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AMBASSADOR ELLSWORTH BUNKER'S "BACK CHANNEL" REPORT TO  
THE WHITE HOUSE - REPORT NO 80 . DATE: July 16, 1969

EXCISE  
United States of America  
(80)

6/ds

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR  
 REVIEWED BY: W. J. H. 21 DATE: 10/11/83

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DECLASSIFIED  RELEASABLE  IN PART

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PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS 1, 3(a)(5)

ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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INFO: AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

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FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM BUNKER  
 PARIS FOR VIETNAM MISSION

SUBJECT: Viet-Nam Mid-Year 1969: Progress and Problems/S

Herewith my eightieth message.

A. GENERAL

1. As I look over the last half year, I see the following as its most important developments: -the emergence of free elections and who is to run them as the key political issue in the negotiations; -the reduction or replacement of U. S. troops as a viable element of our strategy; -the enemy's increasing concern with conservation of his manpower, and the drastic reduction, probably temporary, of infiltration from the north; -the enemy's assumption of a tough negotiating posture apparently based on the belief that time in

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Ex. A - Exemption removed; transferred to O/FADRC

Ex. B - Transferred to O/FADRC with additional access

Ex. C - Exemption and custody retained by S/S

Reviewed by: John Bergeron

Date: 22 July 19 87

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terms of American opinion is working in his favor; -the emergence of Cambodia as a variable, rather than a constant, in the political/military equation; -slow and painful progress in political mobilization in South Viet-Nam; -the developing strains on the economy; -and the extension of pacification and social political development in the countryside unimpeded by the various enemy offensives.

2. In the development of a liberal and flexible negotiating position on the key political issue of elections, Thi Lu must be given full credit. He managed to carry the country along to the point where talking with the NLF, challenging it to a contest at the polls, and opening up options as to timing and modalities of the elections - all things that would have been unthinkable here six months ago - have now become generally acceptable to the Vietnamese people. The enemy, I think, will hesitate to accept the challenge of free elections because he knows that he will lose if they are free. But our side has now carved out solid ground on

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which to stand, or from which to move forward if it is advantageous in the negotiations.

3. The enemy is far from happy about the Vietnamization program because he sees it, correctly, as a manifestation of growing strength of the GVN and is buying time for us and for the GVN. It is encouraging to see how the first increment of reduction has been accompanied by a rise, rather than a decline, of morale in Saigon. The GVN leadership now correctly sees the alternatives before them as a settlement by negotiations or a "long haul, low cost" strategy with progressively lessened U. S. support. They understand that the latter alternative is in the cards only if they show flexibility in the negotiations. On the other hand if the pace of our troop reductions is too fast, the situation here could deteriorate to the point where nothing could be salvaged, with or without negotiations.

4. On the military side, we have seen some important new trends.

The enemy has developed tactics which are designed to maximize,

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and especially American, losses while preserving his own manpower. Although still very costly to him these tactics - largely standoff attacks by fire and limited ground probes - temporarily resulted in increased American casualties, very valuable to him in terms of anti-war pressures in the U. S. But the price the enemy had to pay is considerable. He has been unable to make any significant gain against the pacification program; has suffered losses upwards of 150,000 from all causes during the six month period, has failed to take any significant objectives; and when - as in the case of Ben Het - he tried to demonstrate the inability of the ARVN to defend a position, he proved the exact opposite. I think it is significant that Ho Chi Minh, according to a Hanoi broadcast in May, exhorted army cadres to "economize human and material resources." This is exactly what the enemy has tried to do in the south in recent months, but even so his losses have been very high.

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5. That this is not a temporary phenomenon is suggested by the drastic reduction of infiltration entering the pipeline from the north since March. It seems clear that the enemy will not be able to remedy his supply difficulties in the northern part of South Viet-Nam until well after the rainy season ends in the Laos panhandle in the fall. Where Cambodia is a source of logistic support, he currently suffers some of the same stringency. While he is still able to mount damaging attacks and even offensives, he can no longer sustain such initiatives for any length of time. He has shown no ability to penetrate into any major city. He wanted very badly to take at least Tay Ninh, which is not a major city but which might have given him a "capital" for his provisional government. Increasingly, some types of enemy attacks on fire support bases are so senselessly expensive for him in relation to the losses suffered by us that one wonders about the quality of the enemy leadership or suspects that he may be operating under some time limit or other compulsion.

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6. The recent low level of enemy activity could have several explanations. It could be due in part to lessened capability, caused largely by our efforts against him. It could be part of the normal cycle of attack, retreat, replenishment, re-fitting, retraining, and renewed attack. It could also, of course, reflect a policy decision, perhaps to encourage withdrawal of U. S. forces while conserving manpower in the north to be sent in eventually in greater force. This might explain the reduced infiltrations since March. The interpretation that seems most likely to me is that the enemy's difficulties have forced a temporary reduction in his offensive activity which still leaves him capable of mounting short and damaging attacks. It is fairly satisfactory from his point of view, while he waits out developments in Paris, and in our withdrawal policy. Yet when all is taken together, the enemy is certainly in a weaker posture today than he was six months ago.

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7. In the negotiations there have been very important developments despite the lack of an effective dialogue. I consider the testing of our response to violations of the October understandings to have been one such development. The enemy could not have expected his rocketing of Saigon to make much capital with the general population. His abuse of the DMZ was also political as well as military. He tried to stir up a major quarrel between us and the GVN. He failed largely due to Thieu's ~~own~~ recognition of the importance of keeping cool. The enemy also tried to demonstrate to the world and to his supporters that the bombing halt had been in effect unconditional, i. e., that the U. S. had been forced to yield. Most important, I am afraid he may have convinced himself that he can now predict our actions - or our inaction - in certain circumstances and this is a matter of some gravity. As long as he feels he can count on our always being reasonable and prudently cautious in view of our domestic opinion, the risk

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factor is small in his calculations.

3. That is why the vaguely ominous passage in your May 14 speech "I must also make clear in all candor, that if the needless suffering continues, this will affect other decisions" was of the greatest importance. Its point was not lost by the enemy leadership. The May 14 speech captured the initiative for our side, proved the reasonableness of our position, and demonstrated our adherence to principle. I remarked in my last message on the probably salutary effect on the enemy of the passage that "our fighting men are not going to be worn down and our allies are not going to be let down." I should have added that reassurances of this kind are of the greatest importance in Saigon where there is a constant worry, sometimes quiescent, but periodically flaring up, whether the U. S. is not somehow preparing to let down its ally. Thus reaffirmations of this kind pay double dividends - by backing up morale in Saigon and by shaking some people in Hanoi.

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9. I believe we have since March blocked the enemy's political offensive. He no longer emphasizes the call for a "peace cabinet" and now talks vaguely of broadening his Provisional Revolutionary Government into a coalition government by the addition of elements from outside. One hears almost nothing of revolutionary committees and claims to control territory repeat the old refrain. US/GVN cooperation has held firm despite efforts to divide us. Our joint rejection of the kind of coalition government that the enemy has in mind - a government dominated by him and forced upon the GVN by a U. S. eager to get out - has dashed his hopes for an easy and early political victory. If we do not react disproportionately to any real or fancied de-escalation, if the GVN continues to expand its control and if Vietnamization proves to be a viable program, there is a good possibility that the enemy will move toward serious negotiations in the not too distant future - not to make an equitable settlement but to try to negotiate us out of the

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country even at the cost of his own withdrawal which he may see as a temporary one.

10. It is always risky to make predictions about Cambodia.

I wonder, however, if there may not be a connection between the lessened rate of infiltration from North Viet-Nam and the lessened hospitality of Cambodia for enemy troops. Both seem to have begun at about the same time, in March.

Sihanouk's complaints against communist encroachment against his territory were soon followed by military clashes in March, April and May. In June [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] and there were reports of hold ups in logistic support for the enemy. Even if the communists have reached some temporary modus vivendi with Sihanouk in July, which is probable, the Cambodian sanctuaries seem to have become distinctly less privileged to the enemy.

11. The political situation inside South Viet-Nam is far from satisfactory, but there have been some important improvements

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during the half year period. Dissatisfied with the inability of the politicians to group together, Thieu in April announced that he would take action himself, and on May 25 he launched what is known as the National Social Democratic Front, which is hopefully only the first stage of a broader effort to create anti-communist unity. Thieu made it clear that he did not intend to emulate Diem by trying to head a "party in power", but that he was creating an alliance of political forces that are prepared to support the government and that eventually may participate in it. At the same time he assured those who did not wish to join that there was room for a loyal opposition - and this resulted in a grouping of forces also among opposition parties. Some of the latter are showing energy and imagination, but they are not hostile to the government and the important thing is that at long last there is some coalescence of non-communist groups on the government side and among the opposition. From this, in time, could come real national

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anti-communist unity, but there still is a long road to cover in that direction.

12. Meanwhile, encouraging progress was made in bringing greater political participation to the population of the villages and hamlets. Elections have been held in 88 percent of the villages and 81 percent of the hamlets of the country, which means that the government has been able to hold them also in contested areas. Voter turnout was good, almost 90 percent. While there was not yet much party competition, it is noteworthy that in the hamlets the ratio of candidates to seats was 2.5 to 1. Perhaps most encouraging was the ability of the government to organize these elections and to carry them through efficiently, sometimes on short notice and under unfavorable security conditions, which augurs well for its ability to handle other administrative tasks such as land reform on the local level. Most important, the elected village and hamlet officials now have considerable authority over budgeted funds and cadre sent by the

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GVN to their areas and they are being encouraged to control the local and regional forces stationed in their localities.

All this has given a boost to the self-respect and feeling of responsibility of the villagers, which should be heightened when land reform is implemented in the next half-year period. It is a trend that is highly unfavorable to the communists if there should be a peaceful political contest.

13. Any general assessment of the course of our efforts to protect and further U. S. interests in Viet-Nam during the first half of this critical year must close with a tribute to the performance of our fighting forces. Under General Abrams' leadership, they and their allies have completely denied the enemy even one of the many military successes he so desperately wanted and sought. They have shown great valor and ingenuity in fighting this war. General Abrams has devoted himself tirelessly to developing new strategies and tactics aimed at keeping the enemy away from the populated areas; keeping civilian casualties and

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damage to property down; opening new areas to the GVN; using airpower (including the B-52s) and artillery to defeat the enemy's assaults while keeping our casualties to an absolute minimum; and moving ahead at all possible speed to prepare the RVNAF for the assumption of an ever-growing role in the war. His success in all this has been impressive and growing day by day.

14. Without his magnificent performance by our forces and its brilliant leadership, the progress I am able to report in this message in other fields, be it pacification, political, economic, or whatever, would never have occurred.

**B. POLITICAL**

15. The enemy's political strategy has emerged clearly - and incidentally very much along the lines that we predicted - during the first half of 1969. Faced with heavy losses and little to show for them in terms of military advantage, the enemy hoped to capitalize on the combination of American war-weariness and

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political weakness in South Viet-Nam by making the GVN appear the sole obstacle to peace. He hoped that we would so tire of the war that we would put pressure on the Thieu government to make more and more concessions to the NLF so that we could disengage. He expected that if the GVN resisted our pressure there would be growing strains in our relations and further pressure. If, on the other hand, the GVN yielded and made major concessions to the enemy, there would be disintegration in South Viet-Nam and finally the coalition government that he is seeking.

16. There is no doubt that this has been, and continues to be, the enemy's strategy. It was to produce such results that he revised his military tactics, that he stone-walled in Paris and refused to talk to the GVN, that he issued the ten points and proclaimed the PRG. I think this strategy of the enemy is failing, largely because of the excellent rapport that has been established between yourself and President Thieu.

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By working closely together and refusing to let the enemy divide us we have established joint positions which prove our reasonableness and put the enemy under pressure to negotiate. The important thing now is to give this position a chance to produce results. I fully recognize how difficult that will be, given the pressures in Congress and in some sectors of American public opinion, yet it is very important - both for success of the negotiations and for our relations with the GVN - that we demonstrate to the enemy that there is a point beyond which we will not go in making concessions.

17. It would be idle and dangerous to underestimate the continuing strength of the enemy in South Viet-Nam. His organization still extends deep into government-controlled territory, he still collects taxes in many parts of the country, he continues to recruit some 5,000-6,000 young men and women every month (largely in the Delta), and even though he must conserve on supplies and manpower he still represents a respectable force.

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Yet it is significant that the captured documents no longer speak of victory coming through "all-out offensive and continuous uprising." They speak of limited and partial victories, and recently there are even statements that "even after the war comes to an end, we will have to struggle hard for total victory." One of the most revealing recent documents, entitled "COSVN Resolution for the 1969 Summer Phase" says quite openly that their hopes and expectations are not for successes on the ground but for increasing disillusion with the war in America. They also hope that as American withdrawals increase, friction and rivalries among the non-communists will provide opportunities for them.

18. Frictions and rivalries among the non-communists are nothing new in Viet-Nam, and although as indicated in the General Section I see some improvement in the picture through the coalescence of pro-government and opposition forces, the situation is still far from satisfactory. Seen in its broad outlines, there has been some

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simplification of the situation since instead of the multiplicity of contending groups there are now tending to be, essentially, three groupings: The various parties and groups concentrated in the pro-government NSDF, the efforts to coalesce the non-communist opposition, and of course the NLF. This pattern would give grounds for optimism: if there were any assurance that non-communist opposition would unite with the government, the army and the NSDF in support of peace goals and tactics employed by President Thieu. Perhaps when the chips are down such unity will eventuate out of fear of the alternatives; but it is also possible that the lines may harden to the point that there would be a three-way competition between government, non-communist opposition, and NLF. Other even less attractive patterns are also possible.

19. Illustrative of the problem is the position of General Duong Van (Big) Minh and General (Senator) Tran Van Don. While Minh is ostensibly holding himself aloof, Don has begun to campaign for Minh as a successor to Thieu. Don also is a leading figure in

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the efforts to unite the non-communist opposition and is possibly also acceptable to the An Quang Buddhists who are currently still uncommitted and somewhere between the non-communist opposition and accommodation-minded elements further to the left. Minh and Don privately agree with President Thieu's July 11 initiative, but refuse to say so in public. In his conversation with the Embassy Don has been quite open about the reason. They will cooperate at a price, and that price is a piece of the political pie to be dished out in advance. But this is what Thieu has refused even the politicians of the NSDF, until they earn it by their cooperation. Despite the trend toward consolidation, we thus still have the unseemly spectacle of politicians grasping for power <sup>AND</sup> ~~which is~~ impeding progress toward real national unity.

20. The situation on the left is still more complex. There are not only the essentially loyal oppositionists of the stripe of Minh and Don. In the same category are a number of politicians and

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organizations, some of them highly respectable, who may have the merit of attracting people who dislike the GVN but would vote for a non-communist opposition in preference to the NLF. But there are also more accommodation-minded elements including the An Quang Buddhists whose hatred of Thieu and Ky and fear of the Catholic predominance combines with a kind of pacifism that weakens the war effort. And still further to the left are elements, such as Tran Ngoc Lieng who calls for a "government of reconciliation" and, wittingly or unwittingly, directly plays into the hands of the communists.

21. In face of this situation the government has a difficult time distinguishing between constructive opposition and sedition. By and large, criticism of the government on issues unrelated to the war is free in South Viet-Nam and there is a wide latitude on that score. But the government has acted <sup>H</sup>harsly, and often unwisely in my opinion, in temporarily suspending papers for relatively minor offenses, and in failing to explain when taking even justified

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actions against individuals. American critics of GVN policies toward press and opposition have had a field day with such incidents, usually overlooking the fact that there is a great deal more latitude for opposition in South Viet-Nam than in most other countries of Southeast Asia.

22. Although the following refers to a development subsequent to June 30, I think it necessary to comment on the attitudes of the pro-government and opposition forces toward President Thieu's July 11 speech. This has shown, I think, the wisdom of Thieu's efforts to harness the more right-wing elements ("right" being again in relation to peace issues rather than necessarily on social issues) with the government. Almost all the trouble he is currently having is with elements of the NSDF who, hopefully, will be restrained in their reaction by the fact that they belong to the governing majority. The non-communist opposition has, with two important exceptions, reacted well to Thieu's proposals and this is especially important

in the case of the An Quang Pagoda which has welcomed those

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proposals with unusual warmth, giving the government credit for goodwill. The exceptions are General Minh, who has said nothing, and Senator Don who in effect also speaks for Minh and who has taken the occasion to redouble his attacks on the government, not over the substance of the proposals (with which he actually agrees) but for "lacking consistency, clear-mindedness and especially sincerity." By and large, however, I think the consolidation of the government and of the non-communist opposition is in this instance furthering, rather than impeding, national unity on the peace issue.

23. The Thieu/Ky/Huong government is sometimes described as narrowly based and lacking in representational character. This is true in the sense that the electoral support for Thieu and Huong together was just under 50 percent in the 1967 elections, but it is entirely inaccurate in the sense in which those observations are usually made, for the critics imply that the opposition is broadly based and more or less united. In fact the majority of politicians

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who are in opposition basically accept the sacrifices of the war and want the same thing as Thieu and the GVN -- an acceptable outcome to the war that does not turn the country over to the enemy. And they are not united. Thieu's strength rests on the solid base which he and Huong command in the country, on the fact that the opposition does not fundamentally want a different outcome, and on their divisions. This explains why Thieu himself is probably more widely accepted in the country than at any time since he became President. The government is vulnerable because there is a great longing for peace, it cannot allow free advocacy of dangerous proposals, and a politician who exploits the peace desire unscrupulously could undoubtedly garner much support. This, undoubtedly, accounts for the suspicion with which Thieu regards Ng Minh who could probably exploit the support the An Quang Buddhists have indicated they are willing to give him.

24. The dialogue between the executive and legislature also leaves  
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much to be desired. Basically, I suppose, the assertiveness of the National Assembly testifies to the vigor of the constitutional system. The Assembly has its own weaknesses plus a good dose of demagoguery, but the greater fault for the frequent scrapping between Government and Assembly lie in the failure of Thieu and Huong to cultivate the legislators. They do not adequately prepare the way for legislation. They do not take time to explain the issue and policies nor do they ask for their support for unpopular measures. In short they take legislative support for granted, and are surprised and annoyed when trouble breaks out. With economic issues especially troublesome, the Assembly has balked over taxes and customs duties, but more in protection of its prerogatives and over details than in opposition to the necessary sacrifices. Some of this contention has been healthy and necessary since it resulted in issues being referred to the Supreme Court to decide more precisely where the rights and duties of the two branches

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of government are to be demarcated. On important substantive issues such as land reform the Assembly shows every sign of supporting the government.

25. Partly as a result of the troubles between government and legis'ature, the influence of Prime Minister Tran Van Huong has gradually declined during the six-month period. The newly formed national unity organization, the NSDF, is waiting to send some of its leading exponents into the cabinet as a price for their cooperation with Thieu. The Prime Minister's autocratic attitude toward the Assembly has soured even some of his supporters in that body. Although he himself is still regarded as one of the few scrupulously honest politicians in the country, it is a fact that he is lacking in vigor and that with the passage of time his position has somewhat eroded. Some cabinet changes are likely to be made, but I do not believe that Huong himself will be changed, at least not in the near future. If he is changed his successor would have to be a southerner, since

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Thieu is from the center and Ky is from the north. As of now, the most likely and best qualified successor would appear to be Deputy Prime Minister Khien. If he gets appointed, there will be criticism abroad on the ground that Khien is a general, but he is probably the present cabinet member most keenly attuned to the needs of political development at the rice roots, he is a fairly strong administrator, and he is better qualified than most of the other candidates for the office. He certainly enjoys more of Thieu's confidence and is better able to work with him than any of the party leaders.

26. On corruption there has been some progress, but not enough. South Viet-Nam has a fourth branch of government, the Inspectorate, which is co-equal to the executive and the legislature, and which has gradually gotten itself organized in recent months. A healthy competition has developed between the body and the government's own self-policing agencies. Recently the Inspectorate has issued accusations against a division commander, a province chief, and

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a ranking ministry representative in a province. In each case they also fingered some ten ranking subordinates who were involved in the same peculations. The government continues to set up administrative procedures that are supposed to make the taking of graft more difficult, and of course each ministry has its own anti-corruption apparatus. Some 27,000 officials have submitted property declarations. Many province and district chiefs have been relieved of their duties and some have been disciplined. I wish I could say that all this has amounted to a vigorous house-cleaning, but the problem is much too deep-seated to permit any quick solutions. All one can say is that the government is going after some of the more corrupt and most inefficient of its administrators. Sometimes our prodding has helped, but in other cases men were promoted after being transferred for corruption or inefficiency. Overall, I would say that there has been some, but limited, progress.

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**C. PUBLIC ATTITUDES**

27. One periodic survey of public attitudes indicates the feeling of security of the people in Saigon has remained at a high level since January with only minor fluctuations.

There is a high degree of confidence in the ability of ARVN to protect the capital city. Thus the announcement of replacement of 25,000 of our troops and the prospect of further replacements have been received calmly with more people viewing the move as beneficial than not. On the other hand, the Saigonese continue to express doubts about the ability of ARVN to assume full defense of the country with little aid from foreign sources.

28. The Saigon general public's belief in the dependability of the United States as an ally reached its highest point (52 percent) since Tet 1968 in June. The low point (32 percent) was at the time of the bombing halt in early November 1968.

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D. MILITARY

29. During the first few weeks of 1969, the signs were unmistakable that the enemy was planning an offensive of major proportions. [REDACTED] indications were there: the emplacement of numerous caches (many of which our forces picked up before they could be used by the enemy); the redeployment of his forces; and information from [REDACTED] prisoners, ralliers, captured enemy documents, villagers, and other sources. The Bien Hoa-Long Binh complex and the provincial capital of Tay Ninh were clearly to be among the important targets, but the evidence was abundant that if the initial attacks went well the main target would be Saigon.

BIAS

BIAS

30. Under General Abrams' leadership, friendly forces worked unceasingly to spoil enemy preparations, and when the enemy finally launched his attacks on the nights of February 22-23, they were defeated on every front. The attacks at Bien Hoa-Long Binh

and in Tay Ninh Province and the Michelin area cost the enemy

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enormously and did little damage to the cities themselves. The enemy's hope of getting into Saigon never even approached realization. There were numerous indirect fire attacks throughout the nation but relatively few large-scale ground probes. Within five weeks, the offensive had petered out and the enemy had lost over 23,000 killed.

31. Since then his undertakings have been much less ambitious. He has since mounted only two efforts involving nationwide coordinated attacks by indirect fire and some ground probes, few of battalion size, both of only a few days duration. Enemy directives related to these "high points" called for tactics which would conserve manpower and ordnance. The policy was to pursue "limited objectives" with the hope of inflicting heavy casualties, particularly on U.S. forces, expanding his control over the population, and destroying GVN administration.

32. The first of these, beginning May 11-12, while brief was quite intensive, with more attacks by fire in its first two days than in

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the comparable period of the two Tet offensives. The effort was concentrated against U.S. forces, which received 50 percent of the ground attacks and 55 percent of the attacks by fire, the highest percentage recorded for any of the enemy offensives. The second "high point," which began June 5-6, was 30 percent less intense in its first four days than the May phase, but enemy casualties dropped less than 10 percent. ARVN casualties were about the same as those in May, while US losses were about 40 percent less.

33. Since then, there has been no attempt at coordinated nationwide attacks, even for similarly brief periods. There were two principal actions. One was against Tay Ninh City, where allied forces inflicted exceptionally heavy losses on the enemy. The other was around the Bien Het CIDG camp. Here a planned assault by two reinforced enemy regiments against friendly forces in the Dak Lo area and the camp was defeated by ARVN ground forces supported strongly by allied air strikes and artillery, and the enemy withdrew

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to Cambodia. The latter action was of particular significance in that it was fought in an area where the ARVN had assumed total responsibility on the ground. Our contribution was air and artillery support. An enemy success there would have been costly indeed, and in fact had been advertised by the enemy in their propaganda as a forthcoming "Dien Bien Phu."

34. Thus the enemy has not achieved a single military success so far this year. His attempts to reverse the pacification gains have failed, the Chieu Hoi rate is far ahead of last year, and he continues to take heavy losses. We estimate that the enemy has suffered losses upwards of 150,000 men from all causes during the first six months of the year. With infiltration down to about half that of last year the enemy has clearly suffered some attrition during the past six months - possibly to the extent of 40,000-50,000 men. At the level of combat during May and June (when enemy losses were about 30,000 each month), and with his

shrinking population base from which to draw southern recruits,

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this attrition may continue and even increase. Such attrition, if allowed to continue, would probably require the enemy to re-examine his strategy to reduce his losses, possibly by more limited military activity, or to sharply step up his level of infiltration. These considerations may influence the planned July "high point" (planned as part of the enemy's 1969 summer offensive). Captured enemy documents state that this phase is to be more intense than those of May and June. We do not foresee major assaults against urban areas, with the possible exception of Tay Ninh City, where the enemy may make another major effort. Prisoners of war have stated that the enemy plans a sapper campaign in Saigon, but he is having difficulty infiltrating men and prepositioning supplies in the city, and his capability of mounting a major terrorist campaign is questionable.

35. During the first six months of 1969, ARVN losses are reported at about 8,000, or about 58 percent of the friendly total. On past form, later reports will increase this percentage very

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substantially as more complete ARVNAF reports become available. U.S. killed in action during the first six months of 1969 totaled 6,315. It is this figure, which the enemy paid an enormous cost to achieve, which he no doubt rightly perceives as his most notable military achievement during the first half of 1969.

36. New ARVN units deployed during the period under the Phase II modernization program included two infantry battalions, eight artillery battalions, two armored cavalry squadrons, three military police battalions, seven truck companies, one medium boat group, five logistical support battalions (divisional) and three ordnance direct support companies.

New units in training as of 30 June 1969 included four artillery battalions, one armored cavalry squadron, two engineer construction battalions, one military police battalion, two truck companies, two medium boat groups and five logistical support battalions (divisional).

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37. Conversion of two of VNAF's H-34 helicopter squadrons to UH-1 aircraft was completed and two others began the conversion process. The latter two squadrons will become operational 31 July 1969 and 31 August 1969, respectively. Two of three VNAF A-1 fighter squadrons converted to A-37 aircraft and the third squadron is to complete conversion 1 August 1969. In addition, a special air mission transport squadron became fully operational during the period. Eight Patrol Craft Fast (PCF), two Coast Guard Patrol Boats (WPB) to and five River Patrol Craft (PBR) were turned over to the VNN during the period and were declared inservice. In addition, six River Assault and Interdiction Divisions (RAID) became operational through the turnover of 109 river assault craft. The VNN has taken over responsibility for all 19 inner coastal surveillance stations (Market Time) in the Fourth Coastal Zone and the majority of the river assault operations in the Mekong

Delta.

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38. Desertion within RVNAF is a continuing major problem.

The rates during the past six months show a decline in January and February continuing a trend which began in October 1968. March rates rose to approximately the January rate and were followed by a leveling off during April and May. Preliminary data indicate that the June rate will approximate that of May. The current monthly gross RVNAF desertion rate is 12.1 deserters per one thousand personnel assigned; the net RVNAF desertion rate is 10.7 deserters per thousand personnel assigned. JGS and MACV agree that this rate is too high and have initiated several programs to reduce desertions.

✓  
**3. PACIFICATION**

39. At mid-year, pacification continued its steady expansion of security, with the development of more political participation by the people in decisions about their future. January saw the end of the highly successful three-month Accelerated Pacification

Campaign, which brought within GVN security a million and a half

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(1, 569, 900) formerly considered in contested or VC areas. The first phase of the 1969 pacification campaign ran from February through June. Using the HES as an imperfect but the best available test, ABC security was extended from 79.6 per cent of the population at the end of January to 85.6 per cent at the end of June, or slightly over a million additional people brought up to the C or mid-point level on the security scale. Since the goal for the first phase was 83 per cent, the program could be said to be ahead of schedule on its year-end goal of 90 per cent. Translated into hamlets, some 1, 562 hamlets formerly judged D, E, or V on the lower end of the security scale were raised up to the ABC level.

40. The basis of this continued expansion of security is the pressure maintained on the enemy. The vigorous efforts of our regular forces, with ARVN participation, held the main force enemy units generally away from the more heavily populated

pacification areas. The government's general mobilization

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program of 1968 and the increase in the numbers and effectiveness of the Regional Forces and Popular Forces continued to show dividends in local security during the semester. The Regional Forces increase of approximately 30,000 men in 278 companies added weight to our security effort. Both the Regional and Popular Forces benefited also from the arrival of 113,492 additional M-16 rifles and other better equipment, as well as extensive attention from 353 small mobile advisory teams of two US officers and three NCO's. The result was seen in additional operations; additional contacts with the enemy; and RF KIA ratio of 4.4 to 1 and PF ratio of 3.4 to 1; a weapons-captured ratio by RF of 5.2 to 1 and by PF of 2.6 to 1; and a growing inability of the enemy to forage, conscript or tax in more and more areas in which he formerly roamed free.

People's Self-Defense Force

41. During this semester, some 473,193 more members were enrolled for a total of 1,480,934 and 163,761 additional weapons

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distributed for a total of 270,527. Unpaid, only moderately trained but representing a commitment by the local citizens to protect their communities and families, the PSDF was engaged in many actions against the enemy, aside from its long hours of guard duty. The cost was 1,197 killed, but the enemy suffered the larger number of 1,487. With respect to weapons, the picture was less positive as the PSDF lost 1,508 weapons and only captured 709. While some PSDF have failed to defend themselves or yielded after token resistance, there are increasing stories of their fighting heroically and effectively. In sum, the contribution of the PSDF in terms of security may be modest but in political terms it is substantial.

Terrorism

42. Security has not broken out all over, however, as can be seen by the 6,247 terrorist incidents, resulting in 3,877 civilians killed during this six months. Some 9,794 additional were wounded as a result of continued Viet Cong rocketings, mortars,

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assassinations, bombs in market places, and other forms  
of attack.

Phoenix

43. The PHOENIX Campaign against the internal enemy, the  
covert Viet Cong infrastructure, continued to make its  
contribution to the wearing down of the communist apparatus.  
Some 7,262 members of this infrastructure were captured,  
killed or rallied during the six months. Against some very  
soft estimates of the total strength of the VCI, one could say  
that approximately 9 per cent of the VCI had been picked up.  
Aside from the enemy's ability to replace such a percentage, it  
is clear that more must be done to insure that VCI picked up  
are actually handled so as to be taken out of the war for the  
duration and not slip back through premature releases or light  
sentences. The government issued a new classification system  
to require that local authorities impose sentences measured by  
the level of the VC in the apparatus, and is developing systems to

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track individuals from their arrest through their legal processing to their detention arrangements. This is combined with the increased attention being paid by the government to the development of a proper judicial system to protect against wrongful imprisonment or abuse. The organizational and conceptual work of the Phung Hoang has in great part been accomplished; the problem now is to develop the [redacted]

BIA

[redacted] operational capability necessary to deal with the sophisticated, entrenched and experienced covert VC apparatus.

National Police

44. The National Police have continued to perform a real service. Their operational results during the semester were 3,733 VC killed, 8,737 VC arrested, 14,157 suspects detained, and such contraband seized as 2,311 individual weapons, 265 crew-served weapons, 4,057 grenades and 9,313 items of explosives. However, this has been a difficult period for the

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police. Since their recruits were limited to individuals not subject to military mobilization, the actual manpower strength of the NP declined from 78,431 to 76,819 during this semester. Despite this, a vigorous program was initiated of putting police into villages and some 5,908 policemen are now in 579 villages. In the next six months an additional 13,000 personnel will be provided by transfer from the military. Police will be posted in 1,847 villages, with a strength of 14,988 policemen.

Chieu Hoi

45. The Chieu Hoi program has been a star of the semester. The 20,924 ralliers received during the first six months has already exceeded the 1968 total and the trend continues high. Most of these come as a result of the expansion of security into new areas of the country side and the consequent decision of many local residents who formerly participated in local guerrilla and similar VC activities to switch for the government side. The great majority of these ralliers have come in the Delta area. Unfortunately, there

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has been little or no success in inducing North Vietnamese to join the government side.

Elections.

46. In March and in June, an intensive campaign was launched to conduct elections in as many villages and hamlets as possible, in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of the government's claim in the face of alleged Viet Cong "Revolutionary Committees". Some 794 village and 4,461 hamlet elections were held during the period. The hamlet elections included 1,219,967 voters or 86.6 per cent of those eligible with approximately two and one-half candidates for each seat. On the village level, the voters numbered 735,594, or 89.75 per cent of the eligibles, and the candidates about 1.34 to each seat.

Village Development

47. By the end of June, some 2,839 village officials throughout the country had already been graduated from a special five-week Vung Tau course in their duties and in the political objectives of

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the government, and about 2,000 more are there now. A new program provided funds for development purposes to the village government which was also given authority to decide on projects and spend without further superior approval. There was some slowness in getting this program started, as it represented a revolutionary change from past practices in which "senior officials know best" with respect to the needs and desires of the villagers. The change has been generally promulgated through<sup>out</sup> the country by this time, however, and seems to be under way in most areas. The RD Cadre were changed from 60 to 30-man teams during this semester to put greater emphasis on their political and organizational functions and less on their paramilitary. The 1,477 RD Cadre teams with a total strength of 43,724, plus another 7,412 Highlander Cadre, is an example of the investment of the government in the political development function. The directives are clear that elected village officials should have full authority over all organizations

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working in their village such as the RD Cadre, the National Police, the Information Cadre, and others, but it cannot yet be said that the process of turning these directives into reality has begun.

Refugees

48. The government's attention to the refugees is an integral part of pacification. The struggle between the President and the National Assembly over the government budget held up refugee operations early in the year. When this was resolved, however, the Ministry began an intensive effort not only to care for its current refugees and respond to new crises, but also to start a major new effort to assist the refugees to return to their original and now pacified hamlets. The government now is ready to give special assistance to any individual returning to his original area, refugee or not. As a result of these efforts, for the first time in many months, the number of refugees still under government care has declined from the all-time high of 1.4 million in February 1969

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to 1.2 million at the end of May. Of these, approximately 82,220 were actually returned to their original villages while the remainder were dropped from the rolls after being paid their final benefits, choosing to resume a normal life in a new area. This process is being accelerated and ambitious goals have been set for the reduction of the refugee problem by the end of the year. I believe that on balance the government has done a remarkable job in the midst of this war of dealing with a problem of immense proportions.

Summary

49. The pacification program continued to reflect the attention given it by President Thieu, and now has a reasonably effective organizational structure to prosecute it, the Central Pacification and Development Plan and Council. Thieu is now making his fourth series of visits to each corps to review current progress, and explain and exhort with respect to new directions of the campaign over the coming months. He still insists that 90 per cent

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of the population must be brought to the C category by the end of the year, but he has accelerated the whole process by demanding the completion of the year-end goals by 31 October. He has also added the significant and first priority goal of increasing the population in the higher security categories of AB to 50 per cent, in order, as he explains, "that we can be sure they will vote for us if it comes to an election between ourselves and the Communists." This will place greater emphasis on the internal security, local security, and political aspects of the pacification program. It seems to me to be an appropriate reading of the overall trend of the war, which is turning more and more into a political contest. The momentum of the campaign is being well maintained and will be increased by a large bloc of additional Popular Forces, police and trained local officials in the coming months. While the enemy has not to date heavily attacked the pacification

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program, these additional forces and the popular support which the program has developed put it in a better state to withstand any such turn of the enemy tactic.



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