

RURAL REHABILITATION AND PACIFICATION

A. Introduction: It is generally agreed, as a concept, that the war in Vietnam cannot be won until substantially more of the people in the country-side support the GVN than support the Viet Cong; and, that the people cannot be expected so to support the government unless they are given concrete evidence of the desire and ability of the government to assist and protect them. Accordingly, pacification and rural rehabilitation are seen as so closely linked that they form, in effect, a single program, although one with many diverse facets and special activities.

Much of the USOM program in Vietnam has been built about a supporting concept -- that U.S. assistance in money, materials, and advisors should be channeled directly to the provinces for employment there in accordance with general approval and guidance from the central government. The Office of Rural Affairs has been the principal agency of USOM involved in this program, but there is increasing participation by the technical divisions.

The direct provincial assistance program came into being at the time the GVN was placing virtually all its pacification eggs in the basket of the Strategic Hamlet program. Only recently has it been generally recognized how leaky that basket was, and there has been a net unnatural tendency to wish to exchange it for a new one. Wiser councils appear to have prevailed, however, and the program seems assured of continued emphasis, although not to the exclusion of other approaches to the problems of restoring peace and stability to the rural areas. Indeed, a major problem now is the coordination of the many different efforts and approaches embarked upon or proposed.

As in the past, each province is expected to develop its own rehabilitation program, in accordance with general guidelines established by Saigon, and with the assistance of a joint GVN-USOM-MAC/V team. These teams have now visited all provinces, and the plans have been drafted. By 22 June, provincial agreements (the legal documents backing up GVN-USOM support of these programs) for 42 provinces had been submitted to the New Rural Life Directorate for approval. Twenty-six of these had already been approved and signed by the various formal components of the GVN, and had received final signature by the province chief, twenty have become fully effective. These agreements cover financial and material assistance for mobile action cadre, relocation of peasants in hamlets, combat youth (now part of the Popular Force) training, self-help projects, Montagnard relief and rehabilitation, and allow for other "miscellaneous" expenses.

The release of funds for the implementation of province rehabilitation and pacification operations has been a continuing problem for more than a year. This is due in part to unspoken opposition by key officials (some of whom were in office under the Diem regime and are still supposedly indispensable), in part to cumbersome auditing and accounting procedures and finally, to a general unwillingness to take responsibility. Operations in recent months have largely been financed by a special release, by

General Khanh of 1,000,000 piasters to each province. New accounting procedures, which should ease part of the problem, have been decreed, and General Khanh has repeatedly stressed, to province chiefs, the need for acceptance of responsibility. The problem of uncooperative members of the national government remains unsolved.

B. USOM Rural Affairs: (See Tab E)

The Office of Rural Affairs is the USOM component directly charged with responsibility for the counter-insurgency effort. The unique and significant element of this office is its field staff, which includes a USOM representative in each province who acts as the senior U.S. adviser on civilian affairs to the Vietnamese province chief. With the senior U.S. military advisor in the province, he assists the province chief in the development of the provincial rehabilitation plan, approves expenditures from USOM funds and supplies, monitors their use, and in general, advises and assists in the entire program.

After recent approval for an assistant in each province and region, virtually all of those required have been recruited. Plans have also recently been approved for a build up of specialist teams in critical provinces. Personnel from USIA and other U.S. agencies, as well as from the USOM technical divisions have been, and will increasingly be used as members of the provincial representatives team.

Heading this office in Saigon is the USOM Associate Director for Counter-Insurgency, who has two deputies and a small headquarters staff. Their principal preoccupation is persuading appropriate GVN officials at the national level to approve the things which obviously should be done. They are also responsible for providing guidance and support to the provincial representatives.

C. Central Pacification Committee: The Central Pacification Committee is in many ways the counterpart of USOM Rural Affairs. Chaired by Premier Nguyen Khanh with Deputy Premier Hoam as one of the vice-chairmen, it includes among its members, the Ministers for Defense, Interior, Information, Rural Affairs, Public Works, the Secretary of State at the Premier's Office, the Chief of the Joint General Staff, and a number of others, including the Corps Commanders. Obviously too large a group for effective day-to-day operations, it has a number of action agencies including the New Rural Life Directorate (which replaces the old Permanent Bureau for Strategic Hamlets), the Rural Economic Development Committee (See Section F, below), the Chieu Hoi Special Commissariat (See Section I, Paragraph 1, below), and the General Office for Peoples Suggestions and Complaints (See Section I, Paragraph 2, below). Internal command lines to these agencies are obscure, and reflect the influence and differences in views of the key members of the Committee, as well as the basic, if often unstated, conflict between the two approaches to counter-insurgency; i.e., whether to seek to gain the support of the people, or to seek to control the people.

D. New Life Hamlet Program: Essentially a reformed version of the old Strategic Hamlet Program, this is the responsibility of the New Rural Life Directorate, headed by Col. Hoang Van Lac, and USOM's principal working contact for province rehabilitation. Much of the effort to date has gone into re-evaluation of the old program and its accomplishments, and drawing up guidance for the future.

Basic to this effort has been the development of new criteria for "constructed" New Life Hamlets. These are significant.

Criteria in Force for
Determination of a Constructed
New Life Hamlet (Ap Tam Sinh)

1. Hamlet residents have been screened and existing VC infrastructure discovered and eliminated.
2. Hamlet Combat Youth (ex-Militia, now combined with SDC into Nghia-Quan or Popular Force) have been selected, trained, and armed.
3. An obstacle system, as well as other fortifications, has been established for defense against VC guerrillas.
4. A system for communication and for requesting reinforcement has been set up.
5. Hamlet inhabitants have been organized into age groups and assigned specific tasks for hamlet security and for new life improvement activities.
6. A hamlet committee has been selected by secret ballot in accordance with a democratic spirit. (Montagnard Hamlets may waive this requirement in a committee which has been appointed in lieu of the elected committee.)

(The 6th point above cannot be interpreted literally since the decree on local government provides for an elected hamlet chief with two assistants (security, including combat youth, and propaganda) appointed by the province chief.)

Using these criteria, the GVN reported that there were, as of 30 May 1964:

Hamlets Constructed (formerly called completed) - 4,207

Hamlets under GVN Control (including those under construction) - 4,905

These are the only current figures available, and do not reflect full re-evaluation of the old statistics. For comparison, a recap of the

figures for 30 April, under the old strategic hamlet criteria, and reflecting less re-evaluation, is useful, and provides more data on ancillary aspects of the program:

Total cadre (ex-SH construction cadre) operating	4,900
Hamlets constructed	6,562
Hamlets under construction	782
% of population in NL Hamlets (about 7,865,000 people)	55%
Total families relocated (about 830,000 people)	166,100
Total trained, armed combat youth	87,200
Hamlets w/trained, elected officials	6,000
Hamlets having begun at least one Self Help project	3,021

Suspect as these figures may be, they represent a measure of the inheritance of the Strategic Hamlet program, i.e., the action of a government policy, for better or worse, on the people's lives. The new efforts, the CI programs described below, should be understood to include a re-doing of much that was reportedly done before. Thus, on 30 October 1963, there were, by the last "Diem count", 8,554 hamlets completed, 1,051 hamlets under construction, and 85% of the rural population included in these hamlets.

Voluntary participation, and real benefits to the inhabitants, are supposed to be key elements in the "new" program. With continuing, intelligent, U.S. pressure and guidance, these objectives may largely be realized, although there have already been several reports of forced relocation. This is significant, as it is indicative of the basic split in both American and Vietnamese thinking about the whole counter-insurgency effort. If the hamlet program is to be successful, the emphasis must be on giving improved security and government benefits desired by the majority of the residents of each hamlet (if they do not desire these, i.e., do not voluntarily participate, it should not be called a New Life Hamlet) while controlling and re-educating the possible minority who actively favor the Viet Cong.

Desirably, all direct benefits to the hamlets and their inhabitants, other than improved military protection, should be the responsibility of one government agency. Where these benefits are to be derived from actions by the technical services of government, their provision should be supervised by the special agency, the New Rural Life Directorate, which is responsible for the whole program. Unfortunately, this principle has not been accepted, and many key elements of the program are the responsibility of other agencies, the performance of which varies widely in quality, quantity and timing. This increases the burden of responsibility.

for implementation of the program which must be borne by the USOM provincial representatives who, to a much larger extent than is readily apparent, must rely heavily on the personal relationships which they are able to establish with the province chief and his staff.

E. Civilian Government Improvement Programs:

Bureaucracy, formalism, and lack of responsiveness to the governed has long characterized Vietnam. Since the 1 November coup, these have been further complicated by uncertainty as to the actual structure of government at all echelons. In this last area, much of the confusion has recently been resolved by decrees establishing the form of hamlet and village government (including provision for direct secret election of some officials of each) provincial and municipal councils, and a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The decrees are far from clear and perfect, but do constitute a significant improvement.

There is also a determined effort to improve the quality of government administration at provincial and lower levels. Particularly significant in this is the recent special training as civilian administrators of 464 reserve officers who have been assigned to district staffs, as well as increase assignment of National Institute of Administration graduates to district posts. USOM is seeking to assist this program, and is sending 16 experienced administrative advisors to assist in improving administration at higher levels (See Tab 10). Reinforcement of the provincial advisory groups, in at least some provinces, with experienced administrative advisory personnel is also under active consideration.

The effectiveness of civil government can not be adequately improved, and its programs effectively implemented, within the formal governmental structure. This is especially true of the hamlet program, which requires government "cadre" to assist in the organization and development of each New Life Hamlet. Presently there are three GVN programs, either under way or under consideration, intended to help meet these requirements.

1. MAC (Mobile Action Cadre): This program is intended to bridge the gap between the traditionally Saigon-oriented governments (national, provincial, and district) and the traditionally locally-oriented village and hamlet governments, and to carry the major responsibility for the organization ("construction") of New Life Hamlets. The National Institute of Administration has recently graduated 92 instructors from a special course designed to prepare them to instruct MAC in each province. Initial reaction to the training which these have given has varied from excellent to poor, but the MAC in several provinces seem to be working well. Present plans call for 7,000 MAC members to be working by the end of FY 1965.

2. GAMO (Groupes Administratif Mobile Operationel): Patterned after a French experiment, this program proposes to train 140 cadre skilled in administration, etc., for each of eight critical provinces. Limited

information on this program is available in Washington, but it is clearly to some extent a political maneuver designed to increase the influence of civilian ministers.

3. Political Cadre: There is also a tentative proposal to train covert political action cadre, who are intended to live in each hamlet, village, etc., and secretly influence the residents to support the government and its programs. This again is to a large extent a political maneuver; to a lesser extent a well-meant grandiose psycho-political operation of a type which has been repeatedly tried, in one form or another, and usually failed abysmally, despite some local successes. Little information, and that conflicting, is available here, but the obvious objections to it are so numerous that there seems no reason to expect the program to be either useful or successful.

F. Government Services Improvement Programs;

These are programs of economic and social assistance, generally of types common to rural development activities in all parts of the world. They are essential to successful counter-insurgency, since they provide concrete evidence of government desire and ability to assist the governed. For this reason, their value can be greatly magnified, perhaps ten-fold, by appropriate and adequate propaganda exploitation. The more conventional purpose of such programs -- actually to improve the economic and social conditions of the people -- is much less important in such situations as that in Vietnam today, although the value of such benefits may be, as it certainly is there, adequate to justify major efforts. A side benefit, very significant in the present situation in Vietnam, where a major problem is increasing money supplies without aggravating inflation, is the actual increase possible in the GNP and the foreign exchange earnings of the nation.

As previously noted, there are many bureaucratic and procedural obstacles to the effective accomplishment of these programs inherent in the structure and practices of government. Although not placed under the supervision or direction of the New Rural Life Directorate, some of these programs are under some form of supervision by another appendage of the Central Pacification Committee. This element is called the Rural Economic Development Committee (composition not available here) which appears to exercise budgetary direction, and may develop additional powers and responsibilities.

1. Crop Improvement Programs. A substantial number of U.S.-supported crop improvement programs have been in progress for many years. They range from improvement of existing crops, such as rice and sweet potatoes through the introduction of improved varieties of seeds and cuttings, to the introduction of wholly new crops, and seeking to provide for their marketing. All have been significantly stepped up for their contribution to the counter-insurgency effort, and their potential for increasing the GNP. Of special significance are:

a. Fertilizer program (see Tab P): Through USOM effort, fertilizer imports for the current rice-growing season have been increased by 85,000 tons. This added fertilizer will be distributed on a credit basis, and paid for in rice paddy, all of which is expected to be exported for foreign exchange earnings. This fertilizer is in addition to the large quantity normally imported (much of it with USOM assistance) and distributed through commercial channels, primarily as an economic development measure. (See separate fertilizer paper.)

b. Rice seed: The Mission has long supported efforts to improve rice seed and increase its distribution. Currently, as part of the counter-insurgency effort, 50,000 kiles of improved rice seed are being distributed in small lots. This is primarily intended to demonstrate the ability and desire of the government to assist the farmer in improving his crop yields -- hence the advisability of supporting the government rather than the Viet Cong who taxes him so heavily and does nothing for him. This program has run into considerable opposition from people who fear that it will serve to increase the rice supplies available to the Viet Cong, but should nevertheless yield considerable benefit, if properly exploited through publicity. (For other aspects of the rice production increase effort, see Tab M.)

Crop Protection Program: Another longstanding USOM program, this effectively increases crop return to the farmer through control of pests and diseases which otherwise can ruin the crop of a whole region. Although little data on the 1964 program is available, it is interesting to note that in 1963 the rat control program, in 10 provinces, at a material cost less than \$60,000 saved rice valued between five and ten million dollars, a clear gain to the country as well as to the farmers concerned. While not as dramatic as other programs, its value both to the country and to the counter-insurgency effort is appreciable.

2. Livestock Improvement (See Tab Q): This too has been a long-term USOM effort to increase farm productivity. It has recently been given added emphasis, with a special counter-insurgency twist. Self-help projects have been initiated in many provinces. Under these, farmers desiring to participate in the program are advanced three improved quality hogs, plus PL 480 feedstuffs, and cement for concrete sties. The farmer repays the advance with part of the progeny, which are then advanced to other farmers. This is considered one of the more significant programs, since it establishes a working relationship between farmers and government, from which each derives substantial benefit.

3. Schools (See Tab R): These form one of the most obvious, most desired, and most useful improvement contributions to the counter-insurgency effort. Current programs in Vietnam emphasize the maximum-impact type inexpensive hamlet schools, with hastily (generally 90 days) but adequately trained teachers. This program in the past has been hampered by unrealistic professional qualification requirements imposed by the Ministry of Education, but seems now to be moving well, with a target of 3,000 hamlet schools to be completed by the end of the year. The GVN has just budgeted also for twelve

provincial trade and agriculture schools, and work is reportedly going forward rapidly on these, with substantial USOM assistance in procuring materials, etc.

4. Rural Health Assistance (see Tab S): Programs designed to bring improved medical care, however rudimentary, have obvious substantial value in counter-insurgency, if effectively carried out. There have been, and are, a number of ambitious programs of this nature in Vietnam, which have been hampered by the usual problems of bureaucracy compounded by professional jealousy. Real progress is being made, the GVN has recently approved a budget provision for pay for some 8,000 hamlet-village healthworkers (long a major problem area, requiring special USOM Rural Affairs support) and plans are well advanced for sending additional U.S. and third country medical personnel to Vietnam.

5. Rural Water Supply: To a thirsty family few things can better evidence government concern for their welfare than supplying them with drinking water. A very substantial portion of the population of the Delta area is consistently thirsty during the dry season, since in some areas they must pay more than a day's wage for ten gallons of fresh water. Despite this, the rural well program has been probably the worst implemented of any GVN activity. Recognizing this, USOM nearly two years ago began exerting efforts to persuade the GVN to increase its operations in the Delta, where the fresh water table is usually some 200 meters below the surface. At the same time, the Office of Rural Affairs began a program of supplying low cost improvised hydro-jet rigs, which operate effectively where water can be reached at 50 meters or less.

A counter-insurgency oriented crash program for deep-well drilling, begun early this year, sought the redeployment and full use of nearly twenty suitable rigs (previously supplied the GVN by U.S. assistance) to the Delta area. Lack of skilled personnel, bureaucratic opposition, and sloth have prevented this program from becoming effective. It is hoped that by November enough personnel (including a number of U.S. military personnel on temporary duty - already arranged for) will have been assembled, motivated, and deployed with rigs, to begin a really effective program.

G. Information Improvement Programs:

As previously indicated, government information and propaganda activities are one of the most important elements in counter-insurgency. This is being recognized, belatedly, in Vietnam, and numerous efforts are under way to improve it. Within the last thirty days a long-promised joint U.S. GVN psyops committee has begun to function. The Ministry of Information seems sure of an adequate budget, and expects soon to have some 5,000 cadre working in the field to bring the government message to the people. U.S. efforts are, for the first time, being closely coordinated, and there appears to be meaningful communication between U.S. advisors and the Vietnamese who must interpret and implement the programs.

How well this will work remains to be seen. Assuming that there is new willing cooperation, there still remain the problems of planning appropriate campaigns, preparing suitable material, translating it into language the target audiences understand, and finally, of making sure that it gets to them. All of these have been major impediments in the past.

Mechanically, much progress is being made, especially in the radio field. The estimated half-million local receivers (private and community) already in the country, are being supplemented by another 125,000 low-cost individual receivers, 25,000 of which are due in country by July. Supplementing the existing facilities, including seven major government broadcasting stations will be another 25 provincial low-power stations. Several provincial stations are already in operation. (See Tab T.) Results achieved in one province (Phu Yen) where the USOM Provincial Representative is an extremely capable psy-warrior suggest that this may well be one of the most effective programs practicable at this time.

USOM some time ago completed two ambitious programs in audiovisual propaganda support. One provided more than a hundred mobile units (truck and motor-tricycle) for provincial use. The other provided reproduction equipment of the mimeograph type to enable publishing weekly newspapers in each district. Both programs suffered from all the problems which have existed in Vietnam, and neither really functioned effectively. The new spirit of cooperation, if it is backed up with real command emphasis, and sufficient competent staff, may make these efforts really pay off. There are of course numerous supporting programs, ranging from assistance in the production of weekly newsreels (both by USOM and by USIA) to provincial and national distribution publications by USIA. These programs should be, and are being expanded. Much more U.S. assistance, by personnel knowledgeable both in psychological operations, and in Vietnamese culture patterns and reaction processes, is needed.

H. Hamlet Defense and Rural Security:

Since this is a people's war, the people must actively contribute to their own defense and security, a point sometimes overlooked, especially when seeking to "strategize" hamlets where the majority of the people are hostile toward the government -- or when rendering them hostile by their treatment during the strategizing process. Another of the errors in the original strategic hamlet program was the over-emphasis placed on the security to be afforded by the hamlet, and the emphasis on barbed wire defenses. Nevertheless, in those hamlets where the people were, as many still are, willing to assist in their own defense, there was and is much they can do, and much which USOM can do to help. This help has, in the past, been most evident in the provision of rations for the families of hamlet militia while these were in training, and for the families of the members of the Self-Defense Corps, a sort of mobilized militia. These two elements have been merged in recent weeks into a so-called "Popular Force." The extent to which USOM has

agreed or will agree to support this force is not known here, but existing plans provide that any needed help (except military hardware, provided through MAP) ranging from training support to rations will be made available.

A second field of major assistance to rural security and self defense provided by USOM (through the PSD) is in the provision of radio transceivers to enable hamlets and villages to summon assistance in event of VC attack. (See Tab U.) There are presently over 5,000 installed in the hamlet-village warning nets, and over 6,000 more are scheduled for delivery between September 1964 and March 1965.

I. Special Programs:

There are four programs of possibly great potential which do not fall easily into any usual category. Three of these, of proven value in other counter-insurgencies, are being supported, at least in part, by USOM Rural Affairs, a fourth, of less certain value, may be undertaken by it.

1. The Chieu Hoi (Surrender) Program: This program urged on the GVN for eight years, was finally launched in April 1963 with USOM support. This program, too, was beset with difficulties characteristic of Vietnam (for example, a million dollars worth of piasters was allocated for its support on a modest scale, but the GVN would accept the allocation of only half that amount, and actually spent with U.S. approval, only a fourth of this), but definitely proved its appeal by bringing in some 9,500 persons, ranging from professional Communist officers to recruits and laborers of the Viet Cong, and ARVN deserters, in seven months. After the November coup, the new government, consistent with its studied denigration of everything started under the old regime, seemed likely to let the program perish. Recently it has achieved status, becoming the Chieu Hoi Special Commissariat, under the Central Pacification Committee. In the last week of May, 979 returnees, military and civilian, were reported. Hopefully, it will soon be possible to initiate the long-planned program for resettlement of surrendered Viet Cong, which, properly exploited, can provide as effective a propaganda base as did the similar EDCOR program in the Philippines.

2. Complaints and Action: This program (tentatively called "General Office for People's Suggestions and Complaints"), just getting under way, is being advised by a Filipino expert, a key member of the same operation to assist in exploration of veterans rehabilitation programs. One of the most effective weapons in the war against the Huk in the Philippines, this program has been tried before in Vietnam. On a national scale it was a failure, because of government unwillingness to act, but it has been extremely successful as a provincial venture, notably in Kien Hoa, when fully backed by the province chief. Provision of full support for this program, possibly in conjunction with CAS, is considered both important and urgent, since the adviser was scheduled to leave at the end of June, and the only possibly available qualified replacement is in the U.S. The experience in the Philippines demonstrated that prompt investigation, with appropriate summary action by

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-11-

direction of a national leader, or an individual's complaint of malfeasance or nonfeasance by an officer of government was an extremely potent means of establishing respect for the intentions of government.

3. Military Civic Action: This extremely valuable and well-proven method of improving civilian-military relationships has been consistently stressed by USOM. Budgetary support has been provided to the military, as have materials for specific projects. In addition, U.S. military civic action teams have been sponsored. Two of ten scheduled SEABEE Technical Assistance Teams (STAT's) are currently operating in Vietnam in support of province rehabilitation operations. USOM pays the travel and maintenance costs of these teams which are primarily employed on light construction projects in relatively insecure areas.

4. Land Reform (see Tab N): There is at present no U.S. program to support or advise land reform measures. U.S. and Vietnamese opinion varies widely about the feasibility and effect of a new program at this time. There is no question but that land practices, especially rental rates of communally owned lands in Central Vietnam, and payments for former French-owned lands in the Delta, constitute a potent source of dissatisfaction in several provinces. Further, resettlement practices under the strategic hamlet program have incredibly confused the land tenure pattern in some areas. The GVN Rural Development Committee at the end of May forwarded some rather unrealistic recommendations to the GVN for action, which has not yet been taken. It seems urgent that a review of available information about land tenure and titling practices be undertaken by an experienced but unbiased person, in order that the U.S. may be in a position to offer sound advice, and assistance as required. Land titling constitutes a major problem which must ultimately be faced, even though the impact of this and of workable land reform measures on the present counter-insurgency effort is debatable.

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