

Paper given
to Vnu by RP
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STRATEGY OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

I CONCEPT

A. Experience in successful and unsuccessful attempts to eliminate well-developed communist insurgency in under-developed nations has shown that for success three major tasks must be accomplished almost simultaneously. These are:

1. Committing the rural population to the side of the government and against the communist guerrilla through a program of positive action to win their support.
2. Effectively attacking communist armed forces wherever and whenever they may be found.
3. Teaching, primarily by practical experience, the processes, problems, and practices of self-government and demonstrating that this can be achieved best under the aegis of the anti-communist forces.

B. There are, of course, many other tasks to be accomplished, ranging from the development and propagation of inspiring slogans, and the tactical training of small units, to the selection and training of national leaders; but the three tasks listed above are the essential elements of the grand strategy for turning a communist war-racked, underdeveloped emerging nation such as Vietnam into a free, peaceful, prosperous country. It is because, in theory and, when effectively implemented, in fact, it can accomplish the first and third of these 3 tasks, that the Strategic Hamlet Program is appropriately so named. The deficiencies which have plagued the program, and have caused many to doubt its validity arise from lack of effective understanding of the concepts and the mechanics of implementation of the program

C. The concept of small communities (hamlets), developed by combined governmental and popular action, provided with means of defense against minor guerrilla

attacks, governed by a freely elected council, and offering to their residents a better opportunity to achieve their legitimate aspirations, is sound. More than two-thirds of the peasants of Vietnam have been committed (like soldiers, often malgre lui) to this strategy. They represent at once the principal potential strength of, and the principal challenge to any government of Vietnam. To withdraw them from this campaign, to fail to give to these people those things which were promised in exchange for their participation, would be surely to lose this war. What is required for these 8,000 or more hamlets already begun is not a different approach, but an effective completion of what has been started.

D. The concept of such small defended communities does not seem applicable to all areas. In some places, notably in certain areas in the Delta, the existing population pattern is one of the wide dispersion of dwellings so resettlement of the people would impose substantial hardship and engender opposition to the government. In these areas reliance should be placed on aggressive military efforts, emphasizing civic action, to drive out the VC and win the support of the people. This may well mean that relatively few new strategic hamlets should be constructed. The attached paper (Inclosure A) outlines basic thinking on prosecution of the program and the war effort in the Delta.

II ORGANIZATION

A. Most of the forces and instrumentalities required for the effective implementation of the program are already in existence --- the regularly established ministries, directorates, etc., of government. The remaining requirement is for a coordinating and a supervisory effort which can, where needed, provide additional

special services not within the sphere of regular agencies. Implementation can and should be largely through the existing instrumentalities.

B. It is essential that the coordinating and supervising effort which imposes added duties and responsibilities on existing agencies start at the very top. Accordingly, it is recommended that there be a committee (which might be called Committee of National Strategy, Pacification Committee, Peoples Revolutionary Committee, or, simply, Victory Committee) which can insure this top level coordination. It might well be chaired by the Chief of State and include in its composition the Prime Minister and the Ministers for Defense, Security, Information, Education, Rural Affairs, and Health. It is essential that a permanent secretary who enjoys the respect and confidence of the chief of state and who is authorized to act in the name of the committee be appointed. This secretary and his staff should:

1. Coordinate planning for effective prosecution of the program.
2. Ensure that necessary resources be made available to the implementing officers.
3. Verify performance and maintain records.
4. Plan for possible expansion of the program.
5. Plan, coordinate and inspect similar actions undertaken to win the support of the people in areas not incorporated into the Strategic Hamlet Program.

C. Responsibility for implementation of the program should lie primarily with the Province Chief. Each will need a small staff agency to function in a manner similar to that of the Secretariat at the national level. Each will also need teams, organized primarily from personnel of existing agencies, military and

civilian, to assist hamlet residents in understanding the program and securing its benefits.

III APPLICATION

A. Application has been the major weakness of the program to date. There has been too much attention to numbers and speed, and too little consideration of the objective of the program -- the people. Initially, emphasis must be on convincing the people that the new administration intends to make the existing hamlets truly theirs, and will give them the benefits promised. Accordingly, certain steps should be taken immediately and maximum publicity given them in every hamlet:

1. Dissolution of the Republican Youth and Para-Military Women's command structure, and announcement that final command of all existing military and para-military organizations within the hamlet is vested in the hamlet administrative committee.

2. Announcement that new elections for members of hamlet and village committee will take place on a fixed date, not later than 15 December.

3. Immediate payment, from provincial release agreement funds, of relocation allowance to families as yet unpaid. (This should be done at a hamlet ceremony, where the purposes of the new government are announced, to include I and II above.)

4. Provincial officials be urged to arm at least one squad of militia in each hamlet where men have been trained in their use.

5. Starting no new hamlets unless requested by the people, and then only if military resources are adequate to support it without tying down additional troops in static defense.

B. The new administration can only achieve true credibility, and genuine support, by effective action to provide to the hamlet residents the benefits already promised. This will mean better and more effective action in every sphere. Attached (Incl B) are comments prepared last June, which point out some of the common weaknesses in the program, and the observed requirements for success. Effective application depends, above all, on a real understanding of and commitment to, the principles of the program. Inclosure C, while written in the terminology of the past, seeks to set forth both the principles of the program, and some of the fundamental requirements for its effective implementation.

C. In the Delta particularly, application initially should emphasize the consolidation of existing hamlets. The consolidation process in order to be effective must be systematically applied. The program is now so over-extended in certain areas of the Delta, that a proper priority of emphasis may result in the abandonment of certain hamlets to VC control while consolidation and establishment of the required popular base is accomplished. (See Inclosure A)

D. Application must accept that no hamlet is ever "completed," so long as a Communist sympathizer can exist in its vicinity. It should also be understood that there are certain minimum essentials which a hamlet normally should have if it is to be effective in the grand strategy. A hasty draft statement of these requirements is attached as Inclosure D.

IV CONCLUSION

The difference between the old administration and the new must be expressed by action, if it is to be credible. The best possible demonstration of the intentions of the new administration will be effective implementation of the principles of the Strategic Hamlet Program, in the hamlets already constructed. Like it or not, the success or failure of the war, the freedom or slavery of Vietnam depends on the strategy to which the majority of the resources of the country are already committed.

Inclosures:

- A - A Policy for the Delta
- B - Informal Appraisal, 1 June (French)
- C - Notes on Strategic Hamlets (Vietnamese)
- D - Draft - Minimum Requirements of an Effective Hamlet