

THE DELTA

A Recommendation for Inter-Agency Study

Many observers believe that the war in the Delta is not going as well as it should. Of the numerous reasons ~~are~~ cited to support this view, some are undoubtedly valid, others of possibly less validity. Population patterns, communication routes, and local custom combine to make full implementation of the "classic" Strategic Hamlet pattern unusually difficult and expensive.

These factors suggest that some further development and clarification of the Strategic Hamlet strategy, as applied to the Delta, may be in order. It is accordingly recommended that a small temporary inter-agency subcommittee be established to study the problem, and present to the committee such recommendations as it may find appropriate for clarification and or modification of policy, plans, and programs in the Delta. Attached is a brief synopsis of a policy as might be recommended by the proposed committee.

The ultimate objective should be the development of an adequately detailed plan, concurred in by all US agencies, to be skillfully pushed by US officials at all echelons.

A PROPOSED DELTA POLICY

There is a need for clarification, and amplification, of policy in order to make a coordinated effort designed to secure our holdings in the Delta while making maximum use of our offensive capabilities.

The revitalized policy should stress two main approaches. First, for the present all efforts within the Strategic Hamlet Program should be devoted to completion and consolidation of existing hamlets which generally are in regions of strongest government control, primarily along main communications routes. This would be an essentially defensive effort. Consolidation means carrying out within each hamlet the political and economic-social revolution which is at the heart of the program while at the same time making each hamlet as militarily secure as possible. Adequate consolidation would be the pre-requisite for further expansion.

The second approach should be implementation of an aggressive, substantially decentralized, combined military-intelligence-psychological warfare offensive in contested and Communist-dominated zones. To a large extent, this would be accomplished through continuous small unit operations (battalions and companies) of regular and provincial forces with the classic counter-guerrilla missions of gaining intelligence, winning the support of the people and destroying the enemy.

The objective would be so to reduce Communist capabilities that the political advantages and economic-social improvements of the Strategic Hamlet Program could be implemented under favorable conditions as the final step in permanently winning the people.

Execution of this two-bladed approach will require plans by each province and an overall Delta plan which will strike the proper balance between strategic hamlet consolidation (and possible further expansion through clear and hold operations), and conduct of the offensive or softening-up effort.

Careful consideration must be given to the question of whether, even with the commitment of another division into the Delta, regular forces can be used best primarily in support of clear and hold operations or for the offensive effort against Communist power centers.