help reorganize our armed forces into an efficient anti-Communist force. Consequently, it is the duty of every unit commander to help them accomplish their mission.

II. This memorandum serves as a reminder to unit commanders of their duties and responsibilities towards American advisers assigned to their respective units.

Unit commanders should:

- Provide security for American advisory teams.
- Satisfy, with available means, their needs concerning lodging, transportation, driver, office, mess personnel, interpreter, mail, information and medical emergencies.
- Provide documents necessary for their advisory works.
- Provide information concerning the unit's projects, decisions from higher echelon authorities, and related orders issued to its own subordinate units.
- Confer with them on all problems concerning technical, organizational and training matters.
- Thoroughly study their advice and opinions and make efficient use of them.

Moreover, to demonstrate their understanding of responsibilities and duties unit commanders should show due consideration to MAAG high-ranking officers making visits to their units, and brief them on

the activities and the actual status of their units.

III. It is also requested that officers be civil and courteous in their daily contacts with American advisers in order to contribute to friendly Vietnamese-American relations.

Lt. General LE VAN TY
Chief, General Staff
RVNAF

Restricted Distribution
(officers only)

Glossary

ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CAP	Combined Action Program
CAT	Combat Assistance Team
CATO	Combat Arms Training and Organization
C-E	Communications-Electronics
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CLC	Central Logistics Command
CORDS	Civil Operations and Rural Development Support
CTC	Central Training Command
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DSA	District Senior Adviser
GVN	Government of the Republic of Vietnam
JGS	Joint General Staff
JUSPAO	Joint United States Public Affairs Office
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MAT	Mobile Advisory Team
MALT	Mobile Advisory Logistic Team
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MR	Military Region
MSS	Military Security Service
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PSA	Province Senior Adviser
PSDF	People's Self Defense Forces

