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NO. A-472
TO Department of State

FROM : AMEMBASSY SAIGON

SUBJECT : OPERATION FAIRFAX: Its Impact on Revolutionary Development.

1. Background:

This report is a joint MACV/OCO evaluation and contains assessment of Operation FAIRFAX for the period 1 December 1966 to 1 February 1967. The operation is still in progress and final results may be different from those indicated herein, particularly with respect to the effects of the operation on the VC infrastructure.

By October 1966, certain areas of Gia Dinh were becoming increasingly subject to intensive Viet Cong harassment and activity. Binh Chanh District immediately to the south of the Saigon-Cholon complex, was getting dangerously out of GVN control. The district headquarters was faced with the possibility of being overrun; schools were being burned; and the VC were successfully attacking RF/PF installations and outposts. Thu Duc District, immediately to the east of Saigon, was also under increased VC influence. The vital Ben Hoa highway, Route 1-A, was bracketed by hamlets infiltrated by VC elements which in turn endangered Saigon's new water system, electric plant, and industrial installations located in this area. The threat to Gia Dinh, an area which at the end of 1966 listed only 1200 people under VC control, - was real. The severe consequence which could result if the trend were allowed to continue led to the initiation of Operation FAIRFAX and the commitment of three US battalions to the Capital Military District (CMD).

II. Planning for FAIRFAX/RANG DONG

a. General. Operation FAIRFAX is a US military operation

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RD - General

being conducted by II FFV. Operation RANG DONG is the Vietnamese counterpart operation being conducted by the Capital Military District. Initial US forces available were three battalions, one from each of three divisions. Subsequently, these have been replaced by the 199th Infantry Brigade. Three ARVN battalions from the General Reserve were assigned to the operational control of CMD for the conduct of Operation RANG DONG. Through cooperation and coordination between CMD, III Corps and II FFV, the two operations are essentially parallel in concept, command relationships and execution. Command is maintained along national lines, operation is decentralized to the battalion level, and the battalions provide direct support to the district chief of the district in which assigned.

b. Mission. The mission of Operation FAIRFAX states "II Field Force V in cooperation with ARVN/GVN will conduct operations in Binh Chanh, Thu Duc, and Nha Be Districts of the Capital Military District to destroy the Viet Cong forces, guerrillas, and infrastructure." The underlying objective behind this mission is the restoration of local area security to a level which could be maintained by ARVN, RF/PF and the National Police.

c. Deployment. Three US and three ARVN battalions are assigned to these operations. Initially, the 2/16th Infantry of the US 1st Division and the 30th ARVN Rangers were assigned to Thu Duc; the 4/9th Infantry of the US 25th Division and the 3rd ARVN Airborne were assigned to Binh Chanh; and the 3/22nd of the US 4th Division and the 5th ARVN Airborne were assigned to Nha Be. The US and ARVN battalions employ the "buddy" system in order to improve the training and effectiveness of all units, particularly ARVN. Search and destroy, cordon and search, small unit patrolling and ambushing operations are utilized with particular concentration on small unit operations. The US battalions are assigned the additional mission of improving the RF/PF facilities and training RF/PF units since it is these elements which have been weakened by the stepped up VC activity and need to be strengthened and reinforced if they are to provide continuing local security after FAIRFAX ends. Considerable civic action and psyops activity is expected from the US and ARVN units since they live and fight among the people much of the time and are in fact conducting a "people's war."

d. Duration. It was originally anticipated that US troops would operate in the three districts from December 1, 1966 to the beginning of Tet (February 9, 1967). By that time it was expected that security would be restored to a level which could be maintained initially by ARVN and RF/PF, and then, perhaps after an additional three months, by the RF/PF and the PFF, with the ARVN battalions in general reserve as a reinforcing force if required. Operation FAIRFAX will now be continued for an indefinite period of time.

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~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The length of time which the ARVN battalions will stay in the areas has not yet been determined by J.G.S.

e. Coordinating Mechanisms. Two types of coordinating devices are used in Operation FAIRFAX. They are:

1. Area Security Coordinating Center (ASCC). The ASCC is established in each district/subsector and is the mechanism for coordination of military operations and civilian activities. The District Chief, US battalion commander and ARVN battalion commander are the key participants and decision makers assisted by the subsector advisor, OCO district representative and others as appropriate. The ASCC is a coordinating rather than a command structure. The battalion commanders provide direct support to the district chief but retain complete command over their troops and the conduct of military operations. The US battalion commander, a Lieutenant Colonel, was directed by II FFV to set the example by his conduct, relationship with and support to the district chief (an ARVN Captain). It was anticipated that his example would prevent strained relations between the ARVN battalion commander (a Major) and the district chief; this factor has proved in the past to be a major obstruction to cooperation and coordination.

2. Combined Intelligence Centers (CIC). CICs are established in each district to gather, process and disseminate all US/GVN intelligence with representatives from the ARVN battalion, US battalion, subsector, National Police, Special Branch and MSS. The purpose is to physically locate all of these personnel in the same office area and have them work towards the same objectives.

III. Narrative of Operation FAIRFAX.

a. Thu Duc District.

1. Improvement, military effectiveness. The Thu Duc ASCC has adhered closely to the concept contained in the operations order. However, it has been hampered by a lack of personnel and material resources. Neither the subsector team nor the units involved have been able to provide sufficient facilities to make the ASCC an entirely separate center. Troop operations have been conducted on a buddy basis down to the lowest level, pairing US and ARVN companies, platoons and on occasion squads during combat operations. RF/PF were integrated with US units on all types of operations, including patrolling, ambushes, and platoon/company-sized operations. US forces assisted RF/PF in the reestablishment of previously overrun outposts and in the improvement and strengthening of all outposts. This was possible primarily due to the availability of barrier and construction material through US channels which were not available through RF/PF channels.

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2. Security. Operation FAIRFAX through the end of January had netted approximately 100 VC KIA, primarily guerrilla elements. Observers close to the situation feel that the increase in overall security has not been marked to date, though the psychological climate has improved. The 4/12th Infantry of the 199th Infantry Brigade which replaced the 2/16 Infantry on 13 January 1967, adapted to the situation well in terms of military activity, but more particularly in relating themselves to the people and engaging in an accelerated and aggressive civic action program. The ARVN 30th Rangers, who had a very poor reputation while previously stationed in Binh Chanh, are considered to be the most effective ARVN unit in operation in RANG DONG. This can be explained in part by the fact that they are now located at their "home base" and therefore may feel more committed to the people and the land. However, they have not engaged in much civic action work except for MEDCAP's and improvements on their own dependent housing.

3. Infrastructure. The Viet Cong infrastructure has not been affected by FAIRFAX/RANG DONG unless some elements were eliminated in the actions against the guerrillas. One encouraging sign was a recent intelligence report made by a hamlet chief which indicated the location of 24 VC; an immediate reaction force was launched, accompanied by the hamlet chief. If this trend continues and the people start to give information on the whereabouts of the VC infrastructure and guerrillas, a breakthrough on this problem could be obtained. However, if FAIRFAX/RANG DONG were to be discontinued at this time, there would be in all probability a rapid VC political reinsertion into Thu Duc.

4. Impact on RD. FAIRFAX has not measurably affected the RD plan and related activities in Thu Duc. The increased feeling of security has facilitated work in one of the two Ap Doi Mois now being developed and has permitted somewhat greater civilian efforts throughout the district. Considerable skepticism apparently exists, however, among the population as to how long the troops will stay which consequently affects the prospects for long range security in the district. This skepticism will have to be overcome if followup and permanent RD activities are to take root.

b. Binh Chanh.

1. Improvement Military Effectiveness. The ASCC was established in theory, but has been primarily a matter of coordination on an informal basis. The district chief was newly assigned and was not thoroughly familiar with the district's requirements and the ARVN Battalion Commander has been reluctant to take the initiative. As a result, the early stage of operations was primarily led by the US Battalion Commander. By 1 February, observers on the scene believed

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that the district chief was beginning to assume his proper position. Replacement of the 4/9th Infantry by the 3/7th Infantry, 199th Brigade, was also completed on February 1. US and ARVN military operations have been characterized by separate areas of operations but with an exchange of companies between battalions. ARVN has been noticeably more aggressive during this period, particularly with respect to smaller unit operations and night operations. RF/PF units have been integrated with US units for training, with the same results as achieved in Thu Duc. A number of overrun and abandoned outposts have been reestablished and rebuilt. Again, availability of barrier material through US sources has been essential.

2. Security. The improvement in security in Binh Chanh since the start of FAIRFAX has been dramatic. The contrast between the earlier feeling of imminent disaster and the present sharply reduced level of VC activities is marked. Approximately 85 VC, mainly guerrillas, have been killed through the end of January. The performance of the US and ARVN battalions has been aggressive militarily. The US battalion has also worked well with the people and has undertaken a number of civic action projects. The ARVN battalion, in contrast, has done much less except for some MEDCAP activities.

3. Infrastructure. The VC infrastructure has not been penetrated to date, although a large number of persons has passed through the district interrogation center. As in Thu Duc, the infrastructure is believed to have simply left the hamlets in which they were living (except possibly for some covert elements) and are waiting for the operation to stop so that they can return. A hopeful sign is the recent increase in Hoi Chanh which could possibly weaken the infrastructure if continued pressure is put on the VC over a longer period. Additionally, on 21 January, the first voluntary intelligence tip was received from the local population.

4. Impact on RD. The dramatic security improvement in Binh Chanh has had a direct effect on RD developments. As a result of military operations in the southern zone of Binh Chanh, approximately 800 persons have returned to the area and have requested government authorization to reopen their rice mills. Communication routes have been restored and economic life is returning to the area. This activity has in turn benefitted an RD team working in the Ap Doi Moi to the north of the district headquarters. The other RD team has been inserted in the security belt which immediately surrounds Saigon and was not similarly affected. Largely as a result of FAIRFAX General Thang has authorized more RD teams for Binh Chanh in 1967 and directed the relocation of one RD team. They will work in the hamlets contiguous to or in the recently cleared southern zone.

c. Nha Be

1. Improvement, military effectiveness. The ASCC, although operated on an informal basis, has been more effective as a coordinating apparatus in this district than elsewhere. The district chief, nominally

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the junior, is a strong individual and has assumed his proper responsibility. The US and ARVN battalions have guided their military operations to provide the support he has requested. US and ARVN battalions have established adjacent areas of operations, with occasional exchanges of company size units. US artillery and helicopter support have been shared with the ARVN battalion and this has encouraged a more aggressive attitude on their part, particularly in smaller unit operations and night operations. RF/PF integration with US forces is similar to that of the other districts and has achieved similar results. Similarly, also, the most important contribution to strengthening RF/PF positions has been the provision of barrier materials.

2. Security. The security situation in Nha Be was considerably better than that found in Thu Duc and Binh Chanh before the start of FAIRFAX/RANG DONG. As a result of the intensified military operations during FAIRFAX, there has been further improvement and more pressure has been put on the enemy in the Southern part of the district contiguous to the Rung Sat and Long An. The performance of the US and ARVN battalions has been good and approximately 90 VC guerrillas had been killed by the end of January. The US battalion has engaged in considerable civic action work establishing good rapport with the people but it appears that the 5th Airborne (ARVN) has not yet accepted the role of conducting the civil aspects of a "people's war" and their relationship to the people leaves much to be desired.

3. Infrastructure. The VC infrastructure has not been penetrated during FAIRFAX/RANG DONG thus far. There are indications that the hard core elements may have withdrawn from the area. The district is receiving feelers that some of the VC want to return through the Chieu Hoi program which might indicate a weakening of the infrastructure but it is too early to determine how significant this might be.

4. Impact on RD. The presence of US troops and the increased security they have brought have given an added thrust to the RD effort at Nha Be. More projects and activities are being undertaken throughout the district. Additional RD worker teams, and a more ambitious Ap Doi Moi program, are being considered for Nha Be during 1967 as a result of FAIRFAX.

d. Gia Dinh. The effects of Operation FAIRFAX cannot be measured only within the boundaries of the three districts. As a result of the decentralization of forces and military operations in the three districts, the CMD has been able to concentrate on

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intensified operations in the other districts of Gia Dinh. The most notable action which occurred during the months of December and January was the severe military defeat inflicted on the VC 6th battalion by ARVN in Tan Binh District. The 6th battalion is no longer considered effective. Operation FAIRFAX has therefore contributed indirectly to an improved security situation throughout the CMD.

IV. Summary of Operation FAIRFAX. General results of Operation FAIRFAX can be summarized as follows:

1. There has been a dramatic improvement of security conditions in Binh Chanh; Thu Duc's situation remains insecure although the psychological climate has improved; and Nha Be has gone from reasonably secure to even more secure. The general security situation in Gia Dinh has gone up since the start of FAIRFAX.
2. Body counts have not been spectacular, but considering the improvement of security conditions mentioned above this fact taken alone does not have great significance. In terms of the people, the US units have had good rapport and have zealously engaged in civic action projects. The ARVN units, in contrast, have not really committed themselves to the people, although they have performed their security missions well.
3. In all cases, the VC infrastructure remains intact. Intelligence reporting by civilians has picked up recently but indications are that, by and large, the population has adopted a wait and see attitude. They perhaps recall previous entries of the GVN into their areas, the subsequent withdrawal or removal of pressure, and the final retaliations by the VC. The people are not yet sure that the GVN is intent on staying and are therefore understandably reluctant to commit themselves.
4. ARVN and RF/PF performance has improved as a result of FAIRFAX. This can be attributed largely to the example set by and to their close association with the US battalions, the exchange of combat units and to sharing resources ~~which~~ which a US battalion brings. Many of the RF/PF outposts and installations have been rebuilt or improved during the last two months which materially improves the RF/PF posture. However, RF/PF strength levels have not increased.
5. The RD plan and program is in a stronger position in the three districts than in November. The RD plan has become more ambitious resulting in a request for additional worker teams and more Ap Doi Mois to be developed.
6. The pulling together of all elements, military and civilian

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and the directing of them towards mutually supporting goals at the district level has been a remarkable feat. The ASCC concept itself is being carried out with differing degrees of success and in different ways depending largely on the inter-play of the three dominant personalities: the district chief, ARVN commander, and US battalion commander. The critical factor in this arrangement is bringing the district chief into the ASCC and having him participate fully although he is the junior in military rank. Not all of the district chiefs took advantage of this opportunity. In the final analysis, the relative success of the ASCC can be related directly to the presence and influence of the US battalion commanders.

7. The establishment of the Combined Intelligence Centers at the district level is an excellent concept and has facilitated the collection, collation, and dissemination of information. A limiting factor has been the scarcity of trained and qualified professionals to do the job. Aside from one short-lived incident in the Nha Be CIC, all of the centers have functioned well. As with the ASCC, a major factor in the success of these centers has been the presence and drive of the S-2 (Intelligence Officer) of the US battalion.

8. The National Police and Police Field Forces have not really entered into the operation and therefore their lack of performance can be considered disappointing. Aside from the attachment of some Police Field Forces to the battalions who have participated in cordon and search operations the PFF ~~was~~ have remained in static defense and reserve roles. Although the PFF have worked fairly well with US forces, they have not had the same success with ARVN units. Generally, the ARVN commanders have preferred to conduct the cordon and search with their own personnel rather than employ the PFF.

V. Conclusions

1. The Role of the US Battalions: There is no question but that the US battalions, their commanders, and their resources have been the catalysts in Operation FAIRFAX/RANG DONG. The US units have proved that they could work well with the people and over a period of time obtain their confidence. Their performance in civic action projects is only one measure of how well they have done in the "people's war." Nor does it appear that civilian casualties have created any serious problems during the operation. The extremely fine conduct of the Americans may create a backlash since it exposes quite clearly the differences between them and the ARVN to the people. The people could well prefer to have the Americans protect them but in the long run this mission must be done by the Vietnamese ~~soldier~~. Unfortunately, allegiance which is now given to the Americans is not automatically transferred to ARVN.

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2. The Role of the ARVN Battalions. There is no sure way of determining whether ARVN could have obtained the same results in a similar time period without the benefit of US units. Estimates are that it would have taken ARVN a year. This may be unduly pessimistic but it gives a rough ~~idea~~ indication of the problem. It is also questionable whether ARVN will be able to maintain the high intensity of military activity in the three districts when the US battalions are removed. US withdrawal will automatically remove the US artillery and helicopter support which ARVN has shared during the operation and which was largely instrumental in their acceptance of small unit operations. Such withdrawal may cause ARVN to revert to its habitual and less effective battalion operations. US withdrawal would also eliminate the example set by the US Battalion commander, a Lieutenant Colonel, working harmoniously with the district chief, a Captain. This may result in less cooperation between the ARVN battalion commander and the district chief. A further problem is that although the ARVN units have performed well militarily, they have not been noticeably successful in prosecuting the "people's war." There are many reasons which lead to this problem. A major reason is that requests to assist the farmer, who probably lives better than the ARVN dependent, is not a reasonable demand in the ARVN soldier's eyes. Also the ARVN has very few resources with which to carry out civic action or other projects designed to help their countrymen. There are also the problems of leadership and discipline. Complicating the problems of leadership and discipline ~~xxx~~ is the special case situation of the QMD. QMD does not have permanently assigned forces but is dependent on being given operational control over general reserve units located in the Saigon area. As a result of this employment of largely transitory forces, the QMD commander is limited in the influence he has with subordinate commanders. All of this makes it very difficult for the ARVN to operate effectively against the elusive guerrilla and enemy political cadre.

3. Ramifications for RD. One of the first criteria in the development of an Ap Doi Moi is the elimination of the VC infrastructure. This is sound since it is the infrastructure which is the key to the enemy's control of an area. As has been mentioned previously, a disappointing feature in FAIRFAX thus far is the failure to reach this infrastructure, due to the wait-and-see attitude of the people and their understandable reluctance to give information which puts their life in jeopardy if security is withdrawn. There are indications that with time and continued military

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pressure, the people might place their trust in GVN. This in turn indicates the necessity of maintaining adequate security, either through a continuation of FAIRFAX/RANG DONG or of other similar operations. If, on the contrary, US and ARVN troops are pulled out and are not adequately replaced, the infrastructure and accompanying guerrilla elements will return and replenish their ranks and the situation will revert at a greater or lesser rapidity to pre-FAIRFAX levels. In RD terms, which is a longer range view, this could only serve to diminish the GVN image among the people and put the government in a weaker position than at the start of FAIRFAX. This should not be interpreted as an argument for the continued presence of three US battalions in the three districts for a protracted period. It is in fact extremely important that the US units phase out and hand over the mission to ARVN at the earliest possible moment, for reasons indicated above. However, the phasing must be accomplished in a way which will insure that there is not a sharp decline in security and a loss of all forward momentum.

4. The Need for Planning. This evaluation has shown that FAIRFAX is inextricably connected with RD since it is being fought in an area of high population density and has many of the characteristics of a "people's war." FAIRFAX demonstrates the positive results that can be achieved when military and civilian agencies carry out their efforts jointly towards a common objective. On the negative side, all of the possibilities uncovered by the operation have not been fully exploited. With the establishment of the Office of Civil Operations and its single chain of command on the civil side to the province level or below, joint planning in the early stages should be facilitated and improved upon in the future. This requirement is imperative if sufficiently comprehensive, precise and detailed military-civil plans are to be developed and integrated for those operations which directly affect RD, such as FAIRFAX, or by extension to those search and destroy operations which have direct impact on Chieu Hoi or Refugee activities, such as CEDAR FALLS.

5. The Mission will continue to assess the impact of FAIRFAX/RANG DONG and will submit new reports if any significant changes occur. GP-3

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