

were effective when they were carefully planned. Artillery interdiction and harassment fire, however, was not carefully planned. It was usually applied in a haphazard and unruly manner, particularly in the Mekong Delta, chiefly for the purpose of enhancing the morale of RF and PF troops in isolated outposts.

Civilian Evacuation, Casualties and Property Damage

After 1959 when the war entered a more active phase in South Vietnam, many innocent civilians, caught in crossfire between opposing sides, were killed or wounded. Most of these casualties occurred among the rural population. The civilian casualty rate increased proportionately with the fighting level and reached an all-time high in early 1968 when the Communists launched the Tet offensive against cities and major population centers throughout the country.

Civilian casualties had many causes but most frequently were due to enemy booby traps or to mortar and rocket fires. Civilians also died from stray fire during battles, or from friendly aerial bombings and occasionally from the deliberate use of terror by Communist forces. The most worrisome problem in this regard was the deliberate Communist tactic of precipitating a battle in a populated area. If the friendly forces declined to fight in order to avoid casualties and damage to the friendly population, the Communist would strengthen their control of the area. On the other hand, if a battle ensued by choice or was unavoidable, the civilian population suffered casualties and damage. This not only caused resentment against both the GVN and the Communists but required an expensive and time-consuming rebuilding process to restore the physical damage and for the people to regain their morale and confidence.

Civilian casualties and their causes are presented in Table 1 for the period from 1967 to 1970. It should be noted, however, that casualty figures in Vietnam were notoriously unreliable and that it was most difficult to determine whether the casualties were caused by Communists or friendly action, or both.

Table 1 — Civilian Casualties and Causes²

Mines, mortar, and booby-traps ³	Small-arms fire	Shelling and bombing	Total
1967 15,253	9,785	18,811	43,849
1968 31,244	15,107	28,052	74,403
1969 24,648	11,814	16,183	52,645
1970 22,049	7,650	8,607	38,306

²"Annex K", Statement of Ambassador William E. Colby, Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, before the Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 21 April 1971.

³The enemy sometimes used unexploded bombs and artillery shells as booby-traps.

As of late 1968, however, civilian casualties were gradually reduced as a result of improved security which was achieved throughout most of the countryside by the pacification effort. Regulations for the use of firepower were constantly updated by MACV and the JGS and their strict application was enforced by both US and ARVN forces when conducting operations in populated areas. Operational techniques such as the soft cordon,⁴ for example, which was characterized by a maximum limitation of firepower with a view to minimizing casualties and property damages to the civilian population, were especially encouraged. So were plans to neutralize the enemy "mini-bases" which were thoroughly rigged with mines and booby-traps, especially in IV Corps Tactical Zone. It was also recommended that artillery harassment and interdiction fire be cut to a minimum. Violations of fire employment regulations which caused casualties to the local population were carefully studied to determine those responsible and also served as a basis for equitable compensation and relief to the victims.

When accidents, casualties and property damage were caused to the civilian population by US units, immediate steps were taken to comfort and assist the victims of these units. Injured people were given first aid and immediately evacuated to the nearest US or RVN medical facility. This medical assistance and care was continued until the victims completely recovered. Also transportation was arranged for relatives to make visits. Damaged properties or houses were immediately repaired, rebuilt or equitably compensated.

⁴The soft cordon is characterized by limited use of firepower resulting in minimum property damages and injury to civilians, and slow, painstaking searches of villages and suspicious areas by the sweeping and cordon forces. The cordon force serves a dual purpose: it blocks, and at the same time, searches. The so-called blocking positions are not static defensive positions but are moving, searching troops who make detailed searches. They occupy and serve as a "noose" around the cordoned area. The protracted occupation of an area causes the concealed enemy to become impatient and hungry, forcing them to reveal their hiding places. See also Lam Son 260/NEVADA EAGLE operation later in the chapter.

Civilian evacuation was a responsibility of ARVN units and the local government. In the performance of this task, they were supported by US units and civilian agencies which provided abundant transportation and supplies. The displacement of the populace and their belongings, therefore, was usually smooth and rapid, regardless of size and load. Despite the lack of advance planning, Vietnamese officials who were experienced and familiar with this task could always run the operation without difficulty.

Resettlement of the displaced population remained, however, a thorny problem in the evacuation process. This subject cannot be discussed at length within the scope of this monograph since it was a rather complex socio-political problem. In general, very few Vietnamese, and the peasants in particular, were willing to relinquish their land, their houses, and their normal habitat for a safe, new life elsewhere even though threatened by the constant dangers of war. After they had been displaced and resettled in some local refugee center, most of these reluctant refugees found it hard to make a living as soon as relief was removed. Consequently, some were forced to live on relatives and some would try to return to their old place if that was still possible. Thus, with the exception of large scale and permanent resettlement projects, very few of those makeshift resettlement centers that mushroomed overnight in the wake of military operations could effectively serve their purpose for any long period of time.

Special Planning Considerations

Operations conducted in desolate and remote jungle or mountainous areas necessitated the employment of tactics which differed greatly from those employed in operations conducted in the flatter and more open, populated areas. This was tantamount to prosecuting two different kinds of war. In both types of operations, cooperation and coordination between participating US and ARVN forces were deemed necessary and mutually beneficial.

In the case of operations conducted in remote jungle or mountainous areas, however, the planning and coordination process was much less complicated since it did not involve many of the problems and constraints found in populated areas. Such operations were usually conducted in areas which

harbored enemy logistics bases, troop cantonment havens or major headquarters, political or military. These areas generally were sheltering North Vietnamese main force units. Planning for these operations was exactly like planning for conventional battles. The usual tactic was to employ B-52, tactical air, artillery and naval firepower on the objective, followed by a swift troop movement into the objective area to exploit results. Both US and ARVN training, organization, and equipment were properly geared for such operations, operations in which firepower and mobility were most valuable advantages. To make rapid and accurate use of tactical air and gunships and also to avoid identification errors between the two participating forces in this type terrain, much care and attention was given to the assignment of boundaries and objectives during the planning process.

The allocation of combat support and logistics resources for ARVN units during the entire operation was deemed necessary to maintain their sustained combat effectiveness on a par with US units. When provided with adequate support and when all requirements were fulfilled, ARVN units could make substantial contributions to these operations. Familiarity with the terrain and the enemy, and adaptability to the environment were their natural advantages. Their endurance and resiliency also helped them cross jungles and mountains without much difficulty. They were particularly efficient in conducting reconnaissance with long range reconnaissance patrols, particularly when these patrols were jointly organized. In general, when planning for operations in remote or jungle areas, the maximum exploitation of combat capabilities of each of the participating units, and the effective use of combat support assets were considered the key to success.

In contrast, when US units or ARVN regular units operated in populated areas or participated in the pacification program, they were faced with many complex problems. Not only did they have to fight the enemy, they had to also provide protection for villages and hamlets. And the most difficult part of it all was the goal of doing all these things without causing damage and casualties, or even antagonizing the local population. Civil action efforts played a very important role in such

operations. The most practical civil action effort was to limit the use of firepower, but this firepower constituted the great advantage of the US units. American reactions to enemy provocations, regarded by the Americans as defensive acts, were regarded by the population as offensive acts since it was American bombs and shells which caused the casualties and damages. Fire limitations therefore were a central problem. The difficulty lay not in persuading troops to limit the use of firepower, but in the decisions made in the heat of battle concerning the use of artillery, gunships, and tactical air. The natural inclination of unit commanders of all echelons was to minimize losses to their own men rather than losses to the civilian population. However, in a war in which political considerations usually outweighed military requirements, a certain compromise had to be made in order to win over the people's hearts and minds. In addition to the limited and controlled use of firepower, curfew time and free-fire zones also needed to be made flexible, and tailored to seasonal changes in each locality so as not to obstruct the normal life cycle of the local population.

Before being introduced into an area of operation, units should be thoroughly oriented on local customs and manners in order to avoid awkward situations which would interfere with the development of good rapport with the population. Only in such a way could there be a genuine cooperation on the part of the local population. Particular attention should also be given to preventing the enemy from taking propaganda advantage of our mistakes.

In addition to difficulties that arose from relations with the friendly population, operational units had other problems such as the local government, military authorities, and territorial forces in the area of operation. Coordination with them was necessary in order to combine effectively the military and civilian efforts. The planning for operations in populated areas thus required detailed and careful preparation and close coordination and cooperation among all the elements involved. US units usually combined daily tactical efforts with a powerful dose of psywar and civil action in an attempt to achieve good rapport with the local population. In general, operations of this type required flexibility, not only in force organization but also in tactics, techniques, and the utilization of support assets.

US units certainly had to face many complex problems in addition to their inherent disadvantages in language, culture and race. Despite all this, they succeeded admirably in many instances in bringing about

a well founded confidence and security for the population, even in areas where the population had lived for a long time under Communist influence.

Operation DELAWARE/LAM SON 216

Operation Delaware/Lam Son 216 in the A Shau valley was a typical case of combined operations conducted in remote and jungle or mountainous areas with the purpose of destroying enemy logistics bases and command headquarters. It was planned in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive as one in a series of major combined efforts striking into enemy bases which heretofore were considered as inviolable.

US and ARVN forces were then taking the initiative. Driven back from cities and population centers, NVA units retreated toward jungle or mountainous redoubts to replace losses, refit, and prepare themselves for the next wave of attacks. Launching major offensive operations against enemy bases was a great challenge for ARVN units at that time as their principal effort during the previous few years had been concentrated on pacification support. Most combat actions by ARVN units had been confined to securing or to search-and-destroy operations of very short duration, usually conducted in some nearby foothill areas.

ARVN units had incurred sizable losses during the intense fighting that characterized the initial phase of the enemy general offensive. There were serious losses of experienced cadre and troops. Some ARVN battalions had been reduced to a strength of approximately 100 men, and replacements were all new recruits. This made ARVN combat effectiveness somewhat questionable in the eyes of US commanders, in particular those who were already dubious as to their effectiveness. Indeed, in the beginning, most US units were unenthusiastic about the proposed combined operations. This was understandable enough, since cooperation with ARVN units might turn out to be an additional burden to the US units.

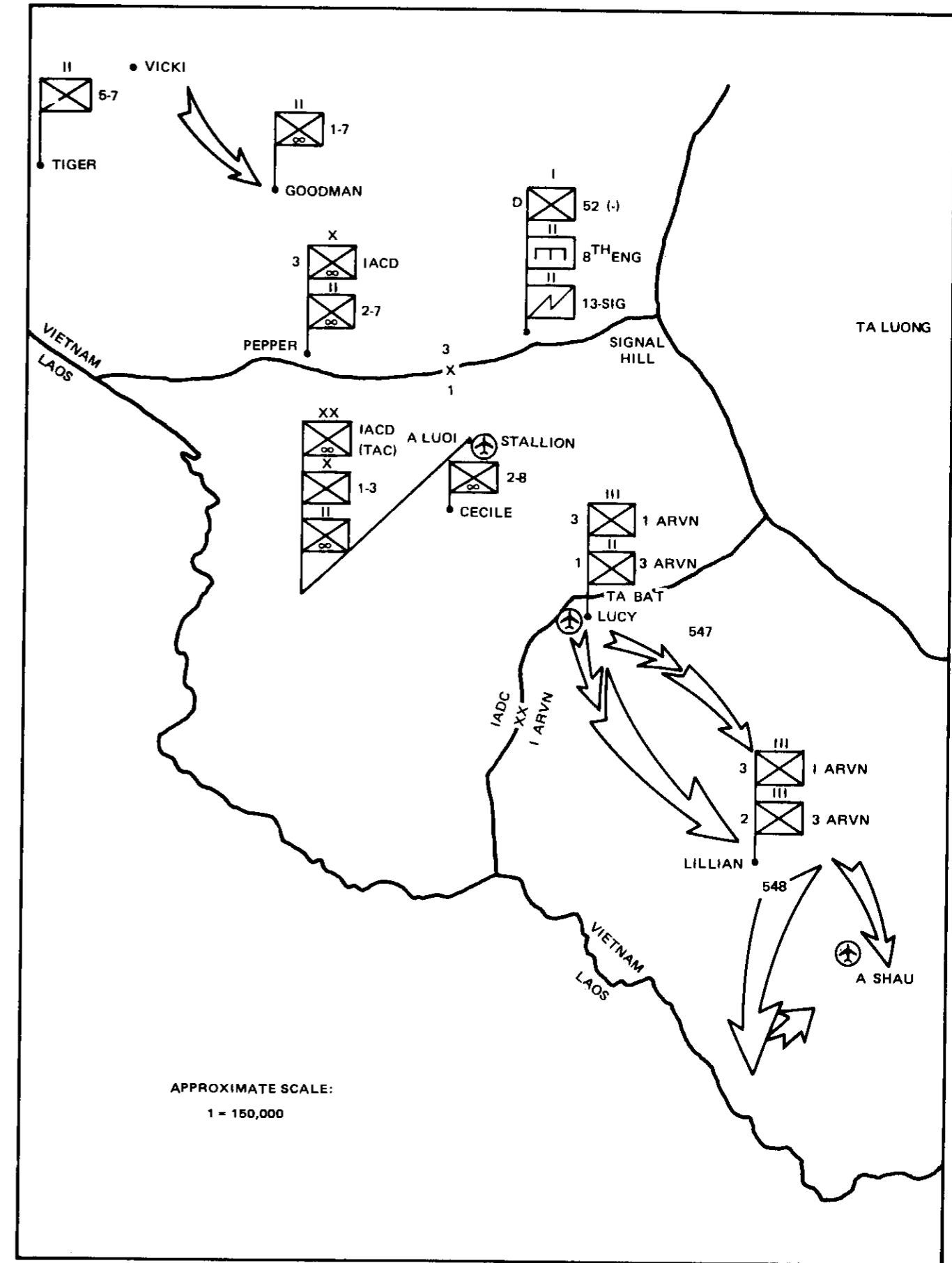
The Delaware/Lam Son 216 combined operation took place in the A Shau valley, in the western part of I CTZ, in mid-April 1968. This was the first major effort to penetrate this longtime enemy held area since 1966 when a US Special Forces camp there was overrun. The A Shau valley, which included

the A Luoi airfield, was surrounded by extremely rugged mountainous areas covered with dense jungle. Located near the Laotian border, it was crisscrossed by a road-system which linked the enemy bases and sanctuaries in Laotian territory with his advance bases located in the foothill area west of I CTZ coastal plain. (See Map 4) The weather in the A Shau valley areas was unpredictable; it was usually cloudy during the monsoon season. The objective area was confirmed as one of the NVA major logistics bases. Intelligence reports estimated enemy forces in the area to include: a command and control headquarters, one engineer regiment, one transportation battalion, one signal battalion, one anti-aircraft battalion, armor elements, and base protection units.

The concept of maneuver set forth in the operational plan stated that the US 1st Air Cavalry Division in coordination with the ARVN 1st Infantry Division was to conduct a heliborne operation into the A Shau valley, occupy the A Luoi airfield, and organize reconnaissance patrols in force. On D-day, the 3d Brigade, 1st ACD, with 3 battalions and support artillery elements, was to land north of the A Luoi airfield, establish fire support bases, destroy by fire enemy positions around the airfield, and conduct reconnaissance in force in the area. On D+1, the 3d Brigade was to continue operations while the radio relay terminal at A Shau began to function. On D+2, the 1st Brigade, 1st ACD, with 3 battalions and support artillery elements, was to land and occupy the A Luoi airfield, and conduct reconnaissance in force in the area. On D+2, engineer and signal equipment and an initial logistics element were to be helilifted into the A Luoi airfield to begin repair to the airfield.

Then, on D+4, the 3d Regiment, 1st ARVN Infantry Division, was to land into the area south of the A Luoi airfield with support artillery elements and to conduct reconnaissance in force. On D+5, the airfield would begin operation with C-7A aircraft, and on D+6, with C-123 aircraft. Reconnaissance in force operations were to be conducted throughout the A Shau valley until termination of the combined operations. The fire support plan gave priority to the 3d Brigade on D-Day. All landings were to be supported by artillery and tactical air. Air coverage was to

MAP 4. - OPERATION DELAWARE/LAM-SON 216



to be provided by fixed-wing aircraft and gunships during landings.

On the US side, maneuver forces included:

1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division:

1-8 Cav., 2-8 Cav., 1-12 Cav.

2-19 Arty (DS), A Battery, 1-30 Arty (GSR)

A Co, 8th Engr. (GSR)

2 Sqds, 25th Inf.

Det. 11th Pathfinder Plat.

Fwd Spt. Tm., 13th Sig. (DS)

Tm., 191st MI Co.

Tm., 5th Weather Sqdn.

Plat., 545th MP Co.

Tm., 246th Psyop. Co.

Det., Co. D 52 Inf.

FSE, Div. Spt Cmd. (DS).

3d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division:

1-7 Cav., 2-7 Cav., 5-7 Cav.

1-21 Arty (DS), C Battery, 1-30 Arty (GSR)

C Co, 8th Engr. (DS)

2 sqds, 34th Inf.

Det, 11th Pathfinder Plat.

Fwd. Spt Tm, 13th Sig.

Tm., 191st MI Co.

Tm., 5th Weather Sqdn.

Plat., 545th MP Co.

Tm., 245th Psyop. Co.

FSE, Div. Spt Cmd (DS)

On the Vietnamese side, maneuver forces included:

3d Regiment, 1st Infantry Division

1st Battalion, 3d Regt.

2d Battalion, 3d Regt.

2d Battalion, 1st Regt.

C Battery, 1-12 Arty.(DS)

US support to Vietnamese forces included:

A Battery, 6-33 Arty, US (GSR)

Arty LNO and FO tms., 1st ACD Div. Arty.

AT Sect (106 RR), D 1-9 Cav.

Plat., C Co, 14th Engr. (DS)

Fwd. Spt. Tm. (VHF), 13th Sig. Bn.

On 19 April (D-day), the 3d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division made initial heliborne landings in the A Shau valley. The 5-7 Cav., supported by the 11th Aviation Group, landed and established Landing Zone Tiger, while the 1-7 Cav. landed on LZ Vicki. The direct support artillery battery intended for the 5-7 Cav was also moved to LZ Tiger. Despite extensive preparatory fire and the protection of landing approaches provided by elements of the 1-9 Cav., enemy anti-aircraft was still very active. A total of 23 helicopters were hit, of which 10 were destroyed. Both the 5-7 and 1-7 Cav. met no enemy resistance during landings, but the helilift of the 1-7 Cav. was delayed due to intense enemy anti-aircraft fire and bad weather. Also, because site preparation required extensive engineer work, the movement of a direct support artillery battery into LZ Vicki was not completed as planned.

In conjunction with landings of the 3d Brigade, Company E of the 52d Infantry (-), two engineer squads of the 8th Engineer Battalion, and elements of the 13th Signal Battalion were helilifted to a high mountain peak to install a radio relay site at Signal Hill.

On 20 and 21 April, the heliborne movement of troops into the area north of A Shau valley was continued; Company B (+) of the 2-7 Cav. landed and established LZ Pepper. But other troop and supply movements were delayed because of bad weather and extremely heavy rains. The 1-7 Cav. also began maneuvering from LZ Vicki to seize and secure LZ Goodman, while forces on Signal Hill continued work on a landing zone and relay site preparation. An enemy probing attack on Signal Hill caused 4 killed and 3 wounded.

Then the 5-7 Cav. initiated activities in the vicinity of LZ Tiger, concentrating on the interdiction of Route 548 which ran into the A Shau valley from Laos. Searches were conducted in force in order to find and

neutralize enemy anti-aircraft positions. The weather, meanwhile, continued to impede all air activities during the day of 21 April. But the 1-7 Cav. continued to overcome the rugged terrain and succeeded in occupying LZ Goodman. On its way to this LZ, the 1-7 Cav. found and destroyed 2 Russian-made bulldozers. The 5-7 Cav., meanwhile, continued its search operations around LZ Tiger, and work also progressed on Signal Hill, where a small D-4 bulldozer was brought in to clear the landing zone. In the early afternoon of 21 April, a section (two 105-mm howitzers) of A Battery, 1-21 Artillery Battalion was helilifted into a firing position on Signal Hill, from where it provided all night support for B Company of the 2-7 at LZ Pepper.

On 22 and 23 April, with improved weather, the 3d Brigade was able to complete its troop movements into A Shau. The 2-7 Cav. and the Brigade headquarters landed at LZ Pepper, and by early afternoon of 22 April, the 1-7 Cav. had completed its defense positions at LZ Goodman. The 5-7 Cav., meanwhile, continued its search operations, concentrating its effort on the areas west and south of LZ Tiger. Benefiting from good weather the movement of artillery units was completed during the day of 23 April. A direct support 105-mm battery landed at LZ Goodman, and another at LZ Pepper. An additional 155-mm howitzer battery was also helilifted into LZ Goodman by early morning the following day.

On 24 and 25 April, after having completed its troop movements into A Shau, the 3d Brigade continued reconnaissance in force operations, by spreading out from LZs Tiger, Goodman and Pepper in an extensive search effort. The 1-7 Cav. found and captured three flat-bed trucks and three 37-mm anti-aircraft guns. On 24 April, the 1st Brigade helilifted its 2-8 Cav. into LZ Cecile together with a direct support battery (-) of three 105-mm howitzers, but the movement was later suspended because of bad weather. On 25 April, the weather improved again, and the 1st Brigade quickly moved its remaining battalions and the 1-8 Cav. into the same LZ. As soon as it landed, the 2-8 initiated reconnaissance in force activities south and west of LZ Cecile while the 1-8 Cav. assumed the defense of LZ Stallion and pushed its companies north in a search effort. The 1-12 Cav., meanwhile, operated south and east of the LZ.

From 26 to 28 April, the movement of artillery units into LZ Stallion for the support of the 1st Brigade was continued, and reconnaissance in force activities were intensified throughout both the 1st and 3d Brigade areas of operation. Friendly forces also began to make light to medium sporadic contacts with the enemy. During their extensive searches, they found and captured several enemy 37-mm anti-aircraft guns which were mostly scattered throughout the area north of A Shau valley, and many important caches of all kinds of supplies, particularly in the area called the "punchbowl" which was located in the 1st Brigade AO. Tactical air and artillery provided powerful support for units conducting the search effort. Also, as of 26 April, heavy drops of materiel and equipment by C-130 cargo planes were delivered at the southern end of A Luoi airfield.

From 29 April to 3 May, the ARVN 1-3 Battalion and the command post of the 3d Regiment were air lifted into the area of operation, south of the A Shau Valley where they established LZ Lucy. They were followed by the 2-3 Battalion on 30 April and the 2-1 Battalion and the regimental direct support 105-mm battery on 1 May. This completed the deployment of the 3d ARVN Regiment. Like the US 1st and 3d Brigades, all three ARVN battalions conducted reconnaissance in force operations as soon as their landings were completed. Their companies spread out around LZ Lucy in search of the enemy.

During this time, US units continued their reconnaissance in force effort with encouraging results. Most remarkable was the skillful maneuvering of the 2-8 Cav. into the "Punchbowl" base area which was heavily protected by enemy forces. Artillery and tactical air firepower was used extensively in this maneuver and destroyed several solidly fortified enemy positions in this area. By 3 May, the 2-8 Cav. was in full control of this area. Tons of enemy supplies were captured and 30 NVA troops were killed.

In conjunction with these operations, the introduction of additional support elements into LZ Stallion was continued. The 8th Engineer Battalion worked day and night on the A Luoi airfield and by 1 May, the airfield began operation with the landing of C-7As and C-123s. By

3 May, work on the lengthening of the airstrip was completed and the airfield began to accommodate C-130s as well. In the meantime, the 1st Air Cavalry Division Tactical CP, supported by elements of the 13th Signal Battalion, began to operate as of 1800 hours of 28 April.

From 4 to 7 May, after search operations in the vicinity of LZ Lucy had been completed, the ARVN 3d Regiment began conducting offensive attacks in a southeasterly direction along both banks of the Rao Lao River with its 2-1 Battalion to the north and the 2-3 Battalion to the south. The 1-3 Battalion, meanwhile, stayed back for the defense of LZ Lucy, which was now reinforced by A Battery of the 6-33 Artillery Battalion. The 3d Regiment progress met only scattered enemy resistance although ARVN troops found many important supply caches. By 7 May, units of the 3d Regiment had advanced to the limit of maximum 105-mm range from LZ Lucy. On 7 May, the 1-12 Cav. replaced the 1-3 Battalion for the defense of LZ Lucy. Another direct support artillery battery was helilifted from LZ Stallion to LZ Lucy. The 2-8 Cav., meanwhile, continued searching the "Punch Bowl" base area, retrieving enemy-captured weapons, and destroying enemy supply caches. The 1-8 also continued securing LZ Stallion by deploying rear company and platoon-size search parties to the south and east of the LZ.

While keeping up its search operations, the 3d Brigade found several supply caches and electrical and telephone wires crisscrossing the valley. Its fire support bases, which straddled the access routes to the valley, were constantly harassed by enemy B-40, 82-mm mortar, and 122-mm rocket fire.

On 8 and 9 May, the ARVN 3d Regiment moved two additional artillery batteries by helilift into LZ Lillian to extend the fire support range toward the south. LZ Lillian had been secured by the 2-3 Battalion the day before. With this additional artillery support, the 3d Regiment resumed its offensive attacks toward the A Shau airfield and soon covered the entire valley with its search parties. The US 1st and 3d Brigades, meanwhile, continued operations in their areas of responsibility. In addition to reconnaissance in force operations, the 3d Regiment and 3d Brigade also initiated extensive preparation of obstacles to impede enemy

activities after the extraction of friendly forces. The direct support engineer company of the 3d Brigade established, within the brigade AO, 32 separate obstacles which completely blocked Route 542 south of LZ Tiger. The engineer platoon supporting the 3d Regiment established 16 obstacles within the regiment's AO.

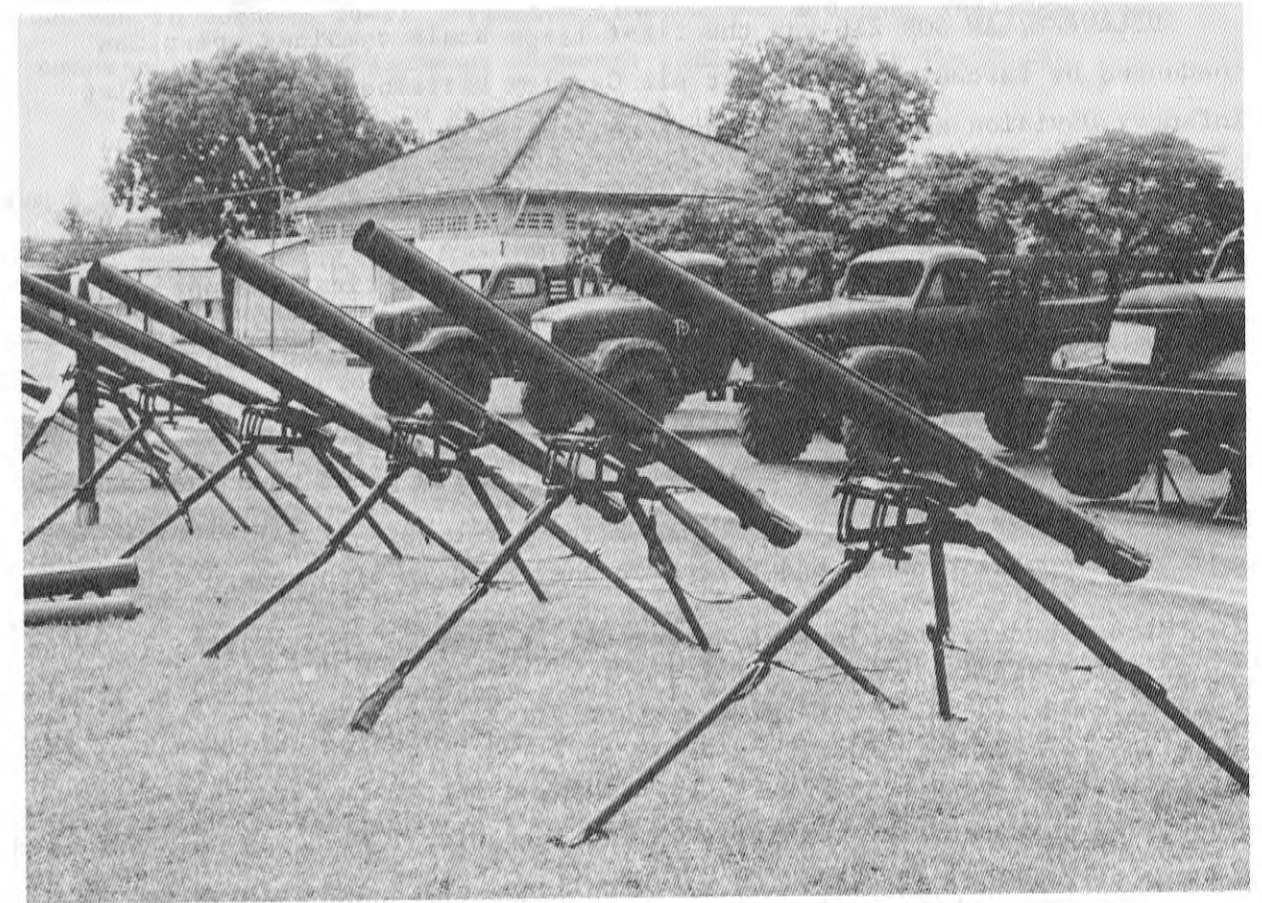
From 10 to 16 May, after completing reconnaissance-in-force operations and establishing obstacles, the 3d Brigade and 3d Regiment began to withdraw on 10 May. The 5-7 Cav. and 1-7 Cav. and artillery units moved out of LZs Tiger and Goodman by helicopters on 10 May. At the same time, the 2-1 Battalion of the 3d Regiment was helilifted to LZ Stallion (A Luoi airfield) where it boarded fixed-wing aircraft and was moved to Quang Tri. From LZ Pepper, the 2-7Cav. (-), the 3d Brigade headquarters and the artillery battery were extracted to Camp Evans. The extraction of the 3d Brigade was completed on 11 May. The 3d Regiment also completed its extraction by helicopter, to include the 1-3 and 2-3 Battalions, the regimental headquarters and the artillery battery.

Also, during the period from 10 to 15 May, the 1st Brigade continued its activities and established obstacles in its area of operation. In the meantime, logistical elements were helilifted from LZ Stallion to Camp Evans while heavy equipment were moved out by fixed-wing aircraft. Heavy rains that began in the afternoon of 11 May, however, rendered the A Luoi airfield completely unusable after that day. After establishing a total of 26 obstacles, the 1st Brigade continued to provide security for LZ Stallion during the time logistics and support elements were extricated. On 12 May, the tactical CP of the 1st Air Cavalry Division and elements of the 13th Signal Battalion were helilifted to Camp Evans. On 15 May, the 1st Brigade began extricating its units, the 1-8 Cav., 1-12 Cav., the Brigade headquarters and artillery elements from LZs Lucy and Stallion. The last units to move out of A Shau valley were the 2-8 Cav. and its artillery battery, which were helilifted out of LZ Cecile on 16 May, and the remaining elements of the 13th Signal Battalion at Signal Hill which were moved to Camp Evans on the same day.

Operation Delaware/Lam Son 216 was terminated at 1100 hours on 17 May 1968 after all US and ARVN participating units had been re-deployed to designated areas and were ready for new assignments. The results achieved by the operation were substantial. Enemy casualties amounted to 425 killed, 3 captured, and 7 returnees. Weapons, ammunition, and materiel captured included: 2 bulldozers, 73 wheeled vehicles, 3 tracked vehicles, 1 tank, 13 anti-aircraft weapons, 2,371 individual weapons, 31 crew-served weapons, 42,347 large caliber rounds, 1,521 mines and grenades, 168,879 small arm and 12.7-mm rounds and 71,805 lbs of food stores.

Continuing its combat activities, the 3d ARVN Regiment, once again in close coordination and cooperation with the 3d Air Cavalry Brigade, initiated another major combined operation just one day after the completion of operation Delaware/Lam Son 216. This operation was launched on 18 May against Secret Base 114, an important enemy base located deep in the jungles of western Thua Thien. The attached 2-1 Battalion was first deployed into the enemy base area where it established FSB Miguel. On the same day, before dark, the regimental headquarters and one 105-mm direct support artillery battery were helilifted into the LZ. The following day, 19 May, two other battalions of the 3d ARVN Regiment completed their deployment into the area of operation. The 1-3 Battalion landed and secured LZ Jose, east of Base 114. The 2-3 Battalion was also moved to LZ Jose.

As soon as the troop landings were completed, these two battalions conducted offensive operations southwestward, searching out enemy main force units and striking into the enemy tactical headquarters and logistics installations. During the entire period of operation, units of the 3d ARVN Regiment engaged the enemy in medium to heavy firefights throughout the area of operation. They discovered and destroyed many important control headquarters and logistics installations of the enemy. What was most remarkable about this follow-on operation was its duration. In close cooperation and coordination with the US 3d Air Cavalry Brigade, the 3d Regiment conducted sweeping operations and fought for 116 consecutive days.



Some Communist trucks and weapons captured in the A Shau valley, ICTZ, Operation DELAWARE/LAM SON 216, April 1968.

Farther to the north, similar combined operations were conducted by the ARVN 1st Regiment and the US 1st Air Cavalry Brigade. In close coordination with each other, both units launched repeated attacks against enemy Base 101, west of Quang Tri province. These operations were also sustained for a long time and brought about encouraging results.

DELAWARE/LAM SON 216 was the first large scale combined operation conducted by forces of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division and the ARVN 1st Infantry Division against an enemy base located deep in the jungle and mountains. Its success required a close and constant coordination and a mutual trust between the participating forces. Since it was a difficult and hazardous mission, the US 1st Air Cavalry Division at first was not enthusiastic about cooperating with ARVN forces. The combat effectiveness of the ARVN 3d Regiment was held in serious doubt by US forces. What they were unaware of was the high morale and discipline of this unit. Troops and commanders of the 3d Regiment were particularly proud when they were given the chance to operate alongside the 1st Air Cavalry Division, a unit whose combat prowess and firepower they held in high regard.

It was understandable that during this operation, the ARVN 3d Regiment was assigned the least difficult objective. The results obtained by this ARVN unit, therefore, were only modest, but the psychological impact of its participation in a difficult operation was extremely favorable among other ARVN units and the population. The operational plan was well executed and the performance of all units was excellent. This was chiefly due to a high degree of cooperation and coordination between US and ARVN forces.

The operation was also a successful test that brought about mutual trust and gave a good impetus to combined activities of US and ARVN forces in the 11th DTZ (Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces). As a result, coordination and cooperation became exceptionally good at the sector and subsector levels between ARVN and US forces on one side and territorial forces on the other. Difficulties and troubles, if any, occurred only when US and ARVN combined their efforts for the first time. After the initial steps had been taken, a spirit of cooperation and teamwork

rapidly developed and in time led to continued success. Some reluctance to cooperate existed at first on the part of a few American commanders because they were uneasy about ARVN combat effectiveness. However, after they had seen ARVN units prove themselves in combat, their prejudice disappeared and they realized that cooperation with ARVN combat elements could help make their task easier and contribute to success.

A great benefit of combined operations of this type was the rapid improvement of ARVN combat effectiveness. The 3d Regiment, until operation DELAWARE/LAMSON 216, was generally considered mediocre among ARVN regiments. But after a few months operating alongside the US 3d Air Cavalry Brigade in enemy base area 114, the 3d Regiment achieved marked progress and became one of the best ARVN combat units.

Operation LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE

Operation LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE was an ARVN-US combined operation conducted in the Vinh Loc district of Thua Thien province in mid-September 1968. The objective of the operation was to destroy enemy local units, eliminate his infrastructure and guerrillas, and ultimately restore local government control and security for the local population.

Vinh Loc district was a long and narrow island sandwiched between the sea and Thuy Tu Sound and located some 20 miles east-southeast of Hue city. Its length was 25 miles and its width, about 3 miles. Before the enemy 1968 Tet offensive, Vinh Loc had been a prosperous and relatively secure district. Its population of approximately 50,000 lived mostly by fishing and farming. During the Tet offensive, the enemy took advantage of the deteriorating situation and infiltrated local troops into the area to reinforce and expand his infrastructure. Several villages and hamlets came under enemy control. The enemy's ultimate goal was to turn Vinh Loc district into an impenetrable safe haven and staging area for his local units. As of that time, local government control was effective only

in the eastern portion of the island where about 29,000 local inhabitants and 12,500 refugees lived. The remaining 8,500 of the district population were virtually under enemy control. Enemy local forces in the area were estimated at anywhere from 2 companies to 2 battalions, not including the guerrillas and infrastructure.

From March to August 1968, Vietnamese territorial forces and US units separately conducted several screening operations in the enemy-infested area without any significant results. In general, when operating by themselves, RF and PF units met with forceful reactions from enemy local units and never fulfilled their mission. On their part, US units usually swept through objectives in the area of operation for only a short time, then quickly moved out. As a result, enemy forces either put up token resistance or avoided contact altogether by hiding themselves and waiting out operating forces. This enemy tactic was well known by the local government and Vietnamese and American units. Nothing could be effectively done against it, however, because separate efforts never gathered enough forces for a saturation effort and the idea of cooperation and coordination was yet to be willingly shared by the commanders concerned.

It was decided then that only a combined effort of US, ARVN, RF and the local government could achieve the desired results. Operation LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE was the product of detailed planning and close coordination between operating forces of both sides. The overall operational concept was to achieve tactical surprise by quick action. Strict security measures were therefore enforced to avoid disclosure of the operation plan. The last coordinating session to finalize the plan, for example, was held off until the day before D-day which was scheduled to be on 11 September. As a result, operational orders were issued to participating forces only at the last minute, allowing them just enough time to prepare for action. In addition, reconnaissance over the target area was held at a minimum; also, operational headquarters and support units were to move into position only after H-hour.

The operational plan first called for a cordon to be surreptitiously put in place utilizing all resources available. The key to success rested on denying the enemy any advance warning signs of the operation.

Then quick action was to follow with the landings of heliborne forces on the beaches. After landings, operating forces would sweep across the island during the first day. The move was designed to fragment enemy forces into separate elements and interdict all communication between them. Care was also taken to block all the routes that the enemy usually employed to evade friendly troops.

To minimize damages and casualties to the local population, preparatory fire was to be held to a minimum and support fire was to be employed only in case of significant resistance. Special precautions were taken to avoid unnecessary destruction. For the effective control and screening of the population, each operating unit was accompanied by representatives of the local government. All youths of draft age were to be temporarily detained, including those who possessed legal identification papers.

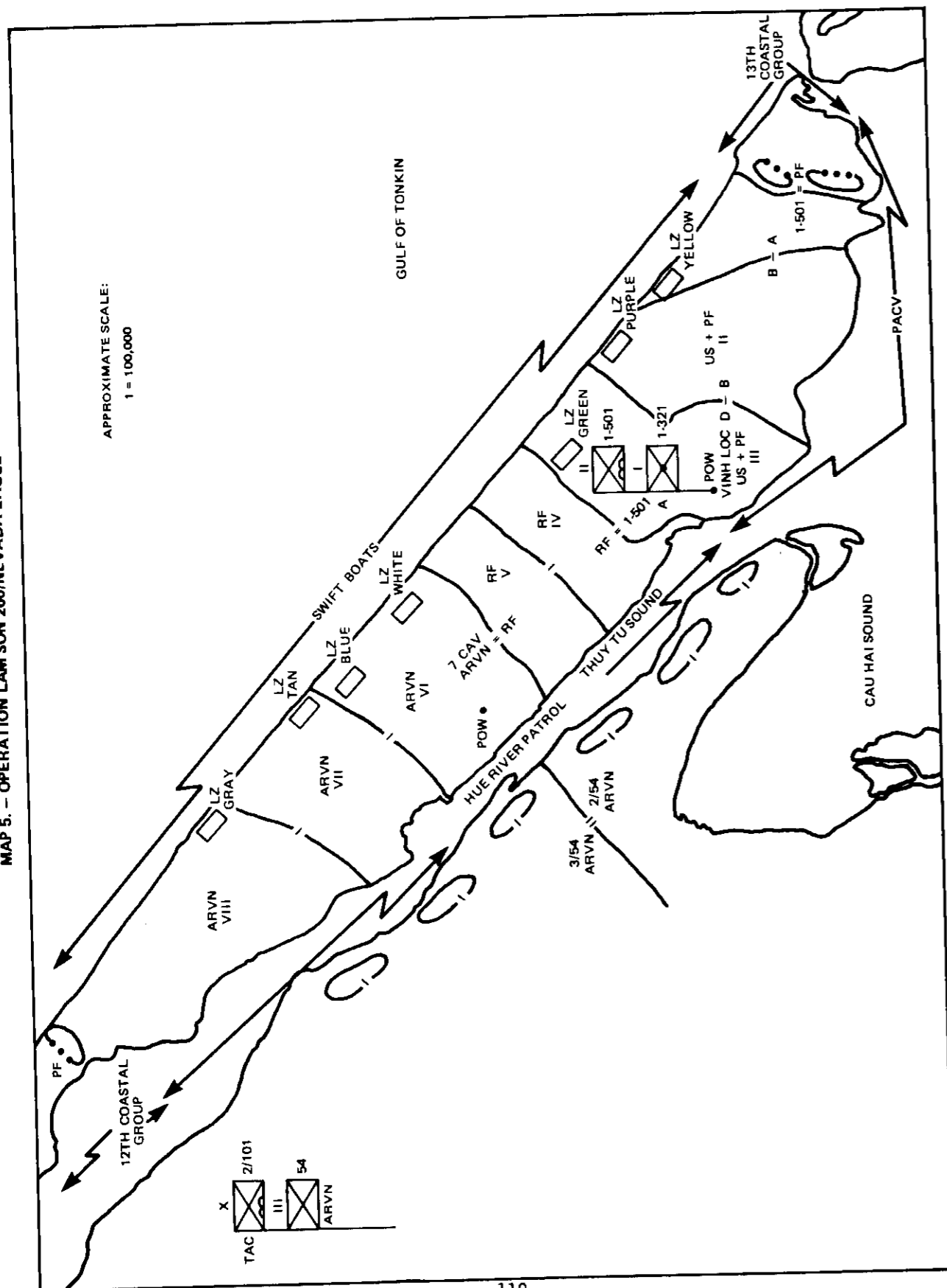
Then a careful and minute search would be conducted throughout the island. As soon as they were introduced into their areas of operations, participating units would quickly fan out and search. The search was to be thorough and systematic. Information provided by the local government, population, prisoners, or returnees and any other sources would be instantly exploited to give focus to the search effort.

The operational plan carefully detailed the task organization of participating forces which were composed of blocking forces, a maneuver element, and control and special elements. (Chart 7)

1. Blocking forces consisted of 2 battalions of the 54th Regiment, 1st ARVN Infantry Division, deployed in Phu Thu district; 1 company of the 1/501st, 101st US Airborne Division, deployed on the Phu Vang - Vinh Loc border for 10 September only; 7 PF platoons, 5 of which were deployed to Vinh Loc and 2 to Phu Vang; 2 ARVN Coastal Groups (12th and 13th), 1 Patrol Boat River Group, USN, and 1 Patrol Air Cushion Vehicle Group, USN, all deployed on the Thuy Tu Sound; and 1 Swift Boat Group, USN, in the ocean screening the coast.

2. The maneuver element was composed of the 1st Battalion, 54th Regiment, 1st ARVN Infantry Division, assigned to the western half of the island; the 1/501 Battalion, 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, assigned to the eastern half; 1 squadron of the 7th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 1st

MAP 5. - OPERATION LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE



meanwhile, moved into positions along the beach in the center portion of the island. The 1/501st Battalion, as scheduled, alighted at three landing zones on the eastern half: Green, Purple and Yellow. By 1100 hours, all forces were moving southward across the island and by 1700 hours, they had swept through the last assigned targets located along the southern bank of the island.

During the first day of the operation, there were medium scale engagements with the enemy. Caught entirely by surprise, enemy troops did not have time to take evasive action or bury their weapons. They either surrendered or were captured. When the first day was over, more than 300 suspects had been detained. During the night, friendly forces consolidated their blocking positions and placed extensive ambushes over the avenues that the enemy might use to exfiltrate from the area. The entire island was illuminated by flares throughout the night.

On the second day of the operation, 12 September, friendly units began a careful search as they moved slowly back toward the sea. Each area of responsibility was minutely and methodically combed. During the operation, Vietnamese units proved their efficiency in thorough search techniques; patience was the key to their productiveness. As they continued the search, they made use of every bit of information provided by prisoners, returnees or the local population. Each source would accompany the search unit to the suspected area and guide our troops in their search. This method proved to be most effective and was used throughout the operation. Suspects were sent to the district headquarters where they were interrogated and screened by the combined intelligence elements. The interrogation and screening task was performed day and night, without interruption.

The heaviest engagement of the operation occurred on 12 September between US troops and the enemy. The 1/501 Battalion encircled the enemy C-3 local force company in an area about 2 miles east of the district headquarters. Caught in an open ricefield area, the entire enemy company surrendered after putting up a fierce resistance. Only 20 enemy troops succeeded in escaping the encirclement.

Throughout the operation, psywar activities were also pushed vigorously. Two loudspeaker teams accompanied friendly troops during the search. In

addition, our aircraft flew many broadcast and leaflet-drop missions. The local inhabitants were urged to stay calm and not to be afraid of friendly troops. They were persuaded that once enemy installations and troops were destroyed, they would enjoy complete security under government control. These psywar activities proved to be effective in controlling the population and persuading several enemy troops to surrender.

Operation LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE lasted ten days. By the last day, 20 September 1968, results obtained were substantial. The enemy lost 154 killed, 370 taken prisoners (including 126 VCI members, 155 guerrillas, 68 local force troops and 21 main force VC and NVA troops), and 56 returnees. A total of 1,970 suspects were detained and processed. Among them, 30 were found to be criminals; 55 were held for further investigation, and 139 youths volunteered for military service in the ARVN. According to one captured VC warrant officer, from 80 to 90 percent of VC cadres and troops in the island were killed or captured. The enemy was thus dealt a resounding defeat. Casualties on the friendly side were unusually light. Only one member of the propaganda team and one policeman were killed, and 12 wounded (7 ARVN, 3 US, 2 RF). Damages caused to the local population were also minimal: only 2 civilians were wounded and 3 grass huts were destroyed by fire.

Immediately after the completion of the military operation, a pacification program was initiated throughout the area. Two Rural Development teams had been brought in to Vinh Loc district on 18 September 1968, two days before the operation was terminated. Together with RF and PF units, they were assigned to organize local defense and re-establish local administration. At the same time, People's Self Defense teams were also activated in every village and hamlet throughout the district.

The local population of Vinh Loc district were greatly encouraged by the happy turn of events. They were all determined to return and rebuild their villages. In particular, they expressed the desire to see US and ARVN units continue their activities in the district until security became total. They requested very little assistance and relief from the district government, except for medicine and corrugated iron sheets for

roofing. The district of Vinh Loc recovered rapidly under government control. Market places and schools were repaired rapidly and the local economy regained its normal prosperity within a few months. Afterward, the people of Vinh Loc district lived in complete security under the effective protection of popular and self-defense forces. This situation was maintained throughout the following years until the very last days of the RVN.

Some outstanding lessons were learned from operation LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE. First of all, it was recognized that the policy of minimizing damage and casualties to the local population worked to the advantage of friendly troops and the government. This is a principle that ought to be applied to any operation conducted in a populated area. Fewer casualties and less damage means less burden for the government and less misery for the population. There is more cooperation with operating troops when it is realized that they come to protect and not to destroy. The LAM SON 260/NEVADA EAGLE operation succeeded because all commanders operated under this principle and took extra precautions.

The participation of provincial civilian and para-military forces proved to be very beneficial in this operation. Information concerning enemy whereabouts was instantly exploited and used. Also, there was less confusion and fear among innocent detainees. Local self-defense forces were employed to assist in searching their own villages. In the operation, 20 SDF members were helilifted to a search area where they effectively assisted US forces in rooting out the VCI.

The combined interrogation center functioned effectively and provided valuable information to operating forces. Its success hinged on good organization, continuous operation, instant exploitation of sources and innovative ideas. On 12 September, for example, a total of 212 suspects were routed to the center at one time. Their processing took less than two hours. Instead of lengthy interrogations, the police officers simply asked them to move to one side if they belong to the K-4 Battalion, and to the other if they belonged to the C-118 Company. Sixty-three among them instinctively did as they were told, thus, unwittingly giving themselves away.

Popular Forces platoons for a period of several months until the PF platoons were considered effective enough to defend the hamlets by themselves. The program was initiated at first around US bases and along National Route 1, then expanded outward until local security had improved to the degree that the Marines were no longer needed. At this level, the program was tremendously beneficial to the GVN pacification effort. As a matter of fact, it was the district chiefs who designated target hamlets for the CAP in accordance with pacification objectives and local conditions. Despite the fact that the program achieved remarkable success, it was not pursued on a country-wide basis since, unfortunately, it required considerable US manpower. Considering its achievements, one may wonder what the CAP would have contributed to the overall pacification effort, had the program been made a systematic and continuous combined US-RVN endeavor throughout the country. It was understandable that US forces were primarily concerned with destroying enemy main forces but it was also important to eliminate the enemy infrastructure which was at the root of insecurity. The commitment of US forces in this effort would have been entirely justifiable. Similar types of effort were made by US Army units elsewhere since 1965 but were not systematically continued due to the priority given to combat operations.

General Westmoreland felt that Saigon, the national capital, and its surrounding districts should be given priority in the common military effort since they involved the prestige of the GVN. The ARVN and territorial units which were assigned for the defense of this important area, therefore, should also be made effective. As a result, he directed, in late 1966, the initiation of Operation FAIRFAX, the first large-scale combined effort ever attempted, in which American and Vietnamese battalions were paired and tasked to support pacification in three key districts of Gia Dinh province surrounding Saigon. It was General Westmoreland's desire that US battalions, by participating in combat operations in a populated center, would inspire ARVN regular and territorial units and instill confidence among the population. The three participating US battalions were able to provide considerable combat support resources for the operation since they were subordinate to three different US infantry divisions.

Operation FAIRFAX, which lasted the entire year of 1967, was initially troubled by coordination and control problems. US and ARVN units, as a matter of fact, operated more on the basis of cooperation and mutual respect under the control of the district chiefs involved. Since the district chiefs, who were company-grade officers, were outranked by both US and ARVN unit commanders and not usually held in high regard by the latter, problems were bound to occur. In the absence of higher command directives, minor issues frequently developed into major problems. This situation changed for the better, however, when the 5th ARVN Ranger Group and the US 199th Light Infantry Brigade took over and assumed responsibility for the conduct of the combined effort. Coordination and control became more effective and the operation was termed a success when the US 199th Light Infantry Brigade was redeployed in November 1967 leaving only Ranger and territorial forces in charge.

After the enemy Tet offensive in 1968, combined operations of this type became more common. In principle, ARVN units remained under Vietnamese commanders although their headquarters were frequently collocated in the same base with US counterpart units. There were many cases, however, where small units such as platoons or squads were exchanged or cross-attached between US and Vietnamese units. In I Corps Tactical Zone, Lieutenant General Richard G. Stilwell, the new XXIV Corps Commander, went a step further when he suggested the integration of all US and ARVN tactical operations in his area of responsibility. His idea highly inspired me, who, as commander of the 1st ARVN Infantry Division at that time, was his counterpart. Jointly, we began to conceive operations and each of us contributed his share of the forces. Our units acted in concert under a virtual unified command since both of us were always in perfect harmony. We also encouraged the collocation of US brigade and ARVN regimental command posts in the same fire support base, since we were agreed that this provided closer and better coordination in tactical matters. General Stilwell was an indefatigable, energetic and devoted field commander. He and I usually worked very closely together and spent most of our days in the same helicopter visiting our units. It was my privilege to have been afforded the opportunity to cooperate with him

and earn his trust. Our association was truly a working relationship inspired by the professional interest shared with each other and was in contrast to the superficial politeness that characterized so many other similar relationships. And I think that our joint efforts brought about results which highly benefited the common cause we pursued.

The practice that we adopted was fully supported by Major General Melvin Zais, Commander of the US 101st Airborne Division, who succeeded General Stilwell in 1969. He applied similar methods along the same line in the 1st Marine and the Americal Divisions. The Americal Division, however, had for some time conducted combined operations with the ARVN 2d Infantry Division. The marked improvement of this unit's effectiveness was largely due to these combined operations. The success achieved by the Americal Division could be ascribed to its practice of establishing common tactical areas of responsibility for both US brigades and ARVN regiments and collocating their command posts at the same base camp.

In II Corps Tactical Zone, a combined operations program was initiated by Lieutenant General William R. Peers, commander of US I Field Force in early 1968, with the cooperation of his counterpart, Lieutenant General Lu Lan, Commander of ARVN II Corps. With the US 4th Infantry Division guarding the central highland approaches, Generals Peers and Lu Lan began the "Pair off" program which combined forces of the US 173d Airborne Brigade and the ARVN 22d and 23d Infantry Divisions. This concept was later expanded to include Vietnamese artillery and other combat support units. There were some drawbacks, however, in operational coordination and cooperation due to the considerable separation of the Headquarters of II Corps and I US Field Force and the relative lukewarmness of participating ARVN field commanders.

In III Corps Tactical Zone, similar efforts were later made by the commander of US II Field Force, Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell. In mid-1969, General Ewell, in cooperation with Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri, Commander of III Corps, initiated the Dong Tien (Progress Together) program which paired the 1st and 25th US Infantry Divisions and the 199th Light Infantry Brigade with the ARVN 5th, 25th and 18th Infantry Divisions

respectively. Combined operations were most extensively conducted by the 1st US and 5th ARVN Infantry Divisions, and prepared ARVN units to assume almost all of the 1st US Division area of operation when it was redeployed in 1970. On the border areas, II Field Force paired Vietnamese Airborne brigades with those of the 1st US Cavalry Division (Airmobile). In time, the ARVN Airborne units became proficient in heliborne operations thanks to the large resources and modern methods used by US units. The Dong Tien program proved invaluable training for ARVN units which later successfully conducted the cross-border operation into Cambodia without significant US support.

Combined operations programs, conceived as a means of improving ARVN combat effectiveness, were a successful training vehicle. Not only did ARVN units improve markedly and become more proficient in modern warfare methods, but ARVN leadership also became more aggressive as a result of the fine examples displayed by US field commanders. In retrospect, these programs truly paved the way for Vietnamese commanders to assume new responsibilities as US forces began to withdraw. In contrast, combined operations certainly were not all crowned with success. There were difficulties and problems generated by human and procedural factors. The association with US units and their abundant resources also developed certain psychological conditioning and habits among ARVN unit troops and commanders which proved to be adverse in the long run. For the purpose of this monograph, the author proposes to examine in detail each of the four above-mentioned programs.

The Combined Action Program

Shortly after their landing in I Corps Tactical Zone, the Marines began a pacification program in the populated areas near Da Nang. The key to this program was the combined action concept whose basic premise was that rapport with the local population was both a military necessity and a prerequisite for permanent security. The problem of winning over the allegiance of the rural population was one of the most difficult challenges of the war, not only for the government of South Vietnam but also for the US forces who came to its assistance. This was a unique and unprecedented

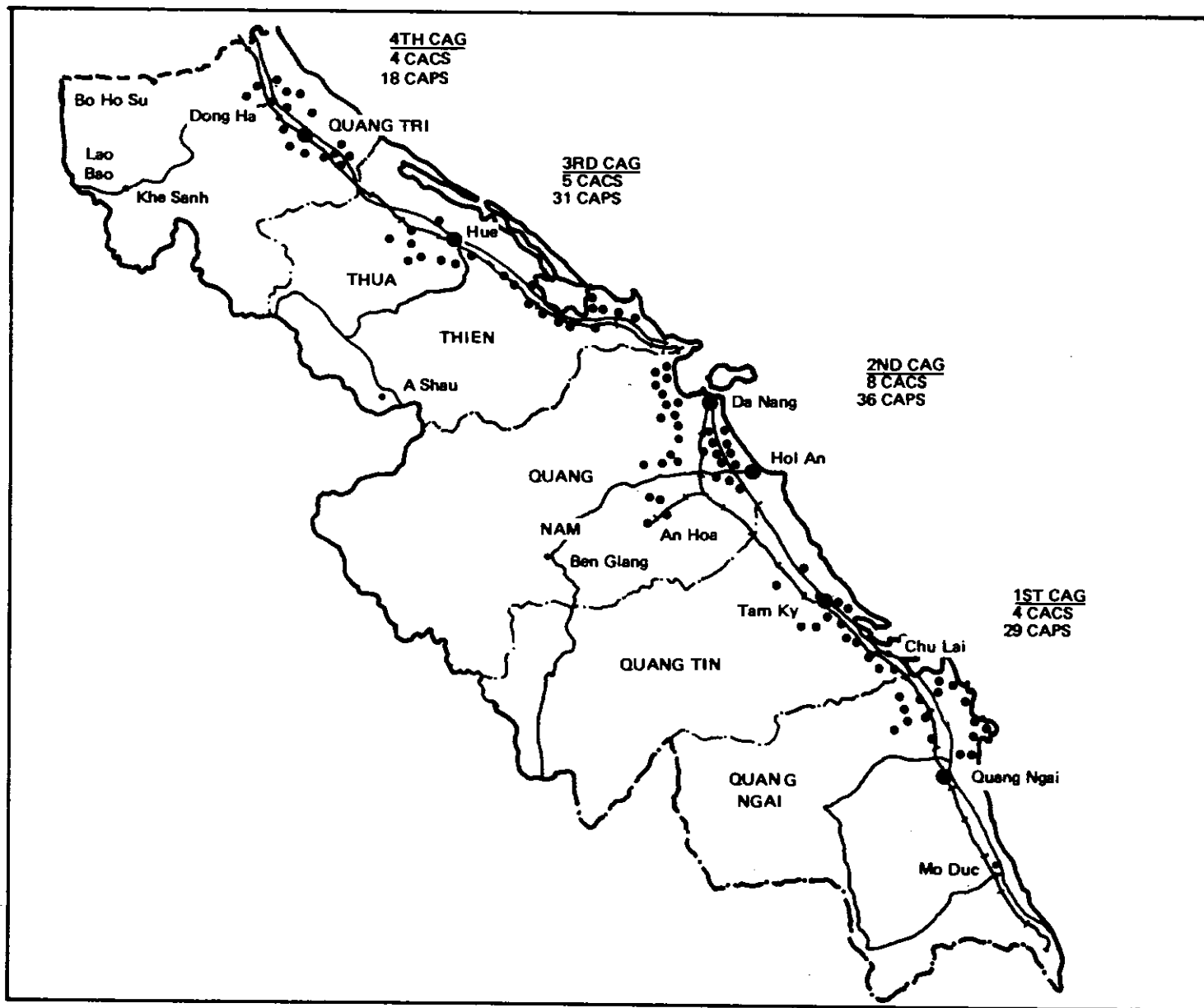
problem for American tactical commanders. Traditionally, American military doctrine, tactics, and training were geared to fight a conventional war; and little thought had been given to the political and psychological aspects of the type of war fought in South Vietnam, where many battles took place in the very midst of the rural populace. To overcome this problem, the approach employed by the Marines was to seek rapport with the rural population through the Popular Forces (PF), who were stationed throughout the villages and hamlets. Because these PF units were locally recruited, they enjoyed the advantage of knowing the local area and people, including the local enemy. In contrast, they were in general poorly equipped and deficient in leadership and training. These were deficiencies which could be overcome by US resources, leadership and know-how.

The method used by US Marines was to train by example, and the principle applied was to integrate a number of Marines at the lowest levels with PF units. The combined action concept thus was a happy marriage between two different elements who mutually reinforced and compensated for each other's weaknesses. In such an arrangement, PF units benefited from US firepower, communications with larger units, and medical evacuation. Conversely, US Marines were able to overcome some of the disadvantages of being foreigners.

The Combined Action Program started in August 1965 with a combined action company (CAC) composed of from three to twelve combined action platoons (CAP) initially assigned to the area around Hue city. It grew to 79 platoons grouped into 14 companies in 1967 and by November 1969, reached a total of 114 platoons grouped into 20 companies spread throughout the populated lowlands of all five provinces of I CTZ. (Map 6) These CAPs provided security for some 350 hamlets and protection for about 135,000 villagers. In manpower, the program involved about 2,000 Marines and Navy Corpsmen and approximately 3,000 PF troops.

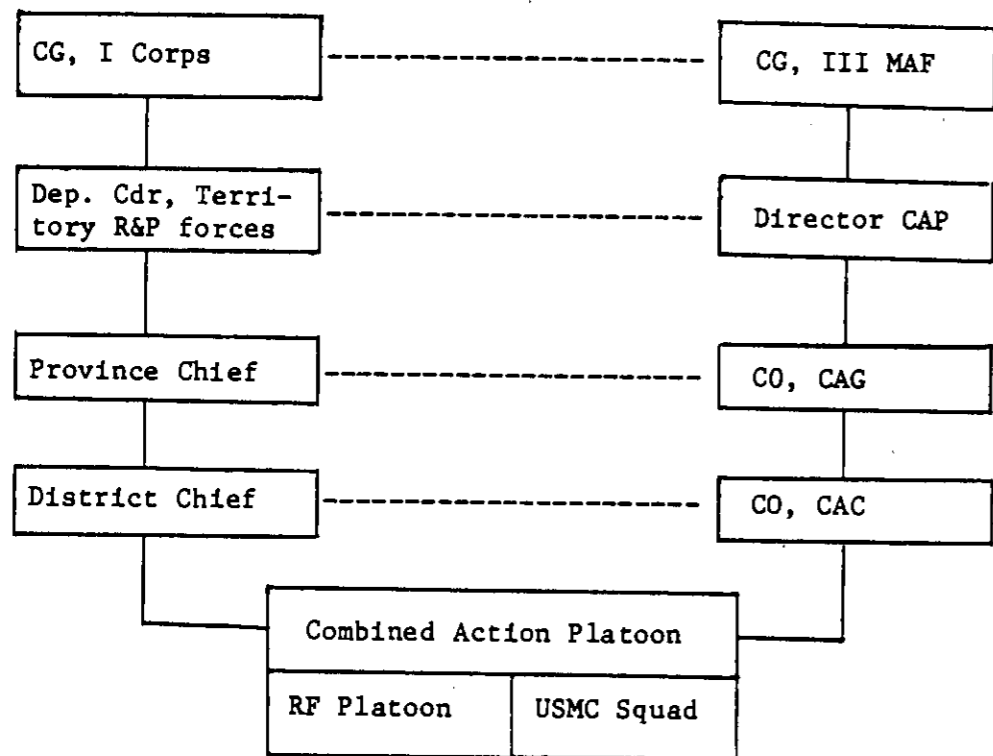
Control and coordination headquarters for the CAPs existed at the District, Province, and Corps levels. The 114 CAPs were organized into 20 companies (CAC) which in turn were controlled by four Combined Action Groups (CAG). In general, company headquarters corresponded to and were collocated with District headquarters; group headquarters corresponded

MAP 6. - COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM, ICTZ, NOVEMBER 1969



with and were usually located near Province headquarters. At Corps level, coordination was performed between the Director, Combined Action Program, and the Deputy Commander for Territory, I Corps, who in turn reported to the commanders of III MAF and I Corps, respectively. (Chart 8)

Coordination and Control
Combined Action Program
(Chart 8)



Basically, each Combined Action Platoon was composed of a USMC squad and a PF platoon. The USMC squad had 15 men, including the squad leader, 1 grenadier, 1 corpsman and 3 fire teams of four Marines each. The PF platoon, in theory, had 35 men, to include the platoon leader, a headquarters of 4 men and 3 rifle squads of ten men each. In total, the aggregated strength of a CAP was 50 men (15 USMC and 35 PF). In practice, however, the PF strength was never fulfilled due to various manpower problems encountered by the GVN. Initially, the CAPs were placed under operational control of the Marine commander of the tactical area of responsibility in which the CAP operated. In time, however, since the Marine element lived and worked with the PF and pacification being the primary mission, CAPs were placed under operational control of the local district chief.

Both the Popular Force and USMC elements of the Combined Action Platoon were assigned the following mission:

1. Destroy the enemy infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility.
2. Provide military security and help maintain law and order.
3. Protect the friendly governmental structure.
4. Protect bases and lines of communication within the village and hamlets by conducting day and night patrols and ambushes in the assigned area.
5. Contribute to combined operations with RF, ARVN, FWMAF and other PF units in the assigned area.
6. Participate in civic action and conduct psychological operations against the enemy.
7. Participate and assist in rural development to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the accomplishment of the foregoing tasks.

In addition, the US Marine element had the mission of providing military training to the PF troops in order to prepare them for more effective performance of their tasks when the Marines were relocated to another area.

Almost all Marines participating in the Combined Action Program were volunteers assigned directly from the US. A few volunteers came from III MAF units. Regardless of their origin, all Marines were screened for adaptability to the program; after selection, they attended a two-week CAP school at Da Nang before going to their CAGs for subsequent assignment to the CAPs. Some Marines later came back for intensive Vietnamese language training at Da Nang. Perhaps the foremost requirements for adaptability to the problem were the willingness to undergo hardship and above all, an affection for the Vietnamese people. In all frankness, we had to admit the cold fact that not all Marines—and US troops by extension—understood and warmed to the local Vietnamese people. While it appears doubtful that as many as 40% of the Marines disliked the Vietnamese, as claimed by a knowledgeable author, the fact was a Marine could not live and work with them unless he sympathized with and came to like them.¹ After all, this was a volunteer, not an assigned job, and a CAP Marine could quit any time he chose. The turnover rate, happily, was rather small throughout the entire duration of the program. There were even some CAP Marines who extended their tour of duty voluntarily for a period of three or more months.

A Combined Action Platoon was assigned to work with a village. Marines lived and worked with the PF in the village itself. They trained the PF in the daytime and, together with the PF, conducted patrols and ambushes at night. The headquarters of each CAP was a fortified compound consisting of several barbed wire fences, heavily sandbagged bunkers and a network of trenches. This was where the Marines and PF ate and slept, and worked in the daytime. The CAP headquarters was also a safe haven where the village chief and RD cadres sometimes spent their night. By any standards, living conditions in the compound were spartan: there was no electricity and no running water. At night about 6 Marines and 10 PFs guarded the compound, normally at 50% alert. The rest of the CAP

¹F. J. West, Jr., The Village (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p 11.

was out patrolling and laying ambushes. Patrols usually started at dusk and were conducted only as a means to drop off ambush squads or teams, generally two or three each night.

Tactics employed by the CAPs were founded on three basic principles: tactical mobility, economy of force, and credible permanence. Although a CAP did man and guard a headquarters compound, it did not defend the village or hamlet from behind bunkers and barricades. The basic tactical idea was to lay out a screen of ambushes on the approaches to the hamlet instead of putting up a static defense wall around it. The hamlet was usually manned by Popular Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). This kind of mobility was also used most effectively by the enemy. It instilled a psychology of offense, not of defense, and embodied, in practice, the precept of "defense through offense." Coupled with stealth, the kind of mobility practiced by the CAP provided not only offensive striking power, but also the protection afforded by elusiveness. By virtue of this quality of elusive mobility, the CAP seemed to be everywhere but never predictably anywhere. The unpredictability of CAP ambushes was the basis of CAP security against surprise attacks by overwhelming enemy forces and what was more important, it insured that the enemy would never feel safe anywhere in a CAP area of operations.

When a CAP first moved into an area, the Marines had to concentrate on basics and usually took a large share of the more dangerous duties. There always tended to be intense action and frequent contacts in the beginning before the enemy activity tapered off. Then the PF gradually took over, becoming more aggressive and more confident of themselves. Being a small element, the CAP, of necessity, had to apply the principle of economy of force. Its tactic was to combine a minimum of personnel with a maximum of firepower. In the presence of an enemy force, the CAP exposed only a small target yet was able to bring down the firepower of a Marine battalion in terms of air and artillery support. The CAP did not operate independently. Marine units usually conducted larger operations in the CAP's area, utilizing CAP personnel as guides and as a source of intelligence. These units also provided quick reaction forces to support the CAP in an emergency. In general, however, CAPs were capable of defending themselves against enemy local units.

The third principle of CAP tactics was that of credible permanence. The PF, being recruited from the local area, were villagers by nature. Like the PF, the CAP Marines were also villagers in that they lived with the PF and among the local population long enough to become known and befriended by the villagers. Their stay partook of permanence since they would remain as long as they were needed. In a sense, the CAP was practically "married" to the people, the village administrative structure, and the land. This quality of permanence was one of the characteristics that set the CAP apart from regular infantry units and accounted for its success among the local population. The CAP, as a secondary effort, also conducted civic action, not so much for what it could physically achieve with its limited manpower, but as a means of getting local officials involved in helping the people.

There was no question that the Combined Action Program had a generally good record. US Marines were fond of saying that no village under a CAP ever reverted to enemy control. That was true as long as the US protective shield was nearby. More meaningful, however, was the number of villages that ultimately no longer needed Marine protection. As a matter of fact, when Marines began to withdraw late in 1969, the security picture in I Corps rural areas was never so bright. The advantages of the CAP were obvious. It provided continuous protection to the village; it trained and motivated a local self defense force; and it was a potential source for the type of intelligence that would ultimately break the enemy infrastructure.

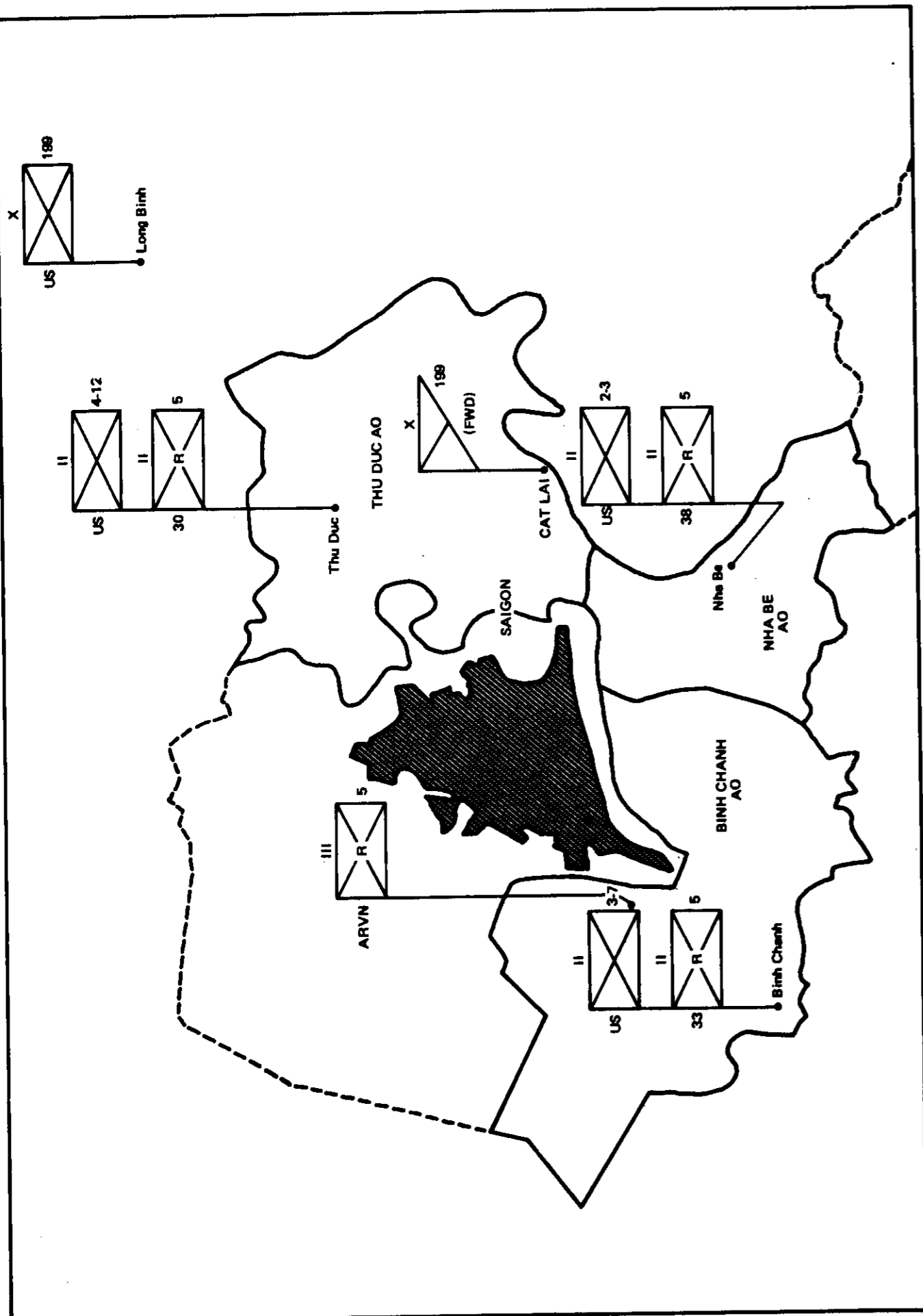
The presence of the CAP was a source of frustration to the enemy who attempted unsuccessfully to counter it. As a matter of fact, the enemy was able to destroy some of the CAP headquarters compounds by means of surprise attacks in force. But he never destroyed a mobile CAP. The effectiveness of the CAPs was demonstrated by the fact that wherever they were located, the enemy was denied his source of manpower because he was denied a free hand in recruiting and intimidation. The enemy was also denied his source of food since he found it too risky to run rice parties through the ubiquitous CAP ambushes. He was no longer able to collect his taxes of money or rice or enlist the support of the villagers. His source of intelligence gradually dried up as the villagers

cooperated more fully with their PF and Marine protectors. Finally, the stability and credibility of the GVN was greatly enhanced when village officials could safely stay in their homes at night and the common people no longer feared reprisals from the enemy.

On the minus side, the CAP was costly in terms of American manpower. The Marines and the GVN wanted to expand the CAP, but MACV could not spare the manpower and instead developed the concept of Mobile Training Teams (MTT) to replace the CAPs. There were also difficulties in command relationship in some instances between the CAP and the local district chief. In one case, two village chiefs were summarily removed because they had received favorable publicity and eminence from close cooperation with US Marines. I Corps Tactical Zone was an area where local politics played a great role, chiefly at the district and village levels. The VNQDD (Vietnam Nationalist Party) and the Dai Viet parties had ramifications and influence among the population. Many able PF platoon leaders were dismissed or transferred because of their political affiliation, much to the chagrin of the Marines who only knew the military and professional aspect of the problem. After living a long time in the village, some Marines tended to become too independent and sometimes acted in defiance of their superiors. Fortunately, these cases of insubordination were few. In other cases, Marine energy and initiative tended to overshadow local Vietnamese military and civilian leadership whereas the real goal was to help these leaders become less dependent on American presence.

When the Americal Division took over the Marines area of responsibility in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces in mid-1969, it continued the Combined Action Program with some modifications. The program was renamed Combined Unit Pacification Program (CUPP) although its basic concept was similar. The CUPP basic unit was the company whose squads were assigned to work with PF platoons like the Marines. But unlike the CAP Marines who were all volunteers assigned directly from the US and who stayed as members of a CAP for their entire tour, the Army squads which replaced them were not. Members of a CUPP unit were still part of an infantry company and continued to associate with it. The Marines employed the tactical mobility concept, without defense walls or perimeters. In

MAP 7. - FAIRFAX/RANG DONG AREA OF OPERATION - 1967



Since Fairfax was essentially a pacification operation, US and ARVN battalions were instructed to support the district chief and work for him. The rationale behind this was that operations would be no better than the intelligence provided by the district chief and he was in fact the government representative in the area. This cooperation was achieved through the establishment of an Area Security Coordination Council (ASCC) which was composed of the American and Vietnamese battalion commanders and the district chief. These principals met every few days to plan and coordinate the overall effort. The ADCC had no chairman or executive authority. All decisions were, therefore, based on mutual agreement or compromise. In essence, these meetings were the means of formalizing decisions before each of the three members issued orders through his own chain of command.

Other innovations in cooperation and coordination were the creation of a Combined Intelligence Center (CIC) and a Civic Action Coordination Center (CACC) which were in fact subcommittees of the ASCC and assisted the latter in matters concerning intelligence and civic actions. To motivate and gain the cooperation of the many different Vietnamese and American agencies involved, the US battalion S-2 served as the spearhead of the new combined intelligence effort which included the ARVN Battalion S-2, the district S-2 and Military Security Service, and the GVN combat police. The CACC was composed of the S-5s of the district and US battalion, the ARVN battalion and USAID representatives. The entire effort relied on voluntary cooperation. The CIC was in effect an attempt to organize a clearing house for the flow of various intelligence inputs. Its product was distributed to all members involved. Two helpful by-products of this effort were the creation of a combined interrogation section and a combined intelligence reaction force whose success greatly enhanced cooperation and enthusiasm.

The method of operation was a mixture of cross-attachment, pair-off, and integration. Since both battalions had four organic rifle companies, a company from each battalion was placed in direct support of the other battalion and vice-versa. The attached company was further broken down by exchanging platoons with the remaining two companies of the battalion. On many occasions, ARVN, RF, PF and US squads worked together. An

additional area of emphasis was the requirement to provide maximum training to the district RF and PF units. This was accomplished by placing at least two PF soldiers in every American squad on a continuing basis.

The size of operations varied greatly. Several operations each month involved all eight rifle companies. On the other hand, combined platoons often conducted independent missions away from their parent units. Movement was by foot, helicopter and boat. While daylight operations were not normally smaller than platoon size, the basic unit for night ambushes was the combined squad. Under this system, the two battalions could saturate the district with over forty ambushes on a given night.

Specialized operations were also a part of the overall effort. Each week the intermixed units carefully cordoned and searched various villages in cooperation with district police forces. After several months experience and after the enemy main force units suffered heavy casualties, Fairfax forces shifted emphasis to small unit antiguerrilla tactics. This effort was a marked success. By breaking down into many small units and by moving constantly, the combined unit practically saturated the area of operation and effectively deterred enemy movement and resupply throughout the districts. Another tactic contributing to the success of Fairfax operation was the concentration of both day and night operations around selected villages identified as main sources of enemy subsistence. Also coordinated with saturation patrols and selective operations was the use of around-the-clock harassment and interdiction artillery fire and air strikes on the inaccessible enemy base areas which in fact drove the enemy either away from or into the area of infantry operations or into ambushes.

A movement control system was also initiated which designated certain key areas as off limits either to all movement, movement by sampans or motorized sampans, or movement without a special pass during curfew hours or even during daytime. Despite its military effectiveness, this movement control sometimes had to be suspended or modified in the interests of the local people who were in general farmers, workers, or merchants.

A training program for both the ARVN battalion and the RF-PF units went along concurrently with field operations. The battalion training program began at squad level and culminated in a battalion test administered by the American battalions. The three battalions of the 5th Ranger Group

completed training in September and then were given a five-day concluding evaluation exercise. By November, all units were rated combat ready and as of December, the 5th Ranger Group assumed responsibility for military operations in the CMD with only a small US advisory element. To upgrade RF and PF units, US battalions tried a number of methods. First, there was a limited version of the Marine CAP concept. An American squad moved into a RF-PF outpost for a period of from two to four weeks. During the day, American and Vietnamese worked together to rebuild defensive positions using American materials following a joint plan approved by the district chief. In addition, the US squad gave weapons training and conducted practice firing. At night Americans and Vietnamese set up joint ambushes. Later the 199th Brigade formed Mobile Advisory Teams (MAT) which moved throughout the province assisting both RF-PF units and RD cadre teams.

Judged from the results obtained, there was no doubt that Fairfax operation was a success. It was the result of extensive planning and it received direct attention from the USMACV commander himself. The overall objective was achieved since security in Gia Dinh province improved remarkably. Over a thousand enemy were killed and 40 chose to return to our side. Enemy activity in general was severely disrupted although his infrastructure was not affected in any serious way. His efforts to reestablish his once-strong influence in the area surrounding Saigon, especially in Binh Chanh district, were largely negated.

The Fairfax operation lasted about one year. Over this period of time, it did produce a dramatic change, but a guarantee of long term results could not be expected. It generated a favorable mood of cooperation between US and ARVN units and also between ARVN units, the RF-PF, and the people. ARVN and RF-PF units performance improved markedly as a result of the example set by US battalions, their close association with the US battalions, the exchange of combat units, and the sharing of abundant American resources. They performed their mission well but were still not fully committed to the people. By contrast, US units developed good rapport with the local population, whom they zealously helped through civic actions. There were some reasons which could explain this apparent paradox. A major reason was that requests to assist the farmer, who

probably lived better than the ARVN dependent, was not a reasonable demand in the ARVN soldier's eyes. Many of them wondered why they were not the ones to be assisted instead. Also ARVN units had very few resources with which to carry out civic actions. There were also the problems of ARVN leadership and discipline that probably would take a long time to be resolved and this depended on the dedication and examples of higher command leadership. In the special case of Fairfax, the US units proved that they could work well with the people and obtain their confidence over a period of time. The fine conduct of American troops perhaps was a backlash for their ARVN counterparts since it showed how differently they behaved.

On the negative side, first of all, there was no single chain of command. The ASCC was a good coordinating structure but did not provide for clear-cut command and control. Decisions were compromises between the individual interests of the US battalion commander, his ARVN counterpart and the district chief. The interplay of their personalities was the key to success. The critical factor in this arrangement was the district chief who was the junior in military rank, yet seemed to enjoy a greater power than the ARVN battalion commander. The CIC, although an excellent concept at the district level, was plagued by the scarcity of trained and qualified intelligence personnel. There was also the language problem which resulted in more time spent for planning, coordination, and execution and, not infrequently, in outright misunderstandings. The lack of interpreters at lower level combined units such as platoons and squads also impeded the joint effort to some extent.

In short, the Fairfax approach was not as permanent as the Marine CAP, and the relocation of US units was deemed somewhat premature. Here again, as elsewhere, American presence, initiative, drive, and resources were instrumental in gaining success, for a time. The permanent danger was that the ARVN had become psychologically and materially too dependent on Americans.

The Pair-Off Concept

The pair-off concept was instituted in II Corps Tactical Zone in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive as an offspring of the "one war" concept then embraced by MACV. Prior to this time, cooperation and coordination in II CTZ, in particular during the enemy offensive, was rather spasmodic and ineffective. The US I Field Force and ARVN II Corps usually operated separately, each concerned with and confined to its own responsibilities. While US forces sought out and fought enemy main force units in outlying areas of the central highlands, II Corps forces generally limited their activities to pacification support in the lowland coastal areas and populated centers. This was a reasonable division of tasks given the rugged and sprawling terrain and the relative ineffectiveness of ARVN units at that time.

It was then decided that since enemy forces, whether regular or local, were but one, the war effort should also be one. The key to success was now to exploit effectively the advantages of each national force while minimizing its disadvantages. To US forces, it was like fighting with blindfolds because the enemy was hard to distinguish. Hence, they preferred to keep to their own areas of operation. ARVN units, by contrast, knew the enemy and the terrain well but could not sustain combat for a lengthy duration, nor could they effectively plan and employ US combat support assets. Besides, accustomed as they were to the brushfire actions of pacification support, there was no way they could get off the ground and look the enemy main force units squarely in the face.

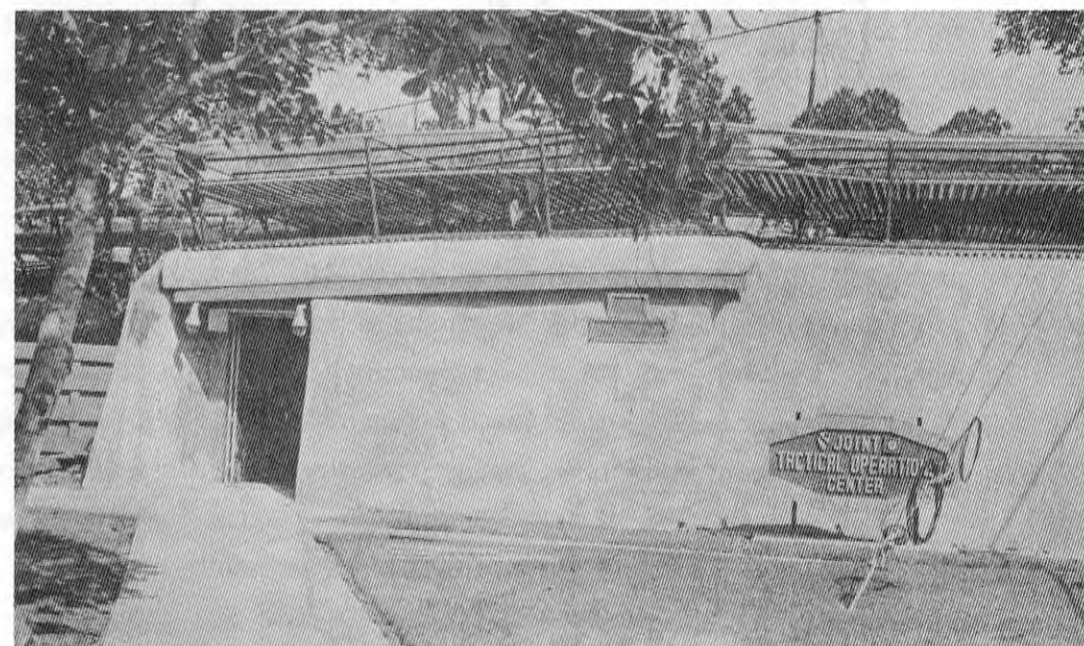
The pair-off concept thus came about as a means to upgrade ARVN combat effectiveness and prepare ARVN units for a larger share of the combat burden. It was decided that each ARVN unit was to be closely and continually affiliated with a US counterpart unit and that operations were to be conducted jointly, regardless of the size each force could commit. Coordination and cooperation were effected throughout the hierarchy from Corps to battalions and districts. Each month, the commanders of II Corps, IFFV and ROK forces and their staffs convened in a tripartite meeting during which the military situation was reviewed, problems discussed and resolved, and the objectives laid out for the following month in accordance with the

MACV-JGS Combined Campaign Plan. The three commanders took turns in chairing the meetings. Despite the great distance between II Corps and IFFV headquarters, located at Pleiku and Nha Trang respectively, Lieutenant General W. R. Peers, commander of IFFV made almost daily trips to II Corps headquarters. In addition, there were also periodic meetings of the various staff agencies of the three nations and daily contact and communications between them. Lieutenant General Lu Lan, commander of II Corps and Major General Choe, then Deputy, ROK Field Forces were in total accord with the pair-off concept. The "one war" concept pervaded the thinking and actions of all commanders and forces within II CTZ.

During the period of time the pair-off concept was implemented three significant combined combat operations were conducted almost simultaneously in II CTZ: BINH TAY/MACARTHUR in the Chu Pa foothill area, DAN THANG/McLAIN in Binh Tuy province, and DAN SINH/COCHISE in Binh Dinh province. (Map 8) Save for the Chu Pa campaign which was in effect aimed at destroying the NVA 24th Regiment in its base area, the other two operations were conducted primarily to assist the pacification effort in populated areas. The strategic objective of II Corps during that period was to, expand government control of the population. Its efforts achieved spectacular gains by October 1968 when 95% of the population were reported living in A, B or C, i.e. secure, hamlets. The disposition and mission of each of II Corps major subordinate command was as follows: the 22d Division was supporting pacification in its area of operations (Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Phu Bon) with emphasis on populous Binh Dinh province; the 23d Division, in an economy of force role, was conducting pacification and security operations in defense of major population centers throughout its vast area of operations (Darlac, Quang Duc, Lam Dong, Tuyen Duc, Binh Thuan and Ninh Thuan provinces); the 24th Special Tactical Zone was providing security in support of pacification in the populated areas of Kontum province, generally along National route QL-14; US forces under IFFV included the US 4th Infantry Division, headquartered at Pleiku, the 173d Airborne Brigade (separate) at Bong Son (Binh Dinh province) and Task Force South, a brigade-size unit at Phan Thiet.

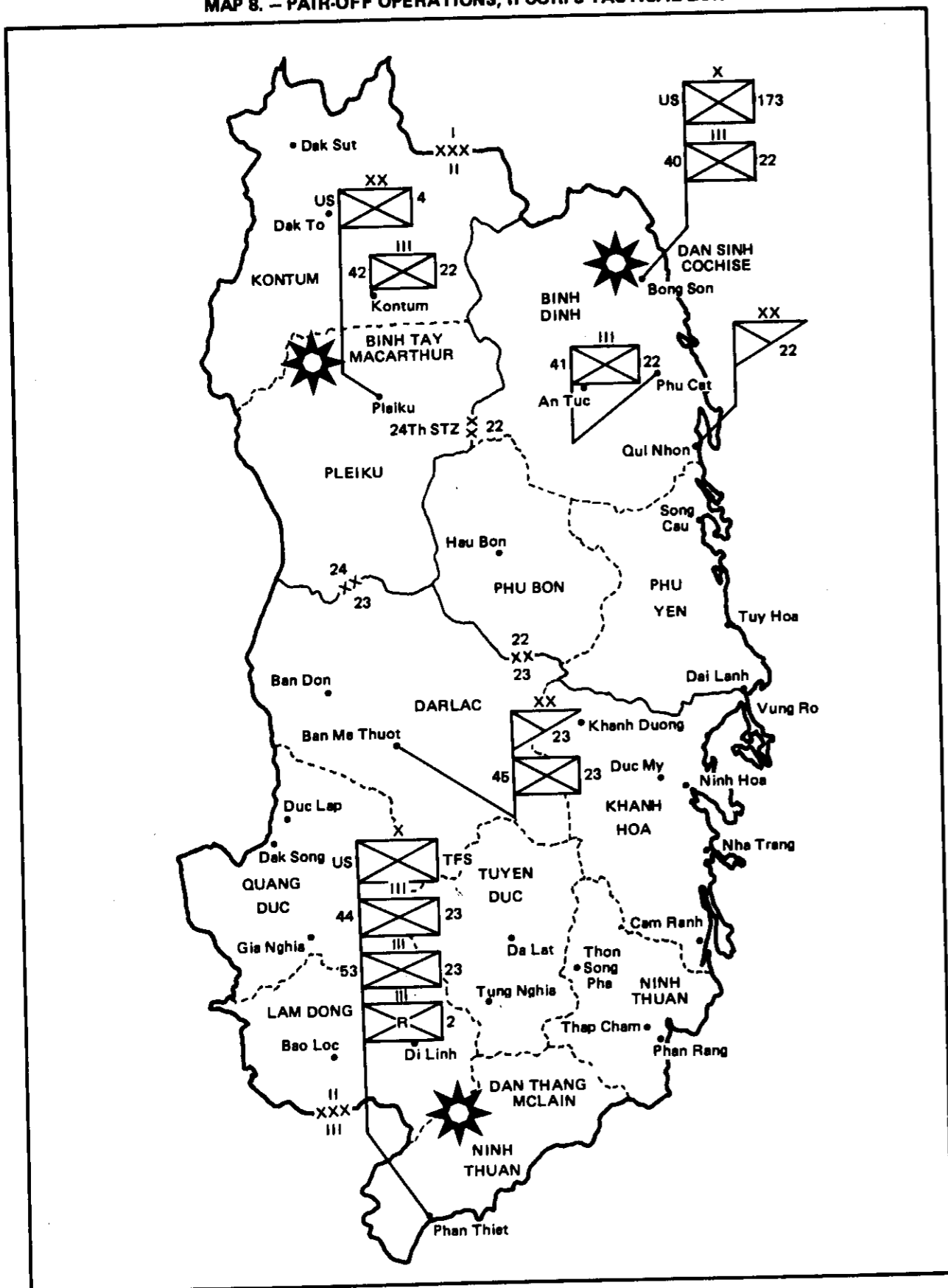


PAIR-OFF II CTZ Senior Commanders Conference at Headquarters, IFFV in Nha Trang, July 1968. Sitting from left to right: MG Lu Lan, CG, II Corps; LTG William R. Peers, CG., IFFV; and MG Choon Shik Im, CG., ROK Forces, II CTZ.



DONG TIEN Joint Tactical Operations Centers, 1st Brigade, US 1st Air Cavalry Division and ARVN 2d Airborne Brigade, located in Tay Ninh, III CTZ, December 1969.

MAP 8. - PAIR-OFF OPERATIONS, II CORPS TACTICAL ZONE



1. DAN THANG/MCLAIN Operation

This was considered the best example of the pair-off concept in action. Conducted on 1 August 1968, the operation combined forces of US Task Force South (2 battalions and 1 armor cavalry squadron) and those of the 23d ARVN Division (44th, 53d Regiments and 2d Ranger Group). The area of operation covered the northern part of Binh Thuan province and part of Lam Dong Province. The units collocated their command posts to simplify coordinating plans and operations. Bilingual operational plans and orders, situation reports, and briefings were used throughout. Combat support, including artillery, tactical air, and aviation was shared, based on tactical requirements. Of particular interest was the emphasis on naval gunfire support which was provided by the USS New Jersey for a six-day period in late October. RF and PF units were frequently integrated into operations and worked closely with ARVN and US units. In September, for example, one company of the US 3d Battalion (Abn) conducted a six-day combined operation with the 444th RF Company, including a combat assault.

During two multi-battalion operations conducted by the 3d Battalion (Abn) and the 2d ARVN Ranger Group, the respective command posts were collocated to facilitate coordination and control. The collocation of command posts and combined operations provided a good opportunity for ARVN troops, staffs and commanders to observe their counterparts at work in performing their respective tasks. This served to some extent to inspire our commanders, staffs and troops to learn by trying to do the same, but that was not enough. Perhaps, by operating alongside US units, they became more confident as a result of the lavish combat support they could obtain. But the most important result of the pair-off concept in this combined operation was increased and more sustained ARVN participation in combat operations. This, perhaps, was made possible by a combined effort at Corps and Field Force level.

2. DAN SINH-COCHISE Operation

Operation Dan Sinh-Cochise began on 22 August 1968 as a coordinated effort involving elements of the ARVN 22d Division and the US 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). It was planned in three phases. Phase 1 was a search and clear operation to clear enemy forces from the operational area, northeastern Binh Dinh province. Phase 2 was a detailed search of

the area including screening and classification of all the civilian population. Phase 3, a saturation phase, continued with US and ARVN forces operating in the area to deny the return of NVA-VC forces, to develop the confidence of the population in the government and ARVN units, and to protect the population from enemy harassment and exploitation. This operation was significant for two reasons. It was a completely combined and coordinated operation, at times involving three ARVN and three US battalions; it was also the first time US forces participated in a pacification support operation in a populated area of II CTZ, in keeping with the stepped up pacification effort.

3. BINH TAY/MCARTHUR Operation

This was a combined ARVN-US operation launched to counter the threat posed by the NVA 24th Regiment which was reported to have infiltrated in the Chu Pa mountains, northwest of Pleiku, toward the end of December 1968. The commander of the 24th Special Tactical Zone confirmed this information through a returnee. To preempt the enemy action, a combined operation was planned for January 1969 in the Chu Pa area. The mission was to defeat the enemy in the base area and to destroy his supplies. The operation was initiated on 4 January 1969 as battalions of the ARVN 42d Regiment on a reconnaissance in force mission began making daily contacts with elements of the NVA 24th Regiment.

In the subsequent phase of the operation, ARVN battalions provided a blocking force while US battalions from the US 4th Infantry Division air-assaulted into the area and began sweeping in an effort to drive the enemy out of his dug-in positions toward the waiting ARVN forces. The operation ended on 28 February 1969 when the enemy withdrew into Cambodia. It was clearly a success since it preempted the enemy spring offensive in II CTZ.

In addition to combined operations, a new advisory concept, designated the Combat Assistance Team (CAT) was formulated and tested by the Advisory Group of the ARVN 22d Division in August 1968. The test demonstrated that the proposed concept improved ARVN leadership and initiative and increased the ARVN capability for making independent use of US combat support assets. Accordingly, COMUSMACV granted each Corps Senior Advisor the authority to organize advisory elements under the CAT concept. Subsequent evaluation

however, indicated that ARVN improvement was not as significant as anticipated, and that substantial advisory assistance was still required. In intelligence, under the pair-off concept, it was suggested by the Commander, IFFV, that each ARVN unit monitor should keep track of a specific VC unit but the idea proved difficult to implement. A substantial improvement was achieved, however, by ARVN artillery units as a result of the Associate Battery Program. US units provided survey data to ARVN units and assisted in the training of forward observers, fire direction center personnel, and gun section crews. Also, assisting the II Corps artillery advisor, were two artillery combat assistance teams (ACAT), one designated ACAT North assisting ARVN artillery units in the 22d Division tactical area and the 24th STZ, and the other ACAT South, assisting ARVN artillery units in the 23d Division tactical area.

There was no doubt that the pair-off concept, as seen through the above examples, brought about some measure of improvement and confidence among ARVN units. It was unfortunate that the program could not be sustained beyond 1969. Despite the temporary achievements, the fundamental, persistent, and most debilitating weakness of ARVN was the lack of strong leadership at all levels. US efforts to help ARVN forces overcome this problem were, in general, not too successful. Another weakness was poor and haphazard staff work, particularly at division and lower levels. This obviously stemmed from poor training and lack of demanding leaders. Coordination and cooperation, finally, depended on the examples set by higher levels of command. The problem was best summed up by Lieutenant General Lu Lan, commander of II Corps, when he said: "If at the top level, we don't coordinate, how do we expect coordination at lower levels?"

The Dong Tien (Progress Together) Program

Operation Dong Tien was a short-term test program which called for the close association of ARVN III Corps and US II Field Force units on a continuing basis in specific areas of III CTZ. It was a program jointly initiated by the commander of III Corps and the commander of II Field Forces. The program began on 1 July and lasted through the rainy season of 1969. Actually, it was somewhat open-ended with an underlying concept that as an ARVN battalion reached a satisfactory level of combat effectiveness, it was phased out of the program and returned to independent operations.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>US</u>
5	Long An	25th Inf. Division (46th & 59th Regiments) & provincial forces	3d Bde, 9th Inf Division
6	Hau Nghia	25th Inf. Division (49th Regiment) & provincial forces	25th Inf. Division
7	Tay Ninh	ARVN general reserve units and provincial forces	25th Inf. Division

This assignment reflected no change in the deployment and disposition of ARVN and US forces. Dong Tien areas were the usual areas of operation to which units of both forces had been assigned. Dong Tien was also a short range training and test program designed to get ARVN units off the ground by the end of the rainy season. The procedures established by III Corps and II FFORCEV for the implementation of the program pointed to the usual formula of coordination and cooperation. In fact, in each Dong Tien area, ARVN and US division commanders would appoint a senior area coordinator responsible for coordinating all aspects of military operations. Coordination, it was clearly stated, would usually be done at sector/regiment/brigade level. Also, it was understood that ARVN and US commanders each retained their full command responsibilities. Coordination at Corps-Field Force level was much more informal as the program was essentially decentralized to and conducted at division-separate brigade and sector level. However, the two senior commanders, by lending the program the force of orders and their personal attention, kept it moving forward.

In actual implementation of the Dong Tien program, a number of methods of operations were devised and tested at each level. In the area of the ARVN 5th and US 1st Divisions (Binh Duong province), for example, an area Combined Coordination Center was established at Ben Cat to receive reports from both ARVN and US units and acted as the catalyst for the lateral flow of information between US brigades and ARVN regiments. Every evening a combined staff briefing was given to both ARVN and US commanders with counterpart staff briefings following each other. These mutual briefings ultimately led to jointly conceived operations. The two divisions also organized a Combined Strike Force (CSF) at Phu Van, consisting of one US and one ARVN company under the command of a US major. But the concept did not work and the CSF was disbanded.



FAIRFAX Operation, Gia Dinh province. An integrated US-ARVN combat team heading back to base camp after an all-night ambush patrol.



DONG TIEN Commanders planning an operation (Left to right: Col. Robert Haldane, CO, 3d Brigade, US 1st Inf. Div.; Col. Le Nguyen Vy, CO, 8th Rgt., ARVN 5th Inf. Div.; LTC Maurice Price, Senior Adviser, 8th ARVN Rgt.; and Cpt. Chau Minh Kien, CO, 1-8 Battalion).

At regiment/brigade level, the usual method used was to collocate an ARVN battalion in the same Fire Support Base with a US battalion. Then the two battalions conducted planned combined operations from the FSB and in the area around it. In some instances, the ARVN battalion was prepared to assume complete responsibility for a certain FSB. In the FSB, the battalion TOCs might be either integrated, or combined or just collocated. Each of the methods used offered some advantages and the same number of disadvantages but the best was perhaps collocated TOCs. There were a few instances where units did not share the same FSB but cross-attached a liaison group at each CP. This was an arrangement which provided few advantages. In field operations, battalions usually used the method of the "dual company" with a combined CP, a method which offered the most advantages for the ARVN battalion. In the dual company method, platoons might or might not be cross-attached. In a few instances, companies were cross-attached in a battalion-level operation, but this was not an effective method since the ARVN battalion commander did not have the experience needed to handle a US Company. At the company level, platoons were usually cross-attached or they might operate as dual units. The same applied to squads.

In general, the dual concept appeared to work best at company level, since it offered an opportunity to develop the leadership capabilities of ARVN company commanders and at the same time provided maximum US support for the ARVN unit, while minimizing the loss of unit integrity. Combined with cross-attached platoons and squads, it was perhaps an excellent method to upgrade the combat effectiveness of the ARVN company, provided the two US and ARVN companies were associated on a continuing basis for a reasonable period of time. In terms of control and coordination, the collocation of CPs at battalion and company level was proved to be advantageous since it offered a maximum exposure to US staff and command procedures and maximum opportunities for coordination and cooperation. Disadvantages existed, however, in that ARVN commanders might be self-conscious of their own deficiencies and became dependent on US initiative.

The Dong Tien program definitely improved the combat effectiveness of ARVN units throughout III Corps although it was short-lived. The 8th

Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, for example, eliminated over 100 enemy per month in its area of operation, a threefold increase over the pre-Dong Tien period. As an ARVN unit showed definite signs of improvement, it was taken out of the program and assigned a separate AO of its own. The program's most eloquent result lay in the fact that, during 1970, III Corps units were able to successfully conduct independent operations striking into enemy base areas, and most particularly into Cambodia, with relatively little assistance from US forces. Many basic problems still plagued the ARVN at low level units, such as weak leadership, lack of planning know-how and the inability to effectively use combat support assets. In general, the better commanders benefited most; some of the others, while making progress, did not do as well. On balance, however, there was a general improvement in aggressiveness, better coordination, and more sustained combat effort.

Summary and Evaluation

Four different concepts and programs have been presented as approaches attempted by US forces to improve the regular ARVN combat effectiveness and upgrade the local RF-PF units. They have been selected over others for the reason that each effort was conducted in a different Corps Tactical Zone. Two of these efforts focused on low-level territorial units and took place in relatively populated areas. The two others, meanwhile, concentrated on regular ARVN units and took place in outlying areas. Perhaps the overall objective attempted by MACV when it directed and encouraged these efforts also encompassed a variety of purposes. This objective was reflected in its "one war" concept which purported, in effect, to be the answer to the enemy's "total war" and which was in line with the RVN strategy.

One of the key aspects of the Vietnam war that frequently escaped the minds of some military leaders was that it was a double war, one that was fought by main forces in a conventional manner, and the other waged at the grass roots level with local forces and guerrillas. The enemy was but one, whether one may choose to label him Viet Cong or NVA; he was the Vietnamese Communist, regardless of where he was born or trained. The arbitrary distinction between VC and NVA, however academically justified, was just a fallacy; and it served the myth perpetuated by the enemy that none of the NVA troops was in South Vietnam. The response

to this double war was obvious: a double effort was to be made to eliminate the enemy at two different levels, in two different environments, and by two different approaches.

This was the rationale behind pacification and the upgrading of territorial forces on the one hand and the sharpening and strengthening of regular ARVN forces on the other. The strategy was both sound and necessary. All programs seemed to work for a certain time; their limited goals were all achieved, sometimes beyond expectations.

The Combined Action Program, for example, gave as good results as anyone could expect. It operated on the same tactical mobility principle of elusiveness that the enemy used so effectively. It presented a credible permanence that fostered the kind of popular rapport and allegiance that was needed to defeat the enemy's own kind of "people's war." It was finally instrumental in bringing about a strengthening of our own infrastructure while denying the enemy the very environment in which he usually prospered.

Discontinuing the program in favor of the less expensive MAT program seemed not to be well justified. What did two or three thousand Marines, or even more, really cost in terms of manpower as compared to the hundreds of thousands committed? There is little doubt that the CAP program was a positive influence and that the MAT program was less effective. One can only assume that US authorities felt they could not afford the personnel resources to implement CAP on a nation-wide basis.

The Fairfax operation achieved practically the same results as the CAP program, although on a smaller scale. Its success was made possible perhaps due to the personal attention of COMUSMACV himself. Besides, Saigon was an area of great importance to everyone concerned. "It must succeed," was the only explanation the COMUSMACV gave. The pair-off concept in II Corps CTZ, meanwhile, was not as successful as expected, perhaps because it came about too belatedly and was not sustained for a longer period. The terrain was rugged and too large even for the combined forces of three nations. Cooperation at lower levels was lukewarm at best, given the lack of interest at division level.

The Dong Tien program, by contrast, was a more complex enterprise which succeeded remarkably despite its few months of existence. The dual

and cross-attachment arrangement at lower levels seemed to be the answer to the problem of effective cooperation and coordination. But it attested to the infeasibility of joint command at these levels, given the natural tendency of every ARVN leader to be his own boss.

Association with and exposure to US methods and initiative, however, brought to the surface many ARVN inherent weaknesses and deficiencies. Some of them were just differences in methods, culture, or way of life. Others were either technical or procedural problems that could easily be disposed of by more specialized and intensive training. Still others were human and difficult to resolve in the short term. The key to success in every human endeavor is of course people. In coordination and cooperation, personalities played the dominant role. Unless both commanders were willing to play the game and forsake their interest to a degree, there was no way to foster a genuine working relationship. Americans were usually impatient with ARVN lethargic work habits. Given their one-year tour, it was understandable that they always tried to get the most out of it. Vietnamese, meanwhile, felt they had all the time they needed. After all, they might well spend the rest of their lives with this war.

Poor planning was one of the most glaring ARVN deficiencies. It was even more acute at regiment and battalion levels. Perhaps lack of training was responsible for it; perhaps the quality and limited number of personnel available at these levels did not permit effectiveness in staff work. But the primary reason, however, seemed to be the lack of aggressive and demanding commanders. ARVN commanders at these levels, it was usually admitted, fought battles without tactics, relying primarily on their own personal methods. In addition, the ARVN commander was everything in the unit. His staff had little, if anything to say. It was the commander who decided every thing, told them what to do, where and when to go, and how to run the complete operation. And when he was absent, very little could be accomplished.

Finally, it was widely accepted that leadership was a perennial problem for ARVN at every level of its hierarchy. This problem was so extensive and so deeply rooted that it is difficult to explain thoroughly

within the scope of this monograph. Suffice it to say that unless a commander or leader had professional competence, devotion, and moral rectitude, he certainly could not expect his subordinates to be dedicated and aggressive. The basic ingredients that were usually found lacking were: motivation and aggressiveness. Perhaps the passive and resilient nature of the Vietnamese could not produce the all-pervasive, gung-ho type of tigers of whom Westerners were so proud. In the context of an ideological conflict, there were certain other qualities that perhaps counted more in the eyes of the Vietnamese, qualities that were more ethical, more spiritual in nature. Perhaps lack of political awareness, and the social and economic degeneration due to the war were at the root of the problem, too. Whatever the causes, the problem certainly could not be solved in a year or two. There was finally the will and determination to fight, which again depended on motivation and leadership, and without which there was no sense in upgrading mere physical capabilities.

CHAPTER VI

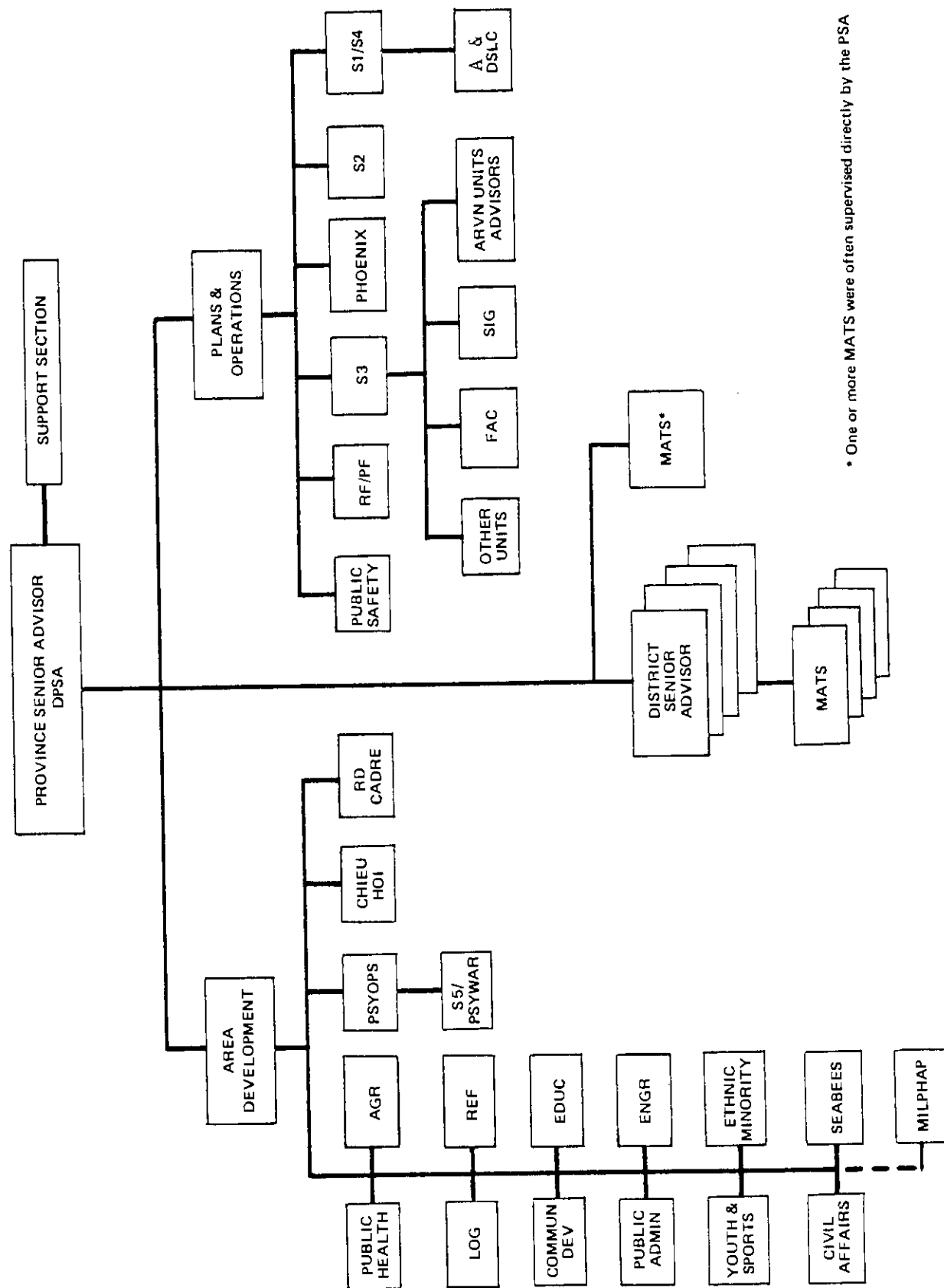
Some Considerations Affecting RVNAF Performance

Expansion of the US Territorial Advisory System

As the pace of the US combat force build-up quickened after 1965, the advisory effort also expanded and developed at a rapid tempo. It was a dual effort by the United States to help build stronger regular forces to combat enemy main force units on the one hand and to assist South Vietnam to consolidate its governmental base so that effective control could be exercised throughout the national territory on the other. These two objectives were closely related. As has been said in the previous chapter, the war in Vietnam was a dual war which had to be fought on two different levels by two different approaches. While the destruction of enemy main force units required large-scale operations and the deployment of sizable units and resources, the task of helping South Vietnam consolidate its government demanded that security be provided at the village and hamlet level. Concurrently, as security improved, an expansion of the RVN influence and control was deemed necessary. These are areas where US advisory and assistance contribution were most beneficial.

The US involvement in South Vietnam began soon after the 1954 Geneva Accords with an advisory effort but this effort existed only at the highest level, in training centers and in major units. It emphasized primarily training and helping the ARVN reorganize its units. In 1959, when the military situation began to deteriorate, advisory teams were sent to infantry regiments and separate battalions in the combat arms of the Army such as Artillery and Armor, and in the Marines. The mission of these teams was to provide immediate assistance and also to evaluate the effectiveness of the advisory effort. Infantry battalions were assigned advisory teams for the first time in 1961. Also at that time each

CHART 9—ORGANIZATION, PROVINCE ADVISORY TEAM
MARCH 1968



2. To assist US and ARVN regular units located in the area or coming from other areas in the fulfillment of their mission.
3. To provide liaison between US units and the province chief or district chief and his staff.

By the very complexity and nature of advisory duties at the province or district level, there was a need to integrate the military and civilian effort in the advisory team. As a result, territorial advisory teams consisted of both military and civilian personnel who were selected among those more experienced in military and administrative matters. The composition and strength of each team, however, depended on security and political requirements of each particular locality. This afforded flexibility in organization and a more efficient use of advisory personnel. As a rule, if the senior adviser was a military officer, his deputy was a civilian and vice versa. At the district level, however, since their mission was heavily oriented toward territorial security, most senior advisers were military officers.

What frustrated the advisory effort most at the territorial level was the poorly-organized, under-staffed Sector (Province) or District headquarters. The lack of qualified and capable cadres in these staffs was a serious handicap. A Sector headquarters was authorized a strength of 183, including 32 officers, if the aggregate strength of RF and PF units in the province was more than 10,000. A Subsector (District) headquarters was only authorized 38 men, including nine officers, if the total strength of PF units in the district was more than 1,500. It was obvious that at the province level, the Sector headquarters was barely able to control and effectively employ a force whose strength approximated that of a division. As a result, RF and PF units were generally poorly led and ineffectively employed in the all-encompassing tasks of providing territorial security. This ineffectiveness gradually eroded the confidence of the local population.

Contrary to the usual uneasiness that Americans felt, the presence of US advisers in provinces and particularly in districts caused little adverse psychological impact among the population. Conversely, it was this American presence that created confidence in and prestige for

the local government. Through the devoted advisory and assistance effort, many of the basic needs of the population were usually met and territorial forces were kept in fairly good shape. US territorial advisers usually spent half of their time on civilian affairs and the rest was devoted to the military effort. In this regard, military advisers provided very effective assistance to Sector and Subsector headquarters. Their contributions were particularly significant in the implementation of defense and of pacification and development plans, as well as in operations and in the employment, training, administration, and logistic support for RF and PF units.

As a result of this advisory and assistance effort, territorial command and control became more effective and the operation of Sector and Subsector headquarters became more systematic and efficient. Combat and logistic support for RF and PF units also had fewer problems. At the district level, the advisory effort was even more beneficial; it helped bring about a more rational distribution, employment, and control of RF and PF resources. In general, US territorial advisory teams were tremendously useful and efficient in problem-solving and rooting out inertia and complacency at Sectors and Subsectors. Particularly, in view of the language barrier and relative unfamiliarity of US personnel with local problems, the expansion of the US territorial advisory effort was a step in the right direction. Its achievements spoke for themselves. The improvement of RF and PF combat effectiveness, however, was an enormous task which required still more advisory effort and attention.

The Mobile Assistance Concept

The RF and PF were a sizable military force which made up approximately one half of the total RVNAF strength. They consisted mostly of companies and platoons scattered throughout the national territory with the difficult and important mission of providing and maintaining territorial security. The RF and PF soldier served in or near the hamlet where he was born and grew up. He was familiar with the natural and social environment and the situation in the locality where he was assigned to work and took an active interest in improving its situation. Basically, he was a good soldier endowed with resiliency and endurance. However, being part of the territorial organization, he was placed under an intricate command

and control system which generally inhibited his full development. As the lowest echelon in the military hierarchy, RF and PF units did not receive adequate training, equipment and support. Their effectiveness when compared with ARVN units was low; they usually came to be regarded as "poor cousins" by regular troops. Because of these inhibitions and constraints, RF and PF units seldom achieved a desired level of effectiveness. How, under those conditions, were they able to provide security and support for the pacification program, once US forces were redeployed and replaced by ARVN units? This was a major problem area that required a considerable effort of improvement if the RVN strategy was to succeed because half of the war was fought where the RF and PF were located.

Prior to 1968, there were no advisers with territorial units. As MACV viewed it, the assignment of advisers to thousands of units scattered throughout the country on a permanent basis was a difficult and costly proposition in terms of manpower and support. Any effort to upgrade territorial forces necessarily depended on the initiative and capabilities of US combat units operating in the locality; there was no other practical solution.

During 1967, US Field Force commands initiated an upgrading program for RF and PF units based on the mobile training concept. US Mobile Training Teams (MTT), each consisting of from three to ten members, were used in rotation among RF and PF units. The MTT mission was to organize, train, and supervise these units until their performance was deemed satisfactory. Various names were given to these teams and all indicated to some extent the nature of their mission. There were, for example, Combined Mobile Training Teams, Combined Mobile Improvement Teams, "Red Catcher" and Impact Teams, and Regional Forces Company Training Teams. The advantage of this mobile training concept was the ability to provide training for a large number of units within a reasonable time. But for that very reason, the time that a mobile training team was able to spend with each unit was necessarily limited; hence, the results achieved were also limited. Even with this economical use of training manpower, the mobile training program proved costly in US

personnel because the number of RF and PF units had increased considerably. And when conducted separately, this training effort ran short of the close coordination and cooperation which were required for any combined effort to become a success.

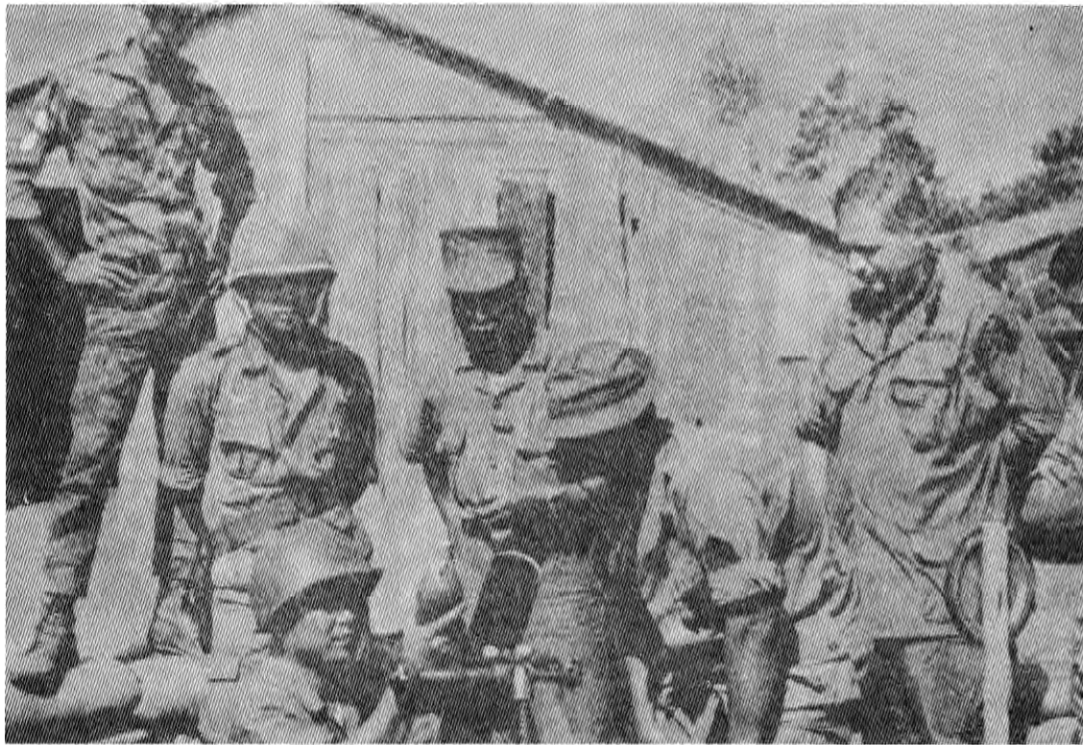
During this period, the Joint General Staff also initiated its own programs for improving the effectiveness of territorial forces with the encouragement and assistance of MACV. Under these programs, RF companies were rotated between field duties and training. They underwent a 12-week training program at National Training Centers just like regular units. The advisory effort, meanwhile, turned to the organization of RF company training advisory teams which were test-deployed in all Corps Tactical Zones. Each team usually consisted of three officers and three NCOs and was attached to a RF company undergoing training at the National Training Center. Its mission was to assist in training the company. After the formal training program was completed, the team stayed with the company for a period from six to nine months to follow up on its training until the company was judged capable of independent operation. For all its merits, this method of training failed to bring about significant results.

Finally in late 1967, drawing from previous experiences, MACV initiated an extensive improvement program for territorial forces based on the Mobile Advisory concept which had been successfully adopted by II Field Force. This effort aimed at improving territorial forces in all aspects: tactical operation, administration, and logistic support. In addition to Mobile Advisory Teams, MACV also created Mobile Advisory Logistical Teams (MALT) whose mission was to help upgrade the territorial logistic organization and operation.

This large-scale improvement program was implemented in early 1968. A total of 353 Mobile Advisory Teams was planned and by year end, they had been deployed to all four Corps areas. Before their field deployment, these teams received training at the US Army Vietnam (USARV) Adviser School. Upon completion of training, they were assigned to provinces with the mission of upgrading RF and PF units by directly advising

and assisting their commanders. Each MAT consisted of two officers (team chief and deputy), three EM (one light weapons infantryman, one heavy weapons infantryman, and one medic), and one Vietnamese interpreter. The team usually lived with a RF and PF unit if the situation permitted. Its members helped train the unit and accompanied it in operations. Emphasis was placed on command and control, the conduct of operations, particularly night operations, marksmanship, the use of mines and booby traps, and the planning and control of fire support. After achieving its goal of upgrading the territorial unit—which was usually done within 30 days—the MAT moved to another unit and started the training process again. From time to time, the team also revisited an old unit to evaluate its progress and to provide assistance as required in order to prevent the unit from deteriorating. A MAT sometimes worked with a RF company and several PF units nearby at the same time. The success of Mobile Advisory Teams could be measured by the improved capability of the territorial forces to conduct independent operations with a minimum of support from the outside.

During 1969, the MAT effort also assisted local governments in expanding control, constructing more outposts in areas formerly under enemy control, coordinating the use of fire support, and developing and employing the command and control capabilities of RF Company Group Headquarters. These were territorial tactical commands activated during 1968 under the control of Sector commanders. Each RF Company Group Headquarters consisted of one commanding officer, his deputy, two officers and three NCOs who made up three staff sections: operations, intelligence, and training. The Headquarters was designed to exercise operational control over a territorial force of approximately five RF companies or an equivalent number of PF platoons. By 1970, when almost all RF company group headquarters and companies had achieved substantial improvement, the MATs were redeployed to areas where village and hamlet security needed to be improved, and where the local government control required consolidation. Their new mission focused on upgrading the Popular Forces, training and deploying the People's Self-Defense Forces, and coordinating



A Mobile Advisory Team, 11th US Armored Cavalry, instructing the 948th RF Company, 1968.



Artillery Advisor and counterpart during drill

activities of Rural Development cadres and the National Police. The MATs also assisted in developing village defense systems which were realistically tailored to local requirements. As the situation and time permitted, the MATs also assisted, advised and encouraged village chiefs to initiate and implement village self-development programs.

After several tests and trials covering a long period of time, the MAT program was found to be the most effective and realistic instrument for upgrading the combat capabilities of territorial forces. An outstanding example of its success was the marked improvement brought to the great mass of RF and PF units in the Mekong Delta, a sizable but ineffective territorial force which had been plagued by lethargy and indolence. Although the task was enormous and complex, MAT members quickly adapted themselves to each situation, strove for innovative ideas and unfailingly fulfilled their responsibility. Their presence and assistance in the improvement of rural security brought confidence to the population and prestige to the RVN government.

The role of territorial advisers was challenging and interesting. In time, it became one of the most important contributions made by United States forces in South Vietnam. As long as the advisory effort lasted, it helped improve the image of the RF and PF trooper, who, like his communist adversary, could fight like a tiger if properly motivated and led, but seldom did because he was not.

Attitude of RVNAF Troops Toward Americans

The presence of Americans in South Vietnam no doubt accounted for the pervasive confidence among the population and RVNAF troops that final victory would eventually be theirs. As far as the RVNAF were concerned, Americans were either advisers, samaritans, or comrades-in-arms. This American standing prevailed no matter how ugly the Americans were painted by Communist propaganda. Very few people in South Vietnam were suspicious of American good will and altruism.

The American involvement had a good start in the mid-fifties when the US began to assist the development of the nascent National

Army of Vietnam. Its goal then as always, was to make South Vietnamese forces strong enough to defend their land and their people. It was realized that without a strong native army, South Vietnam could hardly defend itself against subversion and invasion from the north, regardless of how many allies came to its assistance.

During its first few years of existence as an independent republic, South Vietnam was able to stand firmly on its own due to American aid and assistance, which also helped it build a viable military force. Under the guidance, inspiration, and assistance of American advisers, this military force gradually developed into the full-fledged Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, a source of pride and confidence for the nation. In Saigon, staff members of the US Military Assistance Command acted as advisers to their Vietnamese counterparts in the Joint General Staff in matters pertaining to intelligence, plans, programs, and operations. In the field, US advisers were permanently deployed to regular maneuver battalions and as Mobile Assistance Teams roving among territorial forces. In the initial stage of the war, however, these advisers were primarily concerned with the distribution of war materiel and the training in its handling and use. But when fighting escalated seriously, American advisers became increasingly involved in tactical and combat training for units and in advising and assisting unit commanders in the conduct of operations.

Despite its limitations in personnel, the advisory presence greatly influenced a unit's performance. With only a few members, US advisers did the best they could to take care of problems and they constantly strove to help make the unit effective. In addition to resources that they could make available for operational requirements, their knowledge of techniques, planning, and operations also contributed a great deal to the successful accomplishment of the unit mission in several instances. The unit commander also benefited in many ways. The presence of advisers acted in essence both as a catalyst that transformed and improved and as a stimulant that spurred and activated both the unit and its commander. As a result, command and control at every ARVN echelon became more effective and unit performance improved markedly.

On the other hand, the presence of advisers in several cases stifled the unit commander's initiative and downgraded his authority and prestige. As a matter of principle, an adviser exercised neither command nor authority with regard to his counterpart; the relationship between the two of them was necessarily based on mutual trust and respect. In almost all cases, the adviser simply acted as an assistant to the unit commander; in principle, he should restrict himself to that capacity. But there were instances that required the adviser to transcend his capacity and practically take over in the name of the unit commander. This occurred in a few units whose commanders were weak and indecisive in the face of combat pressure. The power and influence of US advisers in the field did tend to overshadow the role of Vietnamese unit commanders. For example, activities of a unit tended to follow along the lines recommended by the adviser. In many instances, it was the adviser who won the battle by calling in effective tactical air or firepower support from US resources. This gradually produced over-reliance and sometimes total dependence on US advisers. As a consequence, the initiative, responsibility, and prestige that the unit commander usually wielded were greatly affected and, over the long run, the presence of advisers resulted in reduced opportunity for ARVN cadres to develop their command capabilities and leadership.

When US combat units were introduced into South Vietnam to fight the war, their role overshadowed the advisory effort because they held the initiative on the battlefield and coordinated all military efforts. As of this time, ARVN units began to keep close contact with US units through the intermediary of advisers. Their purpose was to obtain additional support from US resources to meet operational requirements, and, almost unfailingly, US units obliged by giving all that had been requested. Because of the plentiful and sometimes lavish support provided by US units the morale and combat effectiveness of ARVN units was very high. Later when called upon to participate in combined operations with US forces, ARVN units appeared to enjoy the opportunity if only because of the dependable support they could always expect. In time, they came to regard Americans as protectors and providers instead

of advisers and comrades-in-arms.

The consequence of over-reliance on material assets as substitutes for initiative and prowess was a failure to develop the infantryman's capabilities to the full—the very qualities that distinguished the Vietnamese soldier: endurance, perseverance, resiliency and manual dexterity. Because they were organized and trained by US standards, and exposed for a long time to US warfare methods, ARVN units inevitably became accustomed to conducting operations with an abundance of supporting material resources. The result was that when American presence and assistance were no longer available, the morale and combat effectiveness of ARVN units became uncertain.

The Tendency to Let Americans Do It All

The American military presence in South Vietnam, with its powerful combat forces, its impressive array of resources and its gigantic bases, really overshadowed the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. The Vietnamese people suddenly found their own military force shrunken to the size of a midget. There was nothing in the RVNAF comparable to the awesome might and modern assets which symbolized the "omnipotent" posture of the United States. Soon, they were convinced, Americans would deal the insurgency a resounding defeat. Those were the first impressions engendered by the initial buildup of US combat forces and their successful offensive campaigns to retake the areas that had been lost to the enemy. At that time the Vietnamese were reassured and, by staking total confidence in US might, they took little interest in the efforts of the RVNAF, which appeared in their eyes as insignificant and superficial.

It was true that even the highest field commands, the ARVN Corps, had only limited resources and limited capability. At best, they were just capable of controlling territorial security activities and implementing short-term plans such as dry season or rainy season campaign plans, and plans for the protection of rice crops, national resources, etc. Those were routine and undramatic plans which looked more important in form

than in substance and which were renewed and repeated every year. Small wonder that nothing substantial had ever been achieved through such operations. Corps commands almost never deployed and operated in the field as tactical headquarters. They never had the opportunity nor the requirement to operate in the field because operations were usually conducted at the battalion or regiment level, or at the most and only rarely, at division level. And most operations lasted only a short time to allow units to return to their territorial duties to which they were permanently tied.

When US Field Forces began operation in Corps Tactical Zones, their capabilities and combat posture practically turned each of them into a key tactical command for the initiation and coordination of all military efforts within its area of interest. For one thing, Field Forces had a better grasp of the military situation and for another, almost all support resources were under their control. This operational practice reflected and befitted the realities of this period and was deemed vital for the integration of all military efforts to effectively counteract an emergency situation. From a temporary arrangement dictated by expediency, US Field Forces gradually became permanent. Their initiative, responsiveness, and all-pervasive efficiency soon stifled the development of ARVN operational capabilities at the tactical level. Soon, ARVN tactical commanders began to lose their combat initiative and became overly dependent on US forces for meeting major enemy initiatives. Gradually they lost interest in the combat situation outside of pacification areas. It was as if the war was being fought in a distant and alien world. ARVN commanders had little idea of what US forces were doing; US activities were after all none of their business. The passivity and lack of enthusiasm on the part of ARVN tactical commanders resulted in a greater freedom of action for US forces, first of all because ARVN units would not get in their way and second, if they were called upon to cooperate, there was not much they could contribute to the joint effort.

During the period from 1965 to 1968, ARVN units performed only a secondary role which was mostly confined to the support of pacification. US units, meanwhile, were responsible for nearly all combat operations

throughout the Corps areas. The less spectacular operations of ARVN units earned them the unjustified criticism that they were not too concerned with the combat situation. In fact, there was little they could do about it. ARVN units had indeed improved a great deal in combat effectiveness by this time but they were still considered not up to the task of taking on major enemy units. In general, they were inadequately equipped to respond effectively to operational requirements. It was during this period that combined operations were initiated, but the idea of cooperating with ARVN units was not widely welcomed by US forces. In the eyes of some US commanders, ARVN units were but an additional burden they had to take in tow and that were apt to cause more problems than they were worth. Moreover, the feeling among some US commanders during that period was that US forces alone could defeat the insurgency without ARVN participation.

The strategy then adopted by MACV and the JGS concerning the prosecution of the war placed equal emphasis on three major tasks: combat operations, pacification, and territorial security, which were all equally important. The division of tasks, as outlined by the Combined Campaign Plan, was a judicious distribution of responsibilities in which each force, Vietnamese or American, was employed according to its capabilities or where its advantages could be best exploited. The attempted goal was to achieve a balance of tasks which could eventually bring about maximum contribution to the joint effort. Hence it was agreed that US forces, with their plentiful resources, would tackle the hardest part by conducting search-and-destroy operations while the lesser endowed ARVN forces focused their efforts on pacification and security. ARVN units accepted this division of tasks with some reluctance since most of them would have welcomed the opportunity to conduct mobile operations, especially when reinforced by American firepower and mobility support.

ARVN units at that time were seldom given the opportunity to develop their combat effectiveness, bound as they were to the tedious task of pacification support and territorial security responsibility. Boredom and routine gradually eroded their combat skill and spirit to the point that they became almost as passive and as lethargic as the territorial

forces. But the enemy 1968 Tet offensive came in time to offer ARVN units the much-welcomed chance of undertaking active combat operations once again. Starting with the battles fought during this offensive, ARVN units really took the big leap forward and contributed a larger and larger share to the combat burden heretofore almost exclusively borne by US forces.

In the area of logistic support, much has been said about RVNAF lack of planning and overdependence on US resources. This was true to some extent because the RVNAF logistic system was more geared to area support than to mobile operational support. By and large, the primary supply requirements for area-type activities consisted of foodstuff (rice) and ammunition for small arms. These basic commodities were generally stocked in field depots at a level that provided continuous supply for several weeks, if not months. Field units usually drew their supplies from these depots by their own means. Rarely was a supply point established for the sole purpose of supporting a particular operation. Logistic planning therefore was not particularly emphasized throughout the hierarchy.

So when it came to providing support for large-scale, combined-arms operations which were conducted away from bases and lines of communication, the RVNAF logistic system usually ran into difficulties. Experience showed that combat units participating in these operations were in short supply for almost everything. The major obstacle was and had always been the lack of transportation resources. For such operations, logistic planning of necessity required a long time for preparation and for coordination with several different units. The risk of disclosure, therefore, was so great that operational commanders usually avoided detailed logistic planning for security's sake. Besides, the RVNAF did not have the resources nor the capability to effectively support major operational efforts, particularly when these involved the use of helicopters for supply and support. During the Lam Son 719 operation into Laos in May 1971, for example, it was the US forces that provided almost all of the logistic support for ARVN units. In other cases, US logistic

support was needed at least during the initial stages of an operation so that it would not end up as a failure because of supply or materiel shortages.

The conclusion that has to be drawn from the foregoing is that if there really was a tendency to let Americans do it all, it was not the natural and common inclination of all ARVN commanders. But it did exist to some extent. Thus, either it could be attributed to undue reliance and uncritical confidence on US capabilities and resources, or it stemmed from a common desire shared by both sides to meet emergency requirements.

Effect of One-Year Tour and Six-Month Rotation

Hundreds of thousands of American servicemen contributed to the American effort in Vietnam over the years of involvement and direct participation. They either served in US units or as advisers to the RVNAF; there were many among them who volunteered for more than one tour of duty; some served two or even three tours. Except for the top positions, the usual tour of duty for the American servicemen in Vietnam was one year. It was a short time indeed, but for all practical purposes one year seemed reasonable enough and was suitable to most of them. The continuous exposure of US troops to field conditions and war risks, however, made the one-year tour of combat duties a long one, particularly in the Vietnamese environment. Hence a six-month tour rotation policy was adopted to alleviate trauma and risks. Since the American participation in the ground war was not designed to last for a long time, it was a reasonable policy to allocate the hardship so that nobody had to endure more than his fair share. This policy proved beneficial for the upkeep of morale and effectiveness, as far as US combat forces were concerned. For the advisory program, however, the one-year tour obviously had its drawbacks.

Among ARVN units, the change of personnel, particularly in command positions, greatly affected the performance of the unit. Because of the lack of a solid foundation and despite formal standing operating procedures, all activities of the unit depended almost entirely on the personality and capabilities of the commanding officer. If he was a good commander, the unit performed well. But if he was ineffective, the unit was apt to deteriorate rapidly. In contrast, US units appeared not to be affected much by personnel change. This was due to established traditions, a solid foundation and well-honed operating procedures from the top to the bottom level. A good US commander could only make his unit a little better whereas the worst that a bad commander could do to his unit was a slight decrease in overall efficiency, which in most cases was hardly perceptible.

Although the one-year tour and six-month rotation policy gave rise to minor problems of personnel turbulence and loss of continuity, it was beneficial in many ways. Due to established procedures, regulations and training, new arrivals in a US unit were usually able to familiarize themselves quickly with unit problems and have a "feel" for unit operations within a short time. The short and definite period of one year was an incentive that spurred them to give the best of their abilities and performance to contribute to the unit achievements. If the tour of duty had been longer or open ended, the protracted combat and hardship in an unfamiliar environment would certainly have worn them down and made them weary of the war effort.

The six-month rotation of battalion and company cadre between combat and staff duties was a judicious arrangement that improved the quality of performance in both duties. A staff officer with combat experience would certainly perform better than a desk-bound officer. However, for higher level command positions, a certain continuity and longer combat experience was necessary. Brigade commanders, for example, should have served at least one year in their position. It was obvious that familiarity with the unit and stability of command at these levels could tend to cushion the adverse effect caused by the quick turnover of personnel at battalion and company level.

Over the years of association with the US presence, each Vietnamese commander worked with several American advisers; they lived with each other and fought side by side like a man and his shadow. An ARVN commander usually stayed in his position for many years but every year he had to work with a different adviser. At the battalion level, this change in relationship occurred every six months. The relatively rapid turnover of advisers at battalion level had a definite adverse effect on the advisory program. While an adviser did not command the unit, his prestige and standing among ARVN troops were considerable. He was understood to be in a position of power and authority with regard to his counterpart. As a result, every change of adviser disturbed the atmosphere of the unit.

An adviser's duties necessarily required a minimum of stability and continuity. His activities were not confined only to the unit he advised; they also encompassed the total environment in which the unit operated. Consequently, the adviser had to perform in both capacities: military and civilian. Despite the fact that the advisory system was well established with time-tested procedures that enabled an adviser to acquaint himself rapidly with a new situation, he certainly had to rely on past experiences and knowledge in order to effectively solve many different and complex problems in his area of responsibility. A case in point was the District Senior Adviser whose tour of duty was extended to 18 months instead of 12 in later years. This extended tour not only benefitted the advisory system in terms of personnel stability, it also enabled the adviser to assist the territorial forces and the population more effectively because of his long experience and familiarity with the locality and its environment.

In contrast to the US combat serviceman, the adviser lived with Vietnamese soldiers and in close touch with the local population, both of whom had spent their entire lives in war. What they needed was someone whom they could trust and on whom they could depend throughout the years. The adviser's short tour of duty was certainly no help in this regard. The longer an adviser lived with a unit and shared the hardships and dangers with its men, the more the men in the unit felt

close to and trusted him out of a sense of loyalty and confidence. The adviser's position also required him to have some continuity in his assignment in order to fully grasp every problem concerning the unit and the external influences bearing on it. This was the best way he could find the appropriate ingredients for improvement—by living and taking advantage of his experience, not by arbitrarily suggesting innovative ideas.

CHAPTER VII

Summary and Conclusions

The introduction of US combat forces in early 1965 saved the Republic of Vietnam from military defeat and helped it restore stability and consolidate a more viable regime. The short term goals that the United States set about to accomplish were successfully achieved within a relatively short time. Despite obstacles, the Americans also finally succeeded in developing and improving the Vietnamese armed forces on which the Republic of Vietnam depended for its survival.

Resorting to the use of combat force meant that the US advisory effort and level of military assistance up to that time had either fallen short of their goal or were not enough. Then three and a half years of intensive fighting also failed to bring the enemy to his knees. Entering the war with the posture and disposition of a fire brigade, the Americans rushed about to save the Vietnamese house from destruction but took little interest in caring for the victims. Only after they realized that the victims, too, should be made firefighters to save their own houses, did Americans set about to really care for them. Valuable time was lost, and by the time the victims could get onto their feet and began to move forward a few steps after recovery, the fire-brigade was called back to the home station.

Throughout the years of participation, the American presence greatly bolstered the RVNAF performance and morale. There could be no doubt about it. The position enjoyed by Americans with regard to the RVNAF was either adviser or comrade-in-arms. Well established and with carefully selected personnel, whose devotion and abilities were undeniable, the US advisory system admirably performed its difficult and complex role. American combat units also made substantial contributions to this effort.

It was obvious that, while operational cooperation and coordination between RVNAF and US forces might not be an ideal solution for the conduct of the common war effort, it was the most realistic way to improve morale and combat effectiveness of the Vietnamese armed forces. Cooperation and coordination also helped to make the task of US forces easier to carry out in many ways.

It is difficult to make an assessment of the US advisory effort. Suffice it to say that it was instrumental in transforming a disorganized, poorly-led, and unschooled army of some 150,000 into a modern and highly organized tri-service military force nearly ten times as large which successfully held and pushed back the NVA invasion of 1972. During the first few years the effort of US advisers met with considerable obstacles, particularly in the area of training. Several years of hard fighting on all battlefields from north to south and of living close to French forces—and undoubtedly under their influence—had instilled a certain psychology of intractability, unruliness, and complacency among the Vietnamese military cadre. Their adjustment to the American way of doing things was painful and slow. They found American training and warfare methods too inflexible, too mechanical, and not realistically adapted to the Vietnam battlefield. The language barrier and cultural difference also formed a wide and seemingly unbridgeable gap. To a certain extent, the Vietnamese were not interested in training and did not think it was necessary. After all, they felt they were experienced enough and knew how to fight this kind of war. American tactical advice was something they thought they could do without.

During the early sixties most US Army company-grade officers that were assigned to field advisory duties—except for a few Korean War veterans—had no combat experience. They were in a truly awkward position vis-a-vis the Vietnamese regimental and battalion commanders who had gone through so many battles during the first Indochina war. Their role and effectiveness, as a consequence, were greatly reduced. The adviser's duties were mostly limited to end use inspections, maintenance of weapons and materiel, and assisting the unit in military techniques and logistics, but seldom in operational matters. This situation changed,

when US combat support assets—airlift, helicopters, and later, tactical air—were made available. For the first time, ARVN unit commanders felt vulnerable and helpless without advisers who controlled and provided the support assets. The role of advisers began to grow in importance and their effectiveness increased markedly with the advent of airmobile operations and US tactical air support. This new aspect and level of the war had changed the advisory relationship for the better.

The training and development of the RVNAF made encouraging progress as a result of increased US assistance and advisory effort. But soon these achievements were undermined by political events that began in late 1963 and carried into the next few years. Command and control of the RVNAF, which had for years been a basic weakness, were further disorganized and weakened by political intrigues and machinations. The armed forces were in deplorable shape and their deterioration prompted the United States to intervene. The experience of this period demonstrated that no matter how effective the military advisory effort might be professionally it could do little to influence the course of events unless the advisers to key command positions also doubled as political counselors. But the nature of the war and the realities of a developing country in which the military so strongly dominated politics perhaps would have required a special breed of politico-military advisers.

If the RVNAF had had a tight and unified command system throughout the entire hierarchy—from the top echelon to the PF platoon—then the US advisory effort to develop and improve these armed forces would certainly have been much easier and less painful. For the Vietnamese private—whether regular or territorial—was basically a good soldier, courageous, enduring and resilient. The young cadre at low level units were also highly motivated, enthusiastic, and easy to mold. The trouble was that these fine soldiers and cadre were not brought along by good leadership. In general, the pressure exerted by advisers to relieve ineffective commanders or to withdraw from units with a poor record only worked at the lower levels. It served no practical purpose for the benefit of the RVNAF apart from causing confusion among the troops. In retrospect, the improvement of military leadership, particularly at the higher levels of the hierarchy,

would have been more vital for the purpose of developing combat effectiveness for the RVNAF than any other program. At the higher levels, what the advisers sought most to do was establish good rapport with their counterparts rather than pressuring them to do the job. But, niceties and civility simply did not work when a war was being fought. As General James L. Collins, Jr. has so aptly commented on this problem:

"The rapport approach is dangerous because it lends itself to the acceptance of substandard performance by the adviser. In any future situation where advisers are deployed under hostile conditions, the emphasis should be on getting the job done, not on merely getting along with the individual being advised."¹

The US advisory effort suffered a setback during the first few years of active US participation in the war. The role of advisers was overshadowed by the presence of US combat forces on whom the success or failure of the war effort depended. ARVN units began to turn to US field commanders for operational guidance and support since it was they who wielded true military power, not the regular advisers who during this time acted mostly in a liaison role. Because of their reduced role and the priority of personnel assignment given to US combat forces, the selection of advisers was no longer subject to exacting criteria, and the advisory effectiveness suffered accordingly.

But it was also during this period that more consideration was given to pacification, and the advisory system was thus greatly expanded on a territorial basis. The availability of US advisers at the district level was truly beneficial for the pacification program and contributed substantially to the general war effort. The adviser at district level was a military officer but his encompassing duties required him to act in both military and civilian capacities. As a matter of fact he was a special kind of adviser. Because of the combat and social environment

¹Brigadier General James Lawton Collins, Jr., The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950 - 1972 (Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.: 1975) p. 130.

in which he lived and operated and the many and highly diversified problems he had to solve, the district adviser at the end of his tour had truly become a political-military adviser in his own right. The unique experience and invaluable training thus acquired by US officers might well make them more qualified leaders in future assignments.

The task of upgrading RF and PF combat effectiveness through the device of Mobile Assistance Teams was only reasonably successful. This was due less to the limitations of advisory personnel than to constraints of the territorial command and control system. Conceived and operating as part of the RVNAF, the RF and PF were nevertheless placed under a different command channel and more often than not were employed in a haphazard and unorthodox manner by a province or district chief who was always too busy with his administrative or political duties. Lacking strong and effective mainforce backing and adequate combat support, RF and PF were usually exposed to piecemeal defeat and seldom had the offensive spirit or the motivation required to accomplish their difficult mission.

On their part, the ARVN regular units did not fare much better, bound as they were to their territorial security and pacification support duties. Only rarely did they have the opportunity to evade the debilitating effect of routine activities and participate in mobile operations. Not until after 1968 was there any systematic effort to improve their combat effectiveness through intensive programs of combined operations. But by the time ARVN units really got off to a good start US forces were already standing down to redeploy.

In addition to the advisory effort, the presence of US combat forces in South Vietnam since 1965 also contributed substantially to upgrading the RVNAF and enabling the RVN government to consolidate its popular base and control. This contribution was made through combined operations jointly conducted by the RVNAF and US forces against enemy forces and bases. With a view to integrating all military efforts, emphasis was placed on cooperation and coordination between Vietnamese and American combat units. Short of a unified command, this was a good working solution to direct the common war effort although it was far from being ideal.

To provide guidance and direction for successful cooperation and coordination in operational matters, the RVNAF Joint General Staff and the US Military Assistance Command jointly worked out an annual Combined Campaign Plan which set forth the objectives, policies and procedures to be carried out by US Field Forces and ARVN Corps. The plan provided general guidelines for the common war effort but failed to institute any combined staff agency to monitor, supervise, and follow up on its actual conduct. These functions were performed separately by the JGS and MACV although cooperation and coordination were achieved through periodic combined command or staff meetings. It was apparently felt that such an arrangement was enough since the field commands were responsible for the actual planning and conduct of combat operations. Only in intelligence were there permanent combined agencies for analysis, production and dissemination.

During the early period from 1965 to 1968, various formulas were suggested but the actual combat cooperation and coordination effort at the field level was piecemeal and individualistic. It depended primarily on the personal rapport between counterpart commanders, the relative interest each of them took in the combined effort, and the tactical situation in each corps tactical zone. The role played by the RVNAF was, as a matter of fact, a passive one since they were made responsible only for territorial security and pacification support. It was the US forces that held the initiative in combat operations because they were assigned this mission and controlled all vital support assets. The division of tasks thus determined by the Combined Campaign plan reflected the status of the RVNAF during this period. Their combat effectiveness was marginal and their combat support assets were still very limited.

Aside from securing operations conducted by US forces around their bases, which necessarily involved elements of ARVN or territorial forces, large scale actions against enemy bases were almost exclusively planned and performed by US forces. In the few operations involving the participation of ARVN forces, Vietnamese units seldom numbered more than a few battalions which were either assigned objectives of secondary importance or served as blocking or cordon forces. The US Marines Combined Action

in ICTZ was probably the first conscious effort at coordination and cooperation at the lowest echelon. Although its goal was to provide support for the pacification program and training for the Popular Forces, it certainly benefited US Marines forces by providing security for their bases. The first significant combined operational effort was Operation FAIRFAX whose success was due both to the long duration of the operation and the personal interest of the MACV commander himself.

In general, the combined effort during this period depended largely on the personality, policy and operational concept of each US Field Force Commander and, to a lesser extent, on the attitude of his ARVN counterpart. The degree of rapport between them was a factor that determined cooperation and coordination between their staffs and subordinate commands. If both American and Vietnamese field commanders were willing and shared a common enthusiasm for combined efforts, then cooperation and coordination automatically became a rule or practice between their staffs and units.

As has been said earlier, ARVN Corps commanders were usually deeply involved in administration and political matters and could not spare enough time or energy to devote to the tactical problems which, fortunately, were cared for by US Field Forces. The rare visits they made to subordinate units were always solemn, formal and time-consuming occasions that practically stopped all activities of the unit being visited. An ARVN Corps Commander never casually dropped in for a visit or for a working session with the unit commander. How could the Corps commander, in these circumstances, have a full grasp of the military situation in his own area of responsibility? Corps commanders were not interested in what US forces were doing, either. There were occasional visits to US forces, of course, but they were more in the nature of ceremonial or official functions. Although some claimed that US Field Forces withheld information concerning US plans and activities—which was probably true in a few instances—Corps commanders were never fully informed about the tactical situation and friendly activities, either Vietnamese or American. They depended totally on US initiative and efforts.

Corps staffs, as a consequence, were never required to make studies or plans to respond positively to the requirements of the situation. Most of the time Corps staffs performed tedious routine work on a day-to-day basis. Operational plans, therefore, were almost always initiated and worked out by US Field Force staffs. It was common knowledge that Corps operational plans during this period were more often than not merely translations or excerpts of US plans and orders.

On their part, US Field Force commanders were always devoted to and busy with their own duties and units. Despite their nominal capacity as Senior Corps Advisers, they rarely performed their advisory functions. The true adviser who worked closely with the Corps commander was always the Deputy Corps Adviser. The changeovers of US Field Force commanders also affected the adviser-counterpart relationship and by extension, the cooperation and coordination between ARVN and US forces. There were some exceptions; these were cases in which cooperation and coordination had been well established and where US commanders enjoyed a true prestige and trust with regard to their counterparts and Vietnamese troops.

At lower echelons, brigade or battalion, US unit commanders were generally reluctant to participate in combined operations with ARVN units. At these levels there existed no adviser-counterpart relationship between US and ARVN unit commanders. When they participated in combined operations, their relationship was usually one of mutual support—for the duration of the common effort. The reluctance to cooperate on the part of US brigade or battalion commanders derived chiefly from a prejudice against the combat effectiveness of ARVN units. They appeared not to realize that perseverance, determination and tolerance were the ingredients that were required from both sides to arrive at genuine cooperation.

Geographic location and terrain also affected cooperation. For a Corps which was responsible for a too large area such as the II CTZ, distance was really an impediment to the combined effort. Since II Corps and its divisions headquarters were located far from I Field Force and its subordinate units and because each of these units were assigned a separate area of responsibility, effective cooperation and coordination became a real problem. Some of the difficulties were overcome by good

communications and by frequent combined command and staff meetings, but these were mainly useful for planning purposes. For a genuinely integrated effort to be effective on the basis of cooperation and coordination, there was also a requirement for constant supervision and follow-up by both commanders on the battlefield on a regular, if not daily basis. The best solution to achieve this would have been a fully integrated tactical operations center or at least the co-location of headquarters or command posts at every tactical level. The exchange of liaison teams between headquarters was a poor substitute for coordination by close physical proximity, because liaison teams obviously have their limits.

A major impediment for the RVNAF was the continuing lack of combat support assets and the perennial shortage of forces available for combined operations. Almost all assets required for the support of ARVN units were provided by US forces, from a command and liaison ship to airlift or helilift facilities, firepower, engineers, supplies, medical evacuation, etc. In large measure, therefore, combined operations depended on the availability of resources. This explained why they were usually initiated and planned by US forces. Then, in order to muster enough forces for the combined effort, it was usually necessary to redeploy ARVN units committed to pacification support. This was a step that neither the US Field Force commander nor the Corps commander took lightly, given the emphasis the RVN government placed on pacification and rural development at the time.

Not until after the successful counterattack by US and ARVN forces in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive did operational cooperation and coordination develop into a systematic and purposeful effort. This was basically due to a drastic change in American policy toward the war. The US was more and more inclined to curtail US participation and was turning over more combat responsibility to the RVNAF. Programs were initiated to quickly expand and modernize the RVNAF on the one hand and upgrade Vietnamese combat effectiveness on the other. This preparatory work was to pave the way for the Vietnamization program and the disengagement of US forces from South Vietnam.

The task of improving the RVNAF combat effectiveness became the major concern of MACV and US Field Forces. Since the trend of modern warfare emphasized airmobility and the effective use of firepower support, the US effort concentrated on training ARVN units in airmobile operations and the coordinated use of combat support assets. In contrast to the earlier period, combined operations involved an increasing number of ARVN units and were conducted more regularly within pre-conceived programs. At the same time, more modern weapons and equipment were made available to ARVN infantry divisions.

Following encouraging results achieved through the integrated employment of US and ARVN units by US XXIV Corps in the two northernmost provinces of I CTZ, I and II US Field Forces initiated extensive programs of combined operations in II and III Corps Tactical Zones. These programs, called "pair off" and "Dong Tien" respectively, have been discussed in Chapter V. In general, they substantially contributed to the rapid improvement of morale and combat effectiveness of ARVN units. For one thing, these programs offered Vietnamese unit commanders at all echelons a good opportunity to learn their trade. For another, they were a training method that no school or training center could duplicate in classrooms or even in field exercises. By working day and night side by side with US units, Vietnamese commanders were able to absorb several invaluable experiences in command and leadership that neither advisers nor schools could have provided. The advantages of these programs were evident. The only drawback was their short duration. One may wonder what these programs could have done to the RVNAF had they been initiated at the very beginning of the US participation in the war. Then perhaps, Vietnamization could have begun much earlier. And if, instead of a gradual response approach, the US had fully and resolutely brought its entire military might to bear on the war effort, then surely the outcome of the war would have been different.

The advent of combined operations also helped to some extent to mitigate the problem of shortage of capable cadre at all echelons. Those ARVN units which were most exposed to US tutelage and had several opportunities to operate alongside US units, such as the 1st and 22d

Infantry Divisions, for example, were all able to develop a very cohesive and uniformly capable command cadre. In addition, they also acquired good traditions and a solid reputation as proven combat units. The high degree of success in these instances, however, depended more on the genuine interest and close association that US commanders displayed toward ARVN units than anything else. An outstanding example was found in the tactical area of responsibility of the US XXIV Corps where cooperation and coordination were neither formally instituted under any formalized program nor bound by any procedure or rule. The key to success here was the US commander himself who daily visited and made himself available to ARVN units on a permanent basis. It was his personal care for the needs and well-being of ARVN troops that made them feel as familiar and as close to him as to their own commander.

On the other hand, when ARVN units directly cooperated with US forces on a permanent basis, their higher commands usually became complacent and less active. All that they had to do was monitor, follow up, and be satisfied with results and reports. The task of planning and conducting operations was entrusted to divisions and regiments and to whatever arrangements for coordination and cooperation they made with US units. This passivity in leadership and planning in time turned into a major deficiency which became more acute when US forces began to redeploy and which adversely affected both morale and combat effectiveness of the RVNAF.

Trained and accustomed as they were to US resources and standards, ARVN units naturally acquired skills and proficiency in the employment of modern combat support assets. This posed no problem as long as US forces were there, since they supplied what the RVNAF were unable to provide. What was questionable in the long run was the own ability of the RVNAF to provide support assets at the same level and rate once US forces were withdrawn. The most serious drawback seemed to be an ingrained habit of overkilling by profligate use of firepower and the over-dependence of ARVN unit commanders on tactical air support, particularly B-52 strikes.

In retrospect, as has been said earlier, the combined operations effort initiated by US forces to upgrade the RVNAF combat effectiveness and as preparation to turn over the combat responsibility to the RVNAF

should have been encouraged much earlier, when US Field Forces were activated. Since the combined effort was in essence a joint enterprise at all levels, the question was why had it not been attempted also at higher levels. To have good combat troops and adequate support resources was certainly not enough. There should also have been stronger leadership, more effective planning, better command and control, and more profound motivation. ARVN Corps staffs and even the JCS could have been given the opportunity to learn, too. Why limit the training to lower levels? It did not make sense to have old fashioned and lackadaisical commanders in charge of advanced and modern troops.

In general, despite shortcomings and drawbacks, the US presence and effort truly helped the RVNAF to improve in most aspects. In return, US commanders, and advisers in particular, learned something about the complex nature of the Vietnam war and acquired invaluable experience that might be helpful to them in some future conflict. There remains though a fundamental question regarding the Vietnam conflict. Why was there a failure to produce strong leadership and motivation? This was, in the final analysis, what plagued the RVNAF the most. To be able to answer this question requires a thorough knowledge of the nature of the war, the kind of political system that directed the war effort, and the circumstances that affected leadership and motivation. A full answer to why there was such a profound lack of strong leadership and adequate motivation lies in these characteristics of the war, its politics, and its circumstances. It can be said though that good leadership and motivation were definitely not developed to an adequate extent and that this failure had a disastrous effect on the eventual outcome of the war.

COMUSMACV Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

Cordon and Search Operation to seal off and search an area

CORDS Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. A MACV organization that provided single manager direction of all US civil/military RD activities in the Republic of Vietnam.

COSVN Central Office of South Vietnam

CP Command Post

CSCC Combat Support Coordination Center

CT Abbreviation of Cong Truong, term used by the VC to designate divisions activated under COSVN

CTC Central Training Command

CTZ Corps Tactical Zone. The geographical area of responsibility of a Corps, but frequently used to refer to the Corps Headquarters itself.

CUPP Combined Unit Pacification Program

DMAC Delta Military Assistance Command (MR4)

DMZ Demilitarized Zone

DS Direct Support

DSA District Senior Advisor

DTA Division Tactical Area. The geographical area of responsibility of a division, frequently used to refer to the Division Headquarters itself.

FDC Fire Direction Center

FFV or FFORCEV Field Forces, Vietnam (US)

FO Forward Observer (Artillery)

FSB Fire Support Base

FSE Forward Support Element

FWMAF Free World Military Assistance Forces

GS General Support

GPWD General Political Warfare Department

GVN Government of South Vietnam

J-2 Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence

Glossary

ABN Airborne

ACD Air Cavalry Division (US)

A & DSLC Administrative and Direct Support Logistics Company (at least one per province for support of RF-PF)

AK-47 Soviet 7.62-mm assault rifle

ALC Area Logistical Command

AO Area of Operation

APC Armored Personnel Carrier

ARVN Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Common abbreviation used to refer to regular Army forces to include airborne and ranger units.

AT Antitank

Buddy Operations Combined operations by US and South Vietnamese forces.

CAC Combined Action Company

CAG Combined Action Group

CAP Combined Action Platoon

CAT Combat Assistance Team

CAV Cavalry (US)

CDEC Combined Document Exploitation Center

CICV Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam

CLC Central Logistic Command

CMAC Capital Military Assistance Command

CMD or CMR Capital Military District or Region

CMEC Combined Materiel Exploitation Center

CMIC Combined Military Interrogation Center

JGS	Joint General Staff (RVNAF)
JOC	Joint Operations Center
JUSPAO	Joint United States Public Affairs Office. Served US interests as well as advising the GVN in information and psychological operations.
KIA	Killed in Action
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOC	Lines Of Communication
Local force	Viet Cong combat unit subordinate to a district or province
LRRP	Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol
LTL	Vietnamese Interprovincial Route (Lien Tinh Lo)
LZ	Landing Zone
M-16	US light weight, rapid-firing 5.56-mm rifle
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force (US)
Main force	Viet Cong and North Vietnamese military units subordinate to the Central Office of South Vietnam, military regions, or other higher echelons of command.
MAT	Mobile Advisory Team
MEDCAP	Medical Civic Action Program
MEDEVAC	Medical Evacuation
MI	Military Intelligence
MILPHAP	Military Provincial Health Assistance Program
MP	Military Police
MR	Military Region
MSS	Military Security Service (Vietnamese)
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPFF	National Police Field Force
NT	Abbreviation of Nong Truong, alternate term used by the VC to designate a division.

NVA	North Vietnamese Army
Pattern Activity Analysis	Procedure begun in mid-1966 which consists of detailed plotting on maps of information on enemy activity obtained from a variety of sources over an extended period of time.
PF	Popular Force (s). Military forces locally recruited, employed within their home district and organized into platoons.
PICC	Province Intelligence Coordination Committee
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit
PSA	Province Senior Adviser
PSDF	People's Self Defense Forces
PsyOps	Psychological Warfare Operations
PW	Prisoner of War
QL	Vietnamese National Route (Quoc Lo)
RD	Rural or Revolutionary Development
RF	Regional Force (s). Military forces recruited and employed within a Province.
ROK	Republic of Korea
RPG-2	Soviet antitank grenade launcher designated B-40 by the VC.
RR	Recoilless Rifle
RVN	Republic of Vietnam. Sometimes used interchangeable with GVN when referring to the government or with SVN when referring to the country.
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SAPOV	Sub-Area Petroleum Office, Vietnam
Search-and-clear	Offensive military operation designed to sweep through an area with the objective of locating, driving out, or destroying the enemy.
Search-and-destroy	Offensive operation designed to seek out and destroy enemy forces, headquarters, and supply installation, with emphasis on destruction rather than occupation.
SLAR	Side Looking Airborne Radar
SVN	South Vietnam. Generally connotes the land itself.

TAOI	Tactical Area of Interest
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
TL	Vietnamese Provincial Route (Tinh Lo)
TOC	Tactical Operations Center
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USARV	United States Army, Vietnam
USOM	United States Operations Mission, a precursor of USAID
USMACV	United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.
VC	Viet Cong. Communist insurgents in South Vietnam
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
VHF	Very High Frequency
VNAF	Vietnam Air Force
VNN	Vietnam Navy