

OBJECTIVES

Since 1965 the primary US objective in Vietnam has been to prevent the defeat of South Vietnam by communist forces, whether North Vietnamese or Viet Cong. This automatically involves a number of concurrent objectives -- such as the U.S. goals of stability in Southeast Asia, of an independent, non-communist government in South Vietnam, of social and economic well-being for the South Vietnamese people, of military self-sufficiency for the South Vietnamese armed forces. We may speak of one objective; in fact we pursue several related and inseparable goals.

For example, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy summarized the U.S. objective as "solely that of protecting the independence of South Vietnam from external interference and force." Then, explaining why we held that objective he said: "...Southeast Asia does matter ... the independence of South Vietnam crucially affects Southeast Asia and ... non-communist nationalism in Southeast Asia and in Vietnam has in it the seeds of a peaceful, progressive and stable area that can take its place in a world at peace."

Today, other official statements and on-going programs in Vietnam support the following three objectives:

- Assist South Vietnam provide its own internal security and increase its capability to deter and defend against external aggression;
- Help South Vietnam secure sufficient time and means to develop an effective, broadly based and cohesive nationalist force capable of meeting the needs of the South Vietnamese people and of competing politically with indigenous communist elements;

- Seek an honorable settlement which respects international borders, ends the fighting and permits further development of representative political institutions -- thus permitting the reduction and eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces without jeopardizing the primary U.S. objectives in Vietnam.

To these must be added a fourth objective found in the Republican and Democratic Party platforms and in statements by official and non-official spokesmen: - de-Americanize the war.

- This fourth objective is consistent with the goals of security, political development and peace listed above.
- It is not consistent with the strategy we have been following in pursuit with those goals.
- It indicates that in the near future priority US objectives are probably
 - . Withdraw US troops as soon as possible
 - . Help the Vietnamese create conditions which give South Vietnamese nationalist a fighting chance - militarily and politically.