

THE VIET CONG

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~~Sanitization~~
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Viet Cong means trouble. Literally translated, the phrase means Vietnamese Communist, and those who are Viet Cong employ the whole Communist arsenal of deceit and violence. A Viet Cong is a man, woman, or child, a **tough** fighter with words or weapons, for what he is taught to call the "Liberation Army" of Vietnam. Viet Cong also applies to the military and civilian components of the "Front" (the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, or NFLSVN). To its deluded followers the "Front" is the government which they serve--but to the vast majority of South Vietnamese it is the instrument of terror and oppression manipulated by the Communists of North Vietnam.

"Seventy thousand ragged guerrillas, whose forty or fifty thousand weapons are mostly homemade or obsolete, are busily pushing around a larger, US-advised and equipped regular army and its even larger auxiliary forces." That was the accurate thumbnail description of the Viet Cong which a senior US officer gave in early 1961.

The Viet Cong, the Communist's "Liberation Army", have now more than doubled their numbers, despite losses equalling their 1960 strength. Their so-called "regular" forces have grown from 10,000 in 1960 to some 65,000 men as of March 1965. As befits "regulars", many are armed with late-model imported weapons (see box ____), wear uniforms, helmets of wicker or steel, and even scarves for unit identification. From isolated companies their formations have grown to battalions and regiments which at times seek to resist or even attack comparable government forces.

The militia of the Viet Cong, the "guerrillas" based in the villages and hamlets which are their homes, have not increased as rapidly. Better armed, and trained than before, they still wear the "calico noir", the traditional black pajamas of the Vietnamese peasant(used also by the "regulars" as fatigue uniforms). The estimated 100,000 militia who guide, support, reinforce, and provide recruits are essential to the success of the "regulars", and the whole Viet Cong effort. They make possible the rule of the Communist Party in the countryside, enforcing the dictates of the puppet "Front" local organizations. Thanks largely to the militia and the secret agents of the Party, perhaps two-thirds of the people of South Vietnam pay taxes to the "Front", even though they may also pay those of the government.

What makes the success of the Viet Cong so sensational, and their way of warfare so significant is that they started with virtually no material assets. Their assets were a belief in a doctrine of subversion, a thorough knowledge of its tactics, and the support of their fellow communists throughout the world. Communist Vietnamese, North and South, were united in their desire to bring the whole country under Communist domination. They had no substantial armed forces when they started this war. The Viet Cong of the South had no national territory. They had no industrial capacity. They had only a few thousand experienced guerrillas, and perhaps an hundred ^{thousand} supporters, mostly in remote areas where government representatives seldom came. Although they still control no territory where government forces cannot enter at will, there are

Substantial areas in which the "Front" is the only effective government. They operate schools and hospitals, clothing factories and arsenals. Millions of Vietnamese support the "Front" out of friendship or fear, most often the latter. Without massive US and Free World support, South Vietnam might already have been added to the list of lost countries.

This seems and is a tremendous success story. In conventional wars each side usually increases the size and strength of its armed forces, and greatly increases its industrial output, after the war has started. Surprisingly, this has also been true in Vietnam. The RVNAF (Republic of Viet Nam Armed Forces), whose fight for freedom we support, have increased their numbers and improved their equipment at a pace far greater than have the Viet Cong. However while the "Front" was experiencing its greatest growth, in 1963 and 1964, the free government of South Vietnam was undergoing great stress and frequent changes of administration. This undoubtedly facilitated the growth of the "Front", but these "growing pains of democracy" have not stunted the growth of the RVNAF, nor shaken its determination to resist Communist aggression, and establish the freedom and independence of the country. Despite government growth, the Viet Cong in mid-1964 pose a greater threat than ever.

This success story of an army and a shadow government built up by Communist direction largely from the people and the resources of a state they seek to destroy is frightening. We must understand how they have done so much, and learn how to defeat such attacks, or they will be repeated again and again. The Viet Cong success is

not that of a race of giants-- the average Vietnamese is about five feet three inches tall. It is not a story of incredible fanaticism -- thousands of Viet Cong desert or go over to the side of government every year. It is not just a story of outside support-- the RVNAF has received far more equipment and training assistance. It is the story of the development of a kind of fighting man and a way of warfare which can succeed under conditions which would seem hopeless to the average orthodox soldier. To understand it one must first know something of the people, their history, and their country.

Vietnam is very nearly ideal for developing such a way of war. On one side of this long, narrow strip of mountains, plateau, river delta, and seacoast is the Pacific. On the other are the undeveloped, largely ruggedly mountainous, frontiers with three other countries. The interior is often covered with dense tropical rain forest giving ideal concealment to secret installations and troop movements. Much of the coastline is swamp, mangrove, forest, or mountain equally useful to those who would overthrow a government. The delta produces fantastic amounts of rice and is crisscrossed by a myriad canals and streams. As one Viet Cong said: "Poling a dugout during harvest time, one can gather enough rice in a day to last for a week". Modern ground transport must use the single coastal railroad or the limited basic network of highways, all very easy to sabotage or ambush.

The people are equally well suited to this kind of war--most of them are rice farmers, accustomed to hard work, meager rations, and an absolute minimum of material comforts. Their philosophy is essential-

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ly fatalistic and undemanding. They do not like war, or soldiers, yet Vietnam has known far more war than peace in the 2,000 plus years of its history. Vietnamese are known in South East Asia as energetic and aggressive, capable of great sacrifice for an ideal, and uncommonly stubborn in resisting oppression when they decide it has become intolerable. These qualities make them excellent fighting men. They *racial and cultural identity, and shared background of the Viet Cong and the* also make it extremely difficult to identify an enemy unless he is *peasant* shooting at you. More, they make recognition of friends (or non-enemies) most important, for mistaking one for an enemy makes him his relatives, and his friends, your enemies. The child on the water buffalo may be a Viet Cong spy --but it is better to treat him as a friend than to make enemies of his sorrowing parents.

Forty years ago the Communists under Ho Chi Minh, now the president of North Viet Nam, began their effort to take over the country. Their first step was to claim leadership in the fight against the occupying French colonial power. In 1940, when the Japanese moved in, overawing the French, Communists and Nationalists alike believed the time for independence was near. Under Communist leadership, and later, Communist control, a coalition force was formed. This was the Viet Minh, which launched a nine year struggle against the French when they returned in 1945.

Like the Viet Cong, the Viet Minh grew from almost nothing -- but they grew larger and much more formidable than the Viet Cong today. By mid-1954 they had nearly 160,000 regulars, and perhaps an equal number of militia. Stunned by defeats in conventional battles such as Dien Bien Phu, unable to solve the problems of this new kind of war, the French were ready to quit. At an international conference in Geneva, presided over by representatives of Great Britain and Soviet Russia, war torn Viet Nam was divided at the Seventeenth Parallel in June 1954. The northern half was abandoned to Communist domination and became the so-called DRV (Democratic Republic of Viet Nam); the free southern half became the independent Republic of Viet Nam.

Under the terms of the agreement, Communists and anti-Communists were given an opportunity to move to the half of the divided country which they preferred. Nearly a million from the north were able to move south to freedom during the brief period allowed. Some 90,000 people, mostly men and boys of the Viet Minh army, or future recruits, went north. Tens of thousands, ^{and} *were left in the south, to assure* sizable stocks of arms and ammunition, *an ultimate Communist takeover.*

Geneva.

The agreement provided for a plebiscite at the end of two years, to determine if the country should unite, and if so, whether it should be Communist or free. Originally, the Communists were confident of winning, while the free men of the South doubted the possibility of an honest vote in the north. As the 1956 voting date approached, it was the Communists (contrary to popular belief) who requested postponement of the elections. Although busy trying to impose their will on the people of the North, the Communists there did not forget those they left in the South. A so-called Central Reunification Committee became an integral part of the government and the Party. It worked through the old Viet Minh commands, the Nambo and the Trungbo Committees, which remained the Communists' administrative and military control agencies for South and Central Viet Nam, until 1961.

Deciding they could not win a plebiscite, the Communists began to seek "a political solution" in the South. This meant replacing the strongly anti-communist government of the Republic of Vietnam, with a ^{controlled} neutralist coalition. ~~which was a neutralist coalition~~ Occasional assassinations of those who opposed their expansion seemed necessary and proper, but initially the main emphasis was on organization and propaganda. In 1959 it was decided that the political struggle must be aided by a major armed effort. How much this decision was influenced by the impatient Communists in the South, and how much by those in the North who were *alarmed* by the obvious contrasts between the prosperity of the South and the ^{own} impoverished dictatorship, *is difficult to say.* For the armed effort the Viet Cong in the South had, by the end of 1958, an armed force of more than 2,000 "regulars" supplemented by militia.

Although few, except those immediately affected, realized the war was on, those who were the victims of the savage campaigns of terrorism,

assassination and kidnapping in rural Vietnam were well aware of it. So too were the thousands of trained, dedicated Communist agitators (usually called cadre) who fanned out in the countryside to win support for the insurgent forces. How they worked in 1961, and work today, is graphically described by one of their leaders:

"We seek to do three things. The first is to drive a wedge between the people and their government -- to make the people hate their government, and the Americans. Our second objective is to get people to join our (VC) armed forces. The third is to persuade them to increase their production of food, and give the increase to us.

"Our cadre go into each village to study the situation and the people. Once they know the people and their problems, our cadre can explain how these problems are the fault of the government, and how the people can achieve their ambitions by following us. In this way we make the people hate their government, and can destroy the government in their village. Then we guide them in forming their own government (under our control) and in organizing their own armed forces, which of course are our auxiliaries.

"Of course we cannot do this right away in those villages and districts where the government is strong. There we concentrate on educating people politically to hate their government, and on forming both open and secret organizations which can support us, or embarrass the government. Every little bit helps. Any voluntary action of the people, from organized protests to simply slowing down on work ordered by the government, is a clear gain for us.

"Our cadre live in the village, or, if this is not safe, very close by. They appeal to the ideals, the patriotism, and the emotions of each individual according to his situation, and try to recruit

him for the cause. If a person is arrested by government forces we try to contact him as soon as ~~possible~~ he is released, sympathize with him, arouse his hatred of government, and recruit him. Many times we bring hungry, tired troops into a village so that the people may see how we are suffering for them, and arouse their sympathy. We try in every possible way to create hatred for the government and the Americans, to separate the people from the government and to make them see that we are their only hope."

Today with the increase in Viet Cong forces, more emphasis is placed on terror and murder ("destroying the village government") and less on persuasion. Organizing and involving everyone possible in a maximum effort, coupled with incessant propaganda, is still emphasized as essential to Viet Cong success.

Open warfare began in 1960, starting with the over-running of an RVNAF regimental headquarters at Trang Sup on 20 January. The Lao Dong (Communist) Party of Vietnam held a "Congress" in Hanoi. Attended by Party representatives from all Vietnam, it acted to establish the appearance of an independent revolution in the South, while at the same time simplifying and formalizing control of it.

A separate party, called the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam (PRP) was established. Its original members were all Communists, but qualifications for admission were made less strict than for the Lao Dong. A basis was established for replacing the two Southern command groups with the "Central Office for South Vietnam" (more often known as the COSVN), the central "brain" coordinating all action in the South, and all relations with the highest party and government echelons in the North. It may well be

compared to the secondary brain built into the hips of such beasts as the dinosaur, to control their hind legs.

Finally to give the whole operation the necessary appearance of being a true struggle for liberation by an oppressed people, to give an appearance of legitimacy to actions taken and to represent the movement in public activities, a provisional government was decreed.

In December 1960, a group of individuals claiming to represent virtually all walks of life, and all major ethnic and religious groups of South Vietnam, met in the forest northwest of Saigon. There they announced the formation of the "Front", which faithfully issued the manifestoes already decreed by the Communist Party "Congress" in the North. The next task was to make the shadow of government appear to have substance; for people and organizations to undermine and destroy the government and its forces. A great deal has been accomplished.

The Viet Cong political and military hierarchies now divide the country into six regions. Each region has its own command structure generally patterned after the national one, the COSVN. Basically a small executive group, acting in the name of the central Party (PRP, i.e. Communist) Committee at that echelon (and in accordance with directives from above) guides the activities of the military and the political committees and other Staff sections. To the extent possible, all seek to hide behind the facade of the Regional Committee of the Front, the Communists nominal civil government and authority for the region in whose name all actions are taken.

Subject to political guidance and veto, the military command and staff for the Region controls directly from one to several "main force" (regular) battalions, perhaps regiments. It is worth remembering

as evidence of the importance which the Viet Cong attach to "political" considerations (meaning in effect, all matters of the mind or the will) that each military committee has a political section responsible for troop indoctrination, morale, and welfare.

An almost identical organization exists for every province, and for most districts (the political subdivision below province). Each has its own "regular" troops under its command. These regulars at province level are sometimes referred to as main forces, sometimes as provincial mobile forces, or as local forces. In some provinces they are organized in battalion strength, in others in company-size units. At district level they are usually called "local forces" and may be in company or platoon organization. The nominal civil authority at each echelon is its "Front" Committee, but the effective chain of command is through the Communist (PRP) party. Always the military effort is guided by the political.

In most villages and some hamlets there is a "Front" committee guided by party members and a military committee of some sort, which controls the militia force. This may be known as the village guerrilla, as the village self-defense force, or as the secret struggle force in government-controlled areas. Sometimes the men in these forces are nominally full-time "guerrillas", more often they are in ^{the} farmer-by-day, fighter-by-night classification.

This organization seems cumbersome, the chain of command seems indirect and slow. Conventional military practice would establish a direct military chain of command from top to bottom-- but this would violate a basic tenet of unconventional or guerrilla war. Lacking strong authority at the top, with good communications and supply

facilities, the guerrilla, the insurgent, must rely for support, indeed for survival, on the efforts and survival of the people and the part-time fighters. In practice ^{this} means giving them substantial freedom of action. There are signs that the Viet Cong may now be neglecting the expansion of this popular base, hoping for a quick victory. This can be a major error.

The nearly half-million men and women who make up the civil and military components of this shadow government and its unconventional army, are as diverse and as divergent in origin and in motivation as those of any government and army anywhere. Perhaps the most important thing that sets them apart from their fellow Vietnamese is the way in which they are incessantly told, and caused to repeat, the reasons for everything they do, including ^{supporting} the Viet Cong. The best illustrations of their diversity, and their common knowledge, may be found in the statements of some of them.

Consider the story of Captain Lam, whose description of how the Viet Cong cadre operate was quoted earlier. One of the real "hard core", the backbone of the movement, he took advantage of the government's Chieu Hoi program which welcomes the return to loyalty of those misled by the Communists.

"I left my village in Central Vietnam in 1947, when I was eighteen years old, to join the Viet Minh. Two years later, because they said that all leaders in the struggle against the French should, I joined the Communist Party. As its Political Officer, I went North with my company

in 1954, ~~he was born in the city of Moscow~~ after the division of the country.

"In 1960, I was promoted to Senior Captain, and ordered to go to help liberate the South. After nearly six months travelling I reached my destination and become first political member of the Province Committee and, later, a District Commissar (Secretary of the District Committee). We were very successful in organizing and expanding the Viet Cong, but after two years, and the change in governments, I began to see the real difference between the way the people live in the North, and the way they would live in the South if it were not for this war. I lost my faith in the Communist claim that we were fighting for the people, and decided that the only right thing was to join the forces of the Republic of Vietnam, so I did."

By way of contrast, consider the statements of Sergeant Vo Anh Long, a 31 year old squad-leader in a main force battalion: "I was a farmer until May 1960. The government controlled my village, but the Viet Cong used to come at night and collect taxes. They would tell us, and we believed, that they were good men who loved and wanted to defend the poor people like us, that they struggled and sacrificed even their lives to give rights to the poor people."

"Finally they told me, and five other young men, that if we stayed in the village the GVN would take us away for the army, but that if we came with them for a week of training we could become local guerrillas and defend our village. We went with them, but then they told me that because of my ability I must go to a long training course. We marched for months to reach the training camp, where I studied for 6 months and then was graduated as a squad leader.

"I soon realized that the life of a Viet Cong was hard, but the cadre kept emphasizing that we were living gloriously, that we must be

prepared to die splendidly. Although I know that I had been fooled, *I accepted this.* We studied and had self-criticism sessions almost every day.

Each of us belonged to a 3-man cell, so that every man was watched by two others.

"I stayed with them for four years fighting in many battles. Eventually I could no longer stand being away from my family, and so I ran away and joined the government side."

A few more statements to illustrate the diversity:

"My uncle told me that I must join the district force, because otherwise the Viet Cong might burn down my mother's house". . . I was farming in the North, but last year when I was 20 the PAVN drafted me, gave me six weeks training, asked my group if it would not help to liberate the South, and marched us down here. Now I am in a transportation unit and have to carry 32 kilos of rice for 12 miles every day. I want to go home. . . "I did not want to become a soldier but the Viet Cong came and took me. Then I was ashamed to desert, because it would disgrace my comrades in the cell. But I used to get drunk and sleep too late, and after I was criticized several times and did not reform I was banished from my unit". . . "I am from North Vietnam. I was an officer of the Viet Minh, now I am an officer of the PAVN (North Vietnamese Army). I was ordered to come to the South, so of course I came." . . . "I was a village guerrilla. The Viet Cong hamlet chief told me I must watch for the government troops. One night the district force came and attacked the government outpost. I had to help them. After the battle they gave me a gun, and said that now I must fight to save my life. When ~~an~~ RVNAF company came I tried to hide but they found me."

Scholar or street-urchin, professional officer or farm boy, they

all tell the same story of relentless indoctrination, of discipline which appeals to every human emotion, constantly applied. The soldier is required to memorize a basic code of conduct (see box___) which puts him in the position of a hero, a patriot, a friend and protector of the people. He is never allowed to forget this role. Perhaps the most effective reminder is the daily discussion session, in which he is reminded of his supposed motives and is told what his future actions will be. After this he must explain his reactions, he must criticize his own thoughts and deeds. After every fight there is an almost immediate critique, with no holds barred, which gives every man a chance to let off steam. It also lets the cadre know what he is thinking. This contributes to the constant surveillance, maintained primarily through the cell system (usually 3-man) into which every possible unit is divided.

Appeals to the mind and the heart are the principal way in which the Viet Cong seek to control their personnel. "Regular" units do employ standard forms of military courtesy, and strict obedience is always expected, but emphasis is placed on the appearance of voluntary compliance. For those who fail in their duty, if such normal punishments as public criticism, extra duty, and brief confinement fail to bring reform, the penalty is often discharge, in terms which make the man feel a traitor and an outcast from the human race. Least significant seems to be the fear of corporal punishment, or death, ^{although either} may be ^{by torture, and} may be visited on the individual or his relatives.

It has been said that the Viet Cong soldier probably is told the reason for everything that he does longer and oftener than any other soldier in the world. Almost certainly he is required to explain the

and labor, including removal of the dead and of any booty.

"When all this is done, the Military Affairs Committee holds another meeting. This will be attended by the leaders of all the units which will be involved in the attack. If the majority of the Committee believes that the attack should be made, they report to another meeting of the Provincial Party Committee, which again reviews the problem and the solution which are proposed, and perhaps direct some additional action. The Party Committee will approve the attack only if all conditions, political, military, and logistic, appear favorable.

"After this is accomplished, all units begin practicing for the attack, either on a sand table or an actual stake-and-string replica of the target. This practice will take from five days to a month, depending on the difficulty of the target, until every man knows just what he is supposed to do, how he is supposed to do it, and when. Every detail of the action will be planned out, including when and where the main force units will meet the local force and militia units. The militia are always necessary to guide the troops and to provide laborers to carry supplies, to carry off the booty, and our dead, if any. We always try to carry away all our dead, to give them proper burial, which will comfort their families and strengthen the moral of the rest."

Such detailed preparation seems fantastic, but account after account bears it out. Any planned operation, whether an attack, an ambush, or a raid on a hamlet, is planned and rehearsed in great detail -- and then often called off at the last moment when something has changed. Viet Cong tactical doctrine is explicit -- It is summarized in the phrase: Four Fast, One Slow, ^{standing for} Fast Advance, Fast Assault, Fast Clearance of the battlefield, and Fast Withdrawal --

all based on Slow Preparation.

There is little that is new or unusual in Viet Cong tactical doctrine, once the basic principle of careful, thorough, preparation for any contingency, followed by swift action, is grasped. Attacks on strongpoints almost always feature maximum use of explosives on a primary and a secondary objective, usually mutually supporting, and a careful deployment of forces to intercept or ambush any reinforcements which may be brought in. In several recent battles there have been indications of deliberate efforts to entice and ambush heliborne troops.

In the past the Viet Cong have usually sought to avoid defensive combat unless they had the battlefield so organized that it was essentially an ambush. Nevertheless they carefully prepare for defense, with alternate and switch positions, in case they do decide to make a stand. Frequently these positions are incorporated into existing dikes separating rice fields so that emplacements seem to be merely breaks in the walls, and even trenches look like canals. Where the ground water level will permit, especially in their so-called secret base areas, elaborate tunnels are often constructed, both for cover and for concealment from ground and air forces. Like the Japanese in WW II, the Viet Cong are tireless diggers.

Controlled land mines, buried in highways, and detonated when a government target is over them have long been a favorite, and economical Viet Cong method of destroying or at least discouraging their opponents. Occasionally non-military targets are mined, usually by mistake, or for some specific political purpose, warning uncooperative civilians in an area. Home-made booby-traps, ranging from simple deadfalls and "spike-boards" to explosive footmines are often used in preparing for a battle or an ambush, being placed in the covered areas the ambushers

would naturally seek.

Like the elaborate trench works often seen, the hundreds of booby traps around "liberated", i.e., Viet Cong-controlled, villages have some value if a Viet Cong unit decides to fight there. Their most important function, really, is to implicate the civilians in anti-government actions. Government forces are likely to treat them as Viet Cong, which the villagers fully anticipate, so they feel forced to support the Viet Cong as their only hope. Secondly, the trenches and the dugouts do provide protection for the civilians if the community is bombed or shelled by the government forces. Even though these attacks are provoked by the Viet Cong, the people are often grateful to these same provocateurs for "helping us to protect ourselves".

The emphasis on carefully planned, discussed and rehearsed actions has its disadvantages. If such an action fails, if losses are heavier than expected or not in proportion to benefits achieved, there is a serious drop in morale and combat effectiveness. An unexpected attack by GVN forces, especially when an unsuccessful resistance is made, demonstrates poor planning and *seriously impairs effectiveness* for weeks or months, longer than the actual damage inflicted would warrant. Only a quick successful counter-action can overcome this effect.

Much is said about the Viet Cong use of terror, which seems to be increasing. This is natural, as the pace of the war steps up, and support requirements grow faster than the voluntary contributions; Taxes have been raised repeatedly in some areas; "draftees" must fill in as voluntary recruiting proves inadequate.

Terror-punishment seems to produce the fastest results, but it eventually reacts against those who use it, unless they succeed in seizing complete power. Today in many areas the Viet Cong are faced with the administrative *problems* which afflict any government in time of war--- and are losing voluntary support as a result.

The Viet Cong have, from the beginning, made every effort to secure the support of members of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces as well as the support of the civilians. Generally similar tactics have been used, emphasizing always the benefits to the individual and the high moral and patriotic worth of such a shift in allegiance. "Serve your country against the American imperialists", they say. "Don't be fooled because the Americans are more clever than the French; the Americans motives are the same, but they use you as puppets!" Prisoners are often held under good conditions for two or three months "re-education" and then, if not notoriously anti-Communist or brutal are released to returned to their homes.

The general preference for the "soft-sell" does not keep them from killing, often by torture, whole garrisons of small posts which have been overwhelmed (and their dependents, at times) when it seems appropriate to punish determined resistance, or frighten others in the area. Not infrequently one or two leaders will be brutally murdered as an example to the others. Threats of reprisals against families are sometimes used as well.

Within the last two years "proselyting", as they call it, has become a major Viet Cong program. A favored practice is the use of

girls and women, speaking as sisters or mothers, to serenade small garrisons, calling to them to save their precious lives for their families sake, and imploring them to have mercy on civilians.

None of these programs has had noticeable success. Homesickness has been the only major cause of desertion in the RVNAF, and has plagued the Viet Cong as well.

Conclusion

In little more than five years the Viet Cong armed forces have grown from an essentially guerrilla army to one which includes regiments of uniformed, well-equipped, highly foot-mobile regulars capable of engaging in conventional operations of limited duration. Concurrently their civil organization has grown from a mere shadow to one of considerable substance, which in some provinces collects almost four times as much taxes as does the government of Viet Nam. The Communist party, under its cover name of the Peoples Revolutionary Party, has expanded the control which it exercises on behalf of North Vietnam-- the so-called DRV. Substantial quantities of portable war material have been brought in by land and sea, as well as 8- 10,000 PAVN soldiers in 1964.

As Viet Cong capabilities have grown, so have their liabilities. They have been forced to draft teenagers directly into their regular units. They have felt obliged to redouble their rates of taxation, and increase their other demands on the civilians in areas under their influence. Logistics requirements for food as well as weapons have greatly increased. Even "regular" units spent

much of their time in producing their own food until 1964, a practice which increased air surveillance renders unprofitable.

Most significant, and most dangerous for both sides, the Viet Cong pretense of being truly a South Vietnam "peoples army" is rapidly being destroyed by the introduction of North Vietnamese forces and large quantities of equipment-- and by their own actions as well. These actions strongly imply that their commanders in the North believe that a quick victory--in 1965 or 1966-- may be possible. If this effort fails, as our support to the Free Vietnamese assures, they are quite prepared to continue for 10 or 20 years if necessary and possible. The Communist doctrine, and Communist strategy, have flourished so well in South Vietnam that no matter how decisively the Viet Cong "regulars" may be defeated, no matter what pious protests of non-intervention North Vietnam may make, the struggle will still continue. This war will never end until an anti-Communist government of the Republic of Vietnam enjoys and merits the willing support of the vast majority of its people.