

The redistribution of territorial force allocations was most widely used since it was within one commander's authority. Several provinces were plagued by a constant shortage of territorial forces due to exhausted manpower resources and difficulties in recruiting and replacements. The 1968 general mobilization law, for one thing, authorized only the conscription of male citizens aged 18 and above, while the Viet Cong effectively pre-empted this manpower by abducting teenagers of 17 and 16, sometimes younger, into their ranks. As a result, territorial units were constantly under strength and their authorized quotas were never fulfilled. To solve this problem, a corps commander could transfer the unfulfilled authorized strength quotas to other provinces that enjoyed abundant manpower resources and recruiting facilities. This redistribution of allocations would then be administratively adjusted by the JGS. It was an effective means that permitted the increase of territorial forces on the one hand and the release of regular ARVN forces for operational purposes on the other.

The primary role of US and FWMA forces was to conduct search-and-destroy operations against enemy main force units and bases. However, in case an area targeted for pacification lay within the TAOR of a US or FWMA major unit, coordination with the US Field Force could be made so that the operational activities of this unit helped in the pacification task. Sometimes search-and-destroy operations conducted by US and FWMA forces near pacification areas could be tremendously beneficial, although indirectly, to the pacification program by keeping enemy forces away from these areas.

Similarly, the deployment and disposition of ARVN forces to expand GVN control could be beneficial to US and FWMA areas of tactical responsibility since ARVN forces might interdict the penetration of enemy forces in the areas. In general, there was an effort to combine or coordinate combat activities between ARVN and US forces to provide the kind of mutual support that benefited both.

The Division Tactical Area Level

The DTA was responsible for providing military support for the pacification program through the tactical employment of its regular forces. Provincial pacification plans were usually worked out with the assistance of the DTA since they involved sizable military support by regular forces. During the planning phase, the division commander usually advised the province chief as to what regular forces would be available for his support, and the division senior adviser provided advice and assistance to the ARVN division commander on the coordinated employment of forces and combat support. When the plan was implemented, the division senior adviser assisted the DTA commander in requesting US support. In this regard, the division senior adviser constantly coordinated and exchanged viewpoints with province senior advisers to ensure adequate support for the provincial effort in pacification.

The employment of forces within a DTA to support provincial pacification programs was subjected to careful consideration and planning. The primary concern of the DTA commander when planning the employment of his forces was directed at such questions as: What would happen to the overall DTA situation once forces had been committed to the province? Was there any reaction force left for the division to be used when required? Was the relocation of forces to the provinces judiciously made? Would the provinces be able to employ correctly and judiciously the attached regular forces? Such worries compelled the DTA commander to constantly monitor the employment of his forces and to plan for contingencies in close coordination with his adviser. It became the rule for most DTAs that an infantry division never fully committed all its forces for pacification support. It always retained a reasonable reaction force for use in emergencies.

The Province/Sector Level

In his role as chairman of the province pacification and development council, the province chief was responsible for establishing the

provincial pacification plan, in close cooperation and coordination with the province senior adviser, the ministerial service chiefs of the province, and other civilian and military agencies. The provincial pacification plan was reviewed by corps/MR, then submitted to the CPDC for approval. When the plan had been approved, funds and material required to support it were directly allotted to the province chief. As far as military support was concerned, it was provided by the DTA upon approval of the corps commander. Corps could also provide support to the province by allotting authorized RF/PF spaces for recruiting purposes.

The province chief was not only the planner of the provincial pacification program, he was also its executor. In general, most provincial shortcomings which usually delayed pacification progress could be traced to three major shortages: support forces, materiel, and cadre.

With the assistance of his senior adviser, the province chief had to plan for the effective employment of forces allotted by the DTA or corps. He had to decide where to employ regular forces, where to employ territorial forces, and where to replace regular forces by territorial forces. He had to base such decisions on the particular areas to be pacified and the province's ability to recruit and train new troops so that when the pacification program started, he would have adequate and readily available support forces.

Once funds and materiel were made available to a province, the corps commander had to maintain the amount of regular forces committed to its support as required by the province plan. If a transfer of these forces was contemplated for any reason, the corps commander would have to ensure that they be replaced by other forces.

There was some rigidity in the way province plans were implemented. Unless warranted by extremely adverse circumstances, a plan usually underwent few changes during the course of the year. For one thing, it was geared to the funds and materiel the province had requested. In practice, however, the province did not always obtain what it needed in time, and there were many reasons for this. First, there were not enough transportation facilities; most of the materials were import items and their availability depended on delivery schedules; and finally,

materiel was damaged or lost during transportation. Although seemingly unimportant, the shortage of materiel such as barbed wire, iron posts, and cement, adversely affected the provincial pacification effort. In order to provide timely and adequate support to the provinces, US agencies closely monitored the delivery and movement of materials and took care not to cause undue obstacles to the provincial pacification programs. Sometimes, to gain time and speed up the delivery of materiel, ARVN corps obtained temporary loans from US Field Forces for such items as barbed wire, fence posts, boards, and cement, and distributed them to provinces as advance issues to be reimbursed when imported materials were delivered.

An Evaluation

US assistance played a vital role in the total pacification effort, beginning with the top level where the GVN ministries, as planners and supervisors of their own programs, seemed to need it the most. They were usually plagued by a shortage of personnel required for the various programs. In addition, there was not always qualified cadre for all specialized fields. Training and qualifying such specialists in sufficient numbers took a long time and close support from various US agencies. Planning for specialist requirements was also a time-consuming task since it involved the compilation and review of individual requests received from all the provinces. Despite these shortcomings, the assistance provided by CORDS and other US agencies usually satisfied every need in personnel training required by the ministries. This was due to the very close cooperation and coordination between the GVN agencies and CORDS and other US agencies. Every plan and program was subject to careful studies by both sides.

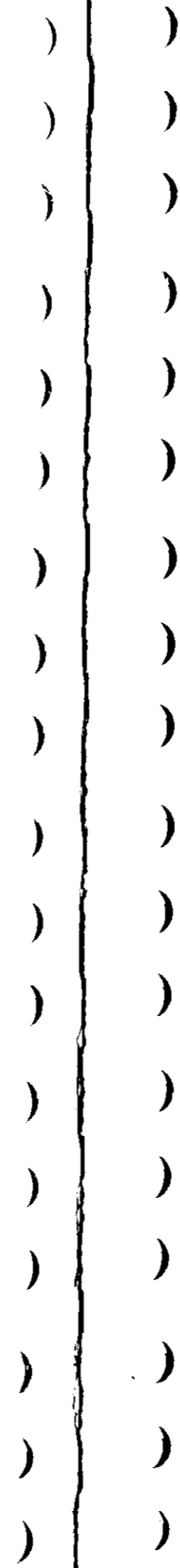
At the CTZ/MR level, however, it seemed that the US side usually held the initiative in planning. For one thing, at this level there was always a substantial US staff with a wide variety of specialists and qualified personnel. Sometimes a plan was subjected to careful studies by the US staff for five or six months before actually being

forwarded for the first time. In general, US Army staffs were made up of talented and experienced officers who had become experts in their own right. They were extremely efficient and helpful in assessing and evaluating pacification results. In particular, they proved to be unequalled experts in evaluating hamlets, monitoring and assessing the employment and capabilities of territorial forces, and in monitoring the implementation of such programs as Phoenix, Chieu Hoi, and war refugees. Their contributions of opinions, ideas, and suggestions were always pertinent and valuable for remedying deficiencies; their role in pacification support was particularly valuable and in many cases indispensable.

On the RVN side, it was admitted that at the field levels, corps and division, staff officers did not always possess a thorough understanding of the pacification concept and its programs. As a result, most of the planning was initiated and undertaken by the US side. At the beginning of the pacification effort, for example, a plan disseminated by the central level to corps was merely duplicated and sent verbatim to provinces without comments or specific guidance. The corps staff responsible for pacification usually consisted of inexperienced officers who were not familiar with planning or studies and often they were assigned to pacification because they did not fit into any other staff capability. As a result, corps were unable to make studies or plans that could help improve the pacification effort.

By contrast, at the execution level, i.e., province, there were many talented and experienced province chiefs. Some held their positions for several years and consequently had a full grasp of provincial problems, the local terrain and the local population. Others had innovative ideas and achieved spectacular gains in pacification. Province senior advisers usually stayed in their jobs only one year, or sometimes a little longer, and as a result they were not entirely knowledgeable about the province and its pacification problems. Nevertheless, they played key roles in providing assistance and support for their counterparts. If a province was well supplied with materiel or received adequate military support, it was invariably due to the province senior

contributions to the provinces and districts where they were assigned. There were indeed several advisers who were more active and devoted to pacification than their counterparts. Many were seen making visits to villages and hamlets if there was a requirement to know more about the real situation. Finally, there were many who sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of their advisory duties.



CHAPTER V

Pacification Techniques and Operations

The pacification process usually began with a tactical operation which went through three major phases, each involving the employment of different forces.

In the initial phase, regular ARVN or territorial forces or both conducted a securing operation in the area targeted for pacification. Their objective was to destroy or drive away enemy main or local force units and guerrillas. Since the area to be pacified was usually populated, the use of firepower was subject to limitations to minimize casualties and damage. As soon as the enemy units were destroyed or driven away, friendly forces usually broke down into small elements for a careful search to destroy the remnants of the enemy or those enemy who tried to escape by mixing with the populace. At the same time, psywar and propaganda activities were conducted, first to publicize the victory and secondly to intimidate or proselytize enemy cadre into surrendering or rallying to the GVN side. At night, small units conducted and laid ambushes around the village to prevent the enemy from escaping under the cover of darkness. After a period of two or three days, they deployed to adjacent areas to pursue the enemy still in the area or to strike into enemy bases or communication routes nearby to prevent the enemy from staging a comeback.

During the second phase, while friendly forces shifted their activities further away to ensure complete protection for the village, cadre teams and regional forces began to enter the village to take over control, replacing the operational forces. This was time for the true pacification effort to begin. By this time, local guerrillas

and the VCI in the village had either been destroyed or neutralized, but there might still be some elements hidden in underground shelters. The mission of the RF was to provide security and protection for the national cadre teams and to conduct searches to root out any remaining enemy. National cadre teams then began the process of separating the enemy from the people. This process consisted of investigation, screening, classification, and checking identification papers. This job was performed by the national police. Other cadre organized an information and propaganda service, initiated civic action programs, and conducted meetings during which they explained the purpose and merits of the pacification program. They also began to organize village defense systems and the election of village officials who would make up the village administrative council. Regional forces, meanwhile, started building watch towers and other fortifications to consolidate the defense system. The goal was to demonstrate to the villager the credible presence of security forces who would stay in the village as long as required to protect them.

The last phase was devoted to developmental works. It began as soon as the village had become secure and free from enemy interference or harassment, either by the VCI or guerrillas. National cadre teams began long-term works such as building a school, a maternity ward, an information office, a market place and repairing roads, and erecting bridges. All these efforts had the goal of bringing about security and prosperity for the villagers and letting them appreciate the contrast between what the GVN was doing and what the enemy had said they would do.

The division of a pacification operation into three separate phases was purely theoretical and phases were not identified in terms of time elapsed but rather by actions taken. All three phases could begin simultaneously if conditions permitted; also, an operation might never get beyond the initial or securing phase. The succession of phases was contingent upon the security situation and counteractions of enemy forces in the area.

Pacification Techniques

First priority in pacification was usually given to populated and economically prosperous areas, urban centers, and villages and hamlets bordering on vital lines of communication and waterways. As soon as these areas were pacified, the effort would shift to adjacent areas. The idea was to spread out as an "oil stain" from secure areas into less secure or semi-secure areas, and from there into insecure areas. Areas targeted for pacification which were termed semi-secure or insecure were usually selected so that they interconnected with secure areas by convenient communications.

Cordon-and-search was a technique designed to search for and destroy the enemy in which a large military force was used to encircle and seal off an area, usually a village or hamlet. It was usually conducted by night to obtain the element of surprise. A force conducting a cordon-and-search operation usually consisted of two elements: a cordon element to encircle and seal off, and a search element which looked for and destroyed the enemy inside the cordon. The cordon force stood ready to counteract any enemy effort to deploy his reinforcements from other areas in order to relieve the elements that had been surrounded, or to face reactions from the enemy being encircled.

After the target area had been sealed off, the search element would wait until daybreak and only then did its members enter the area and began searching. This was when, caught by surprise inside the trap, enemy guerrillas or VCI cadre, or even fugitives such as draft dodgers, deserters and criminals, attempted to slip out through the cordon. The cordon force on the outside perimeter then would arrest them or destroy any enemy element who resisted. The searching task was planned in minute detail and the target village divided into several sections; each search party was assigned a specific section. The search was a painstaking and time-consuming process

which required patience and a thorough familiarity with enemy methods of camouflage and concealment. Enemy underground shelters or weapon caches were usually well laid out and skillfully camouflaged and search parties were carefully trained in enemy concealment and camouflage techniques.

In general, regular ARVN units were employed as the cordon force. They were sometimes augmented by US or FWMA forces if the objective area lay within a US or FWMA TAOR. Search elements were usually made up of RF and PF units, the national police, and sometimes PSDF. The success of cordon-and-search operations depended on detailed organization of forces, close coordination, effective control, thorough understanding of the roles to be performed by participating forces and adequate training in search techniques.

Security patrol activities constituted a technique to search for and destroy enemy forces. There were several forms of searching and destroying, each of which utilized a different technique.

Patrols were used against guerrillas and small units. Patrols were small and lightly equipped, but capable of operating independently. Their mission was to attack and annihilate the enemy, if he was of small size, and to locate or follow large enemy units. They then called on large friendly forces, tactical air or artillery to destroy them. Troops selected for patrols were good combat soldiers - courageous, audacious - with high morale. Patrols were deployed far from their base for periods of from three to five days without support or resupply. Their activities helped the main force rest and recuperate, and stand ready to strike when required. This employed the principle of economy of force.

Another technique used in pacification, especially during the securing phase, was hunter-killer teamwork. This technique was designed to hunt down and destroy isolated enemy elements such as VCI cadre and guerrillas. The hunter-killer team consisted of two elements: the hunters and the killers. The hunter element was lightly equipped and highly mobile. Its mission was to track down enemy forces while maintaining constant touch with the killer element, which stood ready for action. When contact was made the hunter

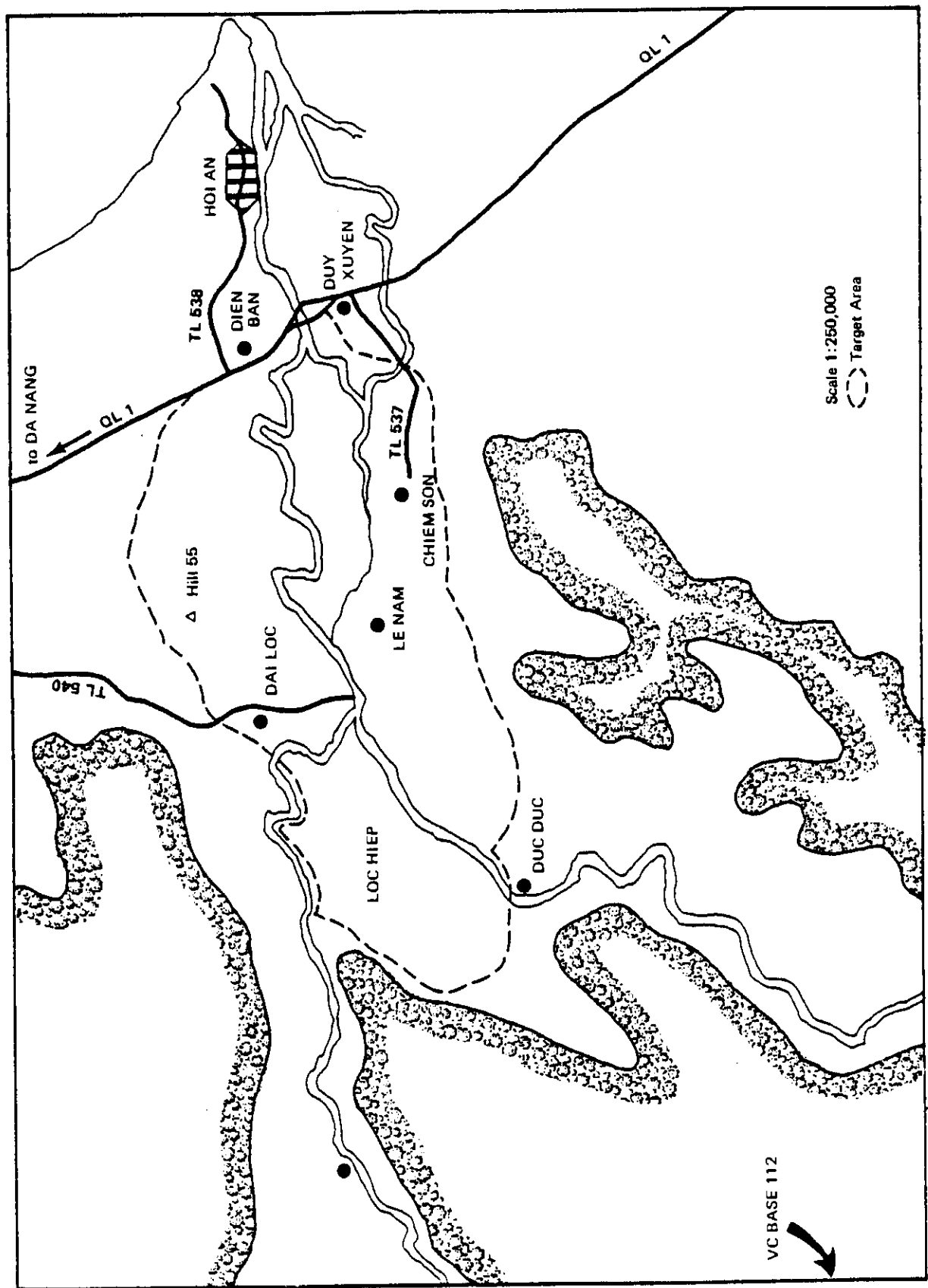
element notified the killer element which swiftly moved in with tactical air and artillery support. The killers usually moved into the target area by the swiftest means, by helicopters in most cases, to prevent the enemy from breaking contact and escaping.

Terrain transformation was a pacification technique designed to transform an insecure, enemy-controlled area into GVN-controlled villages and hamlets. It was employed in all military regions and with significant success by the ARVN 3d Infantry Division in western Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province.

The security situation in Quang Nam province was poor; the enemy frequently attacked friendly forces and shelled Da Nang airfield. Three months before the cease-fire, the 3d Infantry Division was assigned the mission of restoring security and protecting the Da Nang airfield in particular. For this mission, the division created a security zone for Da Nang city out to the range of enemy rockets and artillery - an anti-rocket and anti-shelling belt. At the same time it made plans to restore security to the area west of Hoi An (15 miles southeast of Da Nang) through an intensive pacification campaign which encompassed all the villages and hamlets in this area. (Map 2) Nevertheless, a larger part of the province, the flat plain area in particular, was still under enemy control. This terrain was covered by lush vegetation and crisscrossed by rivers and streams; it included many natural obstacles and the enemy had established many bases which were connected by a trench network and surrounded by mine fields, booby traps, and extensive defense positions. Up until that time, operations into this area had met with serious difficulties and heavy losses.

About three days before the cease-fire became effective, the 3d Infantry Division clashed violently with the NVA 711th Division and inflicted serious losses. With the 711th Division nearly paralyzed, the 3d Division redeployed its forces to hold ground and maintain control of the population in the area around Da Nang. With the ARVN 3d Division spread out, the enemy renewed his attacks and threatened to destroy the 3d Division piecemeal.

Map 2 - Quang Nam Pacification Campaign



With additional support from engineer and armor elements, however, the division was able to stabilize the situation and regain the initiative. As the first step in the pacification effort, the division used bulldozers to clear the densely vegetated areas where the enemy sought cover. Then it deployed the 57th Infantry Regiment to occupy Hill 55, the Go Noi area, and the area northwest of Duy Xuyen district town. The 2d Regiment, with armored reinforcements, meanwhile crossed the Thu Bon river and reoccupied the Loc Hiep area.

After destroying enemy bases in this area, the 3d Division maintained its disposition of forces throughout the area, not only to confront the enemy, but also to demonstrate to the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) that the area was under effective control.

Terrain transformation operations were also conducted in several villages and hamlets in the Go Noi area, and others in the districts of Dien Ban, Dai Loc, Duc Duc and Duy Xuyen. The villages and hamlets in this area had not been under GVN control for ten years, and the enemy had turned this fertile but densely covered area into a fortified and defended base system. In addition to having the advantage of the protection provided by natural obstacles and an elaborate system of fortifications, minefields, and booby traps, the enemy was thoroughly familiar with the terrain. Most of the local population had migrated toward other localities, and those remaining consisted of about 300 households, the majority of which had connections with or relatives among enemy ranks.

In order to reoccupy this heavily defended guerrilla base area, which sheltered the enemy 44th Front forces and other local force units, it was obvious that friendly forces had to be sizable and adequately supported. The 3d Division made sure that all of its units were built up to strength before launching the operation. Its basic maneuver concept was to overrun the enemy positions with an overpowering force, inflicting on him maximum losses and forcing him out of the area. Despite heavy casualties to friendly forces, caused mostly by enemy mines and booby traps, the 3d Division succeeded in overrunning the area and driving enemy forces away. Then its forces

held the area and proceeded systematically to eliminate remnants of enemy forces, not only there but in adjacent areas. Its goal was to secure the target area and prevent the enemy from coming back.

In order to achieve this, the 3d Division obviously needed more troops but since reinforcements were hard to obtain, it made use of the terrain transformation technique. The first requirement was to destroy all enemy fortifications, trench and shelter system, minefields, and booby traps. In addition to manpower, artillery firepower and bulldozers proved highly effective in this task. Within a short time, the area was effectively cleared of all obstacles and its outlook was entirely transformed. Then engineer units began to repair roads and build new ones, and finally devoted themselves to the task of rebuilding the villages and hamlets without altering their configuration and boundaries.

The next phase consisted of consolidating the defense system by the building of outposts and watch towers and by maintaining security. For this purpose, the division permanently installed one of its infantry battalions in the area. The battalion established its operational base at Le Nam and employed its companies in constant mobile operations in and out of the area. The presence of regular friendly troops inspired confidence among the local population, who realized that they could stay in the area indefinitely. This was entirely different from previous sweeping operations.

To maintain security, 3d Division troops conducted searches, patrols, and ambushes. These activities gradually eliminated the enemy infrastructure, rehabilitated roads and buildings, and paved the way for the next phase of reopening the area. At the same time, popular force platoons were introduced into the area and they were deployed to occupy the Chiem Son area and to secure a series of hillocks connecting it with the Le Nam area. Regular forces, meanwhile, held the areas of Tra Son and Duong Dong, to the south. Part of the Go Noi area was taken over by regional forces.

By this time, security had been restored over the entire area and soldiers were encouraged to grow manioc and vegetables during their idle hours. To begin resettling the population in the villages

and hamlets north of Duc Duc and west of Xuyen Truong, the ARVN regimental commander and the district chiefs worked out plans to return those village officials who had fled the area to their original villages and hamlets in the district of Duy Xuyen and north of Duc Duc where they would reestablish local government, with the assistance of the national police and popular forces; return the people, the refugees in particular, to their home villages; build watch towers and village offices; and conduct training and combined ARVN-PF activities.

These efforts brought about remarkable results. With the help of ARVN units, the local people gradually moved back. ARVN units conducted medical civic actions, while competing with one another to build market places and schools. Encouraged by these ARVN efforts, people from outlying, insecure areas soon moved into the area, and even people who had fled and had lived in the province capital for a long time returned to their villages.

As the security situation improved, the number of people returning to their villages increased. The village councils began organizing people's self-defense forces and taking a census of the population. By the time the provincial and district governments initiated development programs, all the villages and hamlets in the area had been resettled and were living in stable, peaceful conditions.

The technique of terrain transformation was first used by US forces against the enemy's "iron triangle" base area in MR-3. It involved the use of heavy bulldozers to level bunkers, trees and destroy underground shelters during a period of several months. Against another enemy base area, Ho Bo - Bo Loi, US forces also used napalm bombs to burn down whole stretches of dense jungle. The purpose of these operations was to deny enemy forces a safe haven to conduct and support spoiling activities against the GVN pacification effort in Binh Duong and Hau Nghia provinces which were adjacent to these base areas. Without these operations, no progress in pacification was possible in these provinces.

In MR-4, the liquidation of Communist mini-bases, using the same technique, was conducted on a large-scale from early 1970 to

early 1972. These were usually swampy and densely covered areas located along canals and near inhabited hamlets. Heavily mined and booby-trapped, these mini-bases had been considered impenetrable despite their close proximity to GVN-controlled hamlets.

Another special pacification technique was the county fair or village festival - a combination of cordon-and-search, civic action and intelligence collection. It required the formation of a special task force which consisted of cordon units, search elements, and a village festival organization.

While the missions assigned to the cordon units and search elements were the same as those given to similar elements in a cordon-and-search operation, the village festival organization added another dimension: winning over the hearts and minds of the population by psychological and civic actions, and at the same time gathering information on the enemy infrastructure.

The village festival organization consisted of a provincial element and an ARVN element. The provincial element included an RD cadre group, the national police, and popular forces. The RD cadre group was the principal actor in the village festival show. It usually consisted of several teams: an information team, an armed propaganda team, a cultural team, an agricultural team, and a small artist troupe. The information team organized film shows, distributed propaganda materials and held education sessions for the villagers to promote the GVN cause and policies while countering enemy propaganda. The armed propaganda team, which was usually made up of former enemy ralliers, served as guides and informants to the NP and popular forces. They pinpointed the families that had members working with the enemy, families that sympathized with the enemy and whose members had regrouped to North Vietnam, and finally, enemy weapon caches, underground shelters, and messenger routes. The agricultural team provided guidance to the farmers on improved techniques of crop planting and livestock breeding. The cultural team organized games and sports, while the artist troupe performed short propagandistic plays, songs and variety shows.

The National Police element usually included an interrogation

team, an identification team, and the Special Police. Its mission was to check identification papers and family records, take photographs and fingerprints, search suspect areas for enemy documents, organize an agent net, interrogate suspects, and supply information to friendly forces. The popular forces conducted a census among village youths to establish a list of draft-age people and to try to recruit them into their ranks.

The ARVN element usually consisted of a MEDCAP team and a psywar team. The MEDCAP team organized sick calls and a dispensary service, and also distributed candy for the children and clothing for the poor. The psywar team held political indoctrination sessions to brief the population on the purpose of pacification and on the reason why GVN troops came to the village. It also maintained morale among friendly troops and made appeals to enemy cadre, persuading them to surrender or rally to the GVN cause.

The technique of village festival was chiefly employed in those villages and hamlets where the GVN wanted to maintain permanent control and presence and the emphasis of the entire effort was on winning the sympathy of the villagers and gathering information on the enemy.

Coordination in Security Activities

Because the pacification effort involved the conduct of security activities by a variety of military forces, coordination was vital for its success. Aside from tactical coordination among operational forces of different nationalities in case of combined activities, coordination between operating forces and the local government was the most important, since military activities in support of pacification were generally conducted in populated areas. When US forces operated separately, coordination with the local government was usually made through the local adviser. One of the major concerns was to minimize casualties and damage caused to the civilian population. The use of firepower, whether by tactical air or artillery, on an area targeted for pacification was, therefore, subjected to elaborate regulations and directives that both the JGS and MACV agreed to publish in a

joint Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) for ARVN as well as US forces.

Two examples of coordination in security activities are provided to show how it was actually done.

1. Combined Activities of US Marines and GVN Popular Forces.

This was a valuable experience which was started by US Marines in the 1st CTZ (MR-1) as soon as they completed their initial deployment in this area in late 1965. One of their immediate tasks was to initiate a pilot program of pacification in populated areas near Da Nang, and after this proved a success, the program was expanded to other areas around Hue. The key element of this program was the concept of "combined action" which joined small US Marine elements with popular forces platoons. This concept was based on the premise that the PF were the GVN forces that enjoyed the closest relationship with the population. They were no strangers to the villages; in fact all of them were relatives of villagers. They knew the local people, the local enemy, and the local terrain. But at the same time, PF were loosely trained, poorly equipped, and poorly led. Thus the combined action concept was also designed to train these forces and make them combat effective.

The combined action program called for the deployment of US Marine squads in villages where each of them was integrated with a PF platoon; they lived and operated together as a single unit. A US Marine squad was further broken down into teams or cells which teamed up with PF squads to improve their combativeness, make maximum use of firepower, and familiarize PF troops with Marine combat techniques. The presence of US Marines among PF platoons inspired confidence and boosted morale and combat effectiveness.

A combined action platoon (CAP) was an integrated unit consisting of one 14-man US Marine squad and a PF platoon whose authorized strength was 38 men. Their mission was to help maintain law and order in the villages where they were stationed; to conduct patrol and ambush activities; and to gather intelligence and perform civic actions.

The US Marine squad leader could call for tactical air and artillery support and medical evacuation by helicopter. This capability was the main source of PF morale, although the support was

seldom needed. To control and supervise the activities of the CAPs, a combined Marine-PF headquarters was established at the district command post with the US Marine company commander and the district chief in command.

CAPs did not always operate separately and individually. When major operations were conducted by US Marine units in the areas where the CAPs were assigned, CAPs served as guides and provided intelligence. Conversely, US Marine units were always prepared to relieve or support the CAPs whenever required. Although their mission involved civic action, CAPs had very limited capabilities in this regard. Their civic action efforts were primarily designed to stimulate the local governments and encourage them to provide more help and assistance to the villages.

The combined action program brought about many realistic benefits. The local population, living under permanent protection of these combined units, developed trust and confidence in the GVN. The presence of the CAPs also denied the enemy infrastructure freedom of action. In addition, they also trained the PSDF and were instrumental in more rigorous activities on the part of village officials.

2. Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax.

During 1966 and in early 1967, US forces in the III Corps Tactical Zone conducted major actions against enemy main force units and bases such as in Operations Cedar Falls and Junction City. The security situation in areas surrounding Saigon, and in Gia Dinh province in particular, had deteriorated but not because of the presence of enemy main force units - in fact there was no more than one enemy local force battalion in the area - but because the enemy infrastructure increased its activities. The VCI in Gia Dinh province was particularly elaborate and almost had a free hand.

To eliminate the enemy's forces and his infrastructure in the area around Saigon, a US infantry brigade was assigned the task of helping in the pacification effort. On the GVN side, forces committed in the pacification operation included one Ranger group and the provincial territorial units.

The principle of combined activities in Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax

was the integration of US and ARVN units. During the initial phase of the operation, battalions of the ARVN 5th Ranger Group and those of the US 199th Light Infantry Brigade operated in parallel with each other and were responsible for one or more districts of Gia Dinh province, depending on the situation. As the operation progressed, and with experience gained, both US and ARVN battalions operated in the boundary area between districts and even beyond the provincial boundary. This concept of operation differed radically from the US Marines' combined action program in that it involved the pairing-off of regular battalions and not lower echelon units such as RF companies or PF platoons. But the basic principle of combined activities was practically the same. The ARVN units were more familiar with the local terrain and environment and could establish good rapport with the local government and people. US forces, on the contrary, enjoyed superior resources, had more firepower, especially that provided by organic artillery - a battery per infantry battalion - and modern communications. In addition, US forces were supported by tactical air, helilift, and rapid medical evacuation, and these assets could benefit ARVN units as well.

During the initial phase, ARVN ranger battalions operated without artillery support, moved on foot, and were limited to daylight activities. Lacking helilift support, they were unable to penetrate outlying enemy base areas. Because of combined operations with US forces and the sharing of US support assets, these constraints were no longer problems for ARVN units.

Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax was designed to achieve two basic objectives: to improve the security situation around Saigon, and particularly in Gia Dinh province, and to completely pacify this area. To carry out the latter, US forces conducted training not only for ARVN regular units but also for all territorial units.

To ensure close cooperation and coordination, US and ARVN units established an Area Security Coordination Committee and a Combined Intelligence Center. The Area Security Coordination Committee included US and ARVN battalion commanders and the district chiefs. These three commanders met periodically to discuss plans or decide on the efforts

to be made. The committee was without a chairman or executive authority. All the decisions were based on mutual agreement or understanding, and the purpose of each meeting was only to affirm the agreements arrived at among the leaders before each of them issued orders to his own subordinate units. The Combined Intelligence Center was designed to collect and disseminate in a timely manner all intelligence pertaining to the enemy so that quick response actions could be taken.

The ARVN ranger battalion, consisting of four companies, was similar in organization to the US infantry battalion. This organizational similarity permitted the integration of one ARVN company with one US company. At lower echelons, platoons and squads were also integrated so that every activity conducted was effectively an integrated US-ARVN activity, whether it was a battalion-level operation or a squad ambush. Sometimes all eight companies participated in operations at one time; at other times only individual platoon-level activities were conducted, depending on the situation and the distance from friendly bases. Movements of penetration into enemy bases were either by helicopters, by boats, or on foot. In general, daylight combined activities were no smaller than platoon-size but at night they were mostly of squad size. Through this method of operation, an infantry battalion was able to lay up to forty ambushes within the limits of a district in any one night. On a few special occasions, ARVN and US battalions also conducted separate company-size activities in combination with RF or PF units.

In order to improve security in villages, ARVN units once a week conducted district-wide cordon and search operations at night in cooperation with the national police. These operations contributed to improving overall security.

After a period of large-scale activities which inflicted heavy losses to the enemy main force in the Capital Military District, ARVN and US forces switched to small-unit tactics, focusing on the destruction of enemy guerrillas. Friendly units were broken down into small elements which deployed against the enemy supply and infiltration routes. Another friendly tactic which proved particularly effective in Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax was the concentration of efforts on a particular objective area. This type of operation was based on

reliable intelligence reports and involved repeated bombardments by tactical air and artillery against adjacent base areas that the enemy used as staging areas or safe havens. These continuous attacks by fire flushed the enemy out into the objective area where he would be destroyed.

Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax succeeded in radically changing the security situation in the Capital Military District within a short time. Not designed to be as permanent and as continuous as the Combined Action Program in the I CTZ, the operation ended in November 1967.

In 1964, well before the success of Operation Rang Dong/Fairfax, the government began the Hop Tac pacification campaign in the Capital Military District with the purpose of clearing and securing this area. The Hop Tac campaign was conducted by III Corps forces and was operationally controlled by a command post at the CMD headquarters. The staff in charge of the campaign was a joint, military-civilian organization which combined III Corps military officers with GVN ministerial and US embassy representatives.

The Hop Tac campaign failed to achieve its objectives because of several difficulties. First, there were not enough police to maintain law and order in all hamlets. Second, there was a shortage of territorial forces to provide protection and maintain security in those areas cleared by regular forces. Third, civilian development projects such as the construction of schools, market places, and maternity wards, were unable to make any progress due to political instability in the national capital; this was a period of turmoil during which several governments succeeded each other within a short time. Finally, there was a total lack of guidance and direction from the central government. Without a central pacification control body and specialized cadre, the campaign was doomed to failure and was suspended in September 1965.

Training

An inherent weakness of ARVN forces lay in the fact that, being trained to fight the enemy with conventional tactics, they did not thoroughly understand the role of pacification support. Hence training

for this role was required.

In view of the security situation which required the permanent presence of military forces and because of the inability of schools and training centers to handle at any one time a large training load, special emphasis was placed by MACV on the use of combined US-ARVN mobile training teams (MTT), which were activated in 1967.

In the beginning, MACV initiated the training of fourteen MTTs, each team consisting of twelve officers, one team for each of the four corps and ten infantry divisions. Each province would later be assigned from two to three MTTs depending on its size and the number of its territorial units. Each of the MTTs earmarked for the ARVN regular forces was assigned a US adviser and provincial MTTs also had US members. Training programs conducted by MTTs lasted about two weeks for regular forces and three weeks for regional forces. This was followed by the training and formation of forty-four MTTs for popular forces, each team composed of five members (two officers and three NCOs). These teams were to provide training for all popular forces located in 243 districts throughout the country.

US Field Forces at the same time also came up with other mobile training variants but all were designed to achieve the same goal, that of improving territorial forces for their pacification support task. Each team was composed of five US members and two Vietnamese. These MTTs were placed under the control of province senior advisers who deployed them to districts to help RF and PF units organize outpost defense systems and train them in small unit tactics, with particular emphasis on night ambushes and the use of combat support such as artillery and tactical air.

There were also Combined Mobile Improvement Teams (CMIT) and Combined Mobile Training Teams (CMTT) that the US I Field Force activated in II Corps area. The composition of these teams and the concept of their employment included some variations but their mission and purpose remained the same, i.e., improving the combat effectiveness of territorial forces. However, this regional training effort was not sustained for long and in the end all CMITs and CMTTs were reorganized into standardized Mobile Advisory Teams that MACV had initiated throughout the country.

The Hamlet Evaluation System

In January 1967, MACV/CORDS first used the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), a computer based measurement to discern the status of rural security, the progress of the pacification program, and identify problem areas. The district senior adviser filled in a questionnaire on each hamlet. The hamlet data was forwarded through the chain of command to MACV/CORDS where it was collated and analyzed. The questionnaire covered two major areas: hamlet security and progress in civil operations.

To ascertain the extent of security, the questionnaire covered all enemy disruptive activities in a hamlet or in adjacent areas such as harassment fire or shelling, terrorist actions, sabotages, propaganda, proselytizing actions, kidnappings, and assassinations. Other data concerning friendly activities to provide security and protection for the local population were also recorded in the form of answers to such questions as (1) How effective were those activities? (2) Who actually held the initiative: friendly or enemy forces? (3) Were friendly forces capable of providing security? (4) What results did friendly activities achieve? (5) What casualties and damage were caused to the local population in terms of human lives and property, both by friendly and by enemy forces?

In addition to security, the HES also measured the progress of efforts in civil operations. Data for this part included answers to questions about the maintenance of law and order in the hamlet, the behavior and attitude of local government officials, the degree of popular sympathy toward GVN cadre, the elections of village and hamlet councils, the influence of the GVN and that of the enemy on the local population, the extent of development in public health and education, the availability of schools, dispensaries, maternity wards, and the influence of local political parties.

All the questions concerning security and civil operations were printed on a card. The district senior adviser filled out the appropriate answers on the card and submitted it through channels. The data provided in the cards were elaborate and scientifically devised. They were tremendously helpful to higher authorities or field commanders, who were able at a glance to visualize what happened in a certain area and to assess correctly the situation. There were, however, certain shortcomings inherent in the HES, the most readily discernible of which was the relative time-lag of the reporting system.

Reports submitted by district senior advisers, for example, took weeks to reach the central echelon, and before MACV/CORDS compiled and sent them to agencies and major units for exploitation at least one month had elapsed. There were other data contained in the HES monthly report, concerning actions to be taken by various agencies for example, which were no longer effective since by the time the HES report was published these actions had already been taken. A HES report recorded, for example, that the PF unit in a certain village was short of M-79s or M-60s due to combat losses; but in reality these losses had been replaced during the month it took the district senior adviser's report to reach MACV/CORDS and get published. A major cause for the slow reporting system was the delay in the RVNAF postal service or the lack of mail routing facilities, which became especially serious after the redeployment of US forces.

The data recorded by district senior advisers were obtained partly from village and hamlet officials' reports, partly from information provided by friendly forces or through the advisory channel, and partly from actual visits to villages and hamlets by the senior adviser and the district chief. A question arose, however, as to the validity and reliability of the reports thus obtained; doubts about accuracy and timeliness. The most reliable way to have accurate data was to make visits to the villages and hamlets and see for oneself. But the truth was that even if all the time available were devoted to visits, and even if road communication and transportation facilities and helicopters were available at all times, no one could possibly cover all the villages

The government provided assistance only when required. Self-help projects were initiated and managed by the people, from start to finish. The ultimate goal was not only to bring about a more prosperous life for the people but also to sustain the war effort for as long as it was required, without relying too heavily on foreign aid.

The Self-Help Hamlet Development Program

The purpose of the Self-Help Hamlet Development Program was to promote moderate and short-range projects which were of practical value to the population of the hamlets. It did not require advanced techniques and was not a duplication of the projects in the permanent programs supported by various ministries.

Examples of self-help projects were:

1. Irrigation equipment for the production of two crops in a year.
2. Repair of village and communal roads, and construction of small bridges and of sewage systems.
3. Construction of dams, and digging of drainage ditches to prevent floods.
4. Digging of ponds for hamlet fish breeding.
5. Construction of pens for pigs, cattle and poultry.
6. Construction of brick-making factories.
7. Digging of wells.
8. Construction or repair of market places.
9. Cultivation of plants for the production of seedling plants.
10. Repair of hospital and maternity dispensaries that involved no new construction.
11. Repair of schools.
12. Construction of latrines, wells, water tanks, and a flag pole for the hamlet school.
13. Repair or erection of religious structures.

The programs would lead to success when they reflected the true aspirations of the population, and would fail if the provincial and district authorities compelled the people to work only according to officials' desires. All projects were to be deliberated and decided

by the population under the guidance of the hamlet managing committees, and with the assistance of the provincial technical cadres who would provide advice during discussions.

The efforts of the hamlet population were considered as the main factor while the support coming from the outside, such as funds and materials, was only of secondary importance and used primarily to get the projects off to a good start. Invitations to bid on the projects under the self-help hamlet development program were absolutely prohibited.

All projects would be established by a committee composed of the representatives of the Hamlet Managing Committee, the RF cadre team operating in the hamlet, the Parents and Teachers' Association, and the popular associations in the hamlet. A decision was then made by the province chief to provide funds and materials for the projects. Each project received the same funding of VN \$50,000 without distinction as to locality.¹ To assist the project, materials such as cement, iron, and roofing sheets were provided by CORDS.

The provinces were authorized to carry out projects for more or less than VN \$50,000, depending on circumstances but the allotted funds should be less than the total expenditures and the provinces were not allowed to spend more than VN \$150,000 for three projects. In very special cases, if the project required more than VN \$150,000, it was subject to prior approval by GVN authorities.

Rural Health

Health service was poor in rural areas. The traditional method used by peasants to heal wounds and cure diseases was through the

¹In October 1969, the exchange rate was set at \$1 US: VN \$285. As inflation worsened, the VN piaster continued to be devalued every year. In 1972, the exchange rate was adjusted at \$1 US: VN \$240, the \$1 US: VN \$475 in 1973 and \$1 US: VN \$560 in 1974. By 1975, it was set at \$1 US: VN \$700.

administration of medicinal herbs, or Oriental medicine while city inhabitants relied on modern medicine and there was a critical shortage of doctors in the rural areas.

There was usually a hospital in each province but its medical facilities were deficient and medicine was frequently in short supply. Provincial hospitals had small capacities and could not accommodate an entire province population, particularly during the periods of heavy fighting. Each district was equipped with only a dispensary, but it did not have a resident doctor or registered nurses. It dispensed first aid in emergency cases but patients were evacuated to the provincial hospital because the district dispensary did not have hospitalization facilities. Each village had a rural medicine chest but its limited supplies were inadequate for the needs of the village population.

With the active participation of US forces the public health effort improved in keeping with the pacification program. The GVN public health program received substantial support and assistance from the US as well as from international humanitarian organizations. Such projects as constructing additional provincial hospitals; equipping, modernizing, and expanding existing hospitals; providing doctors, nurses, and technicians to work with Vietnamese medical personnel; and constructing and increasing the equipment of district dispensaries so as to have limited medical treatment were all undertaken with American and allied support.

A major goal of the GVN public health program was to improve rural health service. In each hamlet, for example, a maternity dispensary and drug station operated by a rural midwife and a laborer were to be established. The model design included a room for prenatal care or for delivery of babies; a confinement room; a drug dispensary; a bedroom; a kitchen; two latrines; and a water well or tank. The hamlet maternity dispensary and drug station was constructed with good, strong, durable materials. A funding of VN \$250,000 was allotted by the Central Rural Development Council to cover construction. Support provided by CORDS included, for each construction project: 175 bags

of cement, 153 roofing sheets, and 100 kilos of iron. The cost of training midwives was covered by a special allocation granted to the Ministry of Health by the CRDC. With this allocation, the province was able to purchase training equipment, instructional materials, and office supplies for the organization of re-training classes for rural midwives for a period of three months. Rural midwives and laborers were recruited by the provincial health service, which was also responsible for conducting training classes for rural midwives.

To make full use of the support provided by the US and other Free World nations, the RVNAF, in coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Health, initiated a program called "Civil-Military Medical Cooperation," designed to establish jointly operated medical facilities for the benefit of both the civilian population and servicemen. A coordination committee which included representatives of the RVNAF Medical Service and the Ministry of Health was set up to manage the program.

During 1968, the Civil-Military Cooperation program operated in 10 out of 26 provincial hospitals and in 86 out of 193 district dispensaries. The Ministry of Health was responsible for additional construction and for providing medical equipment and medicine supplies while the RVNAF Medical Service provided medical personnel. These jointly run medical facilities accommodated wounded servicemen, as well as civilians, free of charge.

In other hospitals and dispensaries not covered and operated by the program, the treatment of servicemen was subject to reimbursement by RVNAF Medical Service for the cost of food during the hospitalization period.

In addition, other humanitarian organizations such as the West German and the New Zealand Medical Groups, the Philippine Civil Action Group (PHILCAG), and, particularly, US charity and relief organizations, all operated with philanthropic devotion in rural areas. In these rural areas doctors and nurses treated thousands of peasants and distributed free medicine to others.

US forces also contributed significantly to the GVN rural health effort through their Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP). While conducting military operations, US forces placed special emphasis on organizing sick calls and dispensary service for the local civilian population. US medical evacuation helicopters, while primarily serving US servicemen, were frequently used to evacuate civilians in emergency cases, especially casualties caused by the fighting. It was estimated that about 70% of civilian casualties were evacuated by US MEDEVAC helicopters and many lives were saved.

Finally, US contributions to the GVN health program also included the invaluable service rendered by the hospital ship HOPE which twice called at South Vietnamese ports, each time staying for a period of several months. This floating medical facility succeeded in saving the lives of many Vietnamese whose illnesses or diseases could not be cured by local doctors or with local medical facilities and technology.

The Rural Education Development Program

The rural education development program was designed to provide educational facilities and opportunities for children. It was an interim step toward compulsory education at the primary level and for the construction of hamlet classrooms. For pacified and consolidated hamlets, the maximum number of classrooms allotted to each hamlet was three which corresponded to the three lower grades — 5, 4 and 3 — of an elementary school.²

²Prior to 1973, Vietnamese elementary schools had 5 grades: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, which corresponded to US grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively. After 1973, the RVN education systems was patterned after the US model: elementary, 6 grades (from 1 to 6), and secondary, 6 grades (from 7 to 12).

Hamlet classrooms were usually built as semi-permanent structures with brick or cinder block walls and a tin roof. The GVN policy was to implement the rural education program through community development or under state supervision just as for the rural health program. Similarly, the construction of classrooms by private contractors was also unauthorized.

In order to achieve lasting results in the establishment and protection of schools, the following guidance was provided by the GVN:

1. An imprest fund was established by the province and cash was distributed to districts for construction under government supervision.
2. The hamlet population, especially parents and teachers, were urged to volunteer their efforts in the construction of classrooms. All forms of commandeered labor were forbidden. More than any other program, the rural education program was widely acclaimed by the people. There was absolutely no coercion of any kind for their participation.
3. A committee in charge of project management was to be created that included representatives of the local government and population in order to supervise the construction and provide protection for the school.

Funds and materials for the construction of rural classrooms were allocated by the CRDC. For each classroom, VN \$60,000 were allotted for construction and VN \$25,000 for furniture (desks, tables, benches, blackboards and bookcases). Construction materials were provided by the regional CORDS. These included, for each classroom, 75 bags of cement, 80 roofing sheets, and 600 kilos of iron rods.

The province chief was authorized to use funds earmarked for self-help projects or other special funds at his discretion, to build school facilities as might be required. In the case of schools built before 1966, the provincial and municipal RD councils were authorized

to use self-help project funds to build such school facilities as latrines, water tanks or wells, and flag poles. Each site having from one to three classrooms was allotted VN \$25,000 by the GVN and construction materials by the regional CORDS. The materials included 60 roofing sheets, 45 bags of cement, and 500 kilos of iron for the construction of two latrines, one water tank and three water jars.

Teachers recruited underwent a three-month training course and upon graduation and assignment, received a monthly salary of VN \$3,500. The need for hamlet teachers was decided by the provincial and municipal RD councils, upon recommendation by the regional education service, and based on procedures and criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

Finally, to assist peasant families in supporting their children in school, a special allowance of VN \$300 was granted each family to cover school supplies.

The Relief and Resettlement of Refugees

Prior to 1965, there was no GVN agency created for the care, relief, and resettlement of refugees and war victims. As of 1965, however, with the increasing number of refugees and war victims, the GVN began to care for them. The responsibility was shared by differing agencies. The Ministry of Social Welfare, for example, assumed responsibility for dispensing emergency assistance while the Ministry of Rural Development made resettlement payments to people who, because of continued insecurity, acquired a semi-permanent refugee status.

In March 1966, a Special Commissariat for Refugees was established to take over full responsibility for refugee assistance and resettlement. The Commissioner General for refugees was empowered

to co-opt both personnel and financial resources from the two ministries which had previously shared this responsibility. A considerable institutional structure was thus built in a very short time. At the GVN level, for example, the Special Commissariat for refugees had over 200 staff members and at the regional level it was represented by over 800 field personnel who constituted the staff of 46 provincial and municipal refugee relief services.

The next stage in the evolution of organizational arrangements to deal with refugee problems came less than two years later when, in November 1967, the Special Commissariat for Refugees was integrated with the Ministry of Social Welfare to become the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees. At the same time, provincial and municipal refugee relief services were merged with local social welfare services.

The final change was the integration of the refugee relief and resettlement effort into the pacification and development program. As of January 1969, all provincial and municipal pacification and development councils were required to include plans for refugee relief and resettlement in their annual pacification plans, and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees became the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Relief. This Ministry was responsible for keeping a census of resettled and returned refugees, for disbursing funds and materials, and for providing personnel and equipment to operate hamlet or village dispensaries and maternities.

The GVN policy of relief for refugees was a realistic one in that it sought first to provide emergency help and then to resettle the refugees in secure areas where they would find opportunities to make a living by themselves. Depending on the circumstances, the GVN might in a few instances allow refugees to return to their home villages. This home-returning effort was particularly strong during 1969.

The relief and resettlement program included three distinct programs in one, each concerned with one specific phase of the refugees' reception and care by the responsible authorities.

Initially, the program provided for emergency or temporary care for a period of thirty days, or in certain cases, up to a maximum of sixty days. At the end of this time the refugees should, either with or without government assistance, have been able to return to their homes or, if security conditions did not permit, have been resettled in a secure area where some means of livelihood was obtainable. The alternative to the second phase or resettlement in a new location, if this was not possible, was the conversion of the temporary center in which a refugee had been provided shelter into a permanent resettlement site, the refugee being eligible for resettlement assistance both in cash and in kind, and the site receiving priority in government development programs. The third phase of resettlement was the "Return to the Village" program.

Due to the difficulties in screening and classifying people fleeing from the war and from the Communists, it was required that a refugee meet certain conditions to be entitled to assistance. By GVN definition, a refugee was a person who had been displaced from his home village for reasons of insecurity and unwillingness to submit to Communist control, or a person whose family had been compelled to evacuate his home village by local authorities or by friendly operational forces.

Refugees were also classified into two categories: those who lived in camps and those who lived outside. Refugees who lived in a temporary refugee center received assistance, protection, and control from the GVN. Those who lived out of camps were people who were not under the control of GVN refugee authorities but made up separate colonies or lived with their relatives.

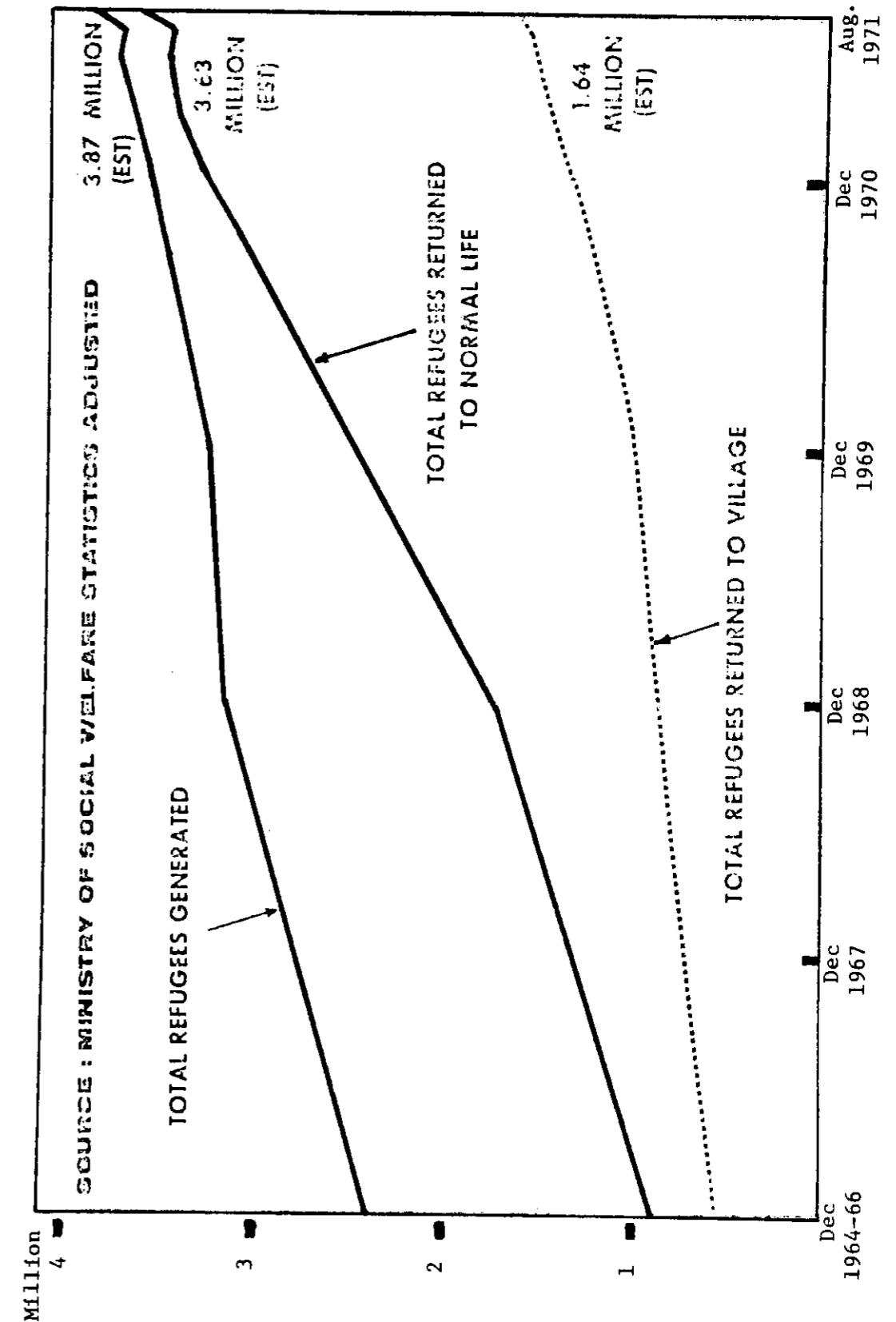
after 1 January 1969, either by moving voluntarily or by being evacuated by military authorities from insecure villages. If their villages were not scheduled for pacification, they were given temporary aid for seven days only, and then the resettlement allowance at the established rate during the period they stayed in the reception camp. If, on the other hand, their villages were scheduled for pacification, they were entitled to seven days emergency aid which, depending on the pacification progress, might be extended to 30 days, but in no case were they entitled to resettlement benefits. They had to apply to return to their villages as soon as security conditions permitted, and when they did, they received a full back-to-village allowance, whether or not their homes were destroyed by military operations.

The cost of the the refugee relief and resettlement program was enormous. Food allowances for refugees living in-camp amounted to VN \$526 million in 1967, VN \$835 million in 1968, then was reduced to VN \$709 million in 1970 and only VN \$236 million in 1971. Resettlement costs amounted to VN \$760 million in 1967, VN \$1.2 billion in 1968, and up to VN \$2.2 billion and VN \$2.4 billion for 1969 and 1970, respectively. These expenditures provided relief and assistance for 3.5 million refugees during the war years. (Chart 18)

Refugee resettlement centers or camps were each provided with an elementary school. The cost of operating these schools, including teachers' salaries, was supported by the school programs which were transferred to the Ministry of Education. In addition, each resettlement center was also provided with a maternity ward and a dispensary if the refugee population amounted to 10,000. Other self-help projects such as sewage, drainage ditches, road repairs, etc., were undertaken under the community development program and allotted VN \$50,000 each. On an average, each resettlement center received about VN \$1.5 million for self-help projects.

The refugee relief and resettlement program was a gigantic effort that succeeded only because of the great financial assistance provided by the US government and other Free World countries. It was a truly humanitarian program that helped to heal the wounds caused by the war.

Chart 18 — Refugee Relief and Resettlement



US agencies and some other international organizations played key roles in contributing to the success of the program. They provided refugees with medicine, food, and relief necessities. They helped in vocational training, in developing education, and in caring for orphans and the sick and the wounded. Altogether, 12 US and international organizations were involved in the refugee relief and resettlement program. Some were responsible for distributing relief items donated by US government or charity organizations. Others, such as the American Red Cross and the International Red Cross provided personnel and staff to assist in the operation of refugee camps or resettlement centers. In addition, these organizations also helped train refugees in farming techniques, handicraft, construction work, and in cattle and poultry breeding, and assisted them in the settlement or resettlement process. The Community Development Foundation, in particular, conducted training courses in refugee camp operation for personnel of the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Relief. Other vocational training courses were also organized by charity and non-profit organizations to train refugees in new occupations.

Agricultural Development

Vietnam is basically an agricultural country. Its production output was still low because of its conservative techniques. Agricultural reform therefore became a concern and the GVN initiated many programs to pursue it within the pacification framework. Such programs as animal husbandry, agricultural affairs, Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry, and fisheries were designed to contribute to the rural development effort and to improve the national agriculture. In each province, these programs were established and implemented by the provincial rural development council, with the cooperation of technical services.

The Animal Husbandry Program

The purposes of this program were to teach farmers modern animal husbandry methods, to protect livestock with preventive immunization

and medical treatment, and to distribute livestock to poor farmers. In hamlets other than those earmarked for pacification, the scope of program activities was limited and aimed only at continuing and consolidating the achievements obtained during the previous years. They included the recovery of the livestock distributed for profit-sharing in the previous years and its redistribution to farmers living in the same hamlet, and continuation of preventive immunization and medical treatment. The GVN also provided additional funds for each province to purchase more livestock for distribution.

In the New Life Hamlets, the program was more extensive. It included training farmers and distributing pigs, chickens, and ducks, and other kinds of livestock. Farmer training taught new animal husbandry methods, how to build pens and farms, how to choose livestock breeds, the advantages provided by mixed feed to livestock and how to cure livestock diseases. The purpose of pig distribution was to popularize the improved breeds of pigs and at the same time to support to some extent the poor farmers who could not afford animal husbandry. Each needy family willing to raise livestock was allotted two breeding pigs, and on an average, each hamlet was allotted 40 pigs.

The distribution of pigs to hamlet households was implemented on the basis of certain criteria. First, piglets raised for meat should be crossbred from Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than eight kilos. Sows should be almost of pure Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than nine kilos. Boars should be of pure Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than two kilos. Then medicine for the elimination of parasites and preventive shots should be given to the pigs kept for distribution. The procedure used for distribution determined that sows were allotted on the basis of the sharing of litters, but boars were allotted free. The animal husbandry office would take one two-month piglet from the first litter.

Chickens and ducks were only distributed to the hamlets that had not received an allocation of pigs. However, chickens and pigs could be distributed simultaneously to those hamlets having a large population and animal husbandry abilities. Each family was allotted 10

breeding chickens or from 40 to 50 ducks, all free of charge. For the province that had requested a distribution of chickens but had not received it in due time, ducks could be provided in lieu of chickens.

As to other kinds of livestock, depending on the local situation, the province could provide a distribution of oxen, goats and rabbits for farmers. This was on the basis of profit-sharing in the case of cows and goats.

The Agriculture Affairs Program

The agricultural affairs program was designed to provide guidance to farmers concerning advanced agricultural methods, distribute seeds and seedlings to poor farmers, protect crops against insects and diseases, and train Montagnards in agriculture.

For the hamlets that were not targeted for pacification, the scope of program activities was limited to continuing operations initiated in previous years, especially the protection of crops and limited distribution of seeds and seedlings to very needy farmers.

In New Life Hamlets, the program was focused on training farmers in advanced farming methods, particularly in the methods adopted for new and improved breeds, on distributing seeds and seedlings of new or improved types, and on helping poor farmers with farming facilities. The seeds varied according to the region: rice, corn, beans, etc. Each needy family having farming abilities received an allocation of from 20 to 40 kilos of seed for the planting of about one hectare of land.

To protect crops, sprayers and pumps were distributed to each hamlet as common property of the community, but were placed under the control of agricultural cadres. Pumps were only provided where such a need could be justified and for minor farming activities. The distribution of powerful water pumps to carry water to rice fields lay within the scope of the irrigation program. Insecticides were provided free.

Montagnard Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

In provinces where many Montagnards were settled, a Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry center was established with the purpose of training Montagnards in farming, animal husbandry, and fish culture

methods. Guidance was also provided to Montagnards concerning certain trades, such as blacksmith, carpentry, sewing, etc.

An average Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry center was operated by a manager, an assistant manager, two instructors, five laborers and one clerk. Montagnard RD cadres were also assigned to each center; their role was to encourage agricultural activities in Montagnard villages. Each Montagnard undergoing training at the center received a daily food allowance of VN \$50.

The Fisheries Program

The fisheries program was designed to provide guidance to farmers concerning fresh water fisheries and to fishermen concerning salt water fisheries, provide support to poor fishermen such as breeding fish and fishing gear for the development of fisheries, and to improve fisheries by motorizing fishing boats. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture also ran a permanent program which provided for activities concerning salt water fisheries, the survey of lakes and ponds to determine fishing suitability, the compilation of fishing statistics, the digging of fish ponds, and the construction of refrigerating rooms.

At the hamlet level, the program provided training for farmers and fishermen in fish culture methods, the use of fishing equipment, the digging of ponds for fish breeding and rearing, the preparation of fish food, etc. To encourage fish breeding and rearing, breeding fish were distributed free to the hamlet people who had the abilities for such activities. Different kinds of fish were provided depending on the availability of fresh or salt water in the areas. Fish were distributed on the basis of one fish per square meter of lake or pond.

Outboard motors, boats and fishing gear were provided for by loans and were to be reimbursed in cash. The terms of payment were one year for fishing gear, and two years for outboard motors and boats. Fishing gear worth less than VN \$200 were distributed free.

For the construction of fish market places, a fund of VN \$250,000 was allotted for each site for the construction work and the digging of

drainage ditches. Market places were constructed according to a standardized plan provided by the Bridges and Highways Program and with the support of CORDS, which supplied for each construction work 80 roofing sheets, 1,000 kilos of iron and 200 bags of cement. For fish drying yards, a fund of VN \$20,000 was allotted for each yard. This program was implemented by the province through self-help projects.

The implementation of the fisheries program as well as other programs such as agricultural affairs and animal husbandry was handled by technical offices staffed by technical personnel and cadres. Depending on requirements, each office was assigned one or two technicians who were selected from engineers, controllers or instructors. Contract salaries were paid to technical personnel on the basis of diplomas and according to a pay scale determined by the Ministry of Agriculture. Salaries included cost of living allowance and family allowance but no per diem allowance.

Cadres worked in hamlets and received a monthly contract salary of VN \$3,500. They were technically trained in various schools of agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry prior to assignment. Technical personnel and cadres had to pledge to serve the programs for at least one year and they were released when the programs were terminated.

An Evaluation

The GVN faced a tremendously difficult task in trying to reform a rural society as complex and as backward as South Vietnam's. Despite the trend toward urbanization and the depletion of male population during the most intensive war years, the countryside remained the major ground of contest where the GVN emphasis was placed on restoring the rural economic infrastructure and improving health and education. These efforts were the mainstay of pacification and development.

The Hamlet Self-Help program was a move in the right direction since the hamlet was the basic communal unit. The range of projects embraced by the program reflected its realistic goal of rebuilding the war-shattered rural infrastructure and bringing about immediate,

practical benefits for the peasantry. The GVN also hoped that a rebuilt rural area could contribute significantly toward developing the national economy. A key feature which accounted for its initial acceptance by the local population was the self-help character of the program. Experience showed that when their own interests were at stake, and when they had a voice in the management of their own affairs, the people volunteered and willingly cooperated. In the district of Cu Chi, Hau Nghia Province, for example, the local population repaired rural roads and culverts, built market places, and classrooms, all within the space of one year. In the Mekong Delta, peasants in the Plains of Reeds took up by themselves the task of dredging and clearing canals of obstacles because farming and business depended on these waterways. Civic actions conducted by US and FWMA forces during the period of their commitment, 1965-1972, gave the program great support, particularly in those areas near operational bases. In addition to providing construction materials, the allied troops frequently contributed labor and turned the finished work over to the local population as gifts. Some overzealous local governments, however, turned the program into a coercive enterprise, requiring the people to meet arbitrarily established deadlines, often at the cost of relinquishing their own business. Despite this, the overall program received wide acceptance by the peasantry.

In health and education, the period from 1969 to 1972 was a period of vigorous development in terms of efforts committed and results achieved. The rural education program virtually eradicated illiteracy among peasant children and youth, and effectively increased the elementary student population multifold. More students went up to high schools because the majority of villages were provided with a first-level middle-school (four-year program, equivalent to US 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grades). This was an unprecedented opportunity for rural students who during the previous years had to go to the only middle-school at the district town, sometimes at prohibitive distances from their villages. The remarkable progress made in rural education was possible due primarily to aid funds which helped subsidize higher salaries for rural teachers, build new schools or additional classrooms and provide free textbooks,

and not infrequently free school supplies as well, for the under-privileged students. But extensive as it was, the development in rural education was but part of an outdated educational system, based primarily on old French methodology and devoid of a new national spirit. The system belatedly underwent some improvement and modernization in 1974.

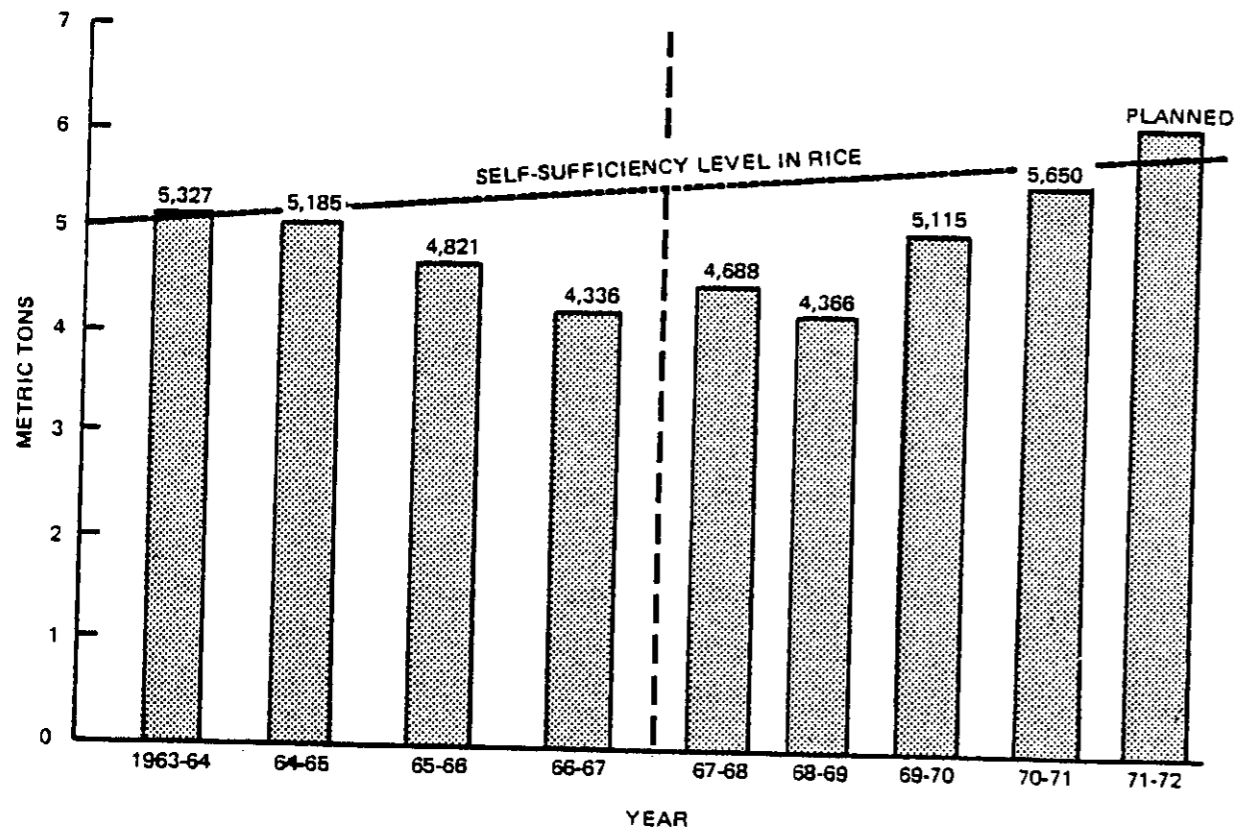
Despite the GVN efforts, the benefits the rural population enjoyed in terms of medical care seemed to derive chiefly from programs sponsored by allied countries, international organizations and, in particular, US forces in Vietnam. The US MEDCAP program was especially beneficial to the local population living in US areas of operation. Allied medical teams and international charity organizations were active in several provinces in the 2d and 3d Military Regions. In the central highlands, the US Special Forces did a splendid job helping the Montangards fight diseases and improve sanitation. The GVN rural health program was a laudable effort but it was inefficiently managed and plagued by problems such as the lack of medical personnel and medicine. Pilferages and illicit traffic in drugs further aggravated the problem by enabling the Viet Cong to purchase large quantities of critical medicine.

By far the heaviest burden the GVN had to shoulder during the war years was the problem of refugees. The highest figure recorded after the 1968 Tet offensive was about three million or 1/6 of the total population. The GVN effort was twofold: providing temporary relief and helping in resettlement. Despite the availability of aid funds which provided up to 80% for the refugee resettlement costs and the humanitarian help of US charity organizations, the task was monumental and the effort an uphill struggle. From 1969 to 1971, the problem was alleviated thanks to improved security which allowed most refugees to return to their villages. There remained, however, about 300,000 refugees living in camps for whom care and resettlement were constantly needed. Most relief items donated by US charity organizations such as powdered milk and western clothes usually found their way to local markets since they were alien to the Vietnamese rural way of life. Part of them also never reached the refugees but were resold to pad the greedy camp officials' pocketbooks.

The GVN effort to resettle refugees was not very successful since most resettlement areas were located in insecure areas and became targets of VC harassments. There was also not enough cultivable land and water for irrigation. The result was, after a certain time living under relief, refugees drifted away again and not infrequently ended up in a refugee camp. Several refugees did this five or six times, all at the expense of the GVN. But the resettlement effort greatly improved with Dr. Phan Quang Dan's program of Land Reclamation and Hamlet Resettlement which began in early 1974. This was a large-scale effort, well-planned and well-supported, which was welcomed not only by refugees but also by veterans who voluntarily joined the program. The program had a good chance of resolving the refugee problem when it was thrown in utter disarray by events in early 1975.

In keeping with the pacification progress, agricultural development projects also brought about rosy achievements during 1969-1971. This was possible due to the availability of seeds, insecticides, fertilizers and farm machines purchased through the economic aid program. For a time at least, the rural area took on a prosperous outlook. Cultivated acreage was expanded and rice production per hectare greatly increased. The fishing industry also improved and expanded, thanks to motor boats and refrigeration technology. Increased production in rice, however, failed to meet consumption demands with the results that in 1972, the year of greatest expectations, South Vietnam continued to rely on imports. (Chart 19) This did not make sense, however, because estimates of actual production indicated at least a level of self-sufficiency. Most province chiefs did testify in effect that there were no rice shortages, except in the MR-1 provinces. The problem, therefore, seemed to involve speculation by greedy Chinese businessmen in the Mekong Delta and purchases made by the Viet Cong who always offered to buy at high prices. A belated effort made by GVN authorities in 1974 to control the traffic in rice failed to produce any significant results. The rice problem seemed beyond the GVN capability to solve, this hurt its efforts at rebuilding the national economy and achieving real progress in pacification.

Chart 19 — Rice Production and Supplementary Crops



BANANAS:	15,500 HECTARES	} SUPPLEMENTARY CROPS
SUGAR CANE:	32,000 HECTARES	
CORN:	28,000 HECTARES	
MIRACLE RICE:	UP TO 850,000 HECTARES	

For all its efforts, the GVN was still a long way from solving the social and economic problems that plagued South Vietnam, especially in the context of a war in which the enemy always held the initiative and had the capability to wreck any achievements any time he chose. This happened in 1968 and again in 1972 when a few months of attacks undid years of hard toil. Unless South Vietnam was free from North Vietnam's military threat, pacification or any nation-building task remained a hopeless proposition.

CHAPTER VII

The GVN Political, Information and Chieu Hoi Efforts

Information and Propaganda

Information and propaganda were designed to exert a favorable influence on the population by publicizing the government policies and programs and eliciting popular trust and support for them. When employed properly, they were sharp-edged tools for the advancement of political and military goals, shattered the enemy's morale, made him feel disen-
chanted, and incited him torally.

As they were practiced in South Vietnam, all information and propa-
ganda activities were conducted and coordinated by the GVN Ministry of
Information through a system that reached down to the village level.
At the province level, there was an information service; at the district
level, an information section; and in villages, an information hall.
Prior to 1965, the GVN information and propaganda facilities were scant.
In each district town there was only a tiny information hall adorned with
outdated pictures and magazines. Information personnel were few because
the entire GVN information service was organized as a general directorate,
and not as a ministry as it was later under the Second Republic.

After the active participation of US forces in the Vietnam War,
however, the GVN information service expanded substantially due to the
considerable assistance and support provided by such US agencies as the
United States Operations Mission (USOM), United States Information Service
(USIS), and Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO). Each province infor-
mation service was provided with movie projectors, a film library, and
a mobile projection unit using Lambretta van-scooters as vehicles for
shows in villages and hamlets. The rural population was given the oppor-
tunity to watch film shows at least once a month, a kind of entertainment

unavailable to most of them before then. USOM and USIS also provided
funds and information equipment for all provinces and even district
information halls were supplied with domestic and foreign newspapers
and pictures. The GVN Information Ministry, with the support of JUSPAO,
purchased nineteen out of twenty-four daily newspapers published in
Saigon and distributed them to village information halls.

Additional radio stations were built in major cities and, to expand
radio broadcasts into rural areas, a total of 100,000 JUSPAO-supplied
transistorized radios were distributed free to peasant families living
in villages and hamlets. In addition, the GVN also imported great
quantities of inexpensive radio receivers so that the population could
afford to buy them. The voice of the GVN could thus reach the majority
of the population across the country. Even in the central highlands, a
radio transmitting station was built to broadcast programs in several
Montagnard languages. Twelve radio stations eventually operated across
the nation. In outlying areas not covered by the GVN information service,
aircraft were used, again with US support, to drop leaflets or to broad-
cast messages. These psychological operations were designed both to
inform the population and to call upon enemy cadre to surrender or rally.

South Vietnam did not have a TV broadcasting station until 1966.
At first, JUSPAO made TV broadcasts through an airborne transmitting
station. A TV studio and broadcast station were subsequently built in
Saigon and GVN information personnel were trained by JUSPAO in the
operation of the station and the production of TV programs. The TV net-
work was later expanded through additional transmitting and relay
stations at Hue, Can Tho and Nha Trang.

Aided by the US, the GVN was in command of a vast array of informa-
tion and propaganda instruments which were more numerous and sophisticated
than those that the enemy possessed. The problem was that the information
cadre did not properly exploit these instruments to produce the desired
effect. Despite his meager resources, the enemy appeared to get more
results out of his propaganda efforts. It seemed that the enemy knew
how to make better use of his propaganda means and, by properly exploit-
ing mass psychology, he was also able to arouse popular sympathy more
successfully.

For a short period following the Paris Agreement, some progress was achieved by the GVN in information and propaganda. It purposefully built up and exploited the people's hatred toward the Communists. For the first time a genuine effort was made to put the arts and literature at the service of propaganda. Songs and plays, for example, no longer displayed languid lyricism as in the old days. But the most extensively read news mediums in the country, the daily newspapers, were left unexploited for propaganda purposes. The majority of them were owned and operated by private entrepreneurs who were more concerned about commercial success than the anti-Communist cause. The GVN was unable to exert any influence on the daily newspapers, except for the ARVN-owned "Tien Tuyen" (Front Line). Despite several stringent measures that the GVN imposed on the free press such as censure, temporary suspension, fines, revocation of license and legal prosecution, they were all ineffective in rallying the press to the national cause.

The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program

The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms), or Great National Solidarity program was initiated by the GVN to subvert the morale of enemy cadre and troops and call upon them to leave their ranks and rally to the national cause. The basic theme was that both sides were brothers in the same family and, since both wanted to end the war, the best and least costly way was to renounce internecine bloodletting, forsake hatred, and cooperate with each other to rebuild the shattered nation.

During a decade of implementation, from 1963 to 1973, the Chieu Hoi program produced impressive results; 159,741 enemy troops and cadre rallied to the GVN cause.¹ Most notorious among the ralliers were some high-ranking military cadre such as Tam Ha, Huynh Cu, and Le Xuan Chuyen, who returned to the GVN side well before the cease fire period, and the

¹This total breaks down into: 97,696 military cadre and troops; 45,173 political cadre and 16,872 others. These ralliers also surrendered 10,699 individual weapons and 545 crew-served weapons to GVN authorities.

political commissar of Lam Dong province and the personal secretary to the Saigon-Cholon political commissar, both of whom rallied during the post-cease fire period. The number of ralliers reached an all-time high during 1969 when 47,087 enemy cadre and troops chose to side with the GVN, apparently as a result of Communist setbacks during the previous year.

The Chieu Hoi Ministry controlled a country-wide organization which consisted of Chieu Hoi services and centers in the provinces, Chieu Hoi sections at the district level, and Chieu Hoi offices at the village level. Enemy ralliers were grouped at provincial Chieu Hoi centers or at centers in Saigon where they underwent reeducation and readjustment to a free and decent life.

During the period of reeducation and readjustment, ralliers were well fed and well treated. They were allowed to correspond with their families and receive visits. They were never roughly treated or compelled to do hard labor as in enemy-run so-called "reeducation centers". While living in a Chieu Hoi center, ralliers were free to converse, watch TV, listen to radio broadcasts, read books, or just relax. Depending on personal desires, ralliers were given vocational training in such courses as tailoring, embroidering, handicraft, etc. The GVN policy was to help each of them acquire a skill to earn a living when he was returned to normal life. The reeducation period usually lasted from 45 to 60 days, and upon release from Chieu Hoi centers, ralliers were permitted, depending on their readjustment and repentance, to apply for public service jobs, enlist in the armed forces, or seek jobs in private industries. Those who wanted to return to their home villages and live a quiet, honest life, were given transportation allowances.

Another GVN effort to win over ralliers completely —politically and psychologically —and also to make the Chieu Hoi effort more meaningful, was to provide the ralliers with housing facilities once they were released from reeducation centers. The GVN constructed a total of 42 Chieu Hoi villages, one for each province, consisting of housing units which were allocated free of charge to ralliers. This was a most welcomed program which really helped the ralliers begin a new life without hardship.

In general, ralliers were more extensively employed by U.S. forces and U.S. Embassy agencies than the GVN. In MR-1, for example, U.S. Marine units used ralliers as informants, interrogators or scouts during operations, especially when U.S. units staged raids against Communist bases. Because of their intimate knowledge of local terrain, ralliers were very effective as scouts.

In addition, ralliers were also used in intelligence work against the VCI by U.S. Embassy agencies. Ralliers made up the bulk of Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), a para-military force organized, armed and financed by the U.S. Embassy. Later, the PRUs were placed under the control of provincial police chiefs as a striking force for the elimination of the VCI. This was done after the National Police was made responsible for the implementation of the Phoenix program in 1968.

Out of the total ralliers who volunteered for GVN service as of October 1970, it was calculated that 27.1 percent were employed in civil servant positions in the GVN or served in regular, territorial, and para-military forces and in national cadre teams such as RD, armed propaganda and PRUs. Another 20.5 percent was employed by private industries or businesses and the remaining returned to their home villages and lived as farmers after being given tilling land by the GVN, like other citizens.

All told, the Chieu Hoi program was a meaningful and humanitarian effort which provided real opportunities for wrongdoers to mend their ways and begin a new life. The large number of enemy personnel who chose freedom gave some measure of the effect of the program. The figures differed from year to year; the higher figures were recorded when the fighting was more intense. Ralliers generally helped our side know more about the true situation on the other side, and they sometimes provided invaluable intelligence. It was learned from their stories that by and large, Communist morale was low and the troops were confused. Because of protracted fighting, most of them became disenchanted with the war and longed for reunion with their families. Other ralliers told of the lack of medical treatment and medicine, spartan living conditions, unbearable hardships and human losses that sometimes edged entire enemy units toward despair and to defection attempts. Had it not been for

fears of retaliation against their relatives, several complete enemy units would have chosen to defect after their 1968 defeat.

Because of the potential of the Chieu Hoi program, the enemy made efforts to counter it. Communist political commissars, for example, told their troops that ralliers were all killed by the GVN.

For all its merits, the Chieu Hoi program had some shortcomings. For one thing, the GVN placed no control over those ralliers who had been released to return to their home villages. The local governments also failed to keep track of the former ralliers. As a result, there occurred several cases of false rallying. Upon release, they conducted subversive activities for awhile and then returned to their base areas. The allocation of free housing for ralliers also caused great animosity and jealousy among ARVN troops and veterans, many of whom were disabled. The disabled veterans' grievances soon gave rise to unlawful acts of house squatting in open defiance of the GVN. They felt that as soldiers who had risked their lives to fight the Communists, and had become casualties as a result, they were not treated as well as the ralliers who only recently had shot at them.

The GVN had pushed the program too far without due consideration for the sensitivities and welfare of war veterans. In a program such as Chieu Hoi, the pros and cons of certain benefits should have been carefully weighed in the context of a war-ravaged society and sounder priorities should have been established. Despite this, however, the Chieu Hoi program was one of the most effective and least costly ways of ending the war. After all, the cost of killing an enemy soldier was much greater than the amount spent to induce him to rally.

Relations with Ethnic Minorities

The Central Highlands of South Vietnam occupied an important strategic position in view of its continuity with Laos, Cambodia, and especially with the enemy North-South infiltration and supply corridor, which ran along the entire length of South Vietnam's western border. The area was sparsely populated, mostly inhabited by Montagnards who numbered

nearly 1 million and consisted of 29 different tribal groups, each having its own language and customs.² These tribal groups usually lived in isolation from the Vietnamese and were generally oblivious to the fact that there existed a GVN and national laws.

Under the Bao Dai government, the central highlands were decreed a "territory of the Imperial Court", a kind of government reservation where homesteaders had to secure a special permit. During the first Indochina War, from 1949 to 1954, the French paid special attention to the central highlands, where they set up a separate administrative apparatus. The Viet Minh were equally interested in the area and made a special effort to win over the Montagnards to their cause. Some Viet Minh underground cadre even went as far as filing their front teeth and stretching their ears to make them look like Montagnards. Some Viet Minh lived with the Montagnard tribes and some married Montagnard girls and were accepted as tribe members. After the French withdrew from Indochina in 1956, the central highlands were virtually forsaken by the GVN.

Beginning in 1961, the GVN took renewed interest in the highlands and sought to rally the ethnic minorities by making certain overtures such as forbidding the use of the derogatory appellation *Moi* (savage) by Vietnamese and encouraging the use of the newly-coined substitute "new Vietnamese compatriot" when referring to Montagnards. In addition, a special education program was initiated which encouraged them to learn Vietnamese and granted special credits and waivers in all kinds of examinations. Finally, special tribunals were established to provide Montagnards with a fair trial process, based not on Vietnamese laws but on each tribe's customs and manners.

At the same time, with the concurrence of the GVN, the U.S. Special Forces began to make inroads into the highlands. They initiated civic action programs such as dispensary service and the distribution of medicine with the purpose of rallying their support. The Special Forces'

² Among these tribal groups, the Rhade were relatively more numerous and more civilized. Some Rhade tribesmen had enlisted in French Union forces.

objective was to shake off the lingering influence of the French and Viet Minh among the Montagnards and turn them into guerrilla fighters, gradually organizing and arming tribal villages for self defense. The first of such self-defense villages was Enao in Ban Me Thuot province. Despite these efforts, the Montagnards were still heavily influenced by the French and especially by the Viet Minh-instilled idea of an autonomous state which would replace GVN authority and prohibit Vietnamese homesteaders among them. These feelings were fomented by Montagnards who made up the FULRO (Unified Front of Struggle for the Oppressed Races) movement and erupted into open rebellion in 1964 in Ban Me Thuot. The FULRO, masquerading as representative of all tribal groups, demanded an autonomous state in the central highlands and equal rights with the Vietnamese. Some Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), trained by U.S. Special Forces and led by ARVN officers, joined the rebellion on 20 September 1964, killed their commanders, and took hostages to press for their demands.

The rebellion was finally quelled but this was a sobering experience for the GVN. To deal with the Montagnards' grievances the GVN initiated a systematic effort designed to improve their political and social standing, beginning in 1965 under the Nguyen Cao Ky administration. The government created a Ministry of Ethnic Minorities, headed by a Montagnard, whose responsibility was to look after all problems concerning the development of tribal groups. Provinces of the central highlands, such as Ban Me Thuot, Pleiku and Kontum were placed under the control of Montagnard province chiefs; the departmental services in these provinces were also headed by Montagnards. In the ARVN and territorial forces, Montagnards were also promoted to field-grade officers and given commands or responsible positions. Elected officials in village, city councils, and in the Senate and the Lower House also included Montagnards.

Montagnards were given certain privileges such as a specially designed education program, compensatory grades in examinations, and an increase in draft age so that they could compete in fairness with Vietnamese and pursue their education without interference. A special training program for Montagnard teachers was conducted by the Ministry of Education to supply adequate teachers for tribal villages.

In public health, emphasis was placed by the GVN on teaching Montagnards body hygiene, public hygiene, house sanitation, and child care and upbringing. To further Montagnard education and to broaden Montagnard knowledge of domestic affairs, the GVN constructed local radio stations in the central highlands that broadcasted in Montagnard languages. Information cadre employed by the GVN in the area were all Montagnards. Efforts were also made to publish propaganda pamphlets and other education and information materials in Montagnards languages.

To operate the pacification program in the central highlands, the GVN created Montagnard RD cadre groups whose members were trained in a special RD training center in Pleiku, the Truong Son Training Center, which was established in early 1967 as a Montagnard counterpart to the RD Training Center for Vietnamese at Vung Tau. Developmental programs were also undertaken by the GVN for the benefit of Montagnards without any hint of racial discrimination. Montagnards were taught new methods of farming to replace their old slash-and-burn technique, and were given modern agriculture equipment. At the same time, crop lands reserved for Montagnards were greatly expanded and the conservation of forest and forest resources were emphasized. In addition, Montagnards were encouraged to grow fruit plants such as bananas, oranges, and prunes, to plant tea, coffee and corn, to build reservoirs for irrigation, and to construct fish ponds.

In general, the GVN strove to improve the Montagnards' lot through the pacification program. But the rate of progress in the highlands was somehow slower than elsewhere, perhaps because they were still suspicious of the GVN goodwill, and probably because the Montagnards were chary of a newly transplanted culture which was not at all like their way of life.

Land Reform and The "Land-To-The-Tiller" Program

To the Communists and the GVN alike, the rural area was of strategic importance and both admitted this fact. The majority of the rural population were peasants who as a class could be rallied to any worthy cause

if properly motivated. One of the best incentives for their motivation was land ownership since for generations the Vietnamese peasants who eked out a meager living from the land were mostly landless farm workers or sharecroppers. At the root of the conflict, there were also problems of social injustice, oppressive landlords, and the class struggle which could all be attributable to the inequality between the haves and the have nots.

Land reform became a conscious effort undertaken with variable degrees of success by successive governments of South Vietnam which felt they had to beat the Communists at their own game. For, to both sides, land reform was the indispensable tool to bring about social justice and a better life.

Under the Bao Dai regime, land reform was initiated through the distribution of public land to peasants, and by a reduction of land rents whereby no more than 15% of crop returns were allowed to be levied by land owners. In addition, no farmer was authorized to own more than 100 hectares of farmland. The maximum amount of farmland then authorized each owner varied according to the region and his capabilities for production. In North Vietnam, the range was from 12 to 36 hectares per head of household; in Central Vietnam, from 15 to 45 hectares; and in South Vietnam (old Cochinchina), from 30 to 100 hectares.

The First Republic of Vietnam also decreed, by an ordinance in 1957, that no landowner was allowed to keep more than 100 hectares for his own farming effort. All farmlands in excess of this maximum allowance were confiscated and reimbursed by the government. Reimbursements were made by a 10% cash advance, the rest to be paid back in 12 years at an annual interest rate of 3%. The GVN was able to purchase, both from departing Frenchmen and from Vietnamese landowners, 450,000 hectares, but only 122,000 hectares had been redistributed by the time President Diem was overthrown. Special measures were taken by the government to help farmers struck by natural disasters.

The Viet Minh also undertook a land reform program in North Vietnam after 1954, but their goal was entirely different from what South Vietnam tried to achieve. The Viet Minh began the program with a campaign of

inciting the hatred and enmity of landless peasants toward landowners. The Viet Minh coaxed the peasants to denounce crimes committed by landowners such as their enriching themselves by the peasant's blood and sweat and levying excessive land rents. It was true that in some areas, landowners in North Vietnam took away from the sharecroppers from 34 to 50% of the crop returns and charged interest rates ranging from 57 to 73% on credits extended for farming. As a result, this land reform program turned into a class struggle movement in which, after being denounced and indicted by their former sharecroppers and summarily tried by a people's court, landowners were stripped of all their possessions. The land thus confiscated was distributed to the landless peasants who had worked for the revolutionary government and to disabled veterans. The true goal of the Communists was obvious enough. Their land reform was nothing but a way of eliminating the landowner and petite bourgeoisie class and reinforcing what they called the proletariat and peasant class, and equalizing all differences between these two classes.

Under the Second Republic of Vietnam, there were also attempts at land reform during the initial years, but not until 1970 were there any significant and purposeful efforts. Land reform was undertaken on a scale extensive enough to take on a revolutionary outlook through the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 3/70 which authorized all peasants to become small landowners. Each peasant was allocated a fair amount of land for farming purposes entirely free of charge. The decree also officially terminated the practice of land rent and determined that the farmer was entitled to all the fruits of his labor and in fact owned the piece of land he actually tilled.

Due to the political significance of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" program, the date of the Presidential Decree that initiated it — 26 March 1970 — was proclaimed as a national holiday. For the rural population, this was truly the greatest and most total revolution ever attempted. For the first time in generations the peasants' aspirations had been realized and this was indeed the boldest move that any government had ever made in South Vietnam.

During 1970 a total of 210,371 hectares of land was distributed, a figure that surpassed the planned objective by 5%. By April 1973, the amount of land which had been planned for free distribution to landless farmers during the period from 1970 to 1973, had all been allocated, a total of one million hectares or 2.47 million acres.³ The rapid progress of the program was made possible by the substantial assistance provided by the U.S. in terms of experts, automatic data processing facilities, land surveying aircraft and the enormous fund of 500 million dollars which had been earmarked for the entire program.

In addition to free distribution of land, the GVN also established the Rural Development Bank (RDB) to extend credit to farmers. By the end of 1970, a total of 22 branch offices of the RDB had been established across the country; the goal was to establish 42 of them, one for each province. Total credit extended to farmers by the end of 1970 reached VN \$3.6 billion out of \$5.7 billion earmarked.

Other agricultural development projects were also undertaken such as modernization of farm equipment and machinery, the digging of new canals and the cleaning of ditches, irrigation, use of herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers, import of better hybrid seeds of miracle rice (which could yield up to three crops per year). All of these projects had the devoted support of the U.S. In addition to agricultural development, the GVN also sought to improve nutrition for the population by importing cattle and poultry, increasing meat production and family income by importing better farm animal feed.

The "Land-to-the-Tiller" program in time became one of the GVN's major successes. Its achievements by far surpassed whatever previous governments had obtained. Its success depended primarily on the large assistance provided by the U.S. in terms of technology and the funds required to reimburse former land proprietors and to purchase land and farm machinery.

³The basic allocation was three hectares per farmer.

Politically, the program was also a resounding success. It brought about prosperity and a decent life for the great mass of the peasants, eradicated injustice and created a new class of landowner-peasants. Although the peasants appreciated land reform, the program met with some adverse reactions on the part of urban people who thought that they had been forsaken. It was true that urban areas also needed help since inflation was rampant and unemployment was widespread. To solve these problems, the GVN initiated programs to develop urban areas, clear slums, and create jobs for slum-dwelling people.

The impact of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" program was profound and far-reaching. Social justice was restored, the GVN prestige grew every-day, and it appeared that it was on the way to win the war. The enemy, in the meantime, strove hard to wreck these achievements. By devious means, he incited the people to oppose and undermine the program; for example, he forbade them to pay back loans owed the GVN, sabotaged the machinery imported for the farmers, stole farm machines, or took them away from farmers for ransom.

Village and Hamlet Elections

Traditionally the village is the basic political, social and economical unit of Vietnam. It has its own territorial boundary, a population and its own resources, and usually enjoys administrative autonomy. In the old days, the village was a self-contained microcosm with its own government and laws, and the village chief was not unlike a lord who reigned over his tiny kingdom. In most instances, the village customs prevailed over the laws decreed by the imperial court and the village was governed by a council of notables which made all the important decisions for the village chief. This system was perpetuated over the generations and, with some modification in organization and name, became what it was in modern times, the village council, with the exception that its members in modern times were chosen through the popular vote.

Village elections were an effort by the GVN to develop democracy at the grass-roots level and at the same time to expand GVN control and authority throughout the nation. In contrast to traditional times, members of the village council were now elected instead of being appointed. This ensured that only people with prestige and popularity could hold office, in the place of the rich people who traditionally bought their way into office and exclusively shared among themselves the prerogatives of power.

As an administrative unit, the village incorporated several hamlets. Hamlets were geographic subdivisions of a village and placed under its administration. Throughout South Vietnam, there were 2,151 villages with a total of 10,522 hamlets.

The village government consisted of two bodies, the Village People's Council (VPC), and the Village Administrative Committee (VAC), which represented the legislative and executive branches, respectively. In 1966, a GVN decree determined that the Village People's Council was composed of from six to 12 members elected by the village through universal suffrage, direct and secret ballot.⁴ This represented a big step toward democracy at the grass-roots level as compared to village elections enacted under the First Republic, since the 1966 decree instituted a legislative body which had been missing up until then.

During the balloting, the member who won the largest number of votes became the chairman of the VPC and the member who ranked second in popular votes, the deputy chairman. After election, the Village People's Council convened its first session to elect the chairman of the Village Administrative Committee from among its members.

⁴The specific number of village council members to be elected was determined by the province chief on the basis of village population:
 Up to 2,000 inhabitants: 6 members
 From 2,000 to 5,000 inhabitants: 8 members
 From 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants: 10 members
 Above 10,000 inhabitants: 12 members
 (Reference: Decree No. 199-SL/DUHC, dated 24 December 1966)

The Village Administrative Committee was composed of one village chief, one deputy village chief, and from one to four commissioners to perform the functions of security, propaganda and civic action, social welfare and agriculture. The other two important functions, civil status and economy-finance were assumed by the village chief and his deputy, respectively. (Chart 20)

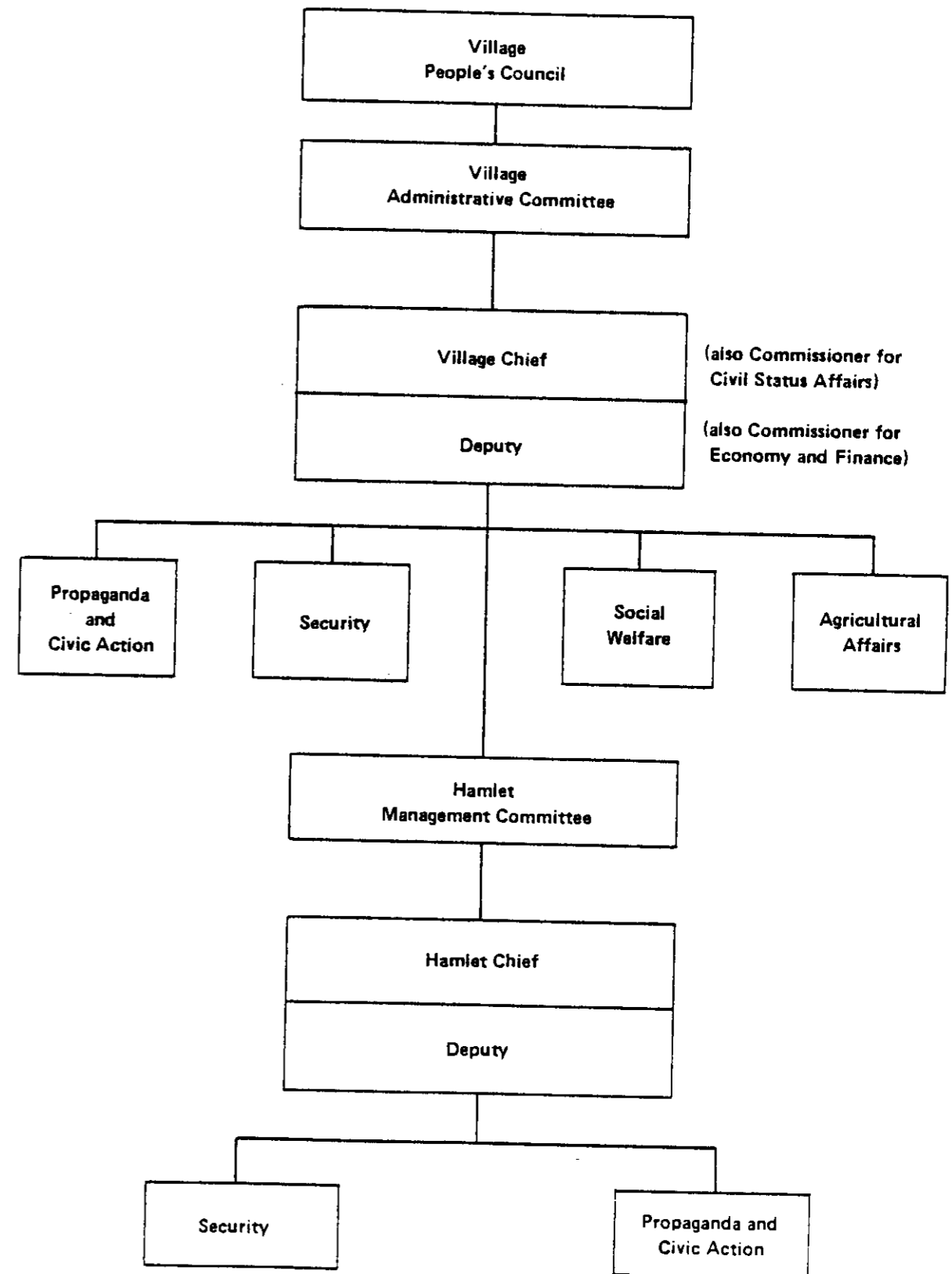
The village chief or chairman of the VAC was elected by the village council from among its members, but he was not authorized to assume concurrently the functions of chairman, deputy chairman or secretary general of the village council. If the chairman of the village council happened to be elected village chief, the deputy chairman, VPC would take over his functions. The term of office of the VAC was three years. It terminated at the same time as the village council. The deputy village chief and commissioners were appointed by the village chief with the concurrence of the village council and the ratification of the province chief or district chief.

The village chief was responsible for enforcing laws and regulations, implementing GVN policies, and maintaining order and security in the village. His commissioner for security was usually the leader of the popular forces platoon assigned to protect the village.

The hamlet was placed under the administration of a Hamlet Management Committee which was composed of one hamlet chief and two assistants, one for security, one for propaganda and civic action. In hamlets with a population exceeding 3,000, the hamlet chief was assisted by a deputy. Both the hamlet chief and his deputy were elected by hamlet people through secret ballot in the same way as the village council.

People running for public office at the village and hamlet level were usually selected from among the anti-Communists who had good records, and frequently included veterans or retired civil servants. Any village resident could apply to run for office. His application was submitted to the district, and if his police record was clean, the application was forwarded to the province. There, the province election committee which included members of the security committee would screen

Chart 20 – Organization, Village and Hamlet Government



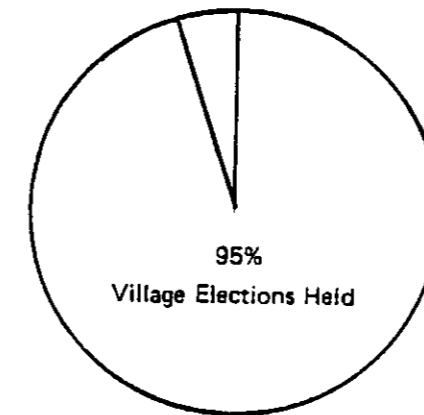
all applications and make its recommendation to the province chief. Again, if the applicant's record was clean, he could be placed on the ballot. In practice, the province election committee exercised control over who would run for office at the local level. After the first term, village and hamlet officials might be reelected several times. With a view to improving the effectiveness of the local government apparatus, the GVN conducted training courses for village and hamlet officials at the National Cadre Training Center at Vung Tau. The purpose was to consolidate the village and hamlet officials' anti-Communist spirit and train them in administrative procedures so that they could serve the people more efficiently. This was also in keeping with the pacification long-range goals that the GVN had set to achieve: self-defense, self-management, and self-sufficiency. Since only a solid infrastructure could bring about the conditions for achieving these national goals, efforts focused on the village and hamlet officials who operated and maintained that infrastructural foundation.

Elections at the village and hamlet level were a political innovation which attempted to institute democracy in a rural society still heavily influenced by traditions. Held within the context of a raging war, these elections met with some serious difficulties. In many villages there were very few youths left and the majority of their population consisted of elderly people, women and children. As a result, the GVN had to bring in people from other localities and even allowed servicemen on active duty to run for office. When elected, these officials could not function effectively, partly because they were strangers, and partly because the village population would not work with those they did not feel were their own people. Thus, despite their devotedness and hard work, such officials could achieve very little because they did not enjoy trust and support of the villagers.

Despite difficulties, village and hamlet elections proceeded with remarkably good results, due to improved security. By 1971, out of a total of 2,151 villages, 2,053 or 95.5% had elected village councils.

(Chart 21)

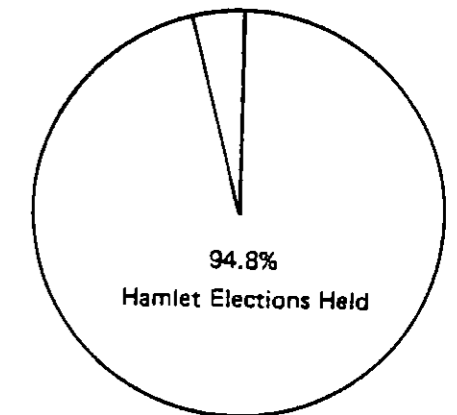
Chart 21 - Village and Hamlet Elections, 1970



2,053 VILLAGES
2,151 VILLAGES

VILLAGE OFFICIALS ELECTED

$\frac{17,305}{18,109} = 95\%$



9,985 HAMLETS
10,522 HAMLETS

HAMLET OFFICIALS ELECTED

$\frac{47,296}{52,610} = 89\%$

In 1972, however, the village and hamlet elections program had to be suspended in the wake of the Communist Easter offensive because of deteriorating security.

In addition to elections and training of village officials, the GVN still wanted to move toward total democratization by reforming the old administrative apparatus. The first step toward complete reform was the decentralization of authority. Province and district chiefs were empowered, for example, to solve all problems concerning the local population's aspirations; the central government would not meddle into local affairs. The GVN encouraged village and hamlet inhabitants to participate in various groups and organizations that served their interests such as farmer's associations, 4T clubs, etc. All these groups and associations were designed to foster a mutual assistance spirit among the population and to provide them with needed help in case of illness or disease.

People's Self-Defense Forces

The People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) was not a political or military organization or an affiliate of some religion, but a people's organization. With government assistance in armament and training, its members were supposed to defend themselves, their families, and their property against the Communists.

The need for a PSDF organization arose in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive as a result of the spontaneous demand from the people. The attacks waged by the Communists during 1968 completely alienated the people who had incurred heavy losses, not so much because of the fighting but because of Communist atrocities. Several thousands of Vietnamese, among them Catholic refugees from North Vietnam, asked the GVN to give them arms so that they could defend themselves and their communities. In response to this popular demand, the GVN initiated the People's Self-Defense program, which was established by the Mobilization Law of June 1968. The basic objectives of the PSDF program were to provide the people with the means to defend their families, homes, and

hamlets or villages in both rural and urban areas; to assist the National Police and RVNAF in maintaining security and order; to promote community development activities for self-help and improvement in both rural and urban areas, and to assist the police in identifying the enemy.

A National People's Self-Defense Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, served as a policy-making body under the operational control of the Central Pacification and Development Council. The implementation and operation of the PSD program was the responsibility of the PSDF Directorate under the Ministry of Interior. The PSDF director's duties included the detailed direction of the PSDF program, and guidance to the subordinate echelons on PSDF matters.

At each lower echelon of the administration, save for the corps tactical zone level, a PSDF committee administered and supervised the program. Thus there were PSDF committees at provinces, in Saigon and other autonomous cities, at districts (or precincts), and at village (wards or quarters) and hamlets. (*Chart 22*)

Under the Mobilization Law, all able-bodied men in the age groups of 16-17 and 39-50, except those joining the RVNAF on a voluntary basis, and males between 18 and 38 (draft age) deferred from military service were required to be members of the PSDF; Veterans who had served full terms of military service, elderly people, and women who were not physically capable to serve as combat PSDF could join support groups.

Combat PSDF were organized into groups with an authorized strength of 134 and consisted of three inter-teams of 44 members each. Each inter-teams was further broken down into three 14-member teams. A team was composed of a team leader, an assistant leader, three cells of three male members each and one cell of three female members. In case there were no woman volunteers as combat members, the strength of a group was reduced to 107. (*Chart 23*)

The positions of PSDF commanders at the capital, provinces, cities, and districts were assumed by the deputy mayor, deputy province chiefs, deputy mayors and deputy district chiefs, respectively. These officials served as the formal heads of PSDF in their areas but were not expected to exercise tactical control since PSDF were not designed to fight

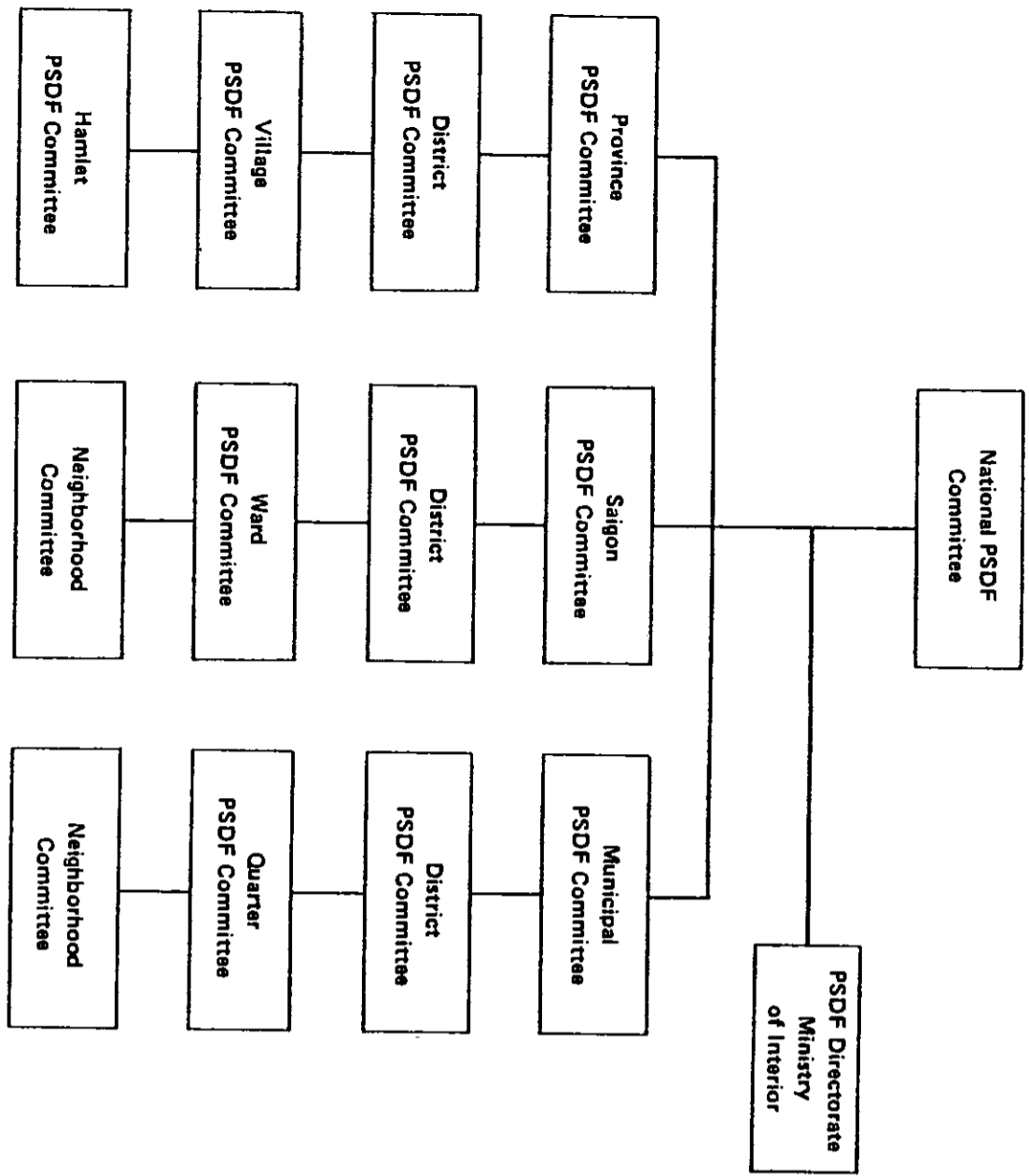
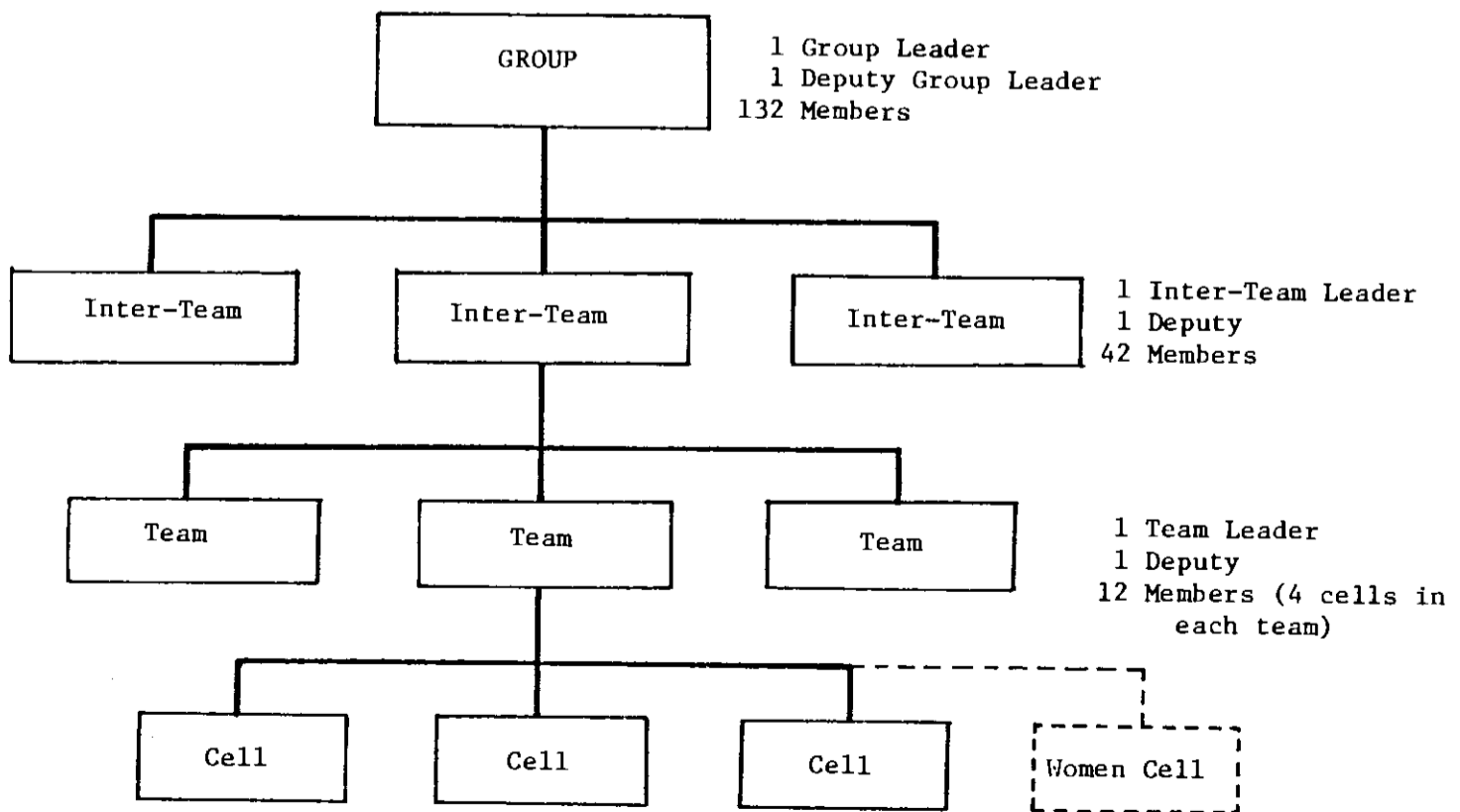


Chart 23 - Organization, PSDF Combat Group



large-scale operations. Combat group, inter-team and team leaders were all elected by PSDF members themselves.

By the end of 1970, the PSDF had grown into a sizable force which included a total of 1,397,000 combat members out of 1,500,000 planned and 2,400,156 support members out of a planned 2.5 million. Combat PSDF members were armed with 463,752 individual weapons of assorted types. Across the country, 95% of villages and hamlets had their own PSDF organizations by this time.

People's Self-Defense Forces were employed primarily in villages, hamlets and urban and suburban neighborhoods against local enemy guerrillas. They generally operated in 3-man cells out of a fixed command post but frequently changed their guard stations, particularly at night. The village chief was responsible for the employment of PSDF. His commissioner for security, usually a PF platoon leader, assisted him in planning and controlling the deployment of PSDF for the village defense. The PF platoon was usually used as a reaction or back up force, supporting the PSDF by patrol and ambush activities outside the village. In city wards and neighborhoods, PSDF cooperated with the National Police in maintaining law and order, fighting crimes and social vices, and guarding against enemy sabotage or propaganda activities. Combat PSDF were supported by support elements who provided such assistance as first aid, medical evacuation, supply, morale, and comfort.

At this early stage of organization the PSDF were plagued by several problems, particularly an acute shortage of able leaders. In several instances, PSDF group leaders turned out to be draft dodgers and it became difficult to apprehend them for military service without undermining the PSDF program. The problem was obviously sensitive and was not solved despite joint efforts by the Directorate of Manpower and the PSDF Directorate.

In addition, although self-defense duties were a civil obligation, in big cities many residents sought to avoid PSDF guard duties by hiring other people as replacements. This practice was widespread among the rich and the influential people, particularly among wealthy Chinese-businessmen. The result was that many PSDF members turned into

"professional" men for hire, whose sole occupation was to take up permanent guard duties for a fee.

The PSDF were regarded as a handy source of weapons by the enemy and he focused on proselyting or intimidating PSDF members. Many weapons were thus lost to the enemy but the number of weapons captured from him and lost to him by PSDF members about cancelled out each other. The loss of weapons to the enemy through PSDF turncoats was particularly serious in the Mekong Delta. Therefore plans were made by the JGS at one time to employ NCOs on active duty or those approaching retirement age as PSDF group leaders in their home towns or villages. The PSDF could have turned into a most effective defense force if properly commanded and led.

An Evaluation

The GVN efforts at instituting grass-roots democracy, informing and educating the people, winning over their support, rallying the enemy's infrastructure members, and bringing about social and racial justice achieved only mild, superficial successes, except in the case of the "Land-To-The-Tiller" program. The truth seemed to indicate that the political achievements of a regime could never be better than the regime itself which was built on personal loyalties rather than popular consent. The "soloist performance" during the presidential elections in 1971 reflected the true light of a democracy which existed only for form's sake. Many knowledgeable Vietnamese believed that as a nation, South Vietnam failed because of bad political leadership.

Through the balloting process, the GVN attempted to institute democracy at the village and hamlet level. The quantitative results obtained by 1971 were impressive but failed to convey a true picture of real political life. The first truth was that the Vietnamese villages could do without elections if people were allowed to manage their own affairs without interference from the central government. For generations, the traditional Vietnamese village had been the most democratic institution even under the most despotic monarchies.

Villagers used to manage their own affairs through a council of respected elders and notables. Village customs defied and always won over the monarch' laws and the mandarins' authority. And French colonial rule never affected nor dared touch the autonomous microcosm of the village. But things began to deteriorate when the village chief was appointed, not by the council of notables who were installed by popular invitation, but by executive orders back in 1955; hence, the need for elections to re-institute a lost popular way of managing village affairs.

But the new generation of elected village councilmen seemed not to enjoy popularity nor command respect among villagers. Many of them were young people, introduced and backed by the district government, and some were not even villagers. The electoral process thus degenerated into some sort of wholesale appointment under the cover of ballots. As a result, most village councilmen behaved in a subservient way as if they were the province chief's appointees, not the people's representatives. They operated under pressure and direction of the provincial government, always mindful that the province chief was empowered by law to remove any of them from office any time he found a convenient pretext for it. The remarkable thing about it all was that elections were held only where GVN control was tight to give the provincial government effective leverage over village councils. And when this control was in jeopardy such as in the aftermath of the 1972 Easter offensive, the opportunity to stop the elective process altogether was too good to pass over.

Information as a national activity was for some time paired off with the Chieu Hoi effort. It was hoped in effect that through effective, straightforward information, the people would become more aware of the GVN achievements, of the free and prosperous way of life under the RVN regimen as contrasted to coercive and spartan life with the Communists and that enlightened elements of the other side would be attracted by it and come over. This policy worked but the results were modest. Somehow, the GVN information effort, to include clumsy attempts at propagandizing, never seemed effective enough despite advanced techniques and large budgetary outlays. The reason seemed to

derive partly from the blase mood of the educated public, partly from the fact that the GVN had very little to show for its political cause. To the rural population, occasional movie shows, propaganda leaflets, and outdated newspapers were just curious things that seemed far removed from reality. The case of the neglected hamlet information hall spoke eloquently, for the GVN always measured success in information in terms of misleading statistics, never in terms of popular responsiveness.

This perhaps accounted for the modest results achieved through the Chieu Hoi program. While the statistics appeared impressive — the number of ralliers was always on the rise — a closer look usually revealed that almost all returnees were low level military and cadre or even stray people who chose to rally to stay away from war hazards, for family reasons or for a chance to earn a living and seldom because they were ideologically convinced by the GVN overtures. The most important catches merely totaled a few relatively high-ranking cadre and most of them defected in the wake of the 1968 Communist military fiasco. The reason? They simply believed they could not win militarily.

For all its potential and merits, the Chieu Hoi effort may not have been fully worth its cost and returns. For one thing, the GVN was only half-hearted in employing ralliers for any useful purpose, out of suspicion and fear of its inability to control. This was not the case with US forces who employed the same people with remarkable success. For another, the program was costly and caused frustration among the troops who felt their lot was much worse than a rallier's.

As to the problem of ethnic minorities and the Montagnards in particular, it was more of a political than a socio-racial issue. The GVN became more alert to this issue after the FULRO-instilled rebellion erupted in 1964. The rebel leader, Y Bham, demanded autonomous status for the Montagnards, which practically amounted to political secession. This was entirely unpalatable to the GVN and to the Vietnamese in general. Racially, the Vietnamese always felt superior to the Montagnards whom they condescended to treat as equals only for political purposes. But the integration process, like other socio-racial problems, was slow and frustrating, for both sides. It might take generations

or it might perhaps remain a problem forever. But the GVN policy and actions seemed to be consistent with the long-range goal of achieving national unity.

One of the key pacification objectives for the GVN was to institute self-protection for the people, hence the creation of People's Self-Defense Forces. This effort fell in line with the overall pacification strategy of employing different forces against different levels of enemy organization. It was also the least expensive among the military efforts. But the PSDF idea, like the RD cadre, was not entirely a GVN invention. It was rather an imitation of Communist people's war doctrine adapted to the RVN cause. Unfortunately, the PSDF were neither as well disciplined nor as ideologically indoctrinated as the Communist militia. The initial gung-ho fervor gained in 1968 soon faded and gave way to a tedious routine in which stand-in guard duties were sometimes performed for a fee. This happened mostly in urban centers where wealthy people could afford hiring substitutes. But in insecure hamlets and in certain areas under religious influence, the PSDF performed much better and were rather well disciplined. In both cases, they appeared to be genuinely motivated by the need to protect their communities. The pattern seemed to indicate that voluntary work succeeded only where motivation and self-interest came into play. In general, the PSDF were plagued by several problems, the most serious being the lack of direction and supervision. If well motivated and under good control, the PSDF could have been a formidable force to contend with.

Among the pacification achievements, only the "Land-To-The-Tiller" program stood out as a resounding success which might portend considerable political gains in the long range. It might eventually become the model for social justice in backward agrarian countries if sustained and capped by a more popular political regime. In the case of Vietnam, agrarian reform had always been a political instrument. The Viet Minh did it in 1954 in North Vietnam to hasten the process of conversion to socialism. Ngo Dinh Diem tried it to bolster his regime but his half-hearted, small-scale program failed. The success achieved by the

Second Republic in 1970 was possible only because of the availability of American financial and technical aid. It succeeded because it was the right thing to do at the right moment. But while the peasantry acclaimed it, it also turned a cool back on the regime that sponsored it. Nevertheless, the program was a bold step in the right direction. Its long-range impact, unfortunately, did not have the chance to materialize.

The political experience gained through pacification thus seemed to demonstrate that whatever instrument or ploy the GVN used to gain popular consent and support only worked to the extent of credibility and popularity of the regime. The results expected could in no way be better than the regime itself. In fact, they mirrored accurately the standing of the regime and its acceptance by the citizenship.

CHAPTER VIII

An Assessment of Pacification:
Some Achievements, Difficulties and Shortcomings

The Ideological Aspect of Pacification

The war in South Vietnam polarized Vietnamese into Communists and anti-Communists and brought them onto a head-on collision course. Some called this war an ideological conflict. This was true but only to some extent because although opposed to Marx-Leninism, the nationalist cause hardly showed a doctrinary cohesion worthy of being an ideological rival. Several Vietnamese intellectuals, therefore, felt the need and actually searched for a codified, political doctrine capable of providing ideological guidance and motivation to the nationalist cause. Ngo Dinh Nhu for some time succeeded in selling this syncretistic version of "personalism" from which he also derived certain cohesive concepts as the doctrinal basis for his strategic hamlet program. Genuine as his concern was, the complexity of his philosophy enlightened no one, much less the peasantry, and served no useful purposes. Other efforts in general never went beyond "tea room" chats or magazine articles. The futility with which the search for an ideology met indicated that this was perhaps a pseudo-problem, which interested only the educated elite and that the peasantry, faced with the pressing and immediate questions of livelihood and security, would benefit more from a pragmatic approach to pacification and nation-building.

The conflict was also termed a civil war, which is probably more appropriate, since the issues at stake had deep roots in the political, social and economic fabric of Vietnam. The Communists, Viet Minh or Viet Cong, were dedicated revolutionaries in the sense that they wanted to destroy all traditional institutions and values and move toward disciplinarian and collectivized life under socialism. Those who opposed

them, by contrast, adhered to a liberal, humanistic way of life sustained by cultural traditions and economic prosperity. Pacification, therefore, provided the RVN with the opportunities to preserve and develop this way of life which most Vietnamese, I believe, if given a free choice, would certainly prefer over dehumanized, coercive collectivization.

It was in this direction that every GVN effort had moved, regardless of the regime or the name assigned to it. The strategy of pacification underwent very little change over the years. The Ngo Dinh Diem government was more ambitious in trying to make its strategic hamlet philosophy a national doctrine but its Communist-inspired methods were harsh and self-serving. The five-family group system, for example, despite its purported goal of "mutual assistance" and protection against Communist penetration, was a Machiavellian scheme, an instrument for control and repression. The dominant role of the village youth leader, who was the sole appointee among elected councilmen and directly responsive to Mr. Nhu's Republican Youth, was another example of the control techniques so common in authoritarian states. It was, in the end, the methods that negated and defeated the doctrine which itself professed to be humanistic.

The next few military governments that succeeded Mr. Diem attempted to improve on and revitalize the Strategic Hamlet program by adopting a new attitude toward pacification, symbolized by a new name: New Life. In essence, the effort amounted to pouring the same old wine into a new bottle since the center of interest was still the hamlet. It was remarkable not in what it professed to do but in its efforts to avoid treading the path of abuses and excesses that had led to Mr. Diem's demise. Hesitant and half-hearted, the New Life effort made no new inroads of any significance.

Pacification was greatly aided by the CORDS arrangement which for the first time provided cohesive support for the GVN effort under Nguyen Cao Ky. Also, Ky attempted to cover pacification with an ideological veneer. He professed that his government was a "poor man's government" and made use of revolutionary terminology to suit his good intent. He called himself "Chairman of the Central Executive Committee" instead of prime minister and addressed his cabinet ministers as "commissioners."

He even coined the term "Revolutionary Development" for the pacification effort although in Vietnamese, it was never called that. The new pacification czar, Major General Nguyen Duc Thang, was his trusted friend, an energetic, hard-driving, gung-ho type of a leader. To boost the image of a revolutionary working for the poor man's cause, Thang usually donned the peasant's black calico pajama chosen as the uniform for his RD cadre. He even appointed a former Viet Minh battalion commander, Colonel Nguyen Be, as commandant of the RD Training Center at Vung Tau. In all respects, Thang was the perfect match for his new US counterpart, Ambassador Robert Komer, an equally positive leader and hard-driver. The remarkable thing about it all was the charismatic effect of the new momentum given to the pacification effort by the Thang-Komer duo. But all these outward manifestations betrayed an obsessive preoccupation with appearances which led to the tendency of substituting statistical results for true achievements.

The only reliable parameter of pacification success was found in the "hearts and minds" of the people, not in self-serving figures. A million propaganda leaflets dropped did not even guarantee that a single soul was won over. This showed to what extent statistical results, even those backed up by the most advanced techniques, could be misleading.

Statistics Versus Achievements

If we believe official statistics, in 1963 more than ten million South Vietnamese inhabitants were living in about 9,000 strategic hamlets and in urban centers. Given the total number of hamlets (11,864) and the population at that time (14.4 million), GVN control was fairly well established over approximately 70 percent of the nation. As far as statistics went, that was an encouraging prospect and the Strategic Hamlet program was anything but a failure. But a quick verification undertaken in 1964 revealed that only 10 percent of these hamlets were really defensible and the remaining were either indefensible or penetrated by the VCI. The lesson here was well learned. It showed how unreliable the reports were from province chiefs, on which these statistics were based.

The scientific measurements used in the Hamlet Evaluation System, however, increased the accuracy of reports and the validity of statistical results. The system, however, had its shortcomings. Apart from the time lag between information gathering and final reports, we were again confronted with the unreliability of the basic data fed by village and hamlet officials. As has been said, the district chief or his adviser had no way of verifying the accuracy of these data unless he personally made spot checks, which was something nearly impossible to do often enough to meet requirements. Thus the final monthly report's reliability was largely a matter of faith, a matter of whether or not we could trust the hamlet officials, and to what extent.

The GVN pacification efforts were twofold: hamlet security and hamlet development. These were measured by statistical results showing the progress being made in each area. Security was measured in terms of hamlets and population under GVN control, the amount of protection forces available for their defense and the maintenance of law and order. Directly linked with security was the viability of the VCI including guerrillas, which could be evaluated by the number of its personnel being destroyed or rallied to the GVN.

On the developmental side, statistics were used to measure progress in such political, social and economic programs as village and hamlet elections, land reform, health and education, refugee resettlement and agricultural development. There were also incidental programs that contributed indirectly toward the development task such as information, cadre training, and public works, but they were rather the tools with which the task was performed.

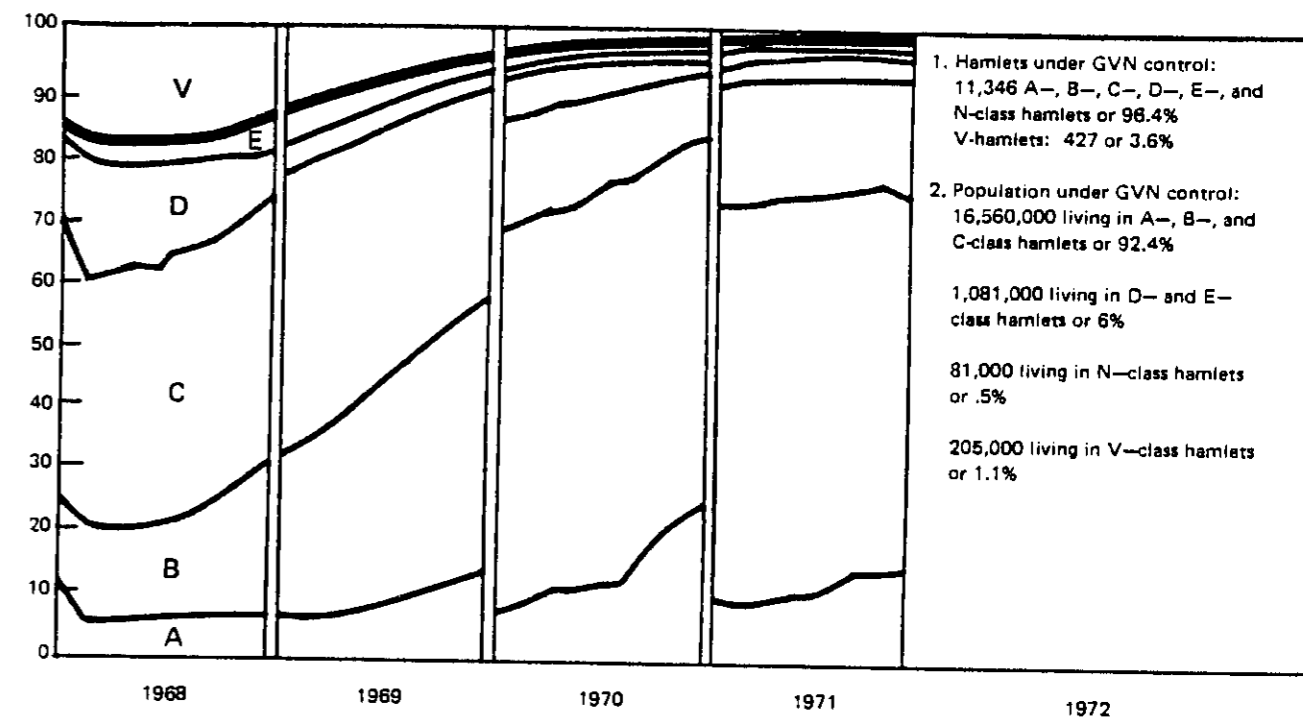
The lack of adequate data for the entire lifetime of the pacification program, particularly the period after the cease-fire, makes any attempt at assessment difficult. With the amount of data available, it is possible, however, to discern certain trends or patterns indicative of both progress and problems. The most discernible pattern in pacification was that progress depended entirely on security and that it was generally better than during the Strategic Hamlet period. A less obvious but still discernible trend showed that pacification progress was a

curve with peaks and troughs. 1967 and 1971 were the years when the best statistical results were gained but 1971 reached a peak never before attained. Characteristically enough, these peaks were invariably followed by troughs which were when security was at a lower ebb: 1968 and 1972, the years of the enemy's big offensives. This pointed toward another significant pattern: a major enemy spoiling action could always be expected when pacification seemed to attain a reasonable degree of success. The last major enemy offensive in early 1975 did not run counter to this pattern. It was attempted at a time when the GVN, despite its difficulties and some territorial losses, seemed to be consolidating its foothold in the rural area,

But statistical results told only part of the story. In 1971, for example, the GVN was apparently in firm control in terms of hamlet security, claiming that 85.3 percent of all hamlets were entirely or relatively secure, while the enemy controlled a mere 3.6 percent and about 11 percent were contested. Population control achieved the same spectacular results; 92.4 percent of South Vietnamese inhabitants were reported living in secure or reasonably secure hamlets, to include urban centers. The Viet Cong, meanwhile, controlled only 1.1 percent. Again, about 11 percent were contested. (Chart 24) These results were obtained at a time when VCI activities were at their lowest level and when Communists main and local forces were avoiding engagements in preparation for their next big push. The situation then appeared as if the GVN was left alone to go about its nation-building task. But it was only the calm that precedes a big storm.

The security attained was not a guarantee that it would be immune to enemy spoiling actions and that the trend was irreversible. The results only reflected the situation at a certain time; they did not represent the kind of solid, permanent achievements that defied retrogression. Also, to attain these results, the GVN overextended its capabilities and relied heavily on American support. The lesson of 1972 indicated that without the military protective shield, pacification setbacks could occur anytime the enemy chose to strike in force. By 1974, the GVN had run out of strategic reserves to maintain a reasonable

Chart 24 - Achievements in Population and Hamlet Control, 1971



Total South Vietnamese Population: 17,928,000

Total Hamlets: 11,173

degree of security and control in the face of stepped up enemy attacks. Its strategic options were limited. It was finally reduced to a simple matter of how much control it could afford.

GVN efforts at eliminating the VCI and winning over its members at the same time seemed to be reasonably effective if statistics could be trusted. In fact, reports gave the Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program credit for making a sizable dent in the VCI ranks: 15,603 casualties by 1971 or about one fourth of total VCI size, estimated at 63,757. But this casualty figure included the VCI greatest losses incurred during 1968 when its members surfaced and actively participated in the Tet offensive. It also included a number of VC killed in local firefights by ARVN forces. Chieu Hoi results were equally encouraging: by 1971, a total of 159,741 "enemy" personnel had crossed the line to freedom. This included 97,696 military troops and cadres, 45,173 political cadres and 16,872 undefinable "others."

But apart from the low caliber of enemy personnel killed or rallied, the statistical results included a substantial number of undefinable "enemy" personnel who were classified as such primarily because they were either innocents caught under suspicion or inhabitants of the other side coming over for safety and a decent livelihood. The fact that several among ralliers switched sides many times over the years was a clear indication that except for a few enemy agents they were something besides enemy personnel. One may question that if so many enemy personnel had rallied or had been eliminated, how could the VCI continue to pose a permanent threat to the pacification effort? Indeed, if statistics were useful, they strongly indicated the enemy's capability to recruit and replace surpassed everything we usually attributed to him.

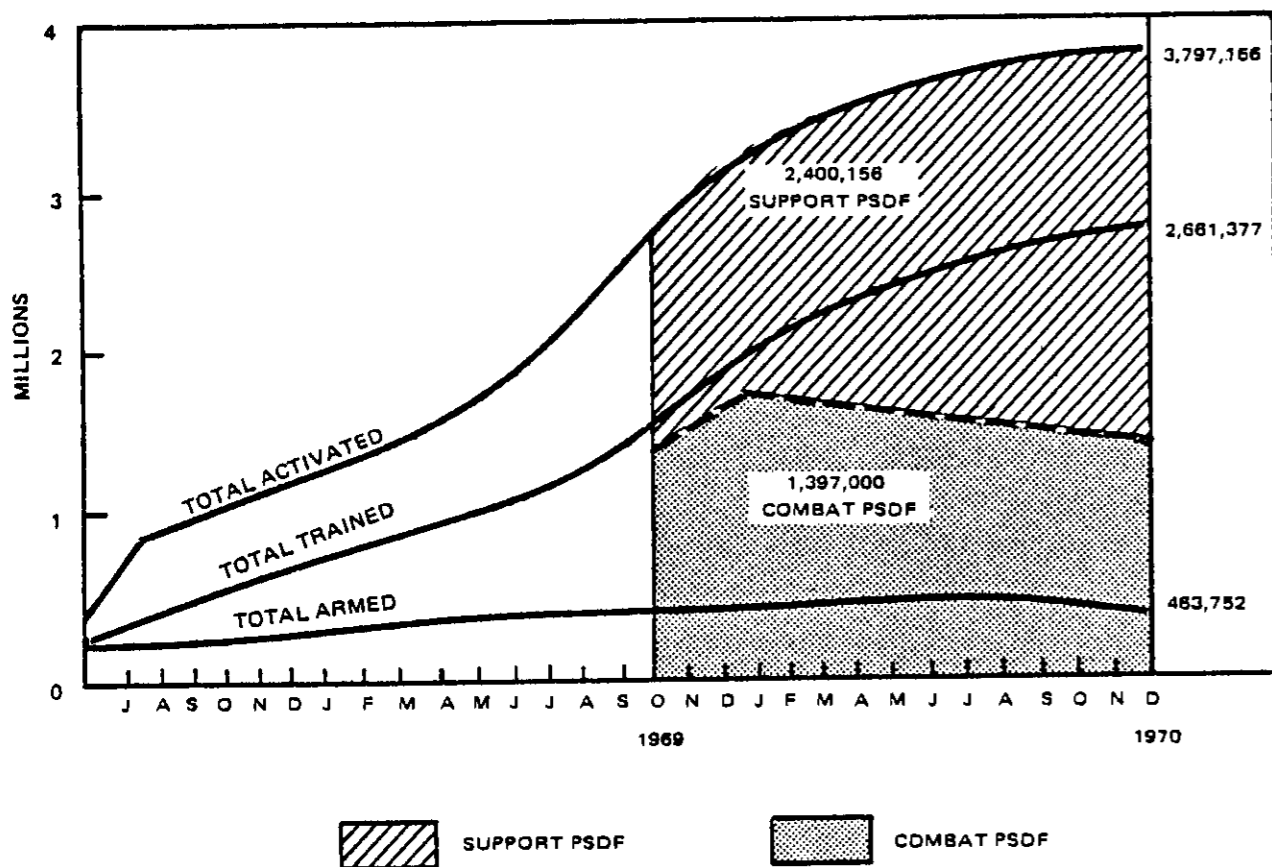
To ensure security and provide protection for the people living under GVN control, a military shield was indispensable. While US forces did not always participate in pacification operations, their powerful combat support assets and intervention capabilities directly contributed to the clearing of several pacification areas. Their most significant effectiveness was the destruction of enemy bases and lines of communication, which indirectly accounted for the improvement of security in rural

areas. But the main responsibility for providing the protective shield remained with the regular and territorial units of the RVNAF. That shield was indispensable because hamlet security forces -- the PF, the PSDF and the police -- could not survive enemy attacks without it. The interdependence of forces thus became a key feature of the pacification strategy.

During the period 1967-1972, the RVNAF grew rapidly in strength, reaching a peak of nearly 1.1 million men. More than half that strength was composed of territorial forces, an indication of their maturity and increasing role in pacification. Sheer numerical strength, however, failed to convey the true picture of combat effectiveness. A conclusion that one may draw is that the RF and PF failed in areas where enemy forces were superior and that this failure accounted for the continued bogdown of ARVN regular divisions in territorial security missions. One of my constant headaches as J-3, JGS came from requests for reinforcements from field commanders who always asked for more and never seemed happy to settle for less. This was perhaps another indication of the RF and PF ineffectiveness. Somehow I got the impression that pacification support was like a leaking tank. No matter how much more manpower you put in it, it never seemed to be enough for the task.

Hamlet security forces also increased substantially during this period. The PSDF, for example, reached a total of nearly 4 million by 1970, of which 1,326,571 were combat members, equipped with a total of 463,752 individual weapons. (Chart 25) Statistics also showed that 95 percent of secure and relatively secure hamlets were defended by PSDF and each of these hamlets had from one to several teams (11 men each) depending on its size. What the statistics did not reveal was the high density of PSDF in cities and urban areas where their role was light and a much lower distribution in rural areas where the PSDF role was more critical. This imbalance in distribution reflected the lower male population in rural areas and was one defect that could never be corrected unless the trend of urbanization was reversed. But even in urban areas, the nominal strength of PSDF was not indicative of their effectiveness. Their notorious trigger-happy unruliness was particularly

Chart 25 — Expansion of PSDF, 1968-1970



irritating to the urban people. Some thought that they stood a better chance of being fired on when stopped by a PSDF than by a Viet Cong.

The expansion of police forces to rural areas was also a significant effort to combat the VCI, in addition to maintaining law and order. The modest strength of the police, however, limited its capabilities. There were no police available at the hamlet level which was the most important natural subdivision of South Vietnamese rural society.

All in all, the statistical results of pacification showed steady progress, particularly after the momentum was gained through the 3-month accelerated program in late 1968. They reached an all-high record in 1971 but suffered some setbacks during the 1972 Easter offensive. Pacification gains were stabilized again after the short, disruptive campaign of "Land and Population Grab" that the enemy launched without success immediately after the cease-fire. Despite stepped-up activities during 1974, the Communists seemed to have lost their foothold in the rural areas. And the pacification gains were being consolidated when North Vietnam decided to go all-out once again in early 1975. South Vietnam was lost, not because pacification had failed but because its weakened military forces, hampered by the flow of panicky refugees, were unable to hold the entire North Vietnamese Army in check.

The Communist Challenge to Pacification

The ups and downs of pacification illustrate the familiar pattern of Communist activities designed to spoil the GVN nation-building efforts and ultimately take over South Vietnam. During the first few years of the war, 1959-1963, the strategy that dominated Communist thinking was basically political and social. Their aim was to disrupt and discredit the newly established republic, create social dissatisfaction and unrest and move toward either a general uprising or a coalition government.

Communist activities during this period began with and concentrated on the rural area. They consisted largely of subversive and terrorist actions against village and other GVN officials at the grass-roots level. These were conducted by the underground Viet Minh agents, estimated at

about 10,000, who remained in the South after the Geneva Accords and were gradually augmented by new recruits and Viet Minh regroupes re-infiltrated from the North. An estimated 61,000 village officials and GVN civil servants were reported to be assassinated or executed from 1958 to 1966. During the next three-year period, from 1968 to 1970, casualties caused by the VC to the civilian population more than doubled, even tripled the yearly rate of the previous period. (Table 1)

Table 1 — Casualties Caused by Enemy Anti-Pacification Terrorist Activities (From 1968 to 1970)

<u>Categories of Casualties</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Kidnapped	10,108	6,096	6,245
Wounded	15,918	15,603	11,177
Killed	6,338	6,090	5,298
Totals	32,364	27,790	22,720

The extent of terrorism and sabotage was such that to save the countryside from Communist control, the GVN initiated the Strategic Hamlet program in 1962. The program produced good effects despite inflated reports by province chiefs. Its progress prompted the Viet Cong in late 1963 to demand the dismantling of these fortified hamlets which they denounced as "disguised concentration camps." Profiting from the political unrest and instability in Saigon before and after Mr. Diem's downfall, the Viet Cong systematically wrecked the program by penetrations and attacks. They came perilously close to success with widespread disorder and violence but the general uprising never came about.

Recognizing the futility of guerrilla warfare as a means of conquest, the Communists decided in early 1964 to shift their strategy toward military violence and began to infiltrate regular NVA units of regimental size into the South. This was the beginning of a force buildup accompanied by the revival or construction of logistical bases in the border areas. From 1965 to 1967, the war had a predominantly

military outlook with pitched battles between US and Communist forces and large scale US search and destroy operations against Viet Cong base areas. These military actions completely overshadowed the other war being fought on a lesser scale against the VCI and guerrillas at the grass-roots level: the war for the control of the rural area for which the GVN and its forces were primarily responsible.

The Viet Cong sought to wreck the pacification effort by a three-pronged strategy based on offensive tactics, political maneuvers and proselytizing actions aimed at the RVNAF. This came to be known as the three offensive spearheads: military, political and proselytizing, which the Viet Cong used selectively or in combination throughout the war.

The offensive tactics most extensively used by the VC were: ambush, hit-and-run attack, road interdiction, shelling, and more or less conventional attacks. The GVN recorded these activities as enemy-initiated incidents. During the period from 1968 to 1970, as an example, a yearly average of slightly more than 10,000 incidents were reported. (Chart 26) The ambush was the most important since it served well the Viet Cong political and psychological purposes. A successful ambush always had repercussions which affected the GVN credibility and the morale of ARVN troops. Enemy ambushes were directed against a variety of targets: GVN officials, ARVN troops, supply convoys etc. but most notoriously, they were laid against reinforcements. This was one favorite Communist tactic called *công đồn dã viện* (attack the outpost to smash the reinforcement) which the Viet Cong used with great success despite ARVN precautions. With the increasing use of air cover and helicopters, however, large-scale ambushes became less efficient, and gradually diminished, especially since the participation of US combat troops.

Ambushes were frequently used by the VC in conjunction with mines and roadblocks. During the early part of the war, mines caused extensive civilian casualties while roadblocks, sometimes mere physical obstacles rigged with booby traps, only caused delays in traffic. Most sabotage acts against the railway were conducted by mines; canals and rivers in the Mekong Delta were also frequently blocked or mined and

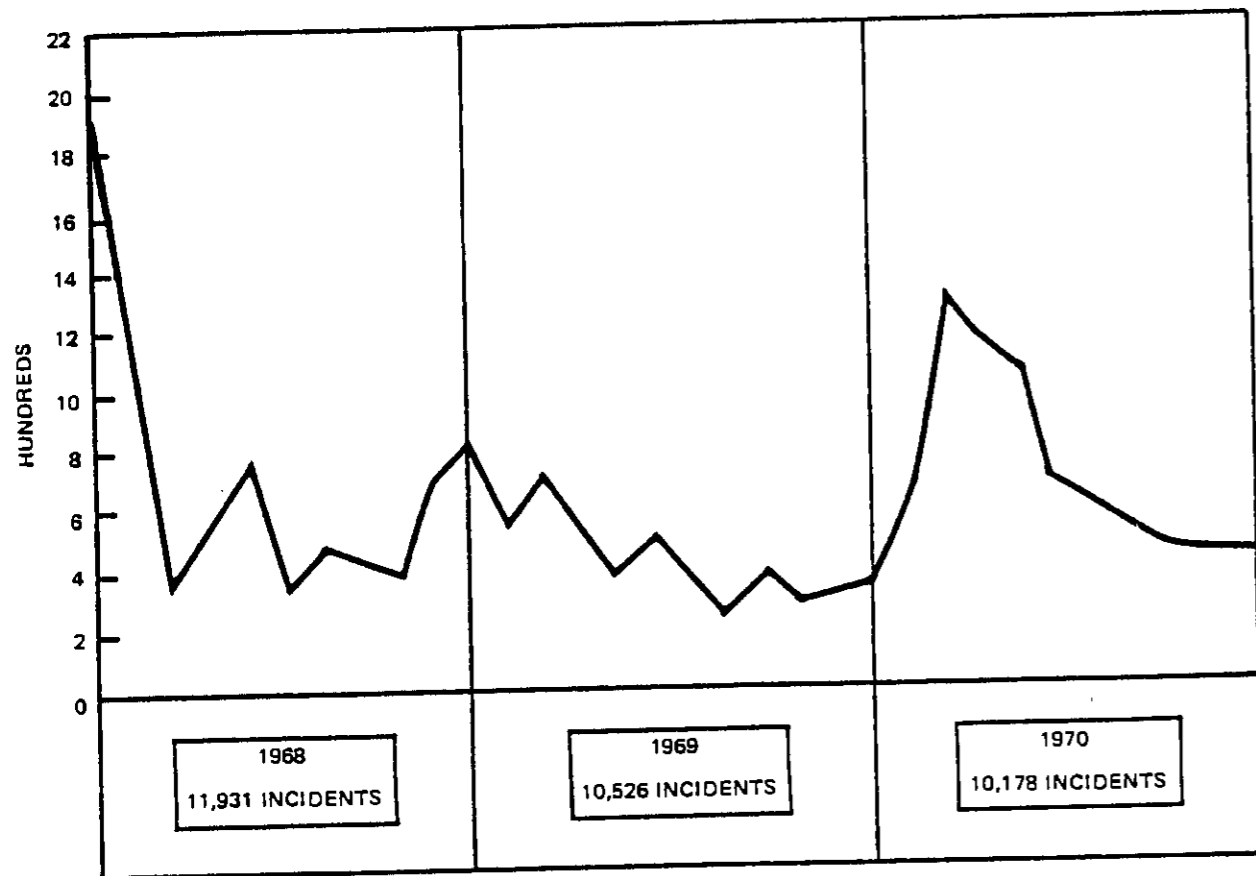


Chart 26 - Enemy Anti-Pacification Activities

ambushed. With the construction of modern, surfaced highways, mines became less and less a hazard. Still, a few key supply routes were frequent targets for mines or blocking actions. The enemy purpose in road interdiction was primarily economic, seeking to disrupt the flow of supplies into cities. When conducted in conjunction with attacks or other actions, it was used to isolate outposts or even larger targets. Enemy road interdiction actions accounted for the increased use of air-lift and helilift in troop movements and in resupply activities.

Another important VC tactic used against pacification was the hit and run, or harassment attack. While this was a guerrilla warfare tactic, it was also used in some large-scale attacks. The enemy's basic tenet was always to ensure victory in hit-and-run attacks which, therefore, were carefully planned and swiftly executed. This tactic was primarily used against isolated outposts, the RF and PF, small ARVN installations and pacified hamlets. Like most other VC tactics, hit-and-run attacks caused adverse psychological effects to the GVN besides inflicting casualties and losses to its forces. After the introduction of NVA units in the south, the enemy became bolder and switched to more conventional attacks in 1965.

In 1968, the Communists unexpectedly launched their Tet offensive. Its most serious impact was the temporary disruption of pacification efforts in the rural areas since ARVN forces were redeployed for the defense of major cities, provincial capitals and district towns. Despite this, the enemy infrastructure was unable to exploit the situation because it was committed to the general offensive effort. A large part of the VCI was thus destroyed during 1968, which accounted for the success of the accelerated pacification campaign late that year. It was also during and after this offensive that the enemy began to make extensive use of a new deadly weapon: the 122-mm rocket. Most enemy shellings were conducted against military and air bases but also against cities and urban areas. The indiscriminate firing of rockets against urban centers caused extensive civilian casualties and a feeling of terror among the population. Saigon was most heavily struck by rockets during May 1968 and this shelling seemed to work against the Viet Cong

psychologically. To the population it was an indication of their desperation in the face of military defeat.

Pacification also suffered setbacks as a result of the 1972 Easter offensive. Although the enemy offensive was localized in three major areas, the deployment of ARVN forces to meet the challenge created some voids in pacification support. The influx of refugees fleeing the embattled areas also caused additional burdens to the GVN. The most serious effect caused by the offensive was the complete absorption of the RVNAF general reserves in territorial defense and the ARVN seemed to be immobilized in territorial security missions, gradually losing tactical mobility.

When the cease-fire was announced, the enemy launched a vicious campaign designed to wrest more control. This was known as the "Land and Population Grab" campaign during which enemy forces succeeded in penetrating more than 400 villages across the country. But the campaign was short-lived; the enemy's effort met with determined RVNAF counter-action and failed. But while the enemy was unable to grab more control, the GVN pacification effort also came to a standstill as a result of US aid cutbacks and a preoccupation for force conservation. The cease-fire thus ushered in a period during which the GVN strived to hold on to as much geographical area as possible. The deployment of ARVN combat forces for territorial security enabled the enemy to prepare extensively for his ultimate offensive. Border outposts and ranger camps successively fell into enemy hands. By the end of 1974, while the enemy was assured of a military advantage through his force buildup, the GVN seemed barely able to maintain its widely dispersed defensive posture which by now had become more and more costly. The loss of Phuoc Long followed by Ban Me Thuot brought to light the strategic weaknesses of the RVN. The question now was how long the country could survive in the face of all-out invasion.

The enemy's capabilities for propaganda and proselyting actions were always as redoubtable as his military activities throughout the war and pacification was the primary target. His propaganda apparatus seemed to be able to exploit the RVN weaknesses. It succeeded, for example, to

convey the image of strategic hamlets as "disguised concentration camps." It also thrived on the mistakes committed by GVN officials in pushing too hard the pacification effort. Self-help projects which required the participation of the local population were denounced as forced labor. The enemy was also adept at inducing the people to voice petty grievances against the GVN, grievances designed to harass and embarrass local officials and deter their zealotry.

Proselyting actions were mainly directed against the ARVN and the RF and PF in particular. Their effectiveness on the ARVN was limited but the RF and PF troopers were less resistant victims. In the Mekong Delta, the VCI was successful in transforming several RF and PF soldiers into turncoats. This accounted for the loss of many outposts that reached a worrisome level in certain provinces such as Chuong Thien and Kien Hoa. Proselyting actions were usually accompanied by threats, blackmail or terror whose purpose was to induce fear, loss of confidence and the lowering of morale. These actions were usually carried out by planted agents who successfully penetrated into RF and PF ranks.

The enemy's challenge to pacification was multi-faceted and persistent. It was a combined political and military effort which fell in line with his overall strategy of conquest. But as long as this effort was made on a local level, the enemy stood no chance of success. He must have realized this and decided to conquer the south by military invasion instead. This was no proof, however, that pacification had failed as a strategy.

The Problems of Cadres and Territorial Forces

Conceived as a revolutionary effort, pacification depended primarily on the cadres for its implementation. The concept of cadre or *can bo* espoused by the GVN, like some other organizational concepts and operational methods, was Communist by origin but adapted by the GVN. Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu was in fact the man who pioneered the creation of various categories of cadres for his Strategic Hamlet program. The "armed propaganda teams" were but one among these categories. Although the Ngos