

DIST:
AMB
DEP
WS
POL-20
OSA-3
MACV-4
MACV/OSA-8
MACV/J2 - 3
MACV/J3 - 3
2ND AIR DIV
USOM-2
USOM/RA
USIS
ECON
CORD
LABOR
C/P-2
DR OF-2

INFO

I. Summary

July 64

Pacification inched ahead in Long An during July, with hamlets along Route 4 receiving the entire focus of GVN efforts. GVN control was expanded slightly as a result. ARVN troops remain committed to hamlet security but have not been entirely successful in preventing VC harassments. Security has not been extended much beyond the highway itself. Throughout the province VC incidents dropped markedly during the month, despite still unconfirmed reports of VC strength increases. GVN Marines operating in isolated Can Duoc and Thanh Duc districts have restored some security along Route 5 through eastern Long An.

The Dai Viet political party is reportedly active in Long An among some second-level officials. The extent and direction of this activity is not known. The USOM-inspired agricultural program has shown impressive results so far and promises to make a significant contribution to local GVN prestige. It faces some danger of being hamstrung by bureaucratic interference from Saigon.

II. Security Situation

A. VC Activity: The number of VC-initiated incidents, which had fallen drastically from 238 in May to 114 in June, continued to drop off; only 85 were recorded in July. The presence of additional GVN troops both along Route 4 and in the eastern districts contributed somewhat to this decline. But the basic decision seems to have been primarily of the VC's own choosing rather than as a result of GVN pressure. Possible reasons include manpower demands of the rice-planting season, reorganization and buildup of local forces, movement

of main forces into other provinces, and lack of further lucrative targets in vulnerable GVN areas. VC domination of almost all of Tan Tru and Can Duoc districts, upper Thu Thua and Ben Luc districts, and much if not most of Thanh Duc and Binh Phuoc remains undisturbed.

Provincial intelligence reports indicate a buildup of both local and main VC forces. The 506th main force battalion is reported to have two new companies, though the battalion itself operates outside Long An as well. Regional force companies may have increased from five to six, while local village guerrilla squads (in Tan Tru and Can Duoc districts at least) appear to be expanding to platoons. These reports are as yet unconfirmed.

B. GVN Activity: The GVN pacification effort is now concentrated in 26 hamlets along National Route 4, the main artery from Saigon south to the Mekong Delta. Half of these hamlets are considered "pacified", at least to the point where cadre teams have moved on; the teams are now operating in the other 13 hamlets.

From a security standpoint, the hamlets appear only slightly better off than before pacification. Several were already relatively secure anyway, and VC harassments continue in others despite the presence of ARVN troops. Nevertheless, the ARVN presence has certainly been the determining factor in retaining GVN control of these hamlets. Local paramilitary forces are still unable to protect any significant part of the initial pacification area without continued and close ARVN support. A modest beginning has been made in organizing additional Popular Forces including some Combat Youth.

The secured area is limited to a short distance on either side of the road, and many hamlets just off the highway are still quite insecure. The road itself was mined in daylight in early July. There has been no significant expansion of security beyond the road since the current pacification operation began.

In Can Duoc and Thanh Duc districts, a Marine battalion has restored a fair degree of security for travel on Route 5 from Saigon south to Go Cong. The presence of the Marines in these shaky eastern districts has added considerably to the GVN military posture there.

Long An is included in planning for FICA I, the major "oil spot" operation to be centered on the Saigon area. The plan takes account of the province's current operational priorities, since the Route 4 area is also given high priority in FICA I. Expansion southward into upper Ben Luc, Can Duoc, and Thanh Duc districts will place severe strain on provincial capabilities and will have to be supported heavily by outside troops and at least some administrative personnel.

C. GVN Control: During July effective GVN control probably increased in about 10 additional hamlets in the pacification area. This would place the number of people in GVN-controlled towns and hamlets at about 73,000 or 19% of the population, compared to an estimated 65,000 or 17% in late June. This addition more or less comprises the rest of the hamlets along Route 4, although many hamlets just

off the road continue "unpacified", insecure, and beyond the predominant GVN authority now exercised along the highway.

Outside the general pacification zone GVN control remains unchanged, limited mainly to district towns and scattered outposts. The Marines in Can Duoc have extended GVN influence there somewhat; establishing permanent control has not been their mission so far. Can Duoc, Thanh Duc, and Tan Tru are still effectively cut off from direct overland communication with the provincial capital. The former two districts can be reached, however, by coming south on Route 5 from Gia Dinh province.

III. Psychological Situation

The overall psychological situation remained the same in July as in June, i.e., a general lack of sympathy for the VC and some preference for the GVN (though not to the point of significant personal commitment.) GVN paywar programs and techniques have improved noticeably, offering a considerably better chance of tapping this psychological potential. However, the ability of the GVN to provide security remains the sine qua non of a constructive and favorable popular attitude. The limited progress of pacification so far has not yet convinced the people of Long An that the GVN can do the job.

IV. Political Situation

The Dai Viet political party is reportedly active in Long An among some second-level officials. These include at least one district chief and several province-level officials, who are said to take their cue from the 7th Division commander. The extent and nature of party activity is not known, but there is no evidence that the party itself enjoys any kind of popular support, nor does it seem to be making any overt effort to build it. Apparently the Province Chief himself is not involved in this activity, although he is aware of it.

V. Economic Situation

The USOM-inspired agricultural program in Long An looks extremely promising. The distribution of improved rice seed and fertilizer and the utilization of pesticides have been carried out effectively, with the focus of the effort properly in the GVN-controlled areas, either in the general pacification zone or around district towns and other GVN outposts. The GVN's provincial agricultural services have come to life and have obviously raised GVN prestige among the farmers. Furthermore, the program is technically sound, thanks largely to USOM's Chinese agricultural specialist in Long An.

Much depends, of course, on how the current rice crop actually turns out at harvest-time; only then can a more thorough judgment of the program's political effectiveness be made. (In fact, the overall yield itself may not necessarily be an important indicator, since Long An farmers have long used fertilizer and pesticides. What will matter more is the personal net return to the farmers as a result of cheaper and better inputs.) But the timing of the program has been right and some political advantage is noticeable already. The prospects for more look bright.

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The program faces some danger of being hamstrung by bureaucratic difficulties between Saigon and the province. The problem has arisen from confusion as to which funds will be used to continue these agricultural activities. It would be a pity if this excellent program were to be reduced or choked off because of central GVN bumbling. USOM is investigating the problem.

V.. Conclusion

Pacification activities definitely picked up in July in Long An, but it is still hard to see tangible results. GVN control of people along the road has increased somewhat, but the province's overall security situation has not basically improved, since highway security was never really a serious problem anyway. Until the pacification area expands well beyond the road, the GVN has merely stood still in Long An.