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VIETNAM'S ESPIONAGE SERVICE DESCRIBED

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[Text] Vietnam's espionage service (GID) is a special agency of the Council of Ministers. It can direct ministries to carry out its orders. It is the principal intelligence-producing body in Vietnam. FOREIGN REPORT has obtained details of its operations.

An American intelligence source says: "You can see GID operations using the foreign trade ministry side by side with the communications ministry, the foreign ministry or indeed any of the 26 ministries with the exception of defence." The GID analyses the information it obtains and delivers its conclusions to the ruling Politburo.

The GID is believed to be run by **Tran Manh**, who was last mentioned in public in 1981. His deputy is **Le Thanh Cong**, last mentioned in 1977.

Abroad, the GID uses the foreign ministry's European and North American departments as its principal operating arm. Its base in the United States is Vietnam's permanent observer mission to the United Nations, headed by **Hoang Bich Son**. Son replaced **Dinh Ba Thi**, who was expelled from the United States in 1978 for complicity in espionage.

Son has a staff of 15, most of whom are engaged full-time on espionage, propaganda or, surprisingly, fund-raising, the source says. In November 1984, a female third secretary was discovered trying to force an elderly widow to contribute heavily to a Vietnamese front organisation in California.

The GID also operates abroad through the "Association of Vietnamese". This group has branches in the United States, Canada and several West European capitals. The link to Hanoi is through the Overseas Vietnamese Department of the Communist party's Central Committee, which works closely with the GID.

The American link used, in the early 1970s, to be through the Union of Vietnam Patriots. This group was subsequently replaced by the Association of Vietnamese Patriots and, later, by the Association of Vietnamese. Associations of Vietnamese attract members because they can make contacts between exiles and their families in Vietnam. The exiles can be asked to reciprocate in ways which help the government.