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Chapter V

THE YEAR OF THE OFFENSIVE—1967

OVERVIEW

The momentum gained by the end of 1966 carried over into 1967. Additional troops and other available resources enabled the scope and pace of our offensive operations to increase steadily throughout the year. During this period, U.S. strength increased from 385,000 to 486,000. The number of maneuver battalions available to allied forces rose from 256 to 278. By year's end 28 tactical fighter squadrons were on hand to provide close air support and assist in the interdiction campaign. Over 3,000 helicopters of all types were organized into 107 units (Army companies and Marine squadrons), up from 68 units the previous year. The number of B-52 sorties increased sharply from 725 to 1,200.

The Mekong Delta Mobile Riverine Force was established at Dong Tam as a joint Army-Navy force. The 2d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, was combined with two Navy River Assault Squadrons of 50 boats each. Two barracks ships housed the brigade between ground operations. The Navy's River Patrol Forces reached a high level of effectiveness with 125 ships, boats, and supporting craft. Equally important, the logistic system was filled out so that for the first time, U.S. and allied forces were operating from a fully adequate and flexible support system.

With these larger forces, added firepower, and

improved mobility, we carried the battle to the enemy on a sustained basis throughout the year. Concurrently, we planned to intensify and expand the pacification effort. The Joint Vietnamese-U.S. Combined Campaign Plan for 1967 assigned to the Vietnamese Armed Forces the primary role in pacification and specified the priority areas for their employment. The same plan provided that U.S. combat forces would carry the bulk of the offensive effort against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army main force units.

As I said in a speech on 24 April to the Associated Press Managing Editors, we had to carry forward several tasks simultaneously:

At one and the same time, we must fight the enemy, protect the people, and help them build a nation in the pattern of their choice.

The real objective of the war is the people. If the enemy could take Saigon, or the heavily populated areas of the Delta, or both, the war would be over—without negotiation or conference. He lost this chance two years ago, and I can promise you that his military tactics alone will not win him another opportunity. Yet, despite his staggering combat losses, he clings to the belief that he will defeat us. And through a clever combination of psychological and political warfare—both here and abroad—he has gained support which gives him hope that he can win politically that which he cannot accomplish militarily.

Four days later I expanded on this point in my address before a joint session of the Congress:

This is the enemy—this has been the challenge. The only strategy which can defeat such an organization is one of unrelenting but discriminating military, political, and psychological pressure on his whole structure—at all levels.

It was precisely to the establishment of such unrelenting military pressure at all levels that the Combined Campaign Plan for 1967 was directed.

The U.S. concentration on the enemy's main forces did not imply an emphasis at the expense of the pacification effort. Its purpose was complementary—to drive the enemy main forces away from the priority pacification area. Moreover, numerous U.S. units would assist and reinforce Vietnamese units in pacification just as Vietnamese Marines, airborne units, Ranger battalions, and other selected Army units would help to prosecute the offensive against the main forces. In fact, we anticipated that over half of the U.S. combat forces would continue to be employed in close proximity to the heavily populated areas of the country, targeted against the guerrillas and local forces—and over half were so employed throughout 1967.

The reasoning behind the partial differentiation of functions embodied in our Combined Campaign Plan for 1967 made good sense then as it does today. The highly-mobile U.S. forces could concentrate and disperse more quickly than could most of the other allied forces in South Vietnam. In addition to their larger airmobile capability, their extensive communications and flexible logistic support systems were well suited to the task. Above all, their tremendous firepower made it vastly more desirable that they fight in remote, unpopulated areas if the enemy would give battle there. This would enable the full U.S. firepower potential to be employed without the danger of civilian casualties. It would also minimize the impact of U.S. forces and operations on the Vietnamese civilian economy.

Many Vietnamese units, on the other hand, had

only a modest mobility capability. Troops were accustomed to a decentralized system of sustenance which depended on local markets. However, most important of all, the soldiers understood the language, customs, problems, and aspirations of the Vietnamese people—for they were part of this people. They were much better suited to measures requiring some degree of population control than U.S. soldiers would have been. On the other hand, numerous U.S. battalions were in constant contact with local Vietnamese officials.

Widespread recognition of the fact that the pacification effort and the main force war were essentially inseparable—opposite sides of the same coin—was one of the reasons why responsibility for the entire U.S. pacification support effort was placed under MACV control in May of 1967. I had objected strongly to the "two war" thesis then popular in some circles. To direct these civil programs we formed within the command the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) and Ambassador Robert W. Komer arrived to serve as my deputy in the entire pacification area.

With the U.S. side of the pacification effort given unified direction and the relative roles of U.S. and Vietnamese forces agreed to, we had to determine where to concentrate and where to conserve in our campaign against the enemy's main forces. We decided to intensify our efforts in the III Corps zone, to begin our expansion into the IV Corps area, to continue our expansion in the populous southern region of the I Corps while continuing to guard the DMZ with minimum forces, and to conserve forces in the II Corps area.

At the beginning of the year the enemy still enjoyed relative security in the huge War Zones in the III Corps, and our use of roads was generally restricted to Saigon and the immediate vicinity. Even our vital water links on the Long Tau and Dong Ngai shipping channels connecting the Saigon area with the sea were never totally secure. With the exception of Operation ATTLEBORO in

late 1966, we had not yet entered these enemy areas on large-scale offensive operations, so that many of them were still largely untouched.

In the northern part of the I Corps, our objectives for 1967 were to meet and defeat North Vietnam's invasion through the DMZ and Laos, to interdict the enemy's infiltration routes in South Vietnam, and to neutralize his base areas near the coastal plain, which provided his guerrilla forces much of their support. Equally important in the southern portion of the corps zone was the protection of our base areas and the lines of communication that enabled the government to extend its control. Having largely denied to the enemy the rice-producing coastal regions of the II Corps and much of the Quang Nam Province of the I Corps in 1966, we intended to link those areas and expand our control into Quang Ngai and Quang Tin Provinces.

In the Central Highlands we intended to screen the Cambodian border with light forces and send reinforcements to the area only when North Vietnamese regiments undertook to cross the border and mount offensive operations. This saved us troops for more important tasks.

In the IV Corps, major allied objectives during 1967 were to increase government pressure on the enemy, enhance security for Revolutionary Development teams, and upgrade the security of major roads, particularly Route 4—the lifeline of the Delta. The biggest change in the tactical picture was the introduction of the U.S. Mobile Riverine Force (a Navy task force and troops of the 9th Infantry Division), the first major U.S. combat unit to operate as far south as the Mekong and Bassac Rivers.

Throughout 1967 I continued to be acutely aware of the conflicting demands on U.S. forces. I knew that it was necessary to strike out against the very formidable forces assembling in the border sanctuaries and remote base areas in order to prevent them from planning and executing deliberate attacks against the populated areas and against government centers. At the same time, I was aware

of the necessity to protect the pacification effort, whose success or failure would, in the long run, determine the fate of South Vietnam.

To explain the interrelationship between these two important missions to our troops and to our Vietnamese allies, I drew on a simple analogy. A boxer faces problems of both defense and attack. As he jabs and probes with one hand, he keeps his defense up with the other. Only when he sees a clear opportunity does he attack with both fists. When he does use both offensively, he accepts a calculated risk by leaving himself momentarily uncovered. Conversely, if he uses both hands defensively for too long—covered up, as a boxer would say—he surrenders all initiative to his opponent. He cannot win by defensive measures alone.

Our problem was similar to that facing the boxer. So, too, was the dilemma posed to the leaders in Hanoi. Before describing their problem and eventual decision, I would like to give an example from 1967 to illustrate how we used the troops available to us to increase our offensive against the enemy's main forces while we continued defensive measures to enhance local security.

In the III Corps area we started the year with a large clearing operation, CEDAR FALLS, in the "Iron Triangle" area just north of Saigon. This area had for many years been under development as a Viet Cong logistic center and as the headquarters for Military Region IV, which controlled enemy activity in and around Saigon. We captured huge caches of rice and other foodstuffs, destroyed a mammoth and deep system of tunnels, seized many documents of significant intelligence value, killed 720 enemy, and captured 213. This operation permitted a speedup in the pacification area close to Saigon.

In February the same U.S. forces that had been engaged in this clearing operation were committed, along with other units, against the enemy's main forces in the largest allied operation of the war to that time, JUNCTION CITY, in War Zone C. Over 22 U.S. and 4 ARVN battalions en-

gaged the enemy, killing 2,728. Additionally, we constructed three airfields capable of handling C-130's, erected a bridge entering the zone on its eastern edge, cleared innumerable helicopter landing zones, and fortified two camps in which Special Forces teams with CIDG garrisons remained as we withdrew. Henceforth, we would be able to enter this important but difficult area with relative ease and with much smaller forces, as we have done many times since.

As Operation JUNCTION CITY ended, elements of the U.S. 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and ARVN forces swung back toward Saigon and conducted yet another clearing operation, MANHATTAN, in the Long Nguyen base area just north of the previously cleared "Iron Triangle." Later in the year we improved the security of the "Iron Triangle" by scraping away its remaining jungle cover with the "Rome Plows." (Explained under Observations—1966.)

Using this technique of expanding offensive strikes while continuing clearing operations, we were able during the first half of 1967 to execute our plans essentially as we had intended, not only in the III Corps but in other areas as well. By June we had initiated our offensive operations in the Mekong Delta area of the IV Corps and had succeeded in restricting enemy activity in the II Corps zone.

In northern I Corps, our offensive operations took a heavy toll of the enemy and met what was very nearly a conventional invasion. However, the North Vietnamese continued to turn their half of the Demilitarized Zone into a vast armed camp. In April we shifted Army forces from further south to the populated areas of southern I Corps and to the enemy's base areas in the foothills. To accomplish this I formed Task Force OREGON as a provisional division. This later became the 23d (Americal) Division. Contingency plans for this task force had been prepared well in advance and component combat and service units had been earmarked and alerted. This shift freed Marines in

southern I Corps to reinforce in the area southwest of Da Nang and near the DMZ where the enemy threat continued to grow in size and intensity throughout the year.

Based on our intelligence, I foresaw an even higher level of enemy effort in the far northern provinces in the future. Consequently, I set in motion a number of actions to increase our logistical capability in the area. A major step was the construction of the Quang Tri Airfield because the airfield at Dong Ha farther north was in range of enemy artillery north of the DMZ. Additionally, we increased the number of LST landing ramps and began planning for additional port facilities. In the actual event these preparatory measures paid off in that we were able to deploy very large forces into this area just before and after the *Tet* offensive and to supply and support them adequately.

In order to free the Marines near the DMZ for mobile operations, we also made plans in concert with the Vietnamese Army to increase the size of one ARVN regiment in the DMZ area. We tailored its forces so that they could man and hold the strong point system, canalize enemy infiltration and secure fire support bases in that area. Additionally, the Vietnamese agreed to increase their armored cavalry forces in northern I Corps as a reaction force and we initiated steps to obtain the necessary equipment for this increase.

Thus, while we continued to gain momentum in both our clearing operations and strikes against the enemy's main forces, we were compelled either to build up our forces near the DMZ or to lose the northernmost provinces to increasingly large North Vietnamese forces.

The leaders in Hanoi were by this time faced with a very serious problem of strategy and tactics. I mentioned in my Overview for 1966 that they had begun an exchange of views on this problem during that year. In 1967 they made the momentous decision to change their basic tactics in an attempt to score a knockout blow. Generally, we had forced enemy main force units toward the remote areas and into jungle sanctuaries. This sep-

arated his main forces from his local forces and guerrilla units. It disrupted the mutual support practices which had earlier proved so rewarding to the Communist forces.

The analogy to boxing may help to explain the Hanoi leaders' basic dilemma. By remaining "covered up" with his main forces in the remote areas, the enemy could not attack the South Vietnamese population centers. As long as the enemy attacked only small outposts and towns near the border in an attempt to achieve psychological impact by an isolated victory, we were able to reinforce quickly and to defeat him. This was conclusively demonstrated late in the year by allied victories at Dak To and Loc Ninh. If, on the other hand, he decided to attack the large population centers, he would have to let his guard down—to leave his remote base areas and his secure sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia and expose his forces to destruction by allied firepower.

Frankly, those of us who had been in Vietnam for a long period of time found it hard to believe that the enemy would expose his forces to almost certain decimation by engaging us frontally at great distances from his base areas and border sanctuaries. He would have to expose his forces to attack the population because we had, by 1967, destroyed or neutralized most of his large close-in bases. However, in 1968 this is exactly what he did—and in doing it he lost the cream of his army.

General Giap, in a statement in September of 1967, forecast very heavy fighting ahead for American and Communist forces. He also forecast victory. But he did so in the context of a border strategy which he claimed had drawn U.S. troops into the remote areas so that Communist guerrillas and local forces could press toward victory in the heavily populated zones. This is simply not what was really happening, since most of our forces were in the populated areas and we reinforced the border areas only to the extent necessary to counter the enemy's initiatives. Many of his planned attacks were pre-empted by the massive use of B-52's.

Furthermore, his guerrillas were taking heavy losses.

General Giap was making a virtue out of a necessity. He was putting the best possible face on a strategy which had proved so unproductive that he and his colleagues in Hanoi were finally compelled to change it in late 1967. I can only conclude that he intended to deceive us as to his intentions and, at the same time, to conceal his dilemma.

This was neither a successful nor a productive time for the enemy. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fortunes deteriorated as those of the South Vietnamese improved. The Autonomous Administrative Committees, constituting the shadow government which he had formed in 1964 and 1965 to inherit political control of the country, were languishing. Allied forces began picking up for the first time significant numbers of civilian specialists heading for positions in the Viet Cong infrastructure—suggesting that the Communist political apparatus needed beefing up. The strength of Viet Cong forces was slowly diminishing and the North Vietnamese were assuming an ever increasing share of the war. In January North Vietnamese forces represented about 43 percent of the enemy in organized combat units but by December they accounted for 50 percent.

In a series of elections from March—when the Constituent Assembly approved a new constitution—through September and October—when nationwide free elections were held—the South Vietnamese government established its legitimacy, selected its leaders, and organized its institutions and agencies. Newly-elected local governments also began to operate in the villages and hamlets. These marked momentous and far-reaching steps in the long quest of the South Vietnamese government for stability. I believe these elections to be one of the most important developments of this long war.

The improving political situation was reflected in other events. The South Vietnamese economy enjoyed an upswing as roads were opened and com-

merce began to flow. Consumer goods were penetrating the countryside for the first time. Life in the major cities and towns was increasingly prosperous. Government forces were increasing in size and effectiveness.

I had, by this time, refined my original concept of a three-phase war to one of four phases, two of which had already been completed. I envisioned 1968 to be the year of the third phase, in which we would continue to help strengthen the Vietnamese Armed Forces—turning over more of the war effort to increasingly capable and better armed forces. In the fourth—and decisive—phase I could see the U.S. presence becoming superfluous as infiltration slowed, the Communist infrastructure was cut up, and a stable government and capable Vietnamese Armed Forces carried their own war to a successful conclusion. These were the directions in which events pointed. The Communists had to do something to attempt to change this trend.

Thus, the combination of the enemy's inconclusive border strategy and growing South Vietnamese strength forced the leaders in Hanoi to change their tactics and their overall strategy. With long range trends running against them, they had no prospects except to see their chances for success continue to diminish. Furthermore, the North

Vietnamese were not happy about the idea of several more years of U.S. bombing of their homeland. Thus it was that the leaders in Hanoi decided to bring their military power to bear directly on their main objective—the people and the government of South Vietnam—regardless of cost.

After the end of the southwest monsoon in October, they began to move their main forces into the populated areas throughout the entire country. We became aware of this movement in November and December through our intelligence, and as the number of incidents rose in the populated areas, the rate of ralliers returning to government authority fell off sharply, while pacification progress virtually stopped.

We now know that the enemy explained to his troops and cadres that the time had come for a herculean offensive effort and a general uprising. He probably had many things in mind—not the least of which was the necessity to do something dramatic to reverse his fortunes. He surely hoped that his dramatic change in strategy would have an impact on the United States similar to that which the battle of Dien Bien Phu had had on the government and people of France. In this way he might hope to bring about a halt of the U.S. effort and the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

OBSERVATIONS—1967

U.S. Operations

CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY deprived the enemy of enormous amounts of supplies, denied him unhampered use of vital communications centers near the urban areas, and partially eliminated his heretofore unchallenged sanctuaries within Vietnam. Several hundred thousand pages of enemy documents were captured—mostly from the headquarters of Military Region IV which controlled forces and operations in Saigon and the immediately surrounding provinces. CEDAR FALLS put this headquarters out of operation for six months and then it was broken down into five sub-regions. Even though the enemy failed to stand and defend his base areas, he suffered tremendous loss—the complexes which we destroyed in the “Iron Triangle” and War Zone C represented twenty years of work and a huge capital investment. The sustained pressure against this area caused 500 of the enemy to rally under the *Chieu Hoi* program in addition to over 200 who were captured and 700 killed.

In JUNCTION CITY we employed together for the first time all our different types of combat forces, including paratroopers and large armored and mechanized units. Four South Vietnamese battalions (two Army and two Marine) participating in the operation concentrated on securing the populated areas and supporting pacification. Military actions by U.S. troops kept the enemy so occupied that the Vietnamese forces experienced little interference from the enemy.

Although our strength was too limited to maintain enough troops in War Zone C to prevent the enemy from reentering it later, the three C-130 airfields which we constructed were designed to facilitate future operations in the vicinity, while the two Special Forces camps built nearby were to protect the airstrips and furnish continuing surveillance of the region. Although I had intended leaving the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in War Zone C as a “floating brigade” to conduct mobile

operations against the enemy during the monsoon season, the ominous enemy developments in I Corps compelled me to withdraw the brigade in April. In addition to the destruction of enemy forces and supplies, JUNCTION CITY “prepared the battlefield” for easy reentry by allied forces.

Statements by several high level defectors a year later revealed the full impact of the enemy’s loss in JUNCTION CITY. They commented—and captured documents confirmed—that the operation was essentially an enemy “disaster.” According to these knowledgeable defectors, the loss of major base areas and the resulting deterioration of local forces in III Corps forced the enemy high command to make basic revisions in tactics. JUNCTION CITY convinced the enemy command that continuing to base main force units in close proximity to the key population areas would be increasingly foolhardy. From that time on the enemy made increasing use of Cambodian sanctuaries for his bases, hospitals, training centers, and supply depots.

Characteristically, General Giap portrayed JUNCTION CITY as a “big victory” rather than the serious defeat it was. The North Vietnamese continued to perpetuate the myth of crippling U.S. losses and defeat. This time, if anything, the reports were more exaggerated than usual. According to official North Vietnamese reports, 13,500 allied soldiers were killed in JUNCTION CITY; in reality U.S.-Free World forces lost 289 killed. The enemy claimed 993 vehicles destroyed (800 of them armored) and the destruction of 119 allied artillery pieces. We actually lost 21 armored personnel carriers, 3 tanks, 5 artillery pieces, and 9 trucks. Exaggeration of this magnitude was commonplace. Whether self-deception or carefully contrived myth, its existence played an important part in decisions the enemy was to make in 1968.

Early in the year enemy activity in I Corps intensified, reaching a critical level just as we were consolidating our successes from CEDAR FALLS

nd III Corps would not permit deployment of a division from either of those areas. I had to improvise a plan.

We developed a contingency plan for a task force known as Task Force OREGON, comprised of a provisional headquarters, division support troops borrowed from various U.S. Army units, and three brigades taken from areas where they could be secured at minimum risk. The brigades involved were the 196th Light Infantry Brigade from the I Corps area, and from the II Corps area the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (which arrived in May) and the 3d Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division (later to be designated the 3d Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division). My Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. William B. Rosson, was to command the force.

Within weeks, the unabated enemy activity in the north prompted me to implement the plan. Task Force OREGON was quickly formed and deployed to Quang Ngai Province and the southern part of Quang Tin Province, where Viet Cong influence was strong. The arrival of Task Force OREGON permitted the Marines in Quang Ngai to move units further north to reinforce in the vicinity of the DMZ. The presence of this large force in the north also hastened the northward expansion of the highly successful pacification support operations by the 1st Cavalry Division in the coastal area of Binh Dinh Province and the opening of Highway 1 to Da Nang. Task Force OREGON drove the enemy main force units from the area and then concentrated upon eliminating local forces and guerrillas. Later in the year we replaced the brigades (3d of the 25th Division and 1st of the 101st) with the 198th and 11th Light Infantry Brigades, just arriving in the country, and redesignated the task force as the 23d (Americal) Infantry Division.

The development and use of Task Force OREGON illustrates a common characteristic of

to cope with changing situations or anticipated enemy movements. In many instances these plans were never implemented, but they were available should an appropriate situation develop.

In October and November the enemy effort shifted to the western border regions where at Song Be, Loc Ninh and Dak To, he hoped to achieve important psychological victories and to divert our attention from the urban areas and I Corps zone. The enemy realized we would face formidable logistical and operational problems in these areas, a prospect which heightened his confidence of success.

The first of these peripheral battles began in the early morning of 27 October near the village of Song Be in Phuoc Long Province when the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment attacked the command post of the 3d Battalion of the South Vietnamese 9th Regiment. The South Vietnamese repulsed every assault and inflicted heavy losses. Much the same happened in the second battle, which began two days later when elements of the Viet Cong 273d Regiment, 9th Division, attacked the small district town of Loc Ninh and a nearby rubber plantation eight miles south of the Cambodian border in Binh Long Province. Although U.S. troops were required to reinforce the position, by the time the enemy broke off the battle on 8 November, he had sustained severe casualties. The excellent performance by Vietnamese forces in both these engagements was an indication of a new strength and determination that they were to demonstrate consistently over the coming months.

In November the pivotal battle of the last quarter of 1967 occurred in the northwestern portion of the II Corps near the district seat of Dak To in Kontum Province. Since Dak To, like Song Be and Loc Ninh, is but a few miles from the Laotian and Cambodian borders, the enemy could take advantage of the nearby sanctuaries and short lines of communication to plan carefully and strike with speed and strength.

many garrisoned by CIDG companies with Special Forces advisors and supported by a nearby ARVN battalion. In late October a battalion of the 4th U.S. Division happened to be in the area providing security for construction of a new Special Forces camp at Ben Het, west of Dak To. When reconnaissance confirmed movement of four North Vietnamese regiments into the area we deployed an additional battalion and a brigade headquarters of the 4th Division, and alerted a battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Before the enemy could launch a coordinated attack, we had concentrated a brigade of three battalions, established artillery fire support bases, and fixed two of the enemy regiments by assault on their forward bases. We beat the enemy to the punch and he never regained the initiative. Before the battle ended, we had temporarily reinforced to a strength of three U.S. brigades including nine U.S. battalions, plus six South Vietnamese battalions. To support this array of forces we massed B-52 and tactical air strikes, using targets located by intelligence from long-range patrols.

Close air support and B-52 strikes were not the only ways in which airpower supported our ground operations. The Seventh Air Force had worked assiduously to improve its interdiction techniques. The skill and determination with which the interdiction campaign was pursued meant that many enemy infiltrators never reached the southern battlefields, that those who did so had been forced to expend additional energy and time infiltrating into South Vietnam, and that the flow of necessary enemy supplies required much larger numbers of enemy support troops.

The enemy paid a terrible price with little to show for his effort. U.S. and ARVN units decisively defeated the North Vietnamese 24th, 32d, 66th, and 174th Regiments, killing more than 1,600 of the enemy in an engagement exceeding in numbers, enemy losses, and ferocity even the Ia Drang Valley campaign of 1965.

erations in other areas. The enemy return was nil. In the words of a ranking Communist officer who defected the following spring, the border battles had been both "useless and bloody."

South Vietnamese Operations

Throughout the country the tempo of Vietnamese operations increased during the year. The General Reserve was more active, participating in a larger number of sustained offensive operations, while the Vietnamese Navy relieved U.S. units of responsibility for several MARKET TIME stations. The Vietnamese Air Force flew 25 percent of all allied sorties flown within South Vietnam during the year.

As they became more active, the much criticized Vietnamese Armed Forces also grew more capable. Since improvement of these forces was a prime part of our mission, I placed strong emphasis on upgrading them in all respects—manpower, weapons, equipment, training, administration, and leadership. When General Abrams became my deputy on 1 June, I assigned him, as I had General Heintges, the principal mission of supervising the advisory and support effort to improve the Vietnamese forces. Under his aggressive and able supervision, the state of training and combat readiness of the Vietnamese units showed marked improvement by the end of the year.

The efforts to modernize and improve the effectiveness of the Vietnamese Armed Forces covered a wide range of activities from advising and recommending to the provision of military hardware. A major effort was exerted to improve overall military leadership through the expansion of military schools and the establishment of a more effective manpower management system. The concept of "battlefield promotions" was encouraged to insure recognition of outstanding junior leaders. Actions were taken to improve the training and use of tactical and support units throughout the country. Training Centers were expanded and programs

Concurrently, our attention also was focused on the problem of expanding and improving the operational capabilities of the Regional and Popular Force units, so essential in providing the local security necessary for the revolutionary development program. With our assistance the Vietnamese government attacked many of the problems which had so long plagued these forces. Measures were taken to improve their logistic system and a complete revision of the command structure was undertaken to increase the responsiveness of the government to their requirements. To provide technical and tactical assistance, we decided to expand the U.S. advisory effort by more than 3,100 U.S. military personnel.

Our policy at all levels was to expand the role of the Vietnamese Armed Forces in the war, and we seized every opportunity to give them increased responsibility. In November, for example, a regiment of the ARVN 1st Division relieved U.S. forces defending a sector of the defenses facing the Demilitarized Zone. For this assignment, beginning in September we supplemented the ARVN division's firepower, adding crew-served weapons, 106-mm recoilless rifles, 60- and 81-mm mortars, and using the more modern M60 machine gun. This division was further strengthened by the issue of M16 rifles late in the year, following the priority issue of this excellent weapon to the General Reserve.

The ARVN 1st Division was given priority in the issue of this equipment in order to increase its firepower so that we could minimize the number of reinforcing units we would need in the northern I Corps, where the intensity of the war continued to increase. The new weapons—and especially the M16 rifle—also resulted in a noticeable increase in the morale of the division, as they did in the ARVN 2d Division when that unit received new equipment in January 1968.

ments of the U.S. 1st Division and the ARVN 5th Division, proceeded to attack enemy guerrillas and to eliminate the political infrastructure. Similar operations by elements of the U.S. 25th Division and the ARVN 25th Division were carried out in Hau Nghia and Long An Provinces.

In Operation FAIRFAX (begun in November 1966) we continued combined U.S.-ARVN territorial security operations around Saigon through all of 1967. The operation was characterized by extensive small unit patrols, night ambushes, river ambushes, and cordon and search actions. While these actions helped to improve the security of the Saigon area, Operation FAIRFAX also served as a valuable training exercise for the ARVN units involved. The U.S. 199th Light Infantry Brigade and an ARVN group of three Ranger battalions worked together at all command levels from squad to group and brigade. In this way we hoped the South Vietnamese would learn our tactics and techniques more quickly and in time be prepared to assume an expanded and more effective operational role.

I decided to shift responsibility for the security of the FAIRFAX operational area from the U.S. brigade to the Vietnamese Rangers by the end of the year. According to a carefully developed program for the transfer, the 5th Ranger Group was augmented by a newly-organized artillery battalion and logistical support organization. Further, I equipped the Rangers with M16 rifles and modern field radios on a priority basis. The II Field Force conducted special training for the Regional and Popular Forces that would be operating in the area. In the event the 5th Ranger Group required assistance, uncommitted units of the ARVN airborne division and Marine brigade of the General Reserve were close at hand. Nearby U.S. combat units operating in III Corps could also be made available in a matter of hours.

process, making frequent visits to the Capital Military District to evaluate the progress of the turnover. By 15 December the 5th Ranger Group and Regional and Popular Forces under the commander of the Capital Military District had full responsibility for the defense of their capital. The Vietnamese accepted the mission with pride. The National Police cooperated in the assignment, but they were not under control of the military commander, an undesirable command situation primarily the product of political complications.

During 1967 it became apparent that the Vietnamese 9th Division in the Delta was overextended. The division was responsible for a wide area embracing the highly-populated central and central coastal sectors of the IV Corps, plus several less critical inland provinces along the Cambodian border. To conserve our forces for operations in the more productive and heavily populated provinces to the east and south, I urged the Vietnamese to establish a special zone in the northern portion of the Delta. In adopting my suggestion, they established the 44th Special Zone, including Chau Doc, Kien Phong, and Kien Tuong Provinces, an area which they manned with a special force of Civilian Irregular Defense Group companies and Regional and Popular Forces. Kien Giang Province was shifted to the responsibility of the ARVN 21st Division. This realignment prevented the enemy from taking refuge along the old Chuong Thien-Kien Giang provincial boundary, which prior to the change was also the boundary between two Vietnamese divisions and a frequent haven for enemy units.

During the year the Vietnamese Special Forces assumed responsibility for several Special Forces camps and for the CIDG companies manning them. In each case all of the U.S. advisors withdrew, leaving the Vietnamese in full command. The Vietnamese handled the responsibility well. As one of our Special Forces sergeants aptly put it, "We had succeeded in working our way out of a

phy underlying our national commitment.

The South Vietnamese conducted several major operations during the last part of the year, and in spite of Viet Cong attempts to avoid battle, achieved a significantly increased number of contacts. ARVN small unit actions became more aggressive and fruitful. The three ARVN divisions in the Delta and the Regional and Popular Forces there scored a number of signal victories in late 1967.

The Vietnamese Armed Forces also showed great improvement administratively. With our advice, they modernized their military financial management system, established an Inspector General organization, created an Adjutant General staff, and instituted a modern personnel accounting system for the Regional Forces. They modernized their promotion system and improved their procedures for selecting officers to attend higher military schools. They adopted a more liberal leave and pass policy and built an extensive commissary system. With our urging they had provided a more precise definition of desertion in August 1966. Throughout 1967 they pursued measures to reduce the troublesome desertion rate. All of these improvements began to show returns as the desertion rate dropped 37 percent below that of the preceding year.

Despite the improvements, I remained convinced, as I had been for some time, that the Vietnamese would be unable to assume full responsibility for their own defense unless they greatly expanded their armed forces and placed the entire nation on a war footing. That would mean general mobilization. Since mobilization would affect every aspect of national life (of which the military was but one), I had as early as 1966 recommended that the problem be studied at U.S. Mission level. When Ambassador Bunker arrived in April, a joint U.S. civilian-military task force was established to study the problem and to develop basic data so that when the time for mobilization came, we might better

arterly reviews of the Combined Campaign Plan with our commanders in the field. These meetings provided a valuable clearing house for lessons learned. As the year drew to a close, we published the third annual Combined Campaign Plan, which for the first time brought together U.S. and Vietnamese civilian as well as military plans for pacification and nation building. With the assistance of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff, my staff prepared the initial draft of the Combined Campaign Plans for 1966, 1967, and 1968. As we contemplated the 1969 plan, we agreed that the Vietnamese planners would prepare the initial draft. This was further evidence of progress and confidence in the South Vietnamese.

Allies

The two Korean infantry divisions—the Capital and the 9th—conducted highly successful clearing operations in the central coastal plains. One of their most important operations was OH JAC in March and April, in which the two divisions linked their areas of responsibility and secured a considerable portion of Route 1 along the coast. The Korean forces gradually assumed responsibility for most of the II Corps coastal area, releasing U.S. units there for other tasks. The Korean troops were tangible proof of the success of U.S. intentions in Vietnam. The Vietnamese realized that with the support of the United States, the Republic of Korea had successfully defeated a Communist attack and in the postwar period had established a viable economy, a powerful armed forces, and a stable government. Working with fellow Asians, the Koreans were more effective than we were in explaining the massive character of communism and why U.S. and Free World troops were in Vietnam.

Organization

May the Embassy's Office of Civil Operations and the MACV Revolutionary Development Sup-

port (CORDS) in MACV headquarters. There were similar consolidations at regional and provincial levels. Mr. Komer, who had a substantial background in pacification issues, was assigned as my Deputy for CORDS, with the personal rank of Ambassador.

This major and portentous change in the U.S. organization for pacification support was designed to provide better integration and coordination of effort by all U.S. agencies. Upon the creation of CORDS, MACV assumed operational responsibility for the entire spectrum (civilian and military) of U.S. support of the pacification program. The U.S. Embassy, which had heretofore administered the program with some support from MACV, retained responsibility for advising the Vietnamese government on political and economic matters at the national level. We were now organized to pursue a "one war" strategy.

By late 1967 our military assistance and support to the Vietnamese Armed Forces had grown so large and complex that we needed a special agency to coordinate and supervise matters which concerned nearly all portions of the MACV staff. The start of a major new program to expand and upgrade the territorial forces (Regional and Popular Forces)—a program demanding integrated staff action—emphasized this need for a focus of control and coordination. In November we created a principal MACV staff agency, Military Assistance, headed by a general officer and charged with responsibility for unifying the assistance efforts of the various staff divisions.

Airpower

Our tactical air requirements throughout Vietnam steadily increased, a demand spurred by our heightened ground activity, particularly in the area near the DMZ, and by our intensified interdiction campaign against the infiltration routes.

By the end of 1967 well over two thousand U.S. and Free World tactical jet aircraft were stationed

At Con Thien we learned a lesson which proved to be of inestimable value later in the year at Khe Sanh.

The air effort in South Vietnam was primarily in direct support of ground operations such as CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY and in support of the Marine bases in the north. Over 100,000 sorties (not including B-52 strikes) were flown during the year in support of ground operations, with the I Corps receiving the major share. In one three-day period alone U.S. Air Force, Marine, and Navy aircraft flew more than 1,000 sorties over the I Corps. In CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY B-52 strikes were an integral and continuing part of the operation.

Logistics

For logistical support of northern I Corps we depended upon a hazardous coastal shipping system running north from the great deep water port of Da Nang to several shallower off-loading points in the vicinity of Hue and Dong Ha. The great quantities of construction material required to build fortifications south of the DMZ and plans for major operations in the A Shau Valley and other enemy base areas in the north during 1968 further taxed these overloaded facilities and resources. To meet all of these requirements we doubled the number of landing craft sites north of the Hai Van pass (to 18) and increased our tonnage capacity tenfold, from 540 tons per day to 5,500.

In the southern part of I Corps near Duc Pho and Sa Huynh in southeastern Quang Nam Province, Army engineer and transportation units developed during April an over-the-beach resupply system to support Operation MALHEUR, conducted by the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. When the northeast monsoon began in September, the engineers had completed a small sheltered coastal port at Sa Huynh and an all-weather airfield at Duc Pho capable of handling C-130 air-

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Despite our spoiling operations, enemy activity in the DMZ intensified, as demonstrated by the intense shelling of the Marine base at Con Thien, a key position on commanding terrain south of the DMZ. The North Vietnamese apparently had two objectives in I Corps: first, to draw our troops into the region, thereby checking our success in other areas; and second, in the process of creating a major diversion, to achieve a significant military victory.

To counter this threat, in the fall we mounted Operation NEUTRALIZE, a massive concentration of air, artillery, and naval gunfire in support of the Marines at Con Thien. This particular kind of attack, which became known as a SLAM operation—for Seeking, Locating, Annihilating, and Monitoring—was refined over the months by General "Spike" Momyer, my deputy for Air Operations and commander of the Seventh Air Force. The SLAM concept used the entire spectrum of supporting fire, from B-52 strategic bombers (in a tactical role) to light artillery. After reconnaissance aircraft and intelligence gathering agencies fixed and defined the target, heavy bomber strikes by B-52's usually triggered the attack. Tactical air strikes and coordinated artillery and naval gunfire followed. During the attack, reconnaissance elements observed the target; later, specially trained long-range reconnaissance patrols entered the target area to assess bomb damage and to locate additional targets for the highly accurate tactical aircraft prepared to strike them.

SLAM operations became one of my most valuable and responsive tools. During the 49 days of the SLAM operation in support of Con Thien, we dislodged a firmly entrenched enemy, destroyed

example of successfully reinforcing an outpost in a remote border region by air with both troops and supplies. In addition to normal equipment and supplies, we had to replace a large amount of ammunition at Dak To after enemy shelling destroyed one of our dumps. Along with the gallantry and tenacity of our forces, our tremendously successful air logistics operation was the key to the victory.

During the year we conducted an extensive program to open and upgrade roads throughout the country. As military actions cleared new areas, we conducted "Road Runner" operations to secure the principal routes and applied substantial engineering effort to improve and maintain them. The expanded road network was both important militarily and vital to civilian trade and commerce. Mile after mile of road was opened. In the III Corps area the ARVN 18th Division, the Australians, Thais, and elements of the U.S. 9th Division opened and secured Route 15 connecting Saigon with the port and naval installations at Vung Tau. Route 20, extending from Saigon to the II Corps boundary where it ran eastward to Dalat, was opened by the U.S. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and ARVN 18th Division, then turned over to the Vietnamese public works ministry for maintenance. Route 13, closed for years, was cleared by the U.S. 1st Division, opening it for traffic from Saigon north to the Cambodian border.

In II Corps, we secured and improved Route 19, leading from the coast inland to Pleiku; Route 14, extending from Pleiku north into Kontum Province; and Route 20 from Dalat to the III Corps boundary. In the IV Corps, we devoted a major effort to safeguarding Route 4 connecting Saigon and the Mekong Delta.

Our most ambitious road project was opening coastal Route 1 all the way from Saigon north to the Demilitarized Zone. This involved a series of military and engineering operations by units sta-

tions of the route. A major section in the Da Nang area of Quang Nam Province (I Corps) had been secured in the spring of 1965 when the 1st Marine Division moved into the area. In the spring of 1967 the 3d Marine Division secured the section north of the Hai Van pass in Thua Thien and Quang Tri Provinces. In the southern provinces of I Corps, Task Force OREGON in May cleared the section running from northern Quang Ngai through Quang Tin and into the southern part of Quang Nam Province.

In the II Corps' Operation OH JAC KYO I during March and April, the Korean Capital and 9th Divisions opened the route from Phan Rang in Ninh Thuan Province to a point 40 miles north of Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province. The portion in northern Binh Thuan Province had already been cleared by the 1st Cavalry Division in Operation BYRD in August 1966. During Operation PERSHING in 1967, the same unit opened the remainder of the route through Binh Dinh Province.

To the south in III Corps during November and early December, in Operation SANTE FE, the U.S. 9th and ARVN 18th Divisions secured Route 1 in Long Khanh and Binh Tuy Provinces. The entire length of Route 1 and the other roads I have noted were open and operating as the year ended. The U.S. Army and Marine engineers, U.S. Navy Seabees, and ARVN engineers performed the herculean task of repairing and maintaining the hundreds of miles of roadway this net encompassed. The first convoy traveled the full length of Route 1 in January 1968, signalling the achievement of a long sought goal, one which facilitated both the nation's economic growth and the conduct of military operations.

Intelligence

The Combined Intelligence Center expanded to keep pace with the ever-increasing quantity of information coming from the field. Intelligence from

Operation CEDAR FALLS was the first large-scale operation to benefit from "pattern activity analysis," a system we had begun to develop in mid-1966. This procedure consisted of detailed plotting on maps of information on enemy activity obtained from a variety of sources over an extended period of time. As more data was plotted, patterns of activity and locations would emerge. We thereby could focus our prime attention on those areas of intensive or unusual activity.

Aerial observation and photography, sensors, patrol reports, infrared devices, sampan traffic counts, enemy probes of Regional and Popular Forces posts, agent reports, civilian movement reports, reports of increased antiaircraft fire, disclosures of caches (and the amount and nature of the material in them) and captured documents—these and more told us much about enemy intentions. Upsurges in road ambushes or bridge destruction usually meant that the VC intended to attack in a location where denial of the particular roads would aid the enemy. Something of the enemy's intent could be determined even by checking the amount of wood shipped into an area for the making of caskets or the number of civilians impressed as porters. The extent and nature of the enemy's own intelligence gathering revealed much about his intentions and even the size of the operation he was planning.

Assiduous plotting of all this information and careful analysis of the patterns enabled us to launch spoiling attacks both with ground troops and with massive air strikes. Where no pronounced pattern developed in an area, we concentrated our efforts elsewhere, thereby conserving our forces. Activity pattern analysis was invaluable in developing broad long-range direction of our military operations, while at other lower echelons it provided commanders with a basis for planning day-by-day operations.

We found extremely valuable intelligence when

two million pages of documents. The most important find was the enemy's complete plan of operations. A film of North Vietnam's second rank officer, General Thanh, who was the senior commander in the south, inspecting Viet Cong troops in the field was particularly interesting.

The Strong Point System

One planned measure to decrease the massive infiltration across the Demilitarized Zone was to construct a strong point warning system just south of the zone. The system consisted of early-warning devices and some physical obstacles backed by carefully selected fortified positions on key terrain, manned as appropriate, and supported by artillery, airstrikes, and naval gunfire.

The line of fortified strong points eventually extended from the coast to the mountains west of Khe Sanh. The strong points served as observation posts, patrol bases, and fire support bases.

The entire system was designed as an economy of force measure. After the U.S. Marines had developed the system, I planned to turn the defense of the strong points over to the ARVN, thereby freeing our troops for mobile operations. We also hoped to cut down our costly search operations in the vicinity of the DMZ. The proximity of the enemy's sanctuary and his artillery and mortar fire made operations there particularly bloody. Furthermore, we hoped to enhance our reaction by fire to enemy incursions by canalizing his movement and detecting him at greater distances. It was an effort to counter both enemy infiltration and direct invasion by increasing the enemy's cost and minimizing our own. During the year, the intensity of the enemy's mortar, artillery, and rocket fire slowed down the development of the strong points and caused us to set aside the construction of obstacles and to restudy their practicability and useful location.

Riverine Operations

The Mobile Riverine Force, which we created in 1967, was composed of an Army infantry brigade and a Navy task force integrated at each level of command. An amphibious force operating entirely afloat, it was the first time the U.S. had used the technique since the Civil War, when similar Union Army forces operated on the Mississippi, Cumberland, and other rivers. The force was a complete package, independent of fixed support bases and with all of its normal fire support embarked or in tow. It provided great flexibility and markedly increased our operational capability in previously inaccessible areas.

The troops lived on barrack ships docked at the Mobile Riverine base anchorage. On tactical operations, Navy armored troop carrier boats, preceded by minesweeping craft and escorted by armored boats (nicknamed "Monitors"), transported the soldiers along the vast network of waterways in the Delta. The units debarked upon reaching the area of operations or upon enemy contact. As the Army troops engaged the enemy, the Navy boats provided close-in fire support with 40-mm guns, .30- and .50-caliber machine guns, 81-mm mortars and individual hand-held weapons. Artillery support was furnished by riverine artillery—Army 105-mm howitzers mounted on barges accompanying the force.

Although "immersion foot" was a restrictive factor in this kind of warfare, we minimized its effects by alternating units of the brigade in action. Fresh troops were brought into the battle every two or three days to sustain the attack while others were removed to "dry out" and refit.

The first element of the Mobile Riverine Force arrived in Vietnam in January and after shake-down training in the Rung Sat swamps, moved to its base near My Tho. Named Dong Tam (meaning "United Hearts and Minds"—a name my counterpart General Vien and I had agreed as appropriate), the base was a 600-acre "island" we had created among inundated rice paddies by dredging earth from the bottom of the Mekong River. The

Mobile Riverine Force often operated with other units (GAME WARDEN units, SEAL teams, Vietnamese Marines, units of the ARVN 7th Division, and River Assault Groups) on reconnaissance, blocking, and pursuit operations. In five major operations during the year the Mobile Riverine Force killed over 1,000 enemy and by its presence gave encouragement to the populace and a new sense of confidence to ARVN units.

Enemy Rockets

The introduction of the portable Soviet-made 140-mm barrage rockets (8,000 meter range) by the enemy in February compounded our security problems, especially for our large airfields and logistical installations. Our concern heightened when a similar weapon with a range of 11,000 meters, the 122-mm rocket, appeared in July. To counter this increased enemy fire capability, we were forced to extend our search areas to provide local defense and warning for our installations.

To bolster local security, I directed construction of a number of high metal observation towers to ring our installations. These towers, some as high as 100 feet, were manned day and night by troops using flash-ranging devices, ground radar, or starlite scopes (night vision devices). The vantage points often enabled us to determine the location of the source of the enemy rocket or mortar fire and to direct counterfire before he could break off the attack and flee to safety. These towers were later available in quantity and served to improve greatly the security of Saigon and other important areas.

Operation MOOSE

My continuing concern about the effects of the massive U.S. presence upon the Vietnamese people and their economy prompted me to develop Operation MOOSE (Move Out of Saigon Expeditiously), designed to hasten the relocation of our units and installations from the urban areas, particularly Saigon where the military numbered 12,700 in early 1967. We implemented the

program as facilities outside the city were completed.

Early in the year the headquarters of the U.S. Army, Vietnam (USARV), and the headquarters of the logistics command moved into a new prefabricated headquarters complex at Long Binh, 16 miles east of Saigon. During the summer my own headquarters moved into a new prefabricated facility near Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

The opening of our port facilities at Newport on the outskirts of the capital city permitted additional units to move and did much to reduce the congestion in downtown Saigon caused by supply convoys moving to and from the old commercial port. By the end of the year, we had reduced the U.S. military population in downtown Saigon to 8,500. By mid-1968 it would be down to 6,900. Similar moves away from populated areas were made throughout the country.

Economy Measures

As an extension of continuing efforts to hold down the costs of our effort in Vietnam without denying items needed by the individual soldier or in any way impeding combat operations, I decided in late 1967 to initiate a study of cost effectiveness and management procedures to aid in reducing costs and assuring the most efficient use of available supplies and personnel. Given the code name MACONOMY, the project was instituted both at MACV and at each of the component commands. Under MACONOMY, management at all levels undertook a continuing review of plans, programs, and methods with the goal of consolidating, substituting or reducing requirements, and eliminating nonessentials or simply maximizing our proficiency at the least cost.

Commanders in Vietnam embraced the program enthusiastically. Within a month MACV had received approximately 200 reports reflecting estimated savings in excess of \$100 million. The Seventh Air Force, for example, conducted a survey to identify and distribute excess property at selected bases, resulting in savings of more than \$70 million. In addition to these savings, the pro-

gram provided a valuable tool for analyzing the efficiency of administrative and logistical operations.

Because of a constant effort to hold down the level of noncombat forces, the logisticians, who were responsible for receiving and supporting a very large force, were hard pressed from the beginning. On the one hand, the dispersed nature of our tactical operations, our support requirements to Free World military forces, and the consequences of the underdeveloped environment required that a major portion of our effort be spent in base development, construction, transportation improvement, and other equally important tasks. In the maintenance field alone, the size and extensive use of our helicopter forces created a staggering requirement for highly-skilled maintenance personnel and sophisticated facilities.

Our logisticians accepted the challenge of this situation and provided the highest quality of support ever received by combat forces in the field. Although logistic facilities were primitive and virtually nonexistent at the beginning of the troop buildup, tactical units were never restricted in their combat operations by a lack of support or supplies. Through the use of aerial evacuation techniques and mobile medical units, troops in the most remote areas were assured that comprehensive medical care was only minutes away. Combat units knew that mail from home would arrive on a scheduled basis and could be read while enjoying hot meals.

The level and responsiveness of logistic support in Vietnam is a tribute to the dedication, imagination, and initiative of our logisticians at all echelons. Even more remarkable is the fact that, as the quality and quantity of support increased, the proportionate strength of our support elements declined. By constantly analyzing requirements and capabilities, consolidating functions, and refining procedures, the support ratio was reduced from about 45 percent in 1966 to about 40 percent in 1967. This feat was accomplished during a period in which Free World military strength in Vietnam grew from 898,000 to over 1,300,000. Through the

increased substitution of Vietnamese for U.S. support personnel and increased emphasis on local contracting, our support strength will continue to decline.

Resettlement Programs

Military considerations led us to undertake three major resettlement programs during 1967. The first one, at Ben Suc, was carried out in order to remove an important Viet Cong supply center near Saigon. The second, at Edap Enang, was designed to protect Montagnard tribesmen from Viet Cong terrorism and exploitation. Finally, we relocated a large number of local inhabitants from the DMZ battle area.

The Viet Cong fortified village of Ben Suc, long an enemy safe haven and supply center, was evacuated during Operation CEDAR FALLS. The central organization for the VC Long Nguyen secret base was located in—and operated from—Ben Suc. The people of the village were organized into four rear service companies. One company moved rice and other supplies in sampans on the Saigon River. A second company unloaded these supplies. The two remaining companies stored them in and around Ben Suc or in the jungles near the village.

When we entered Ben Suc we discovered up to three levels of carefully concealed storage rooms underneath the houses. In these and other nearby sites we found enough rice to feed a Viet Cong division for nearly a year. Just outside the village we found a large cache of enemy medical supplies, including surgical instruments and 800,000 vials of penicillin.

Thus, while we recognized that dislocating the families in Ben Suc would inevitably produce some resentment, it was a matter of military necessity that this enemy supply operation be brought to an end. Every effort was made to evacuate and resettle the people as humanely as possible. All their possessions, including farm animals, rice, and household furnishings, were loaded on boats and delivered to the resettlement center. There—near Phu Cuong—they were provided food, shelter, medical care, and water. Unfortunately, the re-

settlement phase was not as well planned or executed as the actual evacuation. For the first several days the families suffered unnecessary hardships. However, the government quickly rallied and built a new village.

The second resettlement program was in the Central Highlands. As the North Vietnamese Army intensified its infiltration of men and materiel into South Vietnam, it became obvious that large numbers of Montagnard villagers in the border regions were being terrorized and impressed into the enemy's service as laborers and porters. It was a matter of military necessity that the enemy be denied the use of this labor and that the border tribesmen be protected from intimidation by NVA troops. It was with these objectives in mind that the resettlement program at Edap Enang was initiated by the Vietnamese government in Pleiku Province in April at the urging of U.S. military authorities.

This program envisioned the relocation of some 8,000 Montagnard tribesmen from 18 villages along the Cambodian border into a central planned community near Pleiku City. The government designated one Vietnamese Ranger battalion to secure the new village and assigned over 200 revolutionary development cadres to assist in resettlement of the population. The U.S. 4th Infantry Division provided support throughout all phases of the relocation, resettlement, and development of the village. This support included the provision of transport helicopters, cargo vehicles, land clearing equipment, and technical engineering advice.

By mid-July the community of Edap Enang consisted of some 7,000 inhabitants with nearly 600 acres of the projected 1,200 acres of farmland cleared. Market centers, a dispensary, a school, nearly 200 dwellings, and a series of lakes stocked with fish were either completed or under construction. Roads to the settlement were improved and a comprehensive defense system constructed around the community. A major civic action program was initiated by the 4th Division, in conjunction with the Vietnamese government, with the objective of improving the living standards of the

inhabitants. Concurrently, representatives of the Vietnamese government embarked upon similar rehabilitation programs designed to better living conditions and enhance the government's image among the tribesmen.

Despite apparent initial success, a general population exodus from the settlement began in December 1967. By March 1968 the population had declined to about 2,200 people. The Montagnards were instinctively fearful of resettlement, but faulty planning regarding the provision of rice-growing farmland and the continuous deluge of VC propaganda denouncing the project as a "concentration camp" caused additional adverse effects. In fact, the tribesmen were free to leave the area—as many of them did.

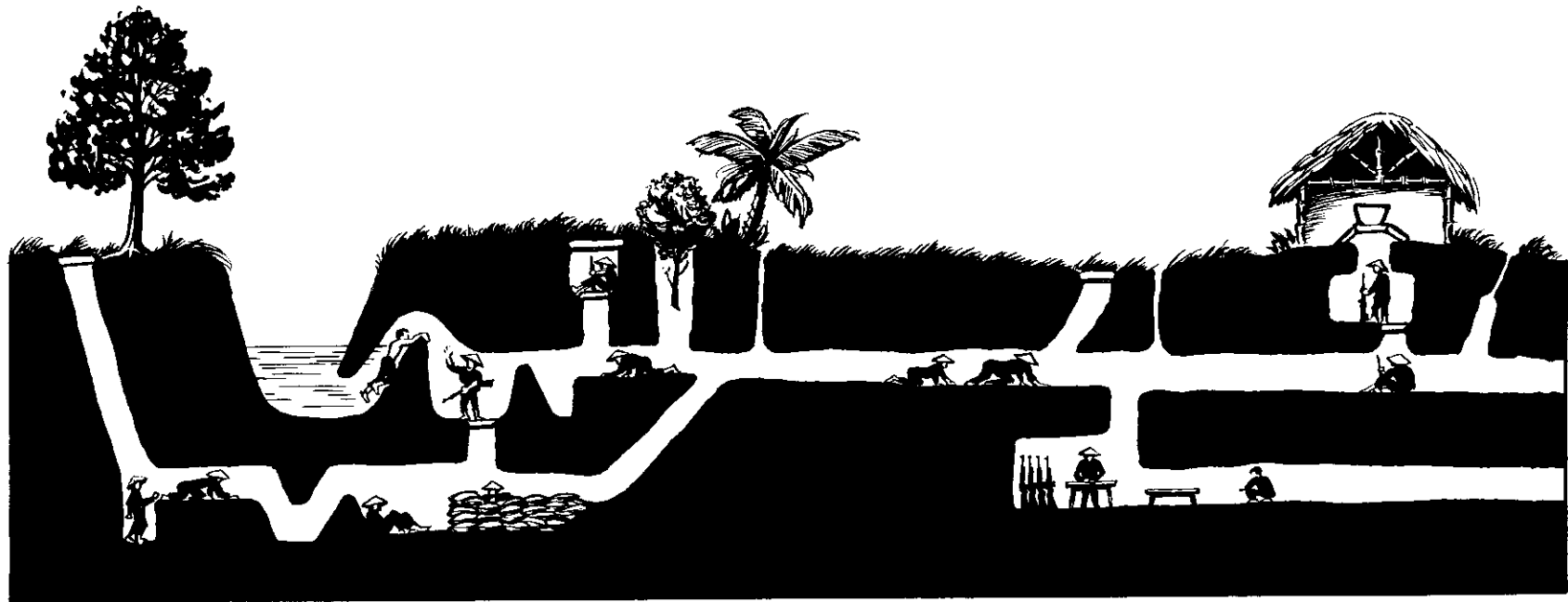
The Vietnamese government, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, initiated high priority efforts to remedy food shortages and to reconstitute the community. By April 1968 the population trend had swung sharply upward and there were about 4,600 tribesmen in the settlement. This progress continued; by mid-1968 Edap Enang contained nearly 6,200 people. In spite of its shortcomings, the project had effectively separated a major section of the border population from the enemy and denied use of these tribesmen in support of the enemy's tactical operations.

In May a combined United States-Vietnamese operation near the Demilitarized Zone removed 10,000 local inhabitants from that intensive battle area where their safety could not be assured and

resettled them in newly-expanded refugee villages at Cam Lo. The families were transported in ARVN and U.S. Marine trucks and in U.S. Navy landing craft to areas in which U.S. civilian agencies, Vietnamese provincial officials, and U.S. Marine engineers had built new homes, dug wells, and provided water storage tanks.

The resettled families were given inoculations by U.S. medics and instructed in basic public health measures. The status of their security and their opportunity to escape the effects of the intense fighting along the DMZ were thereby immensely improved. They were no longer subject to impressment by the growing NVA forces. In this instance there was, understandably, little or no effort on the part of the resettled Vietnamese to return to their homesites in the battle area.

At Edap Enang and Ben Suc, on the other hand, the process of dislocation and resettlement faced built-in obstacles. As in the earlier Strategic Hamlet Program under the Diem government, the separation of a rural people from their ancestral lands caused fear and resentment. Their usual reaction is to attempt to slip back as soon as the opportunity arises. Notwithstanding the efforts of the government to care for these unfortunate victims of a prolonged war, this pattern was repeated at Ben Suc and Edap Enang. Hopefully, these people will be able to return to their original lands when the war is over and the government can help them to rebuild.



TYPICAL VC TUNNEL SYSTEM



Typical Enemy Camouflaged Tunnel Entrance



Concealed Tunnel Entrance by River Bank

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS—1967

January

On 1 January two brigades of the 4th Infantry Division, with contingents of the 25th Infantry Division attached, launched Operation SAM HOUSTON in Pleiku and Kontum Provinces, aimed at destroying the regiments of the North Vietnamese 1st Division operating in the two provinces from bases inside Cambodia. In 95 days the enemy lost 733 killed.

On 3 January Republic of Korea troops began Operation MAENG HO 8, a 60-day search and destroy operation in Phu Yen and Binh Dinh Provinces. The Koreans killed 211 Viet Cong and captured 403.

On 8 January the 1st Infantry Division, with the 173d Airborne Brigade and 11th Cavalry Regiment attached, and elements of the 25th Infantry Division, as well as ARVN units, launched Operation CEDAR FALLS just north of Saigon into the area of the "Iron Triangle," the Long Nguyen base area, and the Saigon River corridor northwest of Saigon. In a 19-day operation, 20 infantry and armored units under control of the II Field Force sealed off and thoroughly searched the region. Killing 720 enemy and capturing 213, the troops discovered a vast "underground city" beneath the jungle floor with chambers extending as far down as four levels and tunnel complexes several miles long. The headquarters of the enemy's Military Region IV was largely destroyed along with enough rice to feed 13,000 VC for a year. Over 500 Viet Cong took advantage of the disruption and the proximity of Allied forces to defect to the government side. Our troops also captured 490,000 pages of enemy documents, an invaluable intelligence find. It was in this operation that U.S. forces first made extensive use of the "Rome Plow" to clear the jungle and uncover the enemy's tunnel system.

Elements of the 9th Infantry Division established the first U.S. base in the Mekong Delta in Dinh Tuong Province in mid-January. Named

Dong Tam (United Hearts and Minds), the base was a 600-acre "island" we created among inundated rice paddies by dredging earth from the bottom of the Mekong River. Occupying the base at Dong Tam was the first step toward creating the Mobile Riverine Force to operate on the waterways of the Delta.

Through the entire year the U.S. 199th Light Infantry Brigade provided security for Saigon with Operation FAIRFAX, an operation begun in November 1966. It operated in close conjunction with the ARVN 5th Ranger Group with the aim of training the South Vietnamese troops eventually to take responsibility for the security mission.

On the last day of the month, the U.S. 3d Marine Division terminated Operation PRAIRIE along the Demilitarized Zone. In 182 days the Marines had killed 1,397 enemy.

February

On 8 February allied forces began observing a four-day cease-fire over the period of *Tet*, the lunar New Year. The enemy marred the truce with 183 minor and 89 serious violations.

The 1st Cavalry Division, on 11 February, began Operation PERSHING in Binh Dinh Province, where the same division had conducted Operation THAYER the previous year. Designed to eliminate the enemy from that rice-rich coastal province, PERSHING was a long-range offensive that extended into 1968. In THAYER and PERSHING together, the air cavalymen killed 7,500 of the enemy and helped establish effective government control over most of the province.

The largest operation of the year, JUNCTION CITY, began on 22 February, employing the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, the 173d Airborne Brigade, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, elements of the 4th and 9th Infantry Divisions, and South Vietnamese units against enemy bases in War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province. Three Vietnamese divisions and

major elements of the Vietnamese airborne division and Marines remained near the populated areas to keep pressure on the guerrillas and local forces and to support revolutionary development.

On the 22d a battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade made the first American parachute assault of the war, jumping into northern War Zone C to intercept enemy troops trying to escape into Cambodia. The operation continued until mid-May. Although the enemy at first avoided contact, he later began to engage our forces and lost 2,700 dead in comparison to 289 American and South Vietnamese killed. The enemy also lost over 600 weapons, vast amounts of ammunition, medical supplies, field equipment, and more than 800 tons of rice. During the operation U.S. forces built three airfields capable of handling the C-130 and established two new Special Forces camps to guard the airfields and provide continuing surveillance in the region. An inviolate Viet Cong stronghold for many years, War Zone C was now vulnerable to allied forces anytime we chose to enter.

On 28 February the Mekong Delta Mobile Riverine Force was activated under the Commander, Naval Forces, Vietnam.

March

During March, and extending into April, the Republic of Korea Capital and 9th Divisions conducted Operation OH JAC KYO I, which enabled the two divisions to link their areas of responsibility in the central coastal plains and secure a large portion of Highway 1.

On 15 March it was announced that Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker would succeed Ambassador Lodge.

The Constituent Assembly, on 18 March, voted unanimous approval of the new constitution for the Republic of Vietnam.

Elements of the U.S. 3d Marine Division launched Operation PRAIRIE FIRE III along the Demilitarized Zone and in the vicinity of Khe Sanh. Heavy fighting continued in the area through the entire year.

On 20 and 21 March officials of the South Vietnamese government met with President Johnson and other U.S. officials on Guam.

April

On 6 April two brigades of the 4th Infantry Division, with elements of the 25th Infantry Division attached, launched Operation FRANCIS MARION along the Cambodian border in Pleiku Province against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese 1st Division. In 190 days the Americans killed 1,200 of the enemy.

The White House, on 6 April, announced assignment of General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., as Deputy Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

On 12 April Task Force OREGON was established in the southern part of the I Corps as a provisional division-size organization, enabling U.S. Marine units to reinforce units in the northernmost provinces where enemy pressure continued to mount. The task force initially consisted of the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, and the 196th Infantry Brigade.

Eight Australian Canberra (B-57) bombers of Squadron No. 2, Royal Australian Air Force, arrived on 19 April at Phan Rang Airbase.

On 20 April the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment arrived to join the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province.

The Commanding General, U.S. 1st Marine Division, turned over responsibility for the defense of the Chu Lai Airbase and logistics complex to the Commanding General of Task Force OREGON on 26 April.

In 984 villages throughout South Vietnam, 77 percent of the registered voters turned out on 29 April for local elections.

May

On 1 May U.S. military strength in South Vietnam reached 436,000 men.

Having started the preceding month, the North Vietnamese stepped up infiltration from Laos into the northwestern corner of South Vietnam and

occupied hills dominating the airfield and Special Forces camp at Khe Sanh. U.S. Marines reacted by shifting two battalions to Khe Sanh and on 3 May, in some of the heaviest fighting of the war, seized Hill 881N, northwest of Khe Sanh, which afforded a dominating position overlooking the enemy's infiltration routes.

On 4 May General Abrams and Ambassador Komer arrived in Saigon to take up their duties as Deputy COMUSMACV and Deputy to COMUSMACV for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, respectively. On the 28th the Embassy's Office of Civil Operations and the MACV Revolutionary Development Support Directorate were combined into the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) under MACV, with responsibility for both civil and military aspects of U.S. support of pacification falling to my command.

The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, was assigned to operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force. In the brigade's first operation in the zone of the I Corps (Operation MALHEUR in Quang Ngai Province), the airborne troops killed 392 of the enemy.

From 14 May through 11 June, 4,612 hamlets throughout Vietnam conducted local elections.

Because of enemy shelling and ground attacks emanating from the Demilitarized Zone, U.S. Marine and ARVN units on 18 May entered and operated in the southern half of the zone for the first time. During a series of operations over an 11-day period, U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops supported by artillery, naval gunfire, tactical air, and massive B-52 strikes killed over 780 enemy and temporarily neutralized the enemy's offensive power in the southern half of the zone.

On 19 May President Thieu declared his candidacy for President of the Republic in upcoming national elections.

June

On the first day of June the 2d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, and the Mobile Riverine Force

launched the first major American operation in the Mekong Delta, Operation CORONADO in Dinh Tuong Province. In 54 days of offensive strikes centering on the vast waterways of the region, almost 500 Viet Cong were killed and 75 captured.

U.S. strength in Vietnam on 17 June approached 450,000. The total strength of the Vietnamese Armed Forces exceeded 600,000, and other Free World forces totalled 54,000. Intelligence estimates placed enemy strength at close to 260,000, including over 50,000 North Vietnamese regulars.

July

The Newport Marine Terminal facility near Saigon, designed to serve U.S. forces and relieve congestion in the Saigon port, officially opened on 11 July. Before the year ended almost all programmed military construction projects would be completed.

The enemy, on 15 July, fired 50 rounds of 122-mm rockets at the airbase at Da Nang, the first use of these long-range weapons. Ten aircraft were destroyed and 41 damaged.

Also on the 15th MARKET TIME coastal surveillance forces intercepted a North Vietnamese trawler heavily laden with arms and ammunition destined for Viet Cong operating in the vicinity of Chu Lai.

On 27 July Premier Ky announced that the Republic of Vietnam would increase its armed forces to 685,000 men.

August

President Johnson announced that American forces in South Vietnam would be increased to 525,000 men.

On 4 August MACV Headquarters moved from downtown Saigon to new headquarters at Ton Son Nhut Airbase on the outskirts of the city, part of a long-range program to relieve congestion in the capital.

In the Mekong Delta, two separate but mutually supporting naval operations helped drive Viet Cong tax collectors from the waterways. The U.S. Navy's GAME WARDEN patrols, cruising 24

hours a day, helped eliminate the tax collectors and keep commercial traffic moving, while River Assault Groups and the River Transport Escort Group of the Vietnamese Navy provided security for major rice and commodity convoys en route from the Delta to Saigon.

September

On 3 September 4.8 million voters, representing 81 percent of those registered, elected General Thieu as President of the Republic of Vietnam with 35 percent of the total vote. Air Vice Marshal Ky was elected Vice President. Members of the Upper House of the National Assembly were elected at the same time.

On 7 September the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced a decision to construct an anti-infiltration barrier just south of the Demilitarized Zone, consisting of strongpoints, obstacles, and electronic devices.

Task Force OREGON was redesignated on 22 September as the 23d (Americal) Division.

On 26 September HMAS *Perth* replaced HMAS *Hobart* to become the second Royal Australian Navy ship to operate with the U.S. Seventh Fleet, providing naval gunfire support to allied forces ashore.

On 29 September last contingents of the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment, "the Queen's Cobras," arrived in Vietnam. The regiment began to conduct operations in Bien Hoa Province, just northeast of Saigon.

October

By 4 October a North Vietnamese siege of the U.S. Marine Corps base at Con Thien had been broken with severe losses to the enemy by a massive use of artillery, tactical aircraft, and B-52's.

On 8 October the new Huey COBRA (AH-1G) armed helicopter, especially designed for support of ground forces in South Vietnam, entered combat for the first time.

During the month the South Vietnamese conducted elections for the Lower House of the National Assembly.

On 27 October the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment attacked the command post of a battalion of the South Vietnamese 9th Regiment near the village of Song Be in Phuoc Long Province. Three times the North Vietnamese rushed the position but each time were repulsed. When the enemy began to fall back, the ARVN defenders left the safety of their position to pursue. The enemy lost 134 men killed to an ARVN loss of 13 in an engagement in which the defenders were outnumbered by at least 4 to 1.

On 29 October the Viet Cong 273d Regiment, 9th Division, attacked the town of Loc Ninh, near the Cambodian border in Binh Long Province. The area was defended by three CIDG companies, a Regional Force company, and a Popular Force platoon. As the fight developed over the next several days, ARVN units and the 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division reinforced the position. By the time the enemy broke off the battle on 8 November, he had sustained severe casualties: over 850 killed at a cost of 50 dead among the defenders.

On 31 October President Thieu and Vice President Ky were inaugurated and the directorate dissolved. With installation of the Lower House, the constituent assembly passed out of existence. President Thieu appointed Nguyen Van Loc as Prime Minister.

November

During the month U.S. military strength in Vietnam reached 470,000.

Also during the course of the month the U.S. 3d Marine Division launched a series of operations in Quang Tri Province against growing enemy strength threatening Khe Sanh and Marine strongpoints at the "Rock Pile," Camp Carroll, Con Thien, and Gio Linh.

In mid-November reconnaissance revealed the presence near Dak To in Kontum Province of four North Vietnamese regiments. In addition to CIDG companies manning a Special Forces camp, a South Vietnamese battalion and a battalion of the 4th Infantry Division were in the vicinity. By reinforcing with one brigade each from the 4th Infantry

and 1st Cavalry Divisions, the 173d Airborne Brigade, and six South Vietnamese battalions, we were able to attack and defeat the enemy before he could concentrate his forces. Massive air and B-52 strikes were made. More than 1,600 North Vietnamese were killed.

December

The enemy struck the Montagnard village of Dak Son in Phuoc Long Province on 5 December in a wanton attack constituting one of the most atrocious acts of terror in the entire war. Rampaging through the village with flamethrowers and hand grenades, the enemy troops systematically killed more than 200 of the civilian inhabitants, 70 percent of whom were women and children, and kidnapped some 400 tribesmen for use as forced laborers. The destruction left 1,382 people homeless.

On 8 December in the biggest single engagement yet to occur in the Mekong Delta, contingents of the South Vietnamese 21st Infantry Division trapped part of a Viet Cong main force battalion and a local force battalion along the Konh O Mon Canal, 100 miles southwest of Saigon. Helicopters lifted selected units into blocking positions while a battalion maneuvered up the canal from the southwest. Viet Cong dead numbered 365.

Also on 8 December leading elements of the remainder of the 101st Airborne Division arrived in Vietnam and located in the zone of the III Corps northeast of Saigon. Command elements of the division arrived on 13 December. Movement of the division involved the longest aerial combat deployment in the history of warfare. The 101st was not originally scheduled to arrive until early in 1968, but because of the ominous intelligence on enemy movements, I urgently requested its arrival before the end of the year.

The 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the Vietnamese 5th Ranger Group ended Operation FAIR-FAX after having killed more than a thousand Viet Cong. Responsibility for the security of Saigon passed to the South Vietnamese force.

The 11th Light Infantry Brigade arrived in Vietnam on 24 December. Taking position in the southern part of the I Corps, the brigade became a part of the 23d (Americal) Division.

At the end of the year U.S. military strength in Vietnam totalled 486,000 (320,000 Army; 31,000 Navy; 78,000 Marine Corps; 56,000 Air Force; 1,200 Coast Guard). Free World strength was as follows: Australian, 6,812; Korean, 47,800; New Zealand, 516; The Philippines, 2,020; and Thailand, 2,205.