

Memo on Pacification.

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Pacification remains a valid concept. Indeed, the GVN believes that to win a profound and stable peace in Vietnam, the principles of pacification must be pursued with ardor.

These strategic principles have been spelled out often. They constitute, on the broadest level, a development of the nation in five major areas: 1) internal defense and security; 2) economic progress to better the standard of living; 3) the improvement of social services such as education and health facilities; 4) the establishment of political institutions and a positive ideology; 5) the amelioration of the administrative system.

Essentially these principles remain unchanged since pacification was first conceived and launched in 1958-59. Of course, reasons for the failure of the pacification program, from its inception with the Agrovilles to Operation Sunrise to the Strategic Hamlets to the Oilspot Campaign and the New Life Hamlets, are complex. Certainly stepped up Viet Cong aggression was a factor. However, it would be an ironic rationalization to place the burden of blame on the enemy. More to the point is the inescapable fact that pacification has often been a failure primarily because the fundamental five strategic principles were followed in practice.

The cause of this seems to have been twofold:

- 1) Though established as a strategic framework for pacification, the principles and objectives -- and even specific plans -- were continually forgotten or abuses in actual tactical operations: military security became the dominating concern; economic projects the secondary concern; and all other aspects of the program were almost completely neglected. Part of the fault here was due to the lack of well-trained cadres in specific areas of endeavor.
- 2) On a countrywide basis governmental coordination broke down. This break down had several facets: a) coordination and cooperation between the central and provincial governments was poor, and within the provinces the security requirements of the pacification program often came into direct priority conflict with military contingencies and needs -- the province chief had no clear set of orders and tended to be more concerned with finding and fighting the Viet Cong than with clear-and-hold operations; b) coordination and cooperation between various government ministries and agencies was inadequate; c) liaison between the GVN and the U.S. missions was poor; d) liaison, coordination and cooperation among the various U.S. missions themselves was often lacking.

I. OBJECTIVES

Where pacification is undertaken, the people must feel a distinct and positive improvement in their living conditions. They must see clearly that the GVN is helping them, and they must come to understand the nature of this help: that it is their government helping them and in turn it is their duty to help their government. The idea here is: "Help your government help you." These duties should be clearly defined in terms of cooperation in constructive projects, defense, intelligence information, and various community participation programs.

The basic criterion by which a village is judged pacified is the degree of voluntary cooperation given by the people to the government cadres. That an extraneous Viet Cong force can overrun the village does not necessarily mean the village is unpacified.

Pursuant to the five strategic principles, and with the village as a basic unit for pacification and reconstruction the concrete objectives should generally be as follows :

1) Security. Absolute security cannot be given, and thus should not be promised. Under present circumstances, the Viet Cong are capable of a range of aggressive activities -- from mortar attacks to terrorism -- which are nearly impossible to prevent. However, these aggressive actions can be impeded. Thus, in establishing the security of the pacification area, the objective should be the impediment and not the total prevention of Viet Cong offensive activity.

The most crucial security problem is the protection of village officials and of the cadres. To this end, a special unit should be established, perhaps similar to the People's Action Teams, with the specific task of protecting the officials and the cadres.

Otherwise, the best defense lies in the loyalty of the people. Paradoxically, pacification has achieved its goal when a village falls into the Viet Cong's hands, and the people feel "captured" instead of "liberated".

2) Economic development. Each area of the country will have its particular economic demands. However, there are two major areas in which economic improvement should be carried out on both a long-range and short-range basis: a) agriculture, and (b) light or cottage industries.

As for the development of light industry, scant progress has been made in this domain although it could well change the whole standard of living in Central Vietnam within a comparatively short time.

The concept to bear in mind with regard to pacification is that long-range programs must be instituted (with clear explanation to the people), but the short-range program must produce immediate visible improvements.

In connection with this principle of visible improvements, the GVN suggests that energetic efforts be made to install electricity from generators in pacification areas. Electricity would not only be a boom to light industry and the improvement of agriculture (through better irrigation), but it would symbolize the "light" of the government's presence.

3) Social Services. The establishment of social services has always been part of the pacification concept. However, under the cement-and-tinroof complex of USOM, these social services have tended to develop slowly at much cost. Schoolhouses are a classic example. The country is in desperate need of more classrooms, and there is no reason why these classrooms cannot be made exactly like the ordinary Vietnamese home : of wood and straw. In time the schoolhouses can be improved (first with a cement floor, then with a tinroof, and finally with cement walls). But at the moment, many schoolhouses must be erected quickly. Medical clinics are another aspect of the same problem.

4) Political institutions and a positive ideology. While this is a difficult domain in which to make positive progress, nevertheless it can and must be developed.

Basic is the nurturing of a community spirit which can then be extended toward the nation.

In terms of the ideological development in pacification areas, the first step is to establish a clear positive understanding that the Central government is more than ever preoccupied by the security problem of the villagers, that the government is decided by all means and through stages to bring back social justice to them and if democracy should be, it would be at the villages first.

5) The Administration. There can be no denying that the

II. Organization.

1) The Ministry of Rural Construction. This Ministry will be charged with the execution of the pacification program. For effective operation, the Ministry should have under its jurisdiction :

- a pacification representative in each province;
- the training, and placement and supervision of cadres;
- defensive units for the cadres;
- the Chieu-hoi program (or at least a strong voice in its activities);
- refugees, or close connection with the refugee program.

Cadres constitute the most important element of the pacification program. Over 30,000 in 30 separate categories are supposed to exist today. This figure, in number, category and quality is dubious. Pacification teams must be organized more tightly, cadres better trained and better paid. To this end, the GVN suggests that one or two cadre-training schools be established. All cadres will receive intensive political training plus one technical speciality in administration, (here the National Institute for Administration may be employed for training), information, agriculture, light industry, health and sanitation, education, police enforcement, and military.

The pacification team will consist of :

- 1/ political cadres
- 2/ social and economical cadres
- 3/ armed cadres as a protection unit.

Whenever possible, these cadres will be sent to work and should be under the command of one man.

2) Central Coordinating Committee for Pacification. This would be an inter-ministerial committee to insure complete coordination and cooperation in the pacification effort. Similar committees will be established at the corps and provincial levels. The provincial committee will make the selection of the pacification area.

Here it should be noted that according to the GVN's concept, pacification will be carried out on a nationwide but selective basis. In each Zone, a number of test-areas will be selected to act as the "oilspot". There should be no preordained time schedule for pacification. The time to expand will be decided

complete coordination. Strong liaison will, of course, be maintained between the Vietnamese and the Americans.

These Central Coordinating Committees will act somewhat as legislative bodies for the pacification program. The Ministry of Rural Construction will be the executive arm of the committees.