

world-wide attention to the FULRO cause.¹² The Montagnard feelings of antagonism towards the Vietnamese, however, did not simply fade away.

The poor communication between the lowlanders and highlanders always posed unique problems for the planning of Chieu Hoi operations throughout the American advisory period. The Highlander's strategic location, however, made it very important to try and include them in any pacification programs.¹³ As a result, probably more so than in other regions, it was very important that propaganda aimed towards potential Hoi Chanh could be understood by all the groups in the region. Not only was language a problem, but cultural differences and very diverse levels of literacy also presented formidable obstacles.¹⁴

The Highland border was of tremendous strategic importance to the VC and the North Vietnamese, as the area was part of the supply route known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.¹⁵ The North Vietnamese used the trail not only for supplies, but also to establish bases in Cambodia and Laos to the west of II Corps.¹⁶

The South Vietnamese and Americans recognized the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong threats from the border. Before large-scale deployment of US troops to Vietnam took place, US Special Forces advisors had already helped to establish CIDG camps in the highlands. Later, Americans helped to build up vital logistical facilities in the Corp area (including the ports of Cam Ranh Bay and Nha Trang) and stationed several combat units in the area. These units at various times included elements of the

5th Special Forces Group, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, the 4th Infantry Division, and the 173d Airborne Brigade.¹⁷ Additionally, II Corps was the only Corps area where there was also a significant Korean FWMAF presence.

On the civil side, cultural tensions between the highlanders and coastal lowlanders posed a unique problem in II Corps. Otherwise, like the much of the rest of South Vietnam, the society was primarily agrarian and village oriented. Although some residents had family in the Government of Vietnam (GVN) forces, a significant number of the people had family members or acquaintances who had been drafted or volunteered for service with the Viet Cong.

The organization of the overall Chieu Hoi effort in II Corps reflected that of the headquarters in Saigon. The II Corps CORDS Chieu Hoi Directorate worked with the regional office of the South Vietnamese Ministry of Chieu Hoi to create, coordinate, and implement Chieu Hoi operations. The directorate and ministry also worked together with the GVN and US military units in the area in order to organize military operations that complemented the rallier program.

South Vietnamese Chieu Hoi personnel in II Corps were given generic psyops materials by the Ministry of Chieu Hoi in Saigon, but they supplemented these materials with propaganda which was based on local themes developed from the ideas of resident ralliers.¹⁸ The GVN military was also heavily involved with the Chieu Hoi program. The overall responsible

agency for GVN military participation was the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD), which supervised the psyops activities of the ARVN forces.¹⁹ These activities included the Chieu Hoi inducement programs that were linked to tactical military operations.²⁰ As GVN military units were often the ones to whom the VC and NVA rallied, it was paramount that they be aware and supportive of the program.²¹

In II Corps (as with the other three Corps areas), a Chieu Hoi Advisor was assigned to the Regional MACCORDS staff. The Regional Chieu Hoi advisor was under the supervision of the DEPCORDS for II Corp and was in charge of monitoring the overall regional Chieu Hoi program. The advisor advised and briefed the DEPCORDS and the Chief of the Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon in all the phases of the Chieu Hoi program in his region. The advisor was also charged with maintaining a close and productive relationship with all individuals and agencies, both Vietnamese and American, that were involved with the Chieu Hoi program. In this capacity, the regional advisor was expected to travel throughout the II Corps area in order to implement the program and assist his provincial Chieu Hoi advisors.²²

CORDS looked for specific qualifications in regional Chieu Hoi advisors. The Regional Chieu Hoi advisor was generally transferred from a USAID, military, or other US agency career and had to have a prior meritorious performance record. Leadership skills and executive experience were essential, as were “personal attributes which could facilitate the establishment of rapport between the advisor and his GVN counterpart.”²³

Those same “personal attributes” were also to be used to work effectively with members of US and Vietnamese agencies. Finally, the advisor should have had a working knowledge of the Vietnamese language.²⁴

The last qualification was usually the easiest to evaluate. Generally, the personnel (both civilian and military) in the pacification programs had some kind of language training in Vietnamese. Some had undergone intensive six month training courses which included language instruction, at such places as the US Special Operations Center at Ft. Bragg, NC.²⁵ Despite this training, few personnel were fluent enough to work in complex situations (such as interrogations of ralliers) without a translator.²⁶ Indeed, many could not function at all without a translator. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that many of the Vietnamese translators working in the field spoke very poor English.²⁷ Ultimately, language was a stumbling block which hampered the not only the effectiveness of the Chieu Hoi program specifically, but the American advisory effort generally.²⁸

In addition to working with the South Vietnamese Ministry of Chieu Hoi officials, the II Corps advisor worked along with the US psyops and combat units in the region. US military units had a key role in the Chieu Hoi program. The success of the inducement phase of the program was heavily reliant on the military situation in the area. Military pressure was an extremely important factor in bring VC defectors back to the GVN.²⁹ There could not be successful Chieu Hoi program in an area where the VC or NVA forces were

winning. Additionally, there was often a greater opportunity to defect during an ongoing military operation.³⁰

Below the II Corps level, in the provinces themselves, there was generally a Chieu Hoi Advisor attached to the staff of the Provincial Senior Advisor.³¹ The same duties and attributes required of the regional Chieu Hoi advisor were also requisite for the provincial advisor. Responsible for the program at a local level, the provincial Chieu Hoi advisor planned and coordinated with the Vietnamese Chieu Hoi officials as well as the other Americans entities in his province. This grass roots level of advising support was extremely important. If the program was not supported effectively at the Province level then the program could never be successful. Ultimately, it was at this level where the American Chieu Hoi personnel most directly interacted with the South Vietnamese who worked on the actual implementation of programs.

Even below the province hierarchy, there were US advisors working on the Chieu Hoi program. These advisors were primarily assigned at the district level, but generally, advisors were tasked with implementing several pacification programs at the same time. As a result, most of the significant planning for the Chieu Hoi program was done at the Province and Regional levels and above. The implementation of the programs at the advisor level, however, made a tremendous impact on the efficacy of the program.

There were three primary relationships crucial to the execution of the Chieu Hoi program in II Corps. The first was the interaction between the US

personnel in the Chieu Hoi program and the US personnel involved with other pacification programs in the region. The second was between the US personnel in the Chieu Hoi program and the allied military units in II Corps. The third, and perhaps ultimately the most important for the long-term prosperity of the program, was the relationship between the Americans and their counterparts in the Vietnamese Ministry of Chieu Hoi.

From its inception, the Americans considered the Chieu Hoi program to be one of the important pacification programs in Vietnam with the greatest potential for success. Despite this official approval, the program in II Corps often had to fight for resources and independence from other programs within CORDS. In order to be effective, the Chieu Hoi program had to gain autonomy from supervisors who did not understand the operation and did not give it the respect and support that a core pacification function deserved.

In December of 1967, only a few months after CORDS inception, Lieutenant Colonel Donald W. Moreau, Chief of the Chieu Hoi program and Military psyops in II Corps wrote to the II Corps DEPCORDS to obtain approval for amalgamating the offices of CORDS/POD, military psyop, and Chieu Hoi advisors into one group which would be called the PSYOP section. Moreau justified this action by pronouncing that the results would be to standardize the psyops operations in all the provinces and to encourage centralized planning, coordination, and advisory assistance in the field.³² This suggestion for integration passed tentatively through the necessary channels in II Corps and was implemented. It was not, however, implemented smoothly.

The perceived slight to the program would affect the II Corps personnel and efficacy of the program for the next two years.³³

The repercussions of Lieutenant Colonel Moreau's suggestion not only affected the II Corps program, but also incited a reaction from the very top of the CORDS hierarchy. Robert Komer, DEPCORDS, who had always been a proponent of Chieu Hoi, sent a telegram three months after the change in II Corps. His March 29, 1968, telegram strongly re-emphasized his support of the Open Arms program and his disapproval of placing Chieu Hoi representatives under other staff components such as New Life Development and psyops. As of the date of the issuance, Komer ordered that all Chieu Hoi representatives would be given full division status and "would not, repeat, not be required to or through other divisions."³⁴

The battle, however, did not end there. Komer's telegram did not substantially affect the situation in II Corps and after his departure in October of that year, the Chieu Hoi program lost an invaluable ally. In December 1968, Ogden Williams, then the head of the Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon, briefed Ambassador Colby, the DEPCORDS, on major problems in the Chieu Hoi program. In discussing II Corps, Williams emphasized the problems that came with lumping Chieu Hoi in with Military Psyops and wrote hopefully of the possibility of a reorganization of CORDS in II Corps.³⁵ Two months later, the reorganization had taken place, but not towards an independent Chieu Hoi program. In response, on 28 February 1969, Williams wrote a letter to the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, George D. Jacobsen reiterating in even

more depth the problems of layering Chieu Hoi personnel under other CORDS divisions. In this letter, Williams argued strenuously for an independent program in all Corps areas. He wrote that the performance of the Chieu Hoi program over the past two years had clearly demonstrated the “destructive effects of layering (our) advisors under other technical divisions, and specifically psyops.”³⁶ He further stated that the Komer telegram (which he had attached to the memo) had had a very favorable effect on the efficiency and priority given to the program in the provinces. However, despite Komer’s directive, Williams remained concerned with the situation in II Corps, which had only grown worse.³⁷

Williams wrote that the “merging” of Military Psyops and the Chieu Hoi program into one division was due to the actions of a lieutenant colonel (presumably Moreau) who was more concerned with increased status career-wise than he was with the efficacy of the program.³⁸ Williams went on to say that although he and his staff had acquiesced in the arrangement on a “tentative basis,” their misgivings had been borne out, “the relative failure of our program in II Corps has been the failure of Chieu Hoi to develop any real identity of its own.”³⁹ Williams stated that as a result of the merging, the performance of the program had been disappointing, and even more important, the regional CORDS staff as a whole had not prioritized the program. Additionally, Williams pointed out that the relationship between the US Chieu Hoi staff in II Corps and the local Vietnamese officials had been woefully neglected. The recent appointment of Major Richard Riddle, however, had

been a boon to the program. Major Riddle, in William's opinion, was working to help the II Corps program develop an identity and improve the efficiency and teamwork that characterized the program in the rest of the country.⁴⁰

Williams re-emphasized that a strong internal Chieu Hoi program was one of the three primary factors for a better returnee rate (the other two being the presence of an available VC target and favorable external circumstances) and that he was confident that Major Riddle would "make everything out of the Chieu Hoi program in II Corps that could be made."⁴¹

It was at this point in his memo that Williams got to the crux of the problem. A new organization had been proposed in II Corps where psyops would be amalgamated under a new chief who was also the JUSPAO representative for the area. Though Chieu Hoi would be considered an important part of this "bouillabaisse," all the files and secretarial and administrative staff of the various branches would be amalgamated, "condemning us to more of the same organizational nonentity that we have seen in the past."⁴² Williams argued that Chieu Hoi was not a psyops program. He contended that Chieu Hoi was a political and resettlement program that received crucial support from psyops during the inducement phase only. The other phases such as reception, training, resettlement, and follow-up had nothing to do with psyops. To add credence to his argument he pointed out that while part of Military Psyops in II Corps, Chieu Hoi had received as much leaflet coverage and psyops support as any Chieu Hoi program in the country, yet the rallying rates were low. Williams reasoned that this was because other

than a blanket of paper, there was nothing much else of substance to the program. Williams maintained that “it did little good to shower the countryside with leaflets when the bamboo telegraph easily informed any VC that the Chieu Hoi center was crummy, or that the Hoi Chanh were ignored or neglected.”⁴³

A response less than a week later on 7 March 1969, from the Assistant DEPCORDS for II Corps, Willard E. Chambers, directed to Jacobsen, shows that William’s letter had upset some of the regional psyops hierarchy.⁴⁴ Again, like LTC Moreau, Chambers argued that amalgamation of Chieu Hoi and Psyops was a way of centralizing and improving psyops programs. He did not differentiate Chieu Hoi from psyops as Williams had done. Chambers maintained that the subordination of the Chieu Hoi Directorate was done “not as a way of diluting their efforts, but as a way of bringing executive talent, skill, authority, and attention to the program in a way that was not possible previously.”⁴⁵

Fortunately for the independence cause of the II Corps Chieu Hoi staff, Chambers’ letter apparently did not have the impact for which he wished. Riddle prepared and authored a memorandum on 21 March 1969, and disseminated it for the upcoming visit of the Commanding General, IFFV. The memorandum was structured around the argument for independence. Riddle wrote that “throughout Region II, the Chieu Hoi program suffers from a misdirected effort in that there is an overconcentration on psychological operations at the expense of the remainder of the program, which if properly

conducted, forms its own best inducement.”⁴⁶ Riddle’s memo was followed up two days later by a directive, drawn up by Riddle, apparently under the direction of James Megellas (DEPCORDS, II Corps), making the Chieu Hoi advisors independent of the psyops offices and emphasizing that the program receive command attention at all levels.⁴⁷

Five months later, on 4 August 1969, Ambassador Colby, made a statement re-emphasizing the importance of the Chieu Hoi program nationwide. Eight days after Colby’s pronouncement, the mini-saga came to an end with the CORDS memorandum 11.4-69 entitled “Organizational Change for CORDS II CTZ.” The memorandum withdrew the Chieu Hoi Division from the Office of Psyops, Civil Affairs, and Chieu Hoi (OPCC) and established it as a separate division.⁴⁸ The jubilation that must have been felt by the Chieu Hoi staff as a result of the directive is clearly indicated by a handwritten note attached to the directive. “Ask OMS for a copy suitable for framing, a black frame, and a gold plaque inscribed with ‘Woops there goes another banana tree plant!’—ALK.”⁴⁹

The relationship between US personnel in the Chieu Hoi Directorate and the allied military units in II Corps was also extremely important to the success of the program. Specifically, the relationship most affected the inducement stage the program. Although as Williams pointed out, inducement alone could not ensure the success of the program, it was an important beginning. The inducement stage was the one step where the Chieu Hoi staff were the most reliant on outside psyop activities. Studies had shown that there

were increased rallying rates at the time of military operations against the VC and the NVA. In order for the inducement stage of the Chieu Hoi program to be successful, the staff had to coordinate very closely with American and South Vietnamese military units. The military units were supposed to support the Chieu Hoi program by engaging in operations that helped to weaken enemy morale and encourage the enemy to rally.⁵⁰

Military operational plans in II Corps, indeed, were required to include a psyops annex detailing proposed psyops activities, including Chieu Hoi support.⁵¹ Further, when a military unit conducted a psyop operation in support of the Chieu Hoi program, the provincial Chieu Hoi service (or if the operation involved more than one province, the regional Chieu Hoi delegate) was always involved in some capacity. If a military unit (either US or South Vietnamese) received one or more ralliers, they were to transfer these Hoi Chanh to the Chieu Hoi Agencies right way.⁵² This was supposed to prevent any possibility of the misuse of a Hoi Chanh. Though both US and GVN units were told to conduct information courses to ensure that all the troops knew their duty in the reception and treatment of returnees, mistreatment was sometimes a problem, usually in GVN units. Another reason for the fast turnaround was that any intelligence information the rallier could provide had to be gathered as quickly as possible so it could be analyzed and returned to the field as quickly as possible. Though many US units did preliminary interrogations in the field, further questioning was carried out in intelligence centers staffed with US and Vietnamese interrogators. The intelligence

benefits a rallier could provide was a tangible benefit from the program which the US military units could readily appreciate. Other benefits US units could draw from the program were the use of Hoi Chanh propaganda teams for psyops missions in insecure areas, and the implementation of Kit Carson Scouts in the field.

In October 1968, the relationship between CORDS and the US military was strengthened further by COMUSMACV Creighton Abram's announcement of his "one war" policy. The idea behind this plan was that the enemy should be attacked simultaneously on all sides, militarily, politically, psychologically, and economically by coordinated and integrated efforts.⁵³ In emphasizing the "one war" concept to his senior advisors he stressed that pacification goals should be foremost in consequence for the military as well as civil programs. Abrams wanted his generals to concentrate on attacking the Viet Cong Infrastructure because "the VCI are the ones who support the main force units."⁵⁴

Like the rest of South Vietnam, II Corps was affected by the reemphasis of pacification. The CG of II Corps, Lieutenant General William R. Peers felt that the one war concept would be especially useful due to the diverse and spread out nature of the Corp's military, advisory, and civil units.⁵⁵ In December 1968 he issued a memorandum directed at the military and civilian personnel in II Corps which outlined the concept of the one war.

In order to help to fulfill this one war objective, the various II Corps CORDS program personnel (including Chieu Hoi) conducted briefings for the

officers of the major units in the area.⁵⁶ Additionally, plans were laid to coordinate all the Psyop support available in II Corps for the 1969 Tet campaign.⁵⁷ The CORDS office had learned from experience that the Tet season was the best time for inducing VC to return to the GVN. By exploiting the Tet ideals of family and “coming home,” the Chieu Hoi program would put forth propaganda not only celebrating the idea of coming home to a village, but “coming home to the nation.”⁵⁸

The 1969 Chieu Hoi Tet plan broke the targets into two groups, the “enemy” and “friendly.” The “enemy” consisted of members of the VC military forces, NVA forces in South Vietnam, members of the political structure of the National Liberation Front and the Revolutionary Party, the population of VC/NVA held areas of South Vietnam, and the civilian populations of psyop accessible areas of South Vietnam. The “friendly” targets were: families living in GVN-held and other areas who were known to have relatives in the VC; the civil bureaucracy of the GVN at national, regional, district, and village/hamlet levels; and other elements of the national population of the RVN who were not included in the above. The reason for choosing the “friendly” targets of the civil bureaucracy and everyone else was to promote the idea of the Chieu Hoi program itself in the GVN. The program had met with a great deal of skepticism and many South Vietnamese were reluctant to accept Hoi Chanh into their communities.⁵⁹

The plan involved many different groups in II Corps. The preparation for the campaign began after Peers' announcement in December of 1968 and took place at a conference for all Chieu Hoi/Military PSYOP Advisors in II Corps. The US Army's 4th Infantry Division, 5th Special Forces Group, and 8th PSYOP Battalion, as well as the US Air Force's 14th Special Operations Wing were also present. The planners of the campaign were also careful to coordinate with the ARVN and Korean military units in the area so that there would be no duplication of effort.⁶⁰

The planners made sure that each local PSYOP unit would know exactly what resources would be available to them prior to the start of the operation. JUSPAO produced psyop materials that covered many themes and were distributed nationally. Examples of these themes include: how to rally; the deterioration of the NVA/VC military situation since TET 1968 and the inevitability of the RVN victory; the wasting of VC youth and life in the service of a bogus cause; the enjoyment of material benefits by South Vietnamese that were in excess of those known in North Vietnam; the spilling of blood of the South Vietnamese by members of their own race, the NVA/VC; and the idea that the NVA soldier who desires to rejoin his family for future Tets can allow himself to be taken prisoner with honor.⁶¹ Additionally, local American and South Vietnamese Chieu Hoi personnel wrote leaflets specifically pertinent for their regions. These leaflets incorporated Tet greetings from Province Chiefs and other GVN officials. Another series of locally produced leaflets included Tet related poems supporting the campaign.

Most of the locally produced materials were created for use in face-to-face operations, which would be the emphasis of the campaign.⁶²

In May, at the end of the campaign, the II Corps Chieu Hoi directorate analyzed the results of their efforts. One indication of success that they observed was that the rallying rate in March was significantly higher than the rate in February (110 as opposed to 35).⁶³ They attributed the lower rate in February to a “wait and see” attitude on behalf of the enemy just before the beginning of Tet. The enemy had apparently used increased surveillance and indoctrination of their troops as weapons against defections prior to Tet.⁶⁴ The Chieu Hoi directorate attributed the increase in March to the enemy’s failure to make good his promises and the intense Psyops campaign that was going on at the same time. Hoi Chanh who came in during the campaign said that the peacefulness enjoyed during the Tet period and the exposure to the Psyops literature were two primary reasons for their decisions to rally. Ultimately, the Americans declared the campaign a success with several factors contributing to the victory. The Chieu Hoi Directorate felt that the early coordination of all US Psyop units, the published plan which outlined all available Psyops media, the constant coordination of all psychological agencies operating in each province, and the three nation PSYOP support, had all been critical to the fulfillment of the plan.⁶⁵

Despite the success of the 1969 Tet campaign, most operations were not as broadly integrated. Generally, cooperation with the military was on a smaller scale, involving one unit at a time. An example of this kind of

operation was Operation MACARTHUR.⁶⁶ Operation MACARTHUR was a year-and-a-half search and destroy operation conducted by the 4th Infantry Division along with other supporting units. The operation took place between 12 October 1967 and 31 January 1969.⁶⁷ The 4th Infantry Division conducted psychological operations in conjunction with tactical operations in order to “spur disaffection and desertion of enemy soldiers through Chieu Hoi themes and to deny support to the NVA by encouraging support for the GVN.”⁶⁸ The psychological operations were directed at not only NVA and VC troops, but also Montagnard tribesman and Vietnamese villagers in the area.⁶⁹

The prevalent method of inducement used by the 4th Infantry Division was the use of leaflets. The Division disseminated approximately 45 million leaflets throughout the operational area.⁷⁰ The leaflets exploited all the central themes generally used by JUSPAO and Chieu Hoi to encourage rallying, including fears of death and abandonment, physical and mental hardships of combat, nostalgia towards their family, loss of faith in the ultimate victory of the North, and disillusionment with the Communist cause.⁷¹ Chieu Hoi personnel and Army intelligence officers created special leaflets, called “Quick Reaction Leaflets” which used personal appeals by recent Hoi Chanh and were directed at the particular units from where they rallied. This method was particularly effective with NVA units who were less likely to sympathize with other traditional appeals.

In addition to leaflets, 4th Infantry Division personnel used air and ground loudspeakers and showed 340 hours of educational films to villagers

living in the area.⁷² A Cultural Drama Team (which was mostly made up of Hoi Chanhs) from the 20th ARVN POLWAR Battalion also performed for villages in the hopes of influencing the families of VC. In March of 1968, the 4th Infantry Division used yet another method of inducement when they developed a newspaper aimed at informing enemy soldiers of the “actual world situation.” Intelligence gathered from ralliers and POWs had indicated that the news the average NVA/VC soldier received was from their political officers and was heavily colored with North Vietnamese propaganda. This newspaper, called “Binh Minh” (First Light), aimed at combating the NVA propaganda using information garnered from all available news media. The stories covered a variety of subjects, but emphasized those stories stressing the futility of the war. Along with the stories, Binh Minh usually included photographs of “Hoi Chanhs, and Vietnamese girls.”⁷³ Over six and one-half million copies of the newspaper were circulated during the operation.⁷⁴ Overall, the efforts of the 4th Infantry Division during Operation MACARTHUR resulted in 156 ralliers who were VC, VCI, and NVA.⁷⁵

Another example of a successful integration of pacification and military operations was the 173d Airborne Brigade’s Operation WASHINGTON GREEN.⁷⁶ WASHINGTON GREEN took place between 15 April 1969 and 31 December 1970, in four northern districts (Phu My, Hoai An, Hoai Nhon, and Tam Quan) of Binh Dinh Province.⁷⁷ The 173d Airborne Brigade worked in conjunction with province officials and the ARVN 22d Division. The stated mission of the operation was to “conduct operations within the area of

operations in order to accelerate the pacification progress and to maintain security of lines of communication" (in cooperation and coordination with ARVN and FWMAF forces and GVN authorities).⁷⁸ The Brigade would try to provide secure environments in the populated areas of the four districts on a 24-hour basis. In order to do this, it was essential that the Viet Cong Infrastructure within the areas be rooted out and destroyed. Once the VCI was destroyed, and the Vietnamese people in those areas had a chance to live without fear of VC reprisal, it was hoped that popular confidence in the GVN would grow and spread.⁷⁹

The psyops personnel of the 173d Airborne Brigade recognized that inducement tactics developed and supported by the Chieu Hoi Directorate were useful as an anti-VCI weapon. Additionally, the district officials with whom the 173d Airborne Brigade interacted, often had very little information about which villagers were under VC control. Therefore, the Brigade was forced to try to exploit such incidents as enemy crimes against innocent civilians, enemy defeats, and use of Hoi Chanh, in order to gain information.⁸⁰ To induce rallying, the Brigade emphasized the use of photographs and leaflets, making three drops each day. However, 173d Airborne Brigade personnel discovered from questioning of POWs and Hoi Chanh that in those areas under VC influence, that anyone caught reading, carrying, or discussing leaflets could be arrested and jailed.⁸¹ Therefore, it was felt that many VC/NVA soldiers would be too afraid of the consequences of actually picking up and reading a dropped leaflet. The Brigade then resorted to the use of tape recordings of Hoi Chanh.

The tape recordings were broadcast from both aerial and ground loudspeakers. The 173d Airborne Brigade found that in such a case the loudspeakers were more effective carriers of propaganda.⁸²

WASHINGTON GREEN was unique because of how much the military had to rely on the work of pacification programs. The enemy was not engaging in traditional big battle warfare, rather the operation consisted of series of skirmishes with small units. Without successful coordination between the US military, ARVN, and pacification programs such as Chieu Hoi and Phoenix, the operation would have failed. At its conclusion, the results from WASHINGTON GREEN were very promising and MACV held up the operation as another example of how operations should be conducted within the one-war strategy throughout South Vietnam.⁸³

Because of the importance of the advisory relationship to the overall success of the Chieu Hoi program, the interactions between the US Chieu Hoi Directorate personnel and their Vietnamese colleagues were the most critical. Ultimately, it is important to remember that the US Chieu Hoi program was an advisory effort and that the heads of the Chieu Hoi Directorate felt that their program was unique in the emphasis they placed on advising rather than enforcing.⁸⁴ They realized that no matter how hard they worked, if the South Vietnamese were not advised properly, or had no interest in the success of the operation, Chieu Hoi would be a failure.

The Americans in II Corps at the directorate level assisted their South Vietnamese counterparts in the financing, planning, coordination, and

implementation of the program; additionally, they felt that the South Vietnamese should be involved in the planning of Chieu Hoi and psyops activities in II Corps. In response to a memo instituting a coordinating committee made up of Americans and Koreans for all psyop activities in II Corps, Richard Riddle, the Director of Chieu Hoi for II Corp for much of the war, wrote that "there is little point in me attending these meetings unless accompanied by my counterpart and then only if the meeting is bilingual...a decision reached by foreigners has no validity for the Vietnamese."⁸⁵ Riddle recognized the importance of South Vietnamese involvement and understood the ramifications of not including them.

Riddle, however, faced serious logistical problems in coordinating with his counterparts. The American and South Vietnamese headquarters were more than 100 miles apart.⁸⁶ The long distance between the two headquarters only increased the problems of coordination and planning. In 1969, Riddle suggested the co-location of Chieu Hoi advisors with their counterparts in order to mitigate this problem. Unfortunately, the proposal was never acted upon.⁸⁷ This small, but important, example lends credence to the argument that the Chieu Hoi program was one of the programs most concerned about actually advising the Vietnamese and not simply exacting compliance to US policy. However, other examples show that despite these good intentions, there was a fine line between the American Chieu Hoi personnel supporting the program and running the program, a line that tended to be blurred in practice.

Throughout his tenure as Chieu Hoi Chief in II Corps, from 1969 until 1972, Richard Riddle expressed concerns about the support that the Vietnamese gave the program. In his reports to the II Corps DEPCORDS and to the Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon, he consistently pointed out the problems in the Chieu Hoi service. These problems usually included poor vocational and political training for Hoi Chanh, inadequate reception facilities, and corrupt or incompetent province Chieu Hoi officials. It was the job of Riddle and other advisors to somehow ameliorate these problems without embarrassing their counterparts or seeming to infringe on their independence.⁸⁸ An example of how Riddle treated such a problem is illustrated in a 1969 letter he wrote to Mr. Tran Van Nhat, the II Corps Chieu Hoi Regional Delegate, regarding increasing the number of Armed Propaganda Teams in II Corps. Riddle wrote:

As the APTs have moved to be one of the most effective inducement tools, we have asked all Provincial Chieu Hoi Advisors to aid the Province Chieu Hoi Chief in any way possible...I would like to advise you also to stress through a message to the Provincial Chieu Hoi Chief the importance of seizing this opportunity...If you decide to act on our suggestion, may we please have a copy of your message...⁸⁹

The language in this letter is indicative of the kind of relationship

Riddle had with his counterpart. Mr. Riddle was obviously not shy about making any suggestions or requests. Despite his use of the word “may” his request seems to be much more of a demand, yet he is careful to leave the final decision in the hands of the South Vietnamese.

Other clues into the relationship between the American directors and the Vietnamese appear in Chieu Hoi program reviews and reference papers. In

his 1969 program review, Riddle wrote that his office would make "a concerted effort to get rid of weak Chieu Hoi Service Chiefs in the provinces."⁹⁰ When they wished, the Americans could put the Vietnamese under a tremendous amount of pressure to move personnel. Unfortunately, as with many appointed positions in the South Vietnamese bureaucracy, the men who were Chieu Hoi Service Chiefs were not always the best people for the position. The Chieu Hoi Ministry, despite its ministerial status, had a problem attracting the best and brightest personnel, especially at the province and regional level. The Ministry did not enjoy the same status as other government offices such as the military.⁹¹ This meant that despite reassignments, this personnel situation never improved much over time.

In a paper addressed to the Commanding General of IFFV on 2 July 1970, Riddle wrote, "in my humble opinion it is too early for Vietnamization. Most programs initiated by US advisory pressure have never been Americanized sufficiently to get them working." At the end of the letter he added, "It is high time that internal GVN procedures, from legal through finance to personnel be subjected to competent US advice."⁹² In another report dated 7 August 1970, Riddle wrote that one of the most persistent problems faced in the Chieu Hoi program was a "lack of support and national reconciliation consciousness on the part of GVN officers and civil servants. From the president down, only lip service is paid to rehabilitation of ralliers..."⁹³ Although it is clear that Riddle took his role as advisor seriously, and had faith in the goals of the program, his words are hardly the words of a

man who had tremendous confidence in the South Vietnamese being able to run the Chieu Hoi program independently.

The American advisors at the province or district level had the same kinds of relationships with their South Vietnamese counterparts. In some ways, their relationships with their counterparts were even more important than those of their program heads. After all, if the advisors at the lower levels who worked with the implementation of Chieu Hoi policy on a day to day basis, were unable to influence successfully the South Vietnamese, the program would always yield poor results.

The Chieu Hoi advisor at the province and district level was part of a larger advisory team, much like the structure of the Corp level CORDS office. The advisors were a combination of military personnel and civilians. The military personnel were generally assigned for a tour lasting one year before being reassigned or sent home.⁹⁴ Many young officers viewed their stay in Vietnam merely as a ticket punch on their duty card; that is, something they had to do in order to advance in their military careers. The short tour in Vietnam has been considered to be a significant problem not only in the pacification program, but for US military effort in general. A popular criticism of this practice is that the US did not fight in Vietnam for seven years, but rather for one year seven times. The loss of institutional memory and expertise was terribly harmful for US operations in South Vietnam. As soon as an officer gained some proficiency in working in Vietnam and with the Vietnamese, their tour was up and they were sent elsewhere. Those military

personnel who opted to “re-up” for longer tours were usually the most effective military personnel. This was truer for advisors. It took longer than a year to build-up any kind of worthwhile relationship with a Vietnamese counterpart. Many of those people who were involved with the advisory program for longer than the normal assignment felt that a tour of a year-and-a-half or two years was the minimum an advisor should be assigned.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, many military officers felt there was a stigma attached to being assigned as an advisor. Many military personnel felt that the only way to become promoted in the Army was to hold a command position in a US unit.⁹⁶ The US Army tried to counter this perception by declaring that an advisory position was equivalent to a command position in a regular US unit. Additionally, they issued guidance to promotion boards and Senior Service College selection boards stating that advisors to Province and District Chiefs should receive full credit for command. Despite these actions, however, most career officers continued to regard assignment to the advisory program as a death knell for their career. This meant that CORDS had a hard time attracting the kind of motivated personnel needed for a successful advisory program. It should be reiterated, however, that those military personnel who became enthused with the advisory program and re-upped for two or more tours often developed successful strong relationships with their counterparts.⁹⁷

The Chieu Hoi program tried at a national level to recruit people who had worked in Vietnam for many years in other capacities and had experience dealing with the Vietnamese.⁹⁸ As a result, unlike numerous short-term

military personnel, many civilians in the Chieu Hoi program had developed a real empathy for the South Vietnamese. At the regional level, however, the program was not quite as fortunate. Most of the civilians in Chieu Hoi were USAID employees with some experience in advising. It was the first time, however, that many of them had ever been in Vietnam and despite some brief intensive training, it was largely up to them to become acculturated in the program and with the Vietnamese.⁹⁹ Another significant group of civilians who worked as advisors at the regional level were Filipino contractors. The Americans brought the Filipinos in because of their successful experience with Huk Rebellion and the EDCOR program. The Americans also brought them in because they thought that the Filipino's Asian heritage would be useful in working with the Vietnamese.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, this was not always the case as language differences often posed a problem for coordination.¹⁰¹ The American Chieu Hoi personnel, however, still considered Filipinos as important members of the program.¹⁰²

Unfortunately, for the Chieu Hoi program in II Corps, the Chieu Hoi advisors at the province and regional level were often subject to the whims of other pacification programs.¹⁰³ Additionally, there was not always enough staff to support the program at the province and district level.¹⁰⁴ If there was no advisor for a province, the Corps level staff had to try to coordinate operations in that area. Generally, this meant that that province's Chieu Hoi programs were neglected. This problem was exacerbated when higher American officials, whether in the Corps DEPCORDS office, or the Chieu Hoi

Directorate headquarters, or even at CORDS headquarters, decided that the rallying rate in an area did not warrant American Chieu Hoi personnel.¹⁰⁵

These problems meant that the Vietnamese Chieu Hoi Chiefs in the provinces often did not receive as much support as they should have. Since many of the local Chieu Hoi Service Chiefs were not of the highest caliber, the lack of training by the Americans was all the more deleterious.

An especially telling example of the importance of advisors in the program was the Armed Propaganda Team (APT) concept. APTs were made up of Hoi Chanh who specialized in face-to-face confrontations with VC and the families of VC, passing out literature and using their own experiences as proof of the validity of the Chieu Hoi program. The APTs were arguably the most effective method of inducing the enemy to rally.¹⁰⁶ However, much like the rest of the Chieu Hoi program, they lacked good Vietnamese leadership. As a result the teams often had little training and in many instances lacked in motivation and self-confidence.¹⁰⁷

The II Corps Chieu Hoi office was convinced that advisors at the APT company level would correct these problems and help the teams to work to their full potential.¹⁰⁸ They initiated the program in 1968, on a trial basis in six provinces using American Non Commissioned Officers as advisors. These advisors were to have had significant field experience with troops, understand the importance of psychological operations, and have demonstrated leadership abilities.¹⁰⁹ One year later, in July 1969, the Chieu Hoi office decided to expand the program. They justified the enlargement of the program on the

successes of advisors in III and IV Corps as well as the six provinces in the pilot program. The office concluded that “the assignment of APT advisors is the quickest way to increase the Chieu Hoi rate,” and were desperate to expand into other provinces¹¹⁰. Unfortunately, the II Corps Chieu Hoi staff had to continually fight to get the personnel required for the program. The APT advisor had to have a military background, and many Chieu Hoi personnel were civilians. Repeated requests to MACV by the regional staff, as well as the Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon, had been rebuffed. As a result, the program had to request men from the Commanding General, IFFV. Men were recruited from the 4th Infantry Division and the 173d Airborne Brigade, however, despite this assistance, the II Corps Chieu Hoi staff did not have enough staff to implement the plan on a corps wide basis.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, as in many cases, South Vietnamese pacification programs which were not heavily advised or emphasized by the Americans never received appropriate support from their own leadership. As a result, the APT concept, which was a proven method of inducement, was never fully utilized.

Even when the Chieu Hoi program was not coping with organizational problems and staff shortages, its ultimate effectiveness was hampered by American attitudes towards Vietnamese culture. This question of cultural understanding is one of the most argued about topics in the literature about pacification. Certainly, without an understanding of those whom one is advising and how they functioned, no amount guidance would be effective. The question is, however, to what extend did Chieu Hoi advisors, or any

advisors make an effort to understand the culture in which they were living and advising? Were they merely being pragmatic in an attempt to get the Vietnamese to understand American methods? Or were their attempts made in an effort to assist in shaping programs into ones which would be seen as not American, but rather Vietnamese?

The question is answered in many different ways, depending on whom is asked. However, the point of view that has perhaps gotten the most emphasis is that Americans never tried to understand the Vietnamese and focused only on their own agenda. Authors such as Frances Fitzgerald and Marilyn Young take the standpoint that the Americans came in as arrogant conquerors focused on defeating communism and with little or no concern for the Vietnamese themselves.¹¹² This assertion, however, is too simplistic and fails to take into account the complexity and variety of American experiences and programs in Vietnam. There is little question that the Americans on the whole were never truly successful in understanding Vietnam and its people. Even after becoming involved in Vietnam, one might maintain that if the Americans had understood the South Vietnamese, they would have worked with them to improve their forces and create programs inspired by the Vietnamese which would function successfully in Vietnam even after the Americans left. That being said, however, it is not true that there was little effort made to understand Vietnamese society and this argument ignores the many Americans who worked and fought there in efforts to advise and assist.

Another perspective on American behavior is that while they had good intentions, they implemented them poorly.

Since its formation, the United States has always looked upon itself as having a unique place and mission in the world order.¹¹³ Geir Lundestad, in his book *The American "Empire"* states that while other states had interests, the United States had responsibilities. Its prime mission was nothing less than to save the world.¹¹⁴ After World War II, the United States shed its insular policies and entered the world arena as the strongest nation, economically and militarily. Its new priority became the containment of the Soviet Union and communism. To accomplish this, the United States had to ally itself with nations outside the Western Hemisphere, as well as to increase defense spending. Lundestad writes that the United States had a new national consensus as to its position on the world stage. This new ideology was a mixture of the old internationalism and the nationalism that had been such an important part of the isolationist tradition. The isolationists had wanted to protect the uniqueness of America from the rest of the world. After World War II, the United States had become so strong that it could not only remain uncontaminated by the evils of the Old World, but even promote America's values in the rest of the world.¹¹⁵

America became involved in Indo-China hesitantly. The United States was not keen on assisting the French to re-establish control over one of their former colonies. However, the United States was intent on pushing the economic recovery of Western Europe, and France was an integral piece of

that policy. Later, with the communist victories in China, and the inconclusive ending of the Korean War, assisting France to retain its colony became a way to stop communism from taking over Southeast Asia.¹¹⁶ Vietnam became a domino whose fall “would turn the Pacific into a Soviet lake, denying raw materials to the United States and its allies.”¹¹⁷ After France pulled out of Vietnam, the United States took its place in order to support the government of South Vietnam against a communist takeover. The first American military advisors went in with typical American enthusiasm. They had a mission to propagate “the American way of life” which included propping up a government and saving the South Vietnamese from an oppressive communist regime.¹¹⁸

Donald Vought in his essay, “American Culture and American Arms”, writes that the Americans had a “now” orientation and a cultural arrogance that lead the United States to ignore the experience of others.¹¹⁹ The United States ignored the years of French experience in Vietnam, because after all, “they were not Americans, therefore they did not do it right anyway.”¹²⁰ Americans were under the impression that the South Vietnamese would welcome their presence because Americans perceived themselves as being universally loved and admired.¹²¹ The advisors began arriving in 1955 and the United States Military Advisory Assistance Group, Vietnam (MAAGV) was formed to train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). From that time forward, the United States military presence grew steadily.

In 1962, the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) replaced MAAGV. The change in name from MAAGV with its emphasis on “Advisory Assistance” to MACV with its emphasis on “Military Assistance” was indicative of the new US policy. Additionally, at the time of the establishment of MACV, US advisors were authorized to return fire if fired upon, further indicating a major change in their role in Vietnam. Americans not only took control over the military effort, but MACV also was taken responsibility for providing the military force to support the South Vietnamese governments that had come and gone since the overthrow of Diem in November of 1963. During this time, there arose two positions regarding the role the US should play in South Vietnamese politics. The orthodox diplomatic position was that the South Vietnamese government would improve and strengthen with American help. The position favored by many in the US military was that the Government of Vietnam (GVN) would never improve until Americans took stricter control over it.¹²²

When US troops began arriving in earnest in 1965 and 1966, they came as fighting units, and brought a new “surge of optimism to the American mission in Saigon.”¹²³ Advising the South Vietnamese troops had become of secondary importance, still important, but no longer the primary mission of US forces. ARVN was to work on pacifying the countryside and the Americans took over the main VC and NVA forces. As the commitment of US forces increased in Vietnam, and Americans played a growing role in the government of South Vietnam (GVN) itself, US policy makers began looking at the war as

an American affair. This was the “Americanization” of the war, and this policy stayed in place until President Nixon began the process of “Vietnamization” in 1969.

The same trend of “Americanization” and subsequent “Vietnamization” affected the pacification program generally, and Chieu Hoi particularly, Vietnam. The Chieu Hoi program was initially taken on by the South Vietnamese with great hesitation. It was not until the Americans began focusing advisory time and money on the program that the Vietnamese began to emphasize the program. The Americans, sure of themselves and their ideas, perhaps did not question enough why the program never took off on its own. Americans were eager to formulate and implement a program on their own schedules neglecting to take into account the fact that the Vietnamese did not have the same sense of urgency. The one year tour of the American advisors only increased the sense of American urgency. Many Vietnamese could not remember life without fighting and could not foresee its end. Sadly, for many war was a way of life and they could not understand the American timetable.¹²⁴

The Americans produced many cultural studies relating to Vietnam. These included histories, geographical and meteorological studies, ethnographies, psychological profiles, and religious guides. The studies were generally produced by sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, and/or anthropologists. Many were written by Americans or other Westerners who had lived or worked in Vietnam for some period of time.¹²⁵ Others were written by people on only the basis of a few interviews.¹²⁶ Most of these

studies appear to have been written in an attempt to help educate Americans who were going, or were already in, Vietnam.

Many of the studies contain information on a wide variety of subjects like Vietnamese politics and religion, as well as such practicalities as, use of language, physical gestures, Vietnamese perception of time, morality, and advisor-counterpart interpersonal relations.¹²⁷ Perhaps, the most telling fact about the works, however, were that they were written by Americans with no Vietnamese taking part in the authorship or in some cases in the gathering of information. This is an important point, who better to write about, or ask about, the Vietnamese culture than the Vietnamese? At least one work acknowledged this omission, stating,

“...from a methodological viewpoint, this study has some significant limitations. None of the team visited Vietnam for the purposes of this study. Further, and this probably the most serious limitation, the research team was required to use only US citizens as sources of primary data...a few competent Vietnamese consultants would have helped make this study more useful to an American advisor...”¹²⁸

This omission is perhaps indicative of the general American policy of “doing it our way,” discussed by Lundestad and Vought. All these criticisms aside, however, many of the studies provided useful information that at least gave some Americans a head start in comprehending the Vietnamese.¹²⁹

The members of the pacification programs and the Chieu Hoi program (both military advisors and civilians), were fortunate in that they had generally received preliminary training before arriving in Vietnam. Many of the studies discussed above, although targeted for all US personnel in Vietnam, were

probably never disseminated to the rank and file American.¹³⁰ Rather they were most heavily used in the pre-tour training classes for PSYOP slated staff. Cultural understanding was paramount in the implementation of useful pacification programs. This was especially true in the Chieu Hoi program, where successful inducement was reliant on making some kind of connection with the enemy. There is a great deal of evidence that would indicate that members of Chieu Hoi, and their partners in military psyops and JUSPAO were aware of many of the intricacies of Vietnamese society. Within the United States National Archives, there are boxes of rejected propaganda pamphlets that had originated from American sources and which psyops and JUSPAO deemed to be unsuitable after review. Additionally, the personnel in II Corps knew they had to address not only Vietnamese, but also the ethnic minorities in the highlands. They were aware of the tensions between the two cultures and knew they had to come up with ways of working with both populations.¹³¹ They produced leaflets in Montagnard dialects and took into account the poor Montagnard literacy rates by broadcasting messages using loudspeaker missions.¹³²

In answer to the question, “did the Americans in the Chieu Hoi program make an effort to understand the culture in which they were living and advising?” it is clear that they did indeed make an effort to understand the cultures in South Vietnam and the relationships with one another. Many personnel were given training in the US prior to assignment, and were aware of the interactions of the cultures around them. Was the Chieu Hoi program

different in this respect from the rest of the American programs? Pacification personnel in general were better prepared in cultural intricacies than was the typical American soldier.¹³³ It was the intent of most of the American members of the Chieu Hoi program to be culturally aware, nurture the role of advisor, and make the program a viable Vietnamese priority.¹³⁴ Were they successful? In many respects, yes. Looking at II Corps again, the Chieu Hoi personnel were attracting and reintegrating ralliers from both dominant cultural groups in the area. However, harkening back to Richard Riddle's words, "most programs initiated by US advisory pressure have never been Americanized sufficiently to get them working," it is clear that many US personnel were never able to completely understand Vietnamese culture and priorities. They seemed more concerned with guiding the Vietnamese towards incorporating American methodologies and priorities.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In many ways, the Chieu Hoi program reflected the complexities of American involvement in South Vietnam. At first, America's role was advisory. Whether in terms of civilian or military presence, the initial American functions were to stabilize and strengthen the GVN against the North. Even when American soldiers began arriving in greater numbers to carry the brunt of the ground war, advising South Vietnamese military and civilian agencies was still a major task. American advisors worked with GVN forces in order to pacify the regions and build up the GVN infrastructure. Both the VC/NVA and the GVN/US forces knew that success in the war was dependent on the support of the people in the countryside.¹

The Chieu Hoi program took this advisory role very seriously. Unfortunately, their efforts were doomed from the very start of the program. Chieu Hoi was an American and British concept. Even with continued American pressure, the South Vietnamese were always reluctant in adopting the program in its entirety. As it was not a program conceived by the South Vietnamese, it always had the obstacle of being an American program not a Vietnamese one.

In the end, the hybrid character of the Chieu Hoi program makes it difficult to assess its effectiveness. One needs to ask not only whether the program achieved its strategic goals, but also whose goals were they? For

many US policy makers, numbers were the ultimate measure of American effectiveness in Vietnam. War by attrition was the name of the game during the first part of the war. Furthermore, many military strategists still claim that if the Americans had stayed in the war, the NVA and VC would never have succeeded. Is this how the Chieu Hoi program should be judged? By the end of American involvement with the program, over 194,000 men and women had rallied to the side of the GVN.² No other pacification program in South Vietnam could claim to have denied the enemy this number of personnel.³ Certainly this is a significant number. Is it reliable enough, however, to judge success? For many years, on a national level, the number of actual ralliers came up short against projections.⁴ Even so, the final numbers were still considered to mark a successful operation. . Additionally, like most statistics, there were problems with the way numbers were kept and ralliers counted. .

This point is exemplified in one particular letter from the Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon to the regional office in Nha Trang:

Here is a copy of the Oct. and Nov. "Chieu Hoi monthly categorization report" we had to fudge some of the Region II figures since they were never sent to us. We are under considerable pressure (we are already looking funny for not submitting the October report until late December) to have this out on time... Please make sure the figures more or less add up. I've been fudging them up and down the line---one particular discrepancy seems to be that the total guerillas, local and main forces reported often exceeds the figure reported for "Total Military."⁵

On the opposite end of the spectrum, however, is an example of undercounting of Hoi Chanh in II Corps. A province chief in Pleiku felt that the best way for Montagnards to rally was for them to come over to the GVN

as refugees rather than Hoi Chanh. He believed that the indoctrination course given to Vietnamese ralliers would be “too restraining.” He hoped that as a result he could get more Montagnards to come to the side of the GVN as refugees than as ralliers.⁶ As the Montagnard population was a significant portion of the inhabitants in II Corps, the loss of these “statistics” might well have made a large difference in the perceived success of the local program. As the author of the memo noted, however, it was the fact that people were coming over to the GVN, whether as ralliers or refugees which was important. He only called for notification if such a program was going on so that “the province will not be pressed to push people into the wrong category just to satisfy our appetite for statistical progress.”⁷ It is easy to see, then, that the numbers “counted” by the Chieu Hoi Directorate, were subject to all sorts of inaccuracies, whether they resulted in undercounting, or over counting. The question remains, then, should numbers be accepted as an accurate measure of the success of this program?

Numbers were not the priority of the leaders of the Chieu Hoi program in Vietnam.⁸ Richard Riddle addressed this very concern in an April 17, 1970, memo, writing “it has continually been the posture of both the CH directorate and of the regional advisor that quotas (euphemistically “goals”) should never be imposed on the CH program.”⁹ Instead, the Hoi Chanh were the focus of the Chieu Hoi directors. Eugene Bable stated that “the importance of it (Chieu Hoi) was the way in which they (Hoi Chanh) integrated into their new society in South Vietnam.”¹⁰ The Chieu Hoi leadership looked at how well the Hoi

Chanh were trained and how they fared in the world outside of the Chieu Hoi Center. They also pointed to the under 1% defection rate amongst Hoi Chanh as an indication of the successfulness of the reintegration process.¹¹ They continually fought for better vocational training and complained of the South Vietnamese general reluctance to hire Hoi Chanh. Riddle wrote that one of the largest problems facing the Chieu Hoi program was that,

“...from the president down only lip service is paid to rehabilitation of ralliers and the only employers of ranking Hoi Chanh are the Americans and the CH Ministry (the latter on a temporary, non-civil service basis). North Vietnam university trained doctors who rallied three years ago are still emptying bed-pans in hospital despite the efforts of the Minister (himself a doctor) to gain them acceptance from the Vietnamese equivalent of the AMA. At province level this distrust is most obvious among Vietnamese military who have missed numerous opportunities of operational success through ignoring intelligence received from HC sources.”¹²

Unfortunately, the South Vietnamese people's distrust of Hoi Chanh existed throughout the war. As a result, the US agencies in Vietnam, both military and civilian, were the largest employers of ralliers.¹³ Additionally, the benefits given to Hoi Chanh, like free housing, aroused great anger in war veterans. South Vietnamese veterans resented their erstwhile foes being given charities that they themselves were denied.¹⁴ In this case, the effort towards the goal of complete reintegration of Hoi Chanh, might be considered a failure. On the other hand, perhaps it was not so much an operational failure of the Chieu Hoi program itself, but rather a mistake in promising conditions that were beyond its control. The Chieu Hoi program could not make the South Vietnamese public-at-large accept the ralliers, it could only try and to provide

them with the skills and benefits Hoi Chanh needed to try and to rebuild their lives. This was the task they were equipped to try and to accomplish.

Unfortunately, Vietnamese Chieu Hoi personnel did not routinely complete follow-ups on the returnees throughout the tenure of the program, so that an accurate study of the reintegration rate cannot be accomplished.¹⁵

Perhaps, to judge the success of the program, one should look at who these Hoi Chanh were. Some argue that the Chieu Hoi program never attracted enough of the “important” members of the VC and the NVA.¹⁶ Official statistics break down the ralliers into VC, NVA, political, and other. By the end of 1971, approximately 59% of ralliers were categorized as VC, 1% as NVA, 29% as political (presumably members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure, VCI), and 11% categorized as “other.”¹⁷ However, these statistics do not break down the categories any further, such as into the relative ranks of ralliers.

Throughout the records there are discussions about the “quality” of rallier the program was attracting. It was true that many of the ralliers were low to mid-level VC/VCI. These were the most likely people to rally. Many of those VC were “drafted” from their villages unwillingly and were tired and disappointed in the VC’s policies, promises, and actions.¹⁸ The NVA and hardcore Communist VC/VCI posed the greatest challenge for Chieu Hoi.¹⁹ The NVA would not respond well to Chieu Hoi calls to “come home” as obviously the South was not their home. Devoutly communist VC and VCI, who were often the soldiers with the highest rank, were more susceptible to pleas from family and nostalgia for their old lives. However, logically, they

would consider the cause of a united Vietnam to be more important. . Was the program a failure then, for not being able to induce significant numbers of high -ranking VC/VCI and NVA to rally? Although there were relatively few Hoi Chanh who held high positions, one should not discount the importance of the mid-level VCI. These cadre were the link from the upper level VCI to the people in the villages, without whose support, either monetarily or logistically, the movement would fail.²⁰ Therefore, it is hard to judge with any real accuracy, the impact of the low to mid-level rallier defection. Certainly the higher- ranked Hoi Chanh were would produce more potent propaganda if they rallied, and perhaps have provided more important intelligence. Nonetheless, as James Megellas, DEPCORDS, MR 2, stated, in “the simple, irrefutable premise which justifies continued emphasis on the CH program is the basic fact that for every one that rallies, there is one less out there shooting at you.”²¹ Therefore, the relative rank of the rallier may not be a significant or reliable mark of success or failure.

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to look at the effectiveness of the Chieu Hoi program is to examine how the enemy reacted to it. Logically, if the enemy considered the program a threat and retaliated, it was making an impact on their ability to wage war. It is clear looking at the records that the VC did consider the Chieu Hoi program a threat. One document captured from the VC in 1969 stated,

Although being confused and on the verge of collapse and failure, the enemy (the US and GVN) still carries out his very cruel and cunning plans. The surrenderers are now very dangerous for us but favorable for the enemy. The US and Puppet Governments are doing their utmost

to encourage and adopt these surrenderers to implement their national policy plan... We should actively oppose the enemy's open-arms program.²²

The same document advocated plans for "quickly investigating" and studying the effects of Chieu Hoi and working out a counter strategy.²³ Information gained from VC informants supported the concerns expressed in the documents the GVN and the FWMAF were capturing. One source stated that the COSVN party considered the Chieu Hoi program as being more dangerous than the Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program and that the rallying of cadres was an ongoing problem.²⁴

The VC reacted to the Chieu Hoi program through the indoctrination of their troops. VC personnel on maneuvers were forbidden to even pick up the open arms leaflets dropped by Americans in the hundreds of thousands. . Additionally, VC officer were instructed that whenever they came across leaflets, or when a desertion was reported, they should "gather all their men together to guide them, motivate their thoughts, analyze and criticize the event and remind people of the nature and traditions of our army, and create hatred against the enemy."²⁵

Violence towards Hoi Chanh, was another VC counter to the program. Many Chieu Hoi Centers were attacked by sappers and mortars. During one week and half period in October 1969, for example, four centers were assaulted by the VC.²⁶ Individual Hoi Chanh were considered to be dangerous and targeted for assassination. The document quoted above which

recommended “actively opposing” the Chieu Hoi program, went further to aver that,

Along with the annihilation of tyrants, local administrative personnel, spies, and pacification personnel, we should be determined to take disciplinary measures against the most dangerous surrenderers in local areas. We should employ armed forces, security forces, guerillas and secret agents to search for their lairs in order to annihilate them.²⁷

It is clear that the VC considered the Chieu Hoi to be a serious threat. According to their documents, one can see that the VC reacted strongly and violently to the program. Is the VC reaction enough to declare the Chieu Hoi program a success? It certainly is an important factor to take into account, and if one judged solely by the VC response, the Chieu Hoi program was an effective threat to the VC. It obviously succeeded in attracting ralliers and inciting enough fear in the VC hierarchy for them to use their men and resources to directly attack the program.

Arguably, in the end, the most important criteria to judge the effectiveness of the Chieu Hoi program might be the ultimate adoption of the program by the Vietnamese. . . As stated earlier in this paper, one of the important tenets held by the US Chieu Hoi Directorate personnel was the importance that their program be an advisory project. The Chieu Hoi Directorate personnel were aware that they would not be able to advise the South Vietnamese indefinitely. The GVN and the people of South Vietnam would have to accept and adopt the program on its own before it would ever be a success. In the same memo where Riddle states that the Chieu Hoi leadership reluctance to focus on numbers, he wrote,

Despite these voices crying in the wilderness, the statistics oriented minds of programmers and evaluators have won through and the irreparable damage has been done. It would take two years of a changed US command posture to expunge the numbers game from the minds of Vietnamese action officers, and there is just not that sort of time available.²⁸

The factor of time played a paramount role in how the Americans interacted with the South Vietnamese. Riddle and the Americans were focused on their own schedules and the Vietnamization process mandated from Washington. Many Vietnamese felt no such urgency to change.²⁹ The Chieu Hoi directorate in II Corps (as exemplified in Riddle's letter) felt that the Vietnamese had not yet adopted the program as their own in 1970. Despite this fact, however, they were being told to Vietnamize the program within the next year.³⁰

The central Chieu Hoi Directorate in Saigon "Vietnamized" the program a year ahead of the rest of the American pacification programs. Eugene Bable, stated that he felt proud that he was able to do so and that Dr. Cham, the head of the Chieu Hoi Ministry was an excellent leader.³¹ This may well have been true, Dr. Cham was considered to be a strong advocate of the program and was making headway in promoting its complete adoption (including the reintegration of Hoi Chanh and the appointment of quality personnel in the field) by his government and people.³² The fact remains, however, the US Chieu Hoi personnel had no real choice in whether or not the program was ready to be "Vietnamized." It was a decision made thousands of miles away with no consultation with them. The Directorate in Saigon may

have been confident that Dr. Cham and his central staff were ready for the challenge, but it is clear that many in the regions did not feel this was the case. The problems that Riddle had encountered with poor South Vietnamese Chieu Hoi Chiefs and the American obsession with statistics only a year or so earlier, had not disappeared. Riddle felt that in order to make the program work, it would need more resources and time with the Vietnamese, and as he wrote in his letter, “there... (was)... just not that sort of time available.”

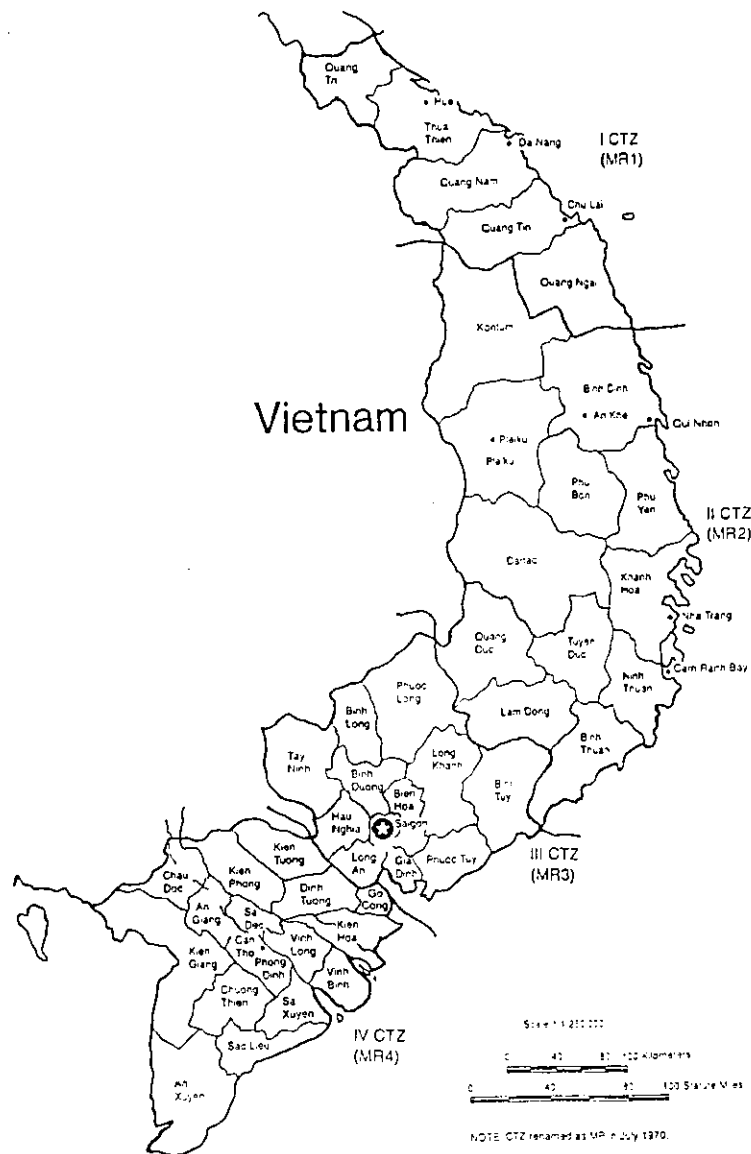
So, was the Chieu Hoi program a success? The American bureaucracy in Washington considered the program a success due to its impressive statistics. The central Chieu Hoi Directorate considered it a success because they felt they had succeeded in their “advisory” role and Vietnamized the program a year ahead of time. Chieu Hoi personnel also considered the program at least a partial success because they were able to attract ralliers, keep them (bearing in mind the 1% defection rate) and, despite South Vietnamese reluctance, make many of them useful citizens of the GVN. The VC and NVA reaction to the program also indicatives it was a success. Any pacification effort countered by such vehemence on the part of the enemy would have to be judged as effective. On the other side of the coin, however, the Chieu Hoi advisors in the field did not feel that the program was ready for Vietnamization and in that light, the advisory part of the program, held so dear by the personnel, was a failure. Additionally, the statistics, so beloved by the Americans, and so much in the Chieu Hoi program’s favor, are clearly unreliable.

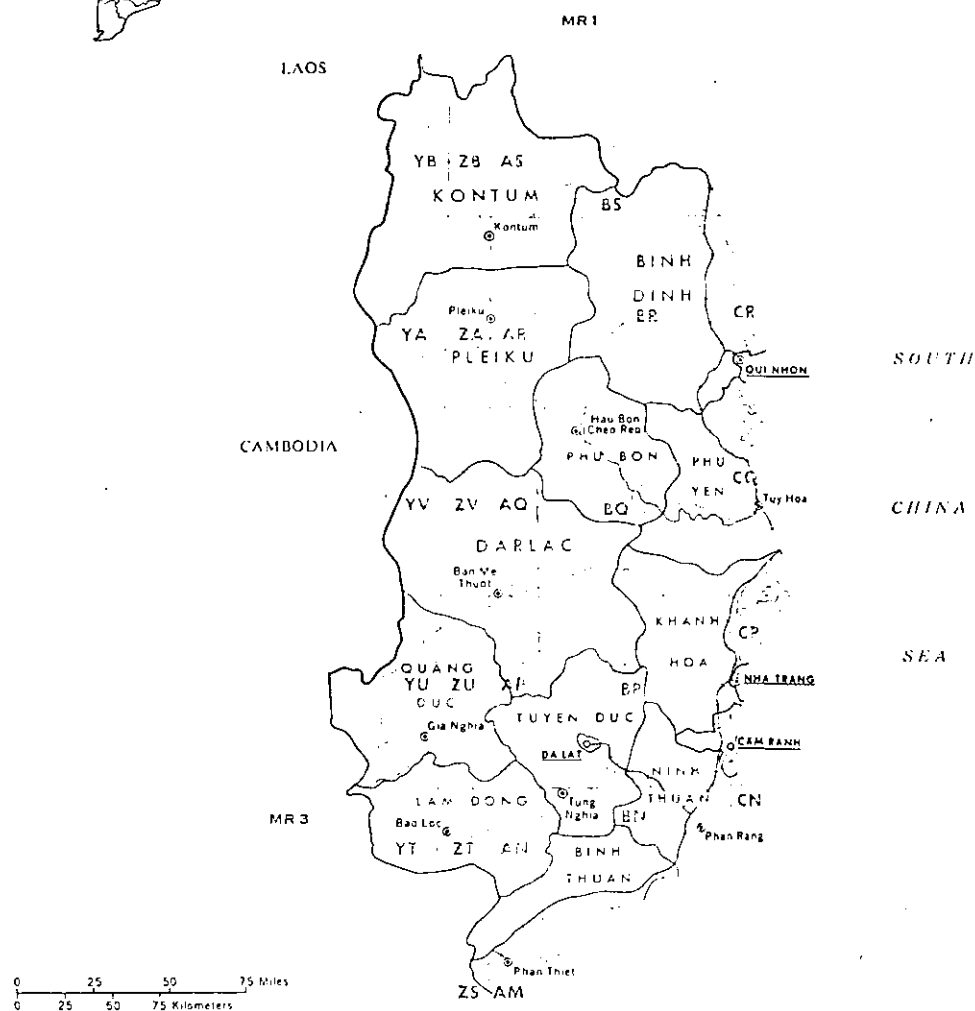
Perhaps, in the end, the success of the program should be divided into two kinds, short-term and long-term. The successes of the program, VC reaction, high rallier numbers, and successful reintegration of ralliers were short-term successes met during the American advisory tenure. The failures of the program were more systemic and far-reaching. In the long-term, the program did not function well in the regions without American advisors, and statistical successes were short lived without a strong internal program.

US personnel were never able to truly make the program a South Vietnamese government priority. In addition, though many Chieu Hoi personnel had been in South Vietnam for longer than the average tour of duty and were chosen because of their awareness of South Vietnamese culture, they never fully got past their American ideas of how the program should have been implemented.

In the short-term, while the Americans were in South Vietnam, the program successfully lived up to many its stated goals. Many Chieu Hoi advisors were trained and chosen because of their knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese culture and this assisted them in creating effective rallying campaigns. The program succeeded in attracting over 194,000 ralliers and was considered a threat by the VC. Moreover, many Hoi Chanh were reintegrated into South Vietnamese society, rejoining families and being employed by the Americans and the GVN in both civilian and military capacities. Finally, the US Chieu Hoi leadership was proud to have the first pacification unit to be totally “Vietnamized,” and done so ahead of schedule.

However, these successes were largely successes only in the eyes of the Americans. For instance, though many ralliers were employed after their stay in the Chieu Hoi center, it was by American agencies and the GVN government, not usually by private South Vietnamese employers. Despite assurances of giving Hoi Chanh positions in the GVN comparable to the ones they had enjoyed in the VC or NVA, this was rarely the case. Additionally, as can be seen by the situation in II Corps, the program was really not ready to be “Vietnamized.” The Vietnamese Ministry of Chieu Hoi had not been able to garner enough support from the central government nor attract strong leaders in the regions. As a result, programs at the local level were poorly staffed and such efforts as the Armed Propaganda Teams, suffered. The critical question, however, was not whether the program was ready to be Vietnamized, or as Richard Riddle wrote, whether it had ever been Americanized sufficiently to be Vietnamized. Rather, the question should be was it ever sufficiently Vietnamese enough to ever be successfully Vietnamized. Clearly, the answer to that question is no.





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