

WAR HIST

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PACIFICATION IN VIET-NAM

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"The countryside, and the countryside alone, can provide the broad areas in which the revolutionaries can maneuver freely."

Communist Chinese Defense Minister Lin Piao

Hamlets where incidents such as these take place would be in the "relatively secure" category. How they got that way reflects the blending of military and civil operations to achieve the first essential of pacification—security.

More than half of the population of South Viet-Nam lives in the countryside. It is here that Viet Cong insurgency has taken root. It is here that shadow governments seek to rule over thousands of hamlets, inflicting terror on approximately 3 million peasant inhabitants.

To combat this threat in the countryside and at the same time defeat the enemy in the field, the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam (GVN) has combined military operations and civil nation-building programs into a unified and coordinated process called "pacification." The aim—

- to liberate the people from Communist control;
- to assist them in choosing their own government;
- to help them carry out various projects that will give them a better and more prosperous life.

Throughout the countryside of South Viet-Nam the daily results of pacification are reflected in a wide variety of activities. These may include such diverse incidents as:

- the arrest by the police of a 24-year-old knife grinder accused of being a tax collector for the Viet Cong;
- the opening of a health station featuring prenatal care;
- the issuance of a rifle to a young lad, no more than 16, who has volunteered to join the local militia;
- the installation by a U.S. civilian engineer of a generator which will bring electricity to a hamlet for the first time;
- a 20-year-old farmer who had defected from the Viet Cong ranks being welcomed home by his family;
- the nailing to a tree of a poster announcing forthcoming elections.

HAMLET PROTECTION

Without continuous local security to keep the Viet Cong (VC) away from the farmer, the rest of pacification cannot get underway. The farmer's first desire is for protection so that he can be left alone to tend to his crops in peace. Protection starts when the Army of Viet-Nam (ARVN) and its allies have eliminated from the area any existing VC or North Viet-Nam (NVA) enemy main force units. Thereafter, the main responsibility for insuring hamlet security rests with the Popular Forces (PF), the People's Self Defense Forces (PSDF), the Regional Forces (RF), and the National Police (NP).

Creating a secure environment is essentially a matter of people participating in their own defense. The hamlets of Viet-Nam illustrate the point dramatically. Here members of



Defense briefing and weapons training is given to local militia by members of Revolutionary Development team.

the Popular Forces, all of them volunteers, all with only a meager education, have been taught how to handle light weapons and perform modest military activity. They guard check points, warehouses, government installations, and key provincial buildings. They rarely go far from their own hamlet. They serve mostly at night when enemy activities are more intense, and are ready to engage guerrilla units if necessary.

The People's Self Defense Forces are a mixture of young and old, including women. They number 1.2 million, with about 200,000 armed and only moderately trained. The PSDF are utilized to gather intelligence and to report information to their superiors. More often they serve as a warning alert system. But the importance of the PSDF is perhaps less military than political. In a country where involvement of the people in their own behalf is only now beginning to assert itself, the role of the PSDF may be regarded as an expression of political awareness and responsibility. The fact that the Government of Viet-Nam plans this year to enlarge the PSDF to 2 million may be taken as evidence of growing rural support of the central government.

As distinct from the PF and PSDF, the

Regional Force is a better educated, more mobile body whose responsibility for security and protection extends beyond hamlet limits. Also better trained and armed, and more highly organized, the RF continually seeks out and engages the Viet Cong in battle until relieved by superior ARVN or allied military forces. The RF is also called upon to support local actions of the popular forces and people's defense units, to serve as a shield for their operations.

The role of these hamlet defense units may be likened to a combined home guard/national guard militia, having the responsibility of dealing with external threats from VC local forces and guerrilla units.

Still, the threat from within is often more dangerous than the threat from without. To the National Police falls the responsibility not only of maintaining public order but of enforcing internal security—dealing with the threat from within. That means rooting out the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI)—the Communists' shadow government. Together with all civil and military intelligence services, the NP is joined in a campaign to identify and eliminate the hard-core cadres who make up the VCI in the hamlets. The operation is known as Phoenix.

OPERATION PHOENIX

VCI members are not soldiers. They are the leadership elements who run the Communist political apparatus, control the guerrilla bands, collect taxes, order assassinations, set up front organizations, draft young men and women as soldiers or laborers, disseminate propaganda, and direct terror campaigns.

Nobody knows yet exactly how many VCI are running this shadow government behind the bamboo hedges. But in December 1967, when Operation Phoenix was launched, it was estimated by intelligence sources that about 80,000 were in VCI jobs. In its first year, despite the Communist offensives in February and May 1968, Phoenix resulted in nearly 16,000 of these cadres being rooted out of their underground positions.

Operation Phoenix is not an organization but a program—a systematized method of intelligence-sharing among the already existing services, mainly the National Police elements assigned to the countryside and the numerous Vietnamese military intelligence services. It is a Vietnamese government program to cripple and eventually eliminate the VC political control structure by getting various intelligence and information services to work together. The VCI is tracked down by the pooling of information, shared on a regular basis, by all the intelligence services, civil and military.

The rural policeman on his remote hamlet beat, or the ARVN medic bandaging a villager's



Revolutionary Development team workers assigned to this secure hamlet help dig drainage ditches along the roads after installing barbed wire around the houses.

blisters, may feed valuable information into the Phoenix intelligence network. As much of this data originally must come from the people, Phoenix is coordinated with campaigns to encourage the people to identify the VCI who are disrupting their lives.

While the pooling of intelligence is commonplace in arenas of war, it cannot be effective without an intelligence coordinating and operating system. Phoenix now has such a system, built around 270 centers scattered throughout the countryside.

The increase in the last few months in the numbers of VCI eliminated from their jobs has kept pace with the progressive establishment and staffing of these centers, now covering more than 90 percent of the nation's districts.

Operatives at the centers collect intelligence data, check it against files and dossiers, and launch operations where warranted. The action can be as small as sending a lone policeman on his bicycle to arrest a man identified as a hamlet tax collector for the Communists. Or the operation can be so large as to entail two or three battalions of troops, supported by armor, artillery, and air strikes, for a week-long sweep and screening mission covering an entire district.

While Viet-Nam officials concede that up to now Phoenix has had no "great strategic effect," they express confidence that the operation is beginning to take more and more of a toll of key VC manpower and are encouraged by the current rise in the number of VCI being eliminated from their positions. The target for 1969 calls for the elimination of 1,800 VCI per month.

REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

To liberate the countryside from Communist control, to destroy the VCI, and to maintain constant vigil against VC infiltration—these efforts by themselves are not enough. Hand in hand must go vigorous and sustained action to involve the people in creating their own local government and, beyond that, generating economic and social development programs. The name given to this activity is Revolutionary Development (RD).

Although essentially and predominantly a Vietnamese program, the RD effort is supported by United States and other free world assistance missions. Under the overall coordination of the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV), American aid and technical advice is funneled through U.S. Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)—an inter-agency management group which combines the efforts of the Agency for International Development (AID), the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), several U.S. Embassy offices, and the non-combat



Building projects are underway throughout South Viet-Nam, where Revolutionary Development teams encourage the villagers' participation to give them a direct interest in preserving what they have built.

provincial advisory teams of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Carrying out the goals of the Revolutionary Development program are the RD Cadre—some 55,000 villagers, trained and organized in 30-man teams, and operating under the command of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development (MORD) in Saigon.

Soon after their recruitment, the RD Cadre teams are put through a 13-week course at a training center which specializes in political and psychological warfare techniques, local government administration, civic affairs, organization for self-defense, and development of self-help programs.

Most of the trainees are young men, although there is a scattering of female Cadre members. Clad in the simple black pajama that has become their familiar "uniform," the Cadre workers are assigned to a single village—usually their own—for an indefinite period.

Within each Cadre team there are Militia, Civic Affairs, and Development sections. RD workers are "cross-trained" to carry out duties in all these fields even though they are usually assigned to a specific section. At work in the village or hamlet, the Militia section develops a self-defense group of local people and takes police action against the VCI. The Civic Affairs section conducts a census, or-



Revolutionary Development team members not only help to build schools, they also assist in the educational process.

ganizes citizen groups, and improves local government. The remaining section assists village officials in the implementation of development programs.

Since the establishment in 1966 of the RD concept, its subsequent programs have emphasized different directions. For example, the 1967 program stressed the political role of the RD effort—to build “bridges of understanding” between the population and the government. At that time it was felt the people needed a better sense of the GVN’s concern for them. In 1968, the emphasis was on territorial and internal security—in recognition of the basic fact that no program in the rural areas of Viet-Nam could succeed without adequately coping with the ever present VC and NVA military threat. The 1969 program in effect combines both concepts—expansion of the GVN presence while pointing up the need for security and an understanding between the people and their government.

The point needs to be underscored that RD, like the war itself, is basically a Vietnamese effort. Nothing illustrates the principle more clearly than what the RD program is trying to accomplish in the area of self-help projects. The real objective is not merely to build schools, health stations, and market places in the hamlets and villages but to mobilize the rural population in a community effort under the security provided by the GVN and with the help of GVN-provided resources.

Projects implemented on a self-help basis by the villagers’ own labor gives them a direct interest in the preservation of what they have built and the political system which permitted them to do so.

AID provides advisory and material assistance to the self-help projects in such fields as education, health, public works, and agriculture. Material assistance is mainly in the form of basic construction items—roofing and iron reinforcement bars.

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

The village for centuries has been the basic social and political unit of Vietnamese society. It is that today. But never before has village government assumed such expanding authority and taken such long steps toward full representative democracy.

New and young leadership has emerged from hamlet and village elections held over the last two years. Self-governing communities are today exercising unprecedented responsibilities—administering local security forces, collecting their own taxes, preparing and adopting their own budgets, overseeing the activities of the 30-man RD teams, and generally taking measures to meet their own local needs.

Since the adoption of the Constitution in April 1967, elections have been held in 1,693 villages and in 7,867 hamlets. Before 1969 ends, elections are expected to be held in 130 more villages and another 889 hamlets.

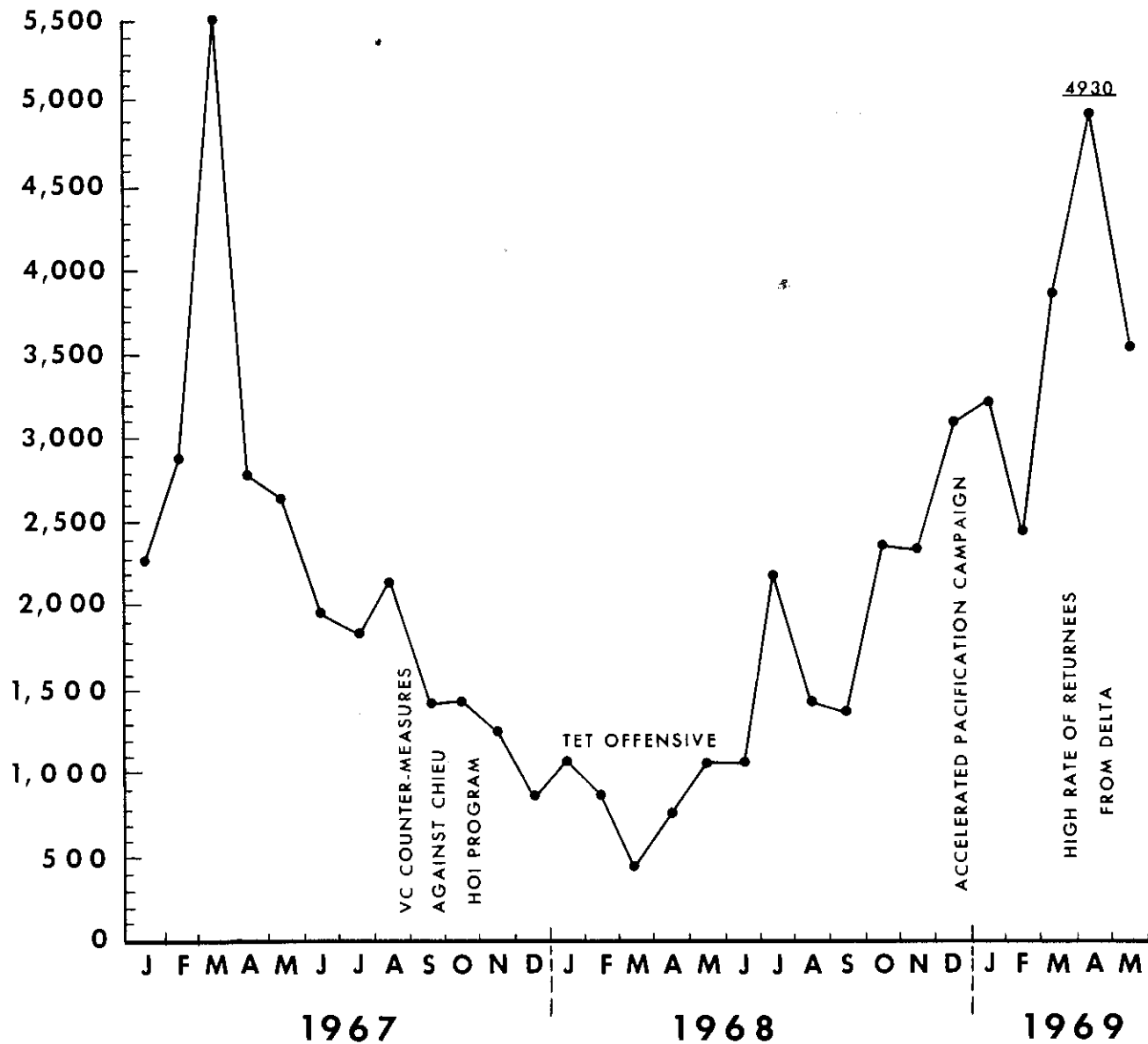
Many of the newly elected village officials never have had any experience with administration. A large number, therefore, undergo training in budget and taxation systems and other skills needed to run a government. By the end of 1969, approximately 42,000 local officials will have received such training at national and provincial centers.

It was at a graduation ceremony of recently elected officials who had completed government training that President Nguyen Van Thieu, speaking extemporaneously, underscored his nation’s resolve to strengthen and support free village elections. “In order to defeat the Communists,” he said, “democracy must be implemented at every level in South Vietnamese life. Democracy is not just having a constitution, an elected assembly, and elected national leaders. For people do not live in the Presidential Palace or in the National Assembly, but in straw huts in the villages and ham-



Cadre advisor of the Agency for International Development checks plans for new housing with Revolutionary Development team and local people.

CHIEU HOI RETURNEES PER MONTH



lets. Village and hamlet officials have the responsibility to bring democracy to those villages and hamlets. And in order to do so they must be given responsibility, authority, and the means to exercise that authority."

Years of war, corruption, and disregard of the peasantry's social needs have created distrust of the central government in the minds of many villagers. The distrust has become traditional. Winning back the rural population has never been anything but a slow and often agonizing process. But events of the past two years have shown that the Revolutionary Development program is headed in the right direction, and that allowing the people dignity and freedom to run their local affairs is forging stronger links to the central government. And that, after all, is a primary objective of pacification.

CHIEU HOI

Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) is an amnesty program aimed at causing defections among the VC^{1/}. Under this program, the Returnees, called Hoi Chanhs, are given the opportunity to join the national cause and to become full-fledged citizens. Chieu Hoi is designed to give the insurgents an alternative to continued fighting, to deplete the VC manpower base, to weaken the VC organization, and to cause dissension and distrust among the Viet Cong. It also provides the GVN and free world forces with manpower and intelligence.

The Chieu Hoi program was officially established by the GVN in April 1963. Since then the program has rallied more than 100,000 Hoi Chanhs. Chieu Hoi added the equivalent of an additional 13 divisions to the total enemy losses in the war.

The actual operation of the program begins with the arrival of a Returnee at one of 51 Chieu Hoi centers located throughout Viet-Nam's 44 provinces. He is immediately interrogated to obtain whatever useful intelligence information he may have. Most Hoi Chanhs show no reluctance to tell everything they know, and many offer to return immediately to their area of operation with a friendly force to locate hidden enemy arms or food supplies.

The Hoi Chanh may stay in the center from 45 to 60 days. During that period procedures are started which culminate in the issuance of a GVN identification card at his graduation. On arrival he is given pocket money plus two suits of clothes, a daily allowance for food, and specified sums for weapons he delivers. He is also given a final payment as a separation allowance.

^{1/} See Viet-Nam Information Note No. 8, National Reconciliation in South Viet-Nam.

Many of the Returnees elect to join the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. Many also join the Armed Propaganda Teams which go into VC-held territory to recruit more defectors. Others join the Kit Carson Scouts, who are former VC now serving as lead scouts and guides with U.S. combat troops.

However, most Returnees elect to return to their prior civilian occupation. On leaving the center a Returnee is given whatever assistance possible to find a new job and become reintegrated into the society. For those who cannot return to their own village, the GVN has constructed 20 resettlement villages in secure areas.

HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM

Is pacification making progress?

A plan for evaluating what is really happening in the countryside, hamlet by hamlet, was introduced in 1967 by the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV). The plan is known as the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). Eighteen key factors are subjected to computer analysis for each hamlet. They include VC military activity, GVN security capabilities, VCI, administrative and political activities, economic development, and progress in health, education, and welfare programs.

The data are assembled at regular intervals by MACV District Advisors who live in close contact with the villages and hamlets in their region. The computerized measurement of hamlet control is reported under three basic categories—Relatively Secure, Contested, VC Controlled.



Briefing sessions on hamlet development progress are conducted regularly by Revolutionary Development teams for U.S. Government representatives.

The most recent HES report on the percentage of hamlet and population security gives the following picture:

<u>Category</u>	<u>% of Hamlets</u>	<u>% of Population</u>
Relatively Secure	59.7	83.3
Contested	21.7	7.6
VC Controlled	18.6	9.1

HES is admittedly an imperfect instrument. It cannot determine absolutes. It cannot evaluate such human elements as popular attitudes, social awareness, and the "hearts and minds" of the peasants.

Still, HES provides useful insights into trends of pacification. The direction, with the major exception of the Tet offensive, has been consistently forward as shown in the following table:

	<u>No. of Secure Hamlets</u>	<u>% of Population Secure</u>
December 1967	5,340	66.9
March 1968	4,559	61.0
December 1968	6,425	76.3
March 1969	7,212	82.1
April 1969	7,393	83.3

Thus, over a period of months, the HES has indicated improvement in security—the first essential in the pacification of the Viet-Nam countryside and the prime requisite in the subsequent development of political, social, and economic institutions. The costs in both human and material terms are high. And progress, not to mention ultimate victory, will continue to depend on the energy, the endurance, and the sacrifices which the Vietnamese people are willing to suffer as the price for their freedom.

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PRESENTLY AVAILABLE ...

1. Basic Data on South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8195) summarizes general information on the land, people, history, government, and economy of the country.
2. The Search for Peace in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8196) reviews the efforts of individuals, governments, and international bodies to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict in Viet-Nam. The policy of the Government of North Viet-Nam with regard to a peaceful settlement is included.
3. Communist-Directed Forces in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8197) seeks to answer such questions as: What is the Viet Cong? Who are its leaders? How is it related to party and government organs of North Viet-Nam? What are the Communists' objectives? Their strengths? Their weaknesses?
4. Free World Assistance for South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8213) describes the scope of the international aid program for the Republic of Viet-Nam. It gives facts and figures about the contributions of 36 participating nations (U.S. aid is not included—a separate Note is to be devoted to that subject).
5. Political Development in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8231) discusses South Viet-Nam's steady progress toward an elected government and representative institutions at all levels of government.
6. Why We Fight in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8245) describes the origin of the conflict and the principal reasons for U. S. involvement.
7. Viet-Cong Terror Tactics in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8259) describes the deliberate campaign of terror by which the Viet-Cong hope to break the resistance of South Viet-Nam.
8. National Reconciliation in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8260) describes the Chieu-Hoi, or Open Arms, program of the Government of South Viet-Nam.
9. Prisoners of War (Dept. of State pub. 8275) explains the special status of prisoners of war under the Geneva convention, allied treatment of prisoners and efforts to discuss with North Viet-Nam and the Communist National Liberation Front repatriation, exchange, and other matters pertinent to prisoners of war.
10. Legal Basis for U.S. Military Aid to South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8285) discusses the well-established points of law and fact which are the legal basis for the U.S. military commitment in South Viet-Nam.
11. Opinions of Asian and Pacific Leaders (Dept. of State pub. 8363). The leaders of the countries most immediately concerned about the future of Viet-Nam express their views on: the U.S. commitment, the nature of the war, North Vietnamese and Chinese involvement, peace efforts, and regional goals beyond the war.
12. Wars of National Liberation (Dept. of State pub. 8384) discusses the origins and characteristics of national liberation wars, Soviet and Chinese involvement in Viet-Nam, and U.S. counterstrategy.
13. The U.S. Assistance Program in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8419), the largest and most challenging program administered by A.I.D., is described in detail, including A.I.D.'s objectives, accomplishments, and future planning.

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