

Indochina Monographs

Territorial Forces

Lt. Gen. Ngo Quang | Truong



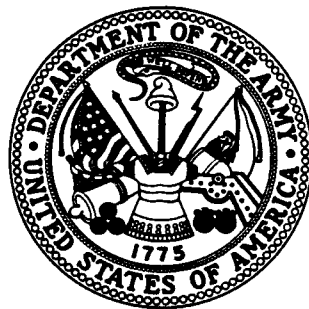
U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Indochina Monographs

This is one of a series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. They were written by officers who held responsible positions in the Cambodian, Laotian, and South Vietnamese armed forces during the war in Indochina. The General Research Corporation provided writing facilities and other necessary support under an Army contract with the Center of Military History. The monographs were not edited or altered and reflect the views of their authors--not necessarily those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense. The authors were not attempting to write definitive accounts but to set down how they saw the war in Southeast Asia.

Colonel William E. Le Gro, U.S. Army, retired, has written a forthcoming work allied with this series, Vietnam: From Cease-Fire to Capitulation. Another book, The Final Collapse by General Cao Van Vien, the last chairman of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, will be formally published and sold by the Superintendent of Documents.

Taken together these works should provide useful source materials for serious historians pending publication of the more definitive series, the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

JAMES L. COLLINS, JR.
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

Preface

A significant aspect of the South Vietnamese counter-insurgency effort was the employment of several differently organized military and paramilitary forces, each in a different role. Among them, the Territorial Forces, which made up more than one half of the total RVNAF strength, deserved particular interest because of their vital role in pacification.

Pitted against Communist local force and guerrilla units, the Territorial Forces fought a low-key warfare of their own at the grass roots level far removed from the war's limelight. Their exploits were rarely sung, their shortcomings often unjustly criticized. But without their contributions, pacification could hardly have succeeded as it did.

To evaluate the performance of the Territorial Forces, this monograph seeks to present the Vietnamese point of view on their roles and missions, development, training, employment, and support as they evolved during the war. More emphatically, it also attempts to analyze their problems and to determine if, in their actual condition, the Territorial Forces were effective enough as antithesis to Communist insurgency warfare.

Although I have drawn primarily from my own experience in the preparation of this monograph, several distinguished colleagues of mine have also contributed to it, to whom I want to express my gratitude. I am indebted to General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the Joint General Staff, and Lieutenant General Dong Van Khuyen, Chief of Staff of the JGS, for their valuable comments and suggestions concerning command, control, and

support of the RF and PF. Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, who served under me for several years as Commander of the 3d ARVN Division and himself Chief of Staff of the RF/PF Command for some time, is appreciated for his thoughtful comments on the RF/PF problems with which he was well familiar. Brigader General Tran Dinh Tho, Assistant Chief of Staff J-3, and Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, Assistant Chief of Staff J-2, of the JGS, each in his own field of expertise and knowledge, also contributed significantly to certain aspects of RF/PF organization, training, and performance.

Finally, I am particularly indebted to Lieutenant Colonel Chu Xuan Vien and Ms. Pham Thi Bong. Lt. Colonel Vien, the last Army Attache serving at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, D.C., has done a highly professional job of translating and editing that helps impart unity and cohesiveness to the manuscript. Ms. Bong, a former Captain in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and also a former member of the Vietnamese Embassy staff, spent long hours typing, editing and in the administrative preparation of my manuscript in final form.

McLean, Virginia
28 July 1978

Ngo Quang Truong
Lieutenant General, ARVN

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

An Abstract of Communist Insurgency in South Vietnam

The end of the First Indochina War in 1954 left the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or Viet Minh) with a well-developed political and military organization potentially capable of carrying on the fight with combined guerrilla-conventional warfare.

In the South, this organization consisted of about 90,000 troops who controlled several war zones (chien khu) and guerrilla bases (l^um). After the partition, the majority of this force was regrouped and evacuated to north of the 17th parallel in accordance with the Geneva Accords. In the process, the Viet Minh left behind an estimated five to ten thousand men, mostly selected from among well-trained, disciplined, and loyal party members. This fifth column was ordered to put away weapons and ammunition in secret storage, mostly in areas of difficult access along the border or in the Mekong Delta. They and other political elements were to mix in the stream of normal life and wait for orders to resume action. It was these men who made up the initial nucleus of insurgency after the South Vietnamese government refused to take part in the 1956 reunification elections.

During 1956 and 1957, the Viet Minh spent most of their efforts recruiting and reactivating former base areas. In the meantime, those who had regrouped to the North and received insurgency training there began to reinfiltrate into the South. This movement of Communist insurgency was thus building up force in earnest while South Vietnam complacently went about its task of nation-building. Gradually, the underground Viet Minh forces gained in strength and organization, ready to exploit the unsettled conditions which characterized the first few years of the Republic of Vietnam. By the end of 1957, a campaign of terror

and assassination was in progress and the first signs of security deterioration began to manifest in rural areas.

Insurgency as a concerted effort did not begin until 1959. By this time, subversive activities by the Communist Viet Minh, now known as Viet Cong, had taken on alarming proportions, especially in the Mekong Delta, and soon spread all over the country. Infiltration from North Vietnam through lower Laos and the DMZ, and from the sea also increased by the month, and in time became an established pattern for the years ahead.

North Vietnam's design for the South, which was decided during the 3d Congress of the Communist Party in September 1960, was to concentrate every effort on what it called "the primary strategic mission to prosecute a revolution for national liberation" in South Vietnam. As Hanoi leaders saw it, this mission was going to be a tough and protracted process requiring several different forms of struggle, from the lowest to the highest. The objective was to build, consolidate, and develop a popular front in the South which would appear as if the South Vietnamese population was revolting to overthrow their own government. This was how the National Liberation Front (NLF) for South Vietnam came into being when its creation was officially proclaimed on 20 December 1960. In early 1962, Hanoi took a further step toward full control of the insurgency war when it upgraded its southern Political Commissariat into the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), *The Party's Politbureau in the South*.

In its conduct of the war, Hanoi adopted the strategy of people's warfare which was to progress through three steps or phases: (1) Laying the infrastructure; (2) Holding; and, (3) Counterattacking. The first step consisted of secretly establishing control over the rural population through propaganda and terror, then gradually eliminating governmental authority through the assassination of local officials, and eventually building a political and military infrastructure among the population. The VC propaganda campaign promised the people land reform, local autonomy for minorities, universal education and a bright future, free from colonialism and based upon socialism. When this was done, the next step called for organizing armed forces to fight a guerrilla war with the objective of destroying governmental forces and structure in outlying areas and

expanding control over the rural areas. The third or final step consisted of building up sufficient military strength to attack and destroy governmental forces and progressing toward total control of the population.

These rules of Communist insurgency — as had been known for a long time — were patterned after Mao Tse Tung's theory of people's war, and with some modifications, had been put into application in Malaysia, Greece, the Philippines, Cuba, and Laos. The only difference as it applied to Vietnam was that one half of the country served as an immune sanctuary supplying men and weapons for the subversion of the other.

With large infusions of men and weapons from North Vietnam, the Viet Cong were therefore able to upgrade their terrorist activities to full-fledged guerrilla warfare. During 1960, the first battalion-size attacks were initiated against outlying towns and outposts, to include a few conducted against ARVN forces. Most significant were the attacks in early 1960 against an element of the 32d Regiment in the Mekong Delta and the Headquarters, 12th Light Division in Tay Ninh Province, which created quite a tremor across the country. Soon, these attacks gained in tempo and reached multi-battalion size during 1961; as a result, several outlying areas succumbed under Communist control.¹ In the meantime, the flow of infiltration from the North kept increasing in size and local recruiting efforts by the VC also became more successful as enemy control expanded.

By 1962, the Viet Cong guerrilla force structure had increased to over 75,000. This force consisted of three categories: full-time guerrillas, part-time guerrillas, and rural support elements. Full-time guerrillas were estimated at 18,000 and organized into companies and battalions which operated at the provincial level; they were considered the VC military. Part-time guerrillas, estimated at about 40,000, were organized at the district level into platoons and companies. Summarily trained they were equipped with small weapons, grenades, mines, and

¹The first two VC regimental-size units were activated during 1961.

explosives. The rural support elements numbered about 17,000 and constituted a reserve force at the village level. During the day-time, they went about their normal business but at night participated in activities under the local guerrilla chief's orders. Usually equipped with knives or machetes, they sometimes operated with firearms. These support elements played an important role in guerrilla operations, providing new recruits, supplying food, and collecting information concerning village defense, local government officials, and security forces.

From these three categories of guerrilla forces, the VC eventually built up their main, local, and guerrilla units which all increased in size and structure to keep up with intensified war efforts. By the end of 1963, the VC main force had reached a level of 35,000, a figure which kept expanding every year with the flow of weapons infiltrated from the North, especially those supplied by Russia and Red China.

As their forces grew in strength, the VC stepped up attacks, terror, and sabotage despite governmental counter-measures. Between 1963 and 1965, the level of armed conflict in South Vietnam grew to alarming proportions. The VC also benefited from the domestic political difficulties faced by the GVN during this period, which they exploited to their advantage by expanding the range and scale of their activities. During 1964 alone, they assassinated 436 hamlet chiefs or other officials, and abducted 1,131 others. More than 1,350 civilians were killed by VC mines or terrorist activities and at least 8,400 were kidnapped. This level of activity continued into 1965.

With their growing military posture, during 1964-1965, the VC gradually expanded their control over rural areas and upgraded their force structure to division size. From all indications, it was apparent that they were evolving into the final or mobile warfare phase.

The RVN's Counter-Insurgency Efforts

Born amidst tumultuous political events that marked the aftermath of the 1954 Geneva Accords, the Republic of Vietnam endeavored to develop a free, democratic, fully sovereign country that could resist Communist aggression from the North.

The threat of a military conquest by North Vietnam was genuine, especially after 1956. South Vietnam's leaders estimated then that this conquest could materialize either under the forms of a subversive war waged by Hanoi-directed Communist elements remaining in the South or through an outright invasion from the North conducted by NVA regular forces.

In the face of this double threat, South Vietnam planned its defense structure to cope with either or both possibilities. This, in essence, consisted of defending the national territory against a possible invasion from across the borders and eliminating subversive activities within the national boundaries. The objective was to ensure territorial integrity and pacify the whole country.

Toward that objective, the force structure of South Vietnam was organized into two principal components: the regular forces and the territorial forces. Regular forces consisted of infantry, airborne, marine, ranger units, etc., which were for the most part conventionally organized into divisions with organic support elements similar to U.S. counterparts, and whose primary mission was to destroy the enemy through combat operations and to defend the national borders. Territorial forces were made up of the Regional Forces and the Popular Forces, formerly known as the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps respectively. Their organization was local in nature, being kept mostly at the small unit level, (platoon and company), lightly equipped, and tasked for pacification and the maintenance of territorial security.

The first significant pacification effort made under the First Republic to counter Communist insurgency was the Agrovillage program. Launched by President Ngo Dinh Diem in July 1959 after the Communists began to step up disruptive activities, the program was designed to assemble those rural people who lived in scattered isolation into farming agglomerations for better governmental control and protection. Called "agrovilles," these farming agglomerations were to serve a double purpose: maintenance of local security and socio-economical development. Despite sound planning and a promising start, the few pilot agrovilles carved out of the Mekong Delta's wilderness did not live up to expectations.

Too large for effective defense, they proved to be vulnerable and unrealistic.

Drawing from this unsuccessful experiment, the Diem administration worked on another pacification concept and put it to test in a few areas during 1961. The concept, which became known as the Strategic Hamlet, was officially declared a national policy in March 1962.

Considered the most important pacification effort under the First Republic, the Strategic Hamlet program was essentially based on the British counter-insurgency experience in Malaya. Designed to counter Communist people's war and neutralize its frontless effect, the guiding concept of the program was to turn each individual hamlet, the natural geographic and demographic unit of South Vietnam, into a defense fortification. Hamlet defense was deemed basic, and easier to organize and control than the village, the administrative unit. Under the vision of Mr. Nhu, who devised the concept to neutralize the effect of a war without frontlines, we had to create interconnected lines of defense. These lines of defense were to be made up of strategic hamlets linked together in a mutual support system and when interconnected, would create large secure areas which made it easier to detect the enemy and facilitated mutual security support among the hamlets.

The initial plans established priority areas which the central government classified as strategically important, depending on the local security situation, so as to devote all efforts to those considered more important. The plans also set forth a policy of self-defense whereby the rural people living in hamlets would be trained and equipped to defend themselves against VC intruders.

When implemented, the Strategic Hamlet program revealed certain intrinsic weaknesses. A major weakness, which derived basically from the initial concept, was the forced displacement of a substantial number of farmers, which eventually generated an undercurrent of discontent. In addition to uprooting them from their lands and ancestral graveyards to which they felt intimately attached by tradition, the transplanting of farming people to an unfamiliar environment also tended to make their living standards somewhat lower.

Another basic difficulty was physical protection. Although in theory, the strategic hamlets should receive support not only among themselves but also from territorial and regular forces, there was seldom close coordination in local defense plans. Many hamlets under attack, therefore, found themselves isolated with no one to depend on for support but their own people.

As for training and equipment, they proved totally inadequate for the purposes intended. The VC in fact, encountered no significant difficulties when they mounted attacks against strategic hamlets of which a good number were destroyed. By the end of 1963, the program fell into disfavor and neglect after President Diem was overthrown.

The new military government which took over did not have any plans nor was any significant effort made to pacify the rural areas. The objective then was simply to destroy the VC. After General Nguyen Khanh came to power, in March 1964, the government initiated the "Victory Plan," the essential of which was to pacify the countryside on the "oil stain" concept. Pacification was to progress slowly but firmly gaining ground from secure areas and expanding outward as it proceeded.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the Victory Plan which sought to implement pacification in several aspects and required close military-civilian cooperation, in reality, it turned out to be primarily a military campaign endeavoring not so much to obtain the lasting results of pacification as to destroy the enemy. Therefore, South Vietnam's pacification efforts to counter Communist insurgency up to that time achieved very little indeed. It was possible that each attempt had been undermined by unfavorable circumstances prevailing in that particular period. But basically, these efforts still fell far short of the objective intended which was to bring about and maintain local security, a prerequisite of pacification.

During that period, the RVNAF were still progressing through a developing stage and constantly committed to operational activities. Support for pacification efforts, therefore, remained extremely limited. The territorial forces — Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps — also in the same developing process, did not have the capabilities to play their

role effectively at the grassroots level. Command and control throughout the RVNAF hierarchy suffered seriously from power intrigues which rocked national unity in the wake of Mr. Diem's death. The morale of combat units declined steadily while the security situation across the country deteriorated with every passing day.

To save South Vietnam from the danger of collapse and to stop Communist aggression, the U.S. introduced combat troops in 1965. The next period saw the war intensified by U.S.-conducted large-scale operations which achieved substantial results. Enemy forces were soundly defeated and their combat potential markedly reduced. All important populous centers were successively cleared from enemy pressure and the situation improved remarkably as a result.

All of these achievements, however, in spite of their magnitude, represented temporary success rather than lasting progress. The key issue in territorial security remained unsolved as long as the VC guerrilla and local forces with the support of their political infrastructure were still intact. Experience indicated that pacification would not produce lasting results until these elements were discovered and eliminated.

Therefore, the efforts to fight the insurgency war in South Vietnam were twofold. In addition to destroying enemy main force units and defending the borders against infiltration, the government had also to deal with the VC infrastructure and guerrillas, the enemy's insurgent component. This was precisely the role to be performed by the territorial forces.

CHAPTER II

South Vietnam's Organization for Territorial Defense

The Geographical Environment

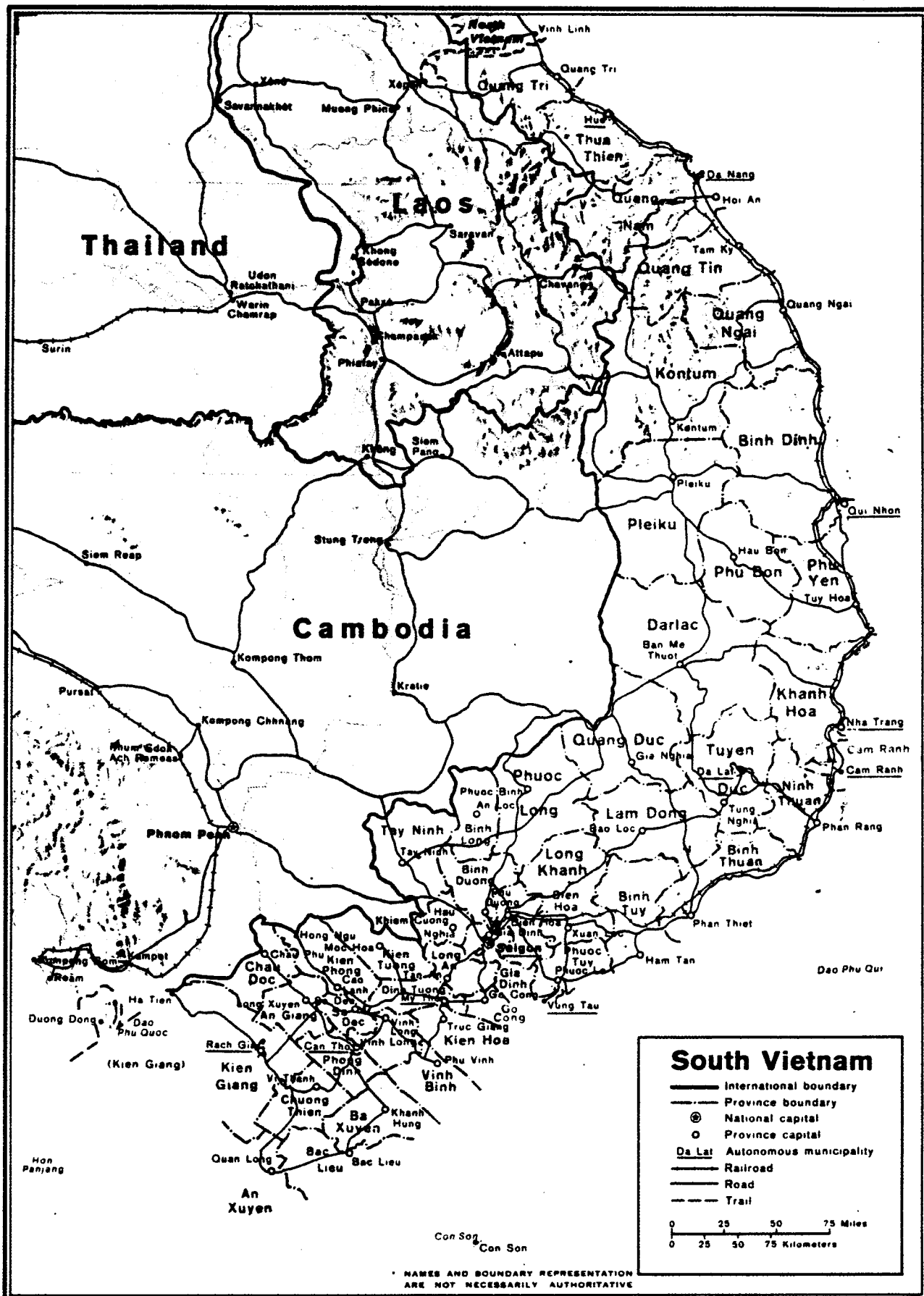
South Vietnam covered a crescent-shaped area of approximately 67,000 square miles flanked on one side by a 1,500-mile coastline facing the South China Sea, and on the other by a 950-mile border which is shared with Cambodia and lower Laos.

While the long coastline, which ran from the DMZ at the 17th parallel to the Gulf of Siam, was generally uncluttered and flat, the western border was, for the most part, lost in a maze of jungle and mountains and usually remained undefinable. Because of this terrain configuration, South Vietnam lent itself to easy infiltration through innumerable accesses both from the sea and the border areas. (*Map 1*)

South Vietnam's climate is tropical; hot and humid, it is under the influence of alternating monsoons. There are, therefore, only two seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. The monthly mean temperature is 85°F. September and October are the period of heavy rain throughout the country with occasional cyclones whose eyes usually move into the Gulf of Tonkin. Heavy rains, cyclones and floods which frequently occur along the coastal lowlands affect the lives of people living in these areas to a considerable extent.

The topography of South Vietnam is highly diverse. In general, three geographic regions can be distinguished: the Central Highlands, the Coastal Lowlands, and the Mekong Delta. The sparsely-populated Central Highlands, which occupies about two-fifths of South Vietnam's total area, is made up of jungle-covered high plateaux with elevations ranging from 3,000 to a maximum of 8,366 feet. Its terrain offers excellent concealment for troop cantonments and movements. A long and

Map 1 - South Vietnam General Reference Map



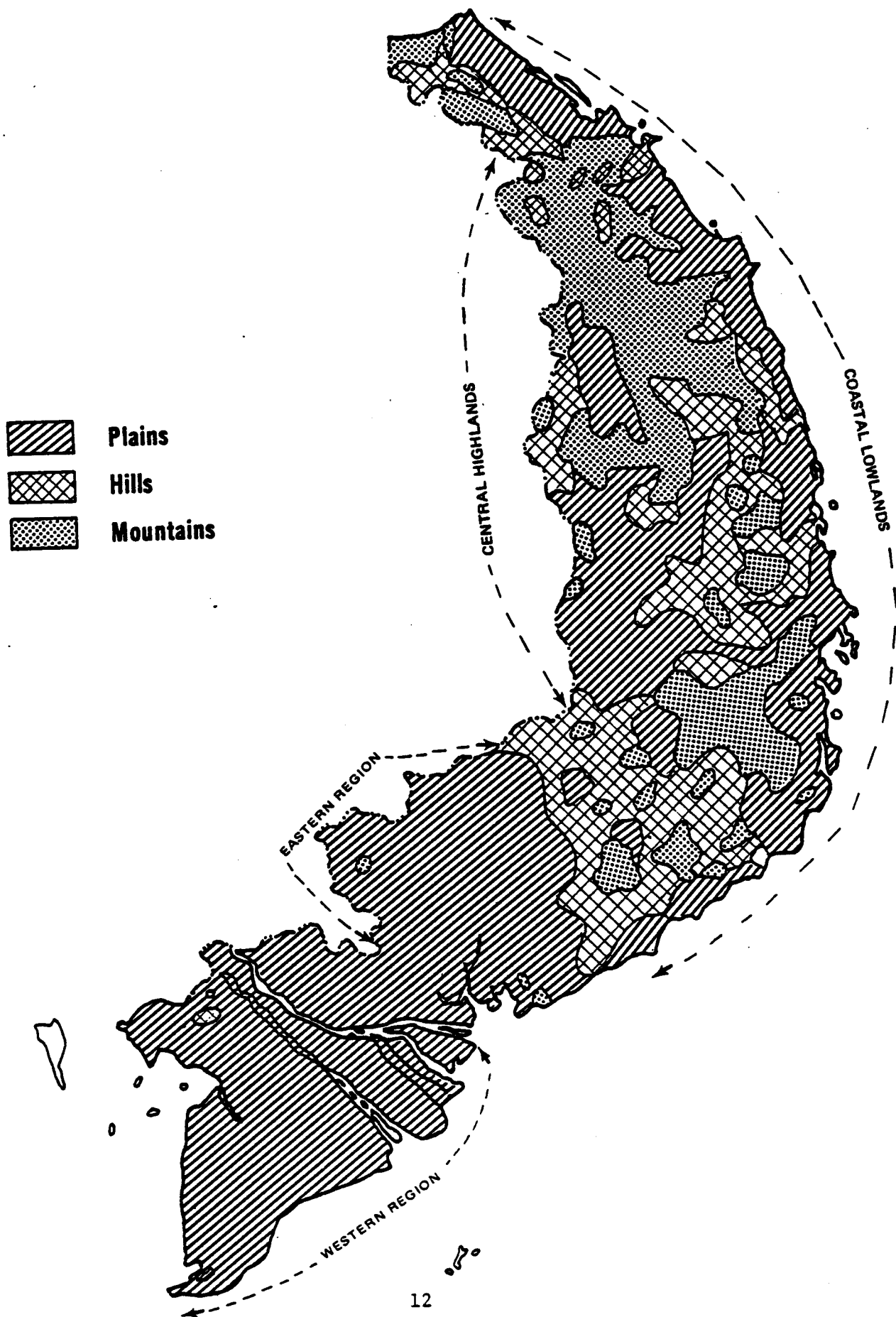
narrow plain, from 10 to 25 miles wide, forms the coastal lowlands which run from Phan Rang northward to the 17th parallel, hemmed in from the west by the foothills of the Truong Son range. The coastal lowlands was extensively cultivated and had a high population density. The remainder of South Vietnam, approximately two-fifths of the total area, is the delta region formed primarily by the Mekong River and other lesser rivers. This is the most densely populated area in which the South Vietnamese distinguished two regions separated by the Vam Co East River: the Eastern region heavily covered with vegetation and rain forests, and the Western region, or the Mekong Delta proper, with its crisscrossing canal system.

(Map 2)

Lines of communications were few and in poor condition. Aside from major roads which connected big cities and provincial capitals, there were very few secondary roads; most of them narrow, requiring constant maintenance to keep them trafficable, especially during the season of heavy rains and floods. In addition to natural causes of debilitation, lines of communication were frequently interdicted by the VC. Great numbers of bridges, culverts, and mountain passes offered the enemy the ability to use ambush or blocking tactics to his advantage. Outside of the road system, movement was difficult particularly in the jungle-covered high plateaux and in swampy areas. To reach outlying places where outposts and fire support bases were usually installed, movement by air was essential and sometimes remained the only means of communication. In time, because of difficulties in communication and enemy activities, many remote rural areas became isolated from central control, physically and psychologically. This in time facilitated the enemy's efforts to gain control over the population and impeded the government's ability to intervene quickly in case of heavy enemy threat.

On the other hand, the terrain of South Vietnam seemed to favor movement by foot because there were myriad pathways and trails through jungles and mountains and these were especially practicable during the dry season. In the Mekong Delta, the extensive canal system facilitated

Map 2 — South Vietnam, Terrain Configuration



communication by small boats and during the rainy season, large flooded areas made it possible to reach other areas outside the normal waterways. Control of enemy movements during the rainy season was therefore nearly impossible.

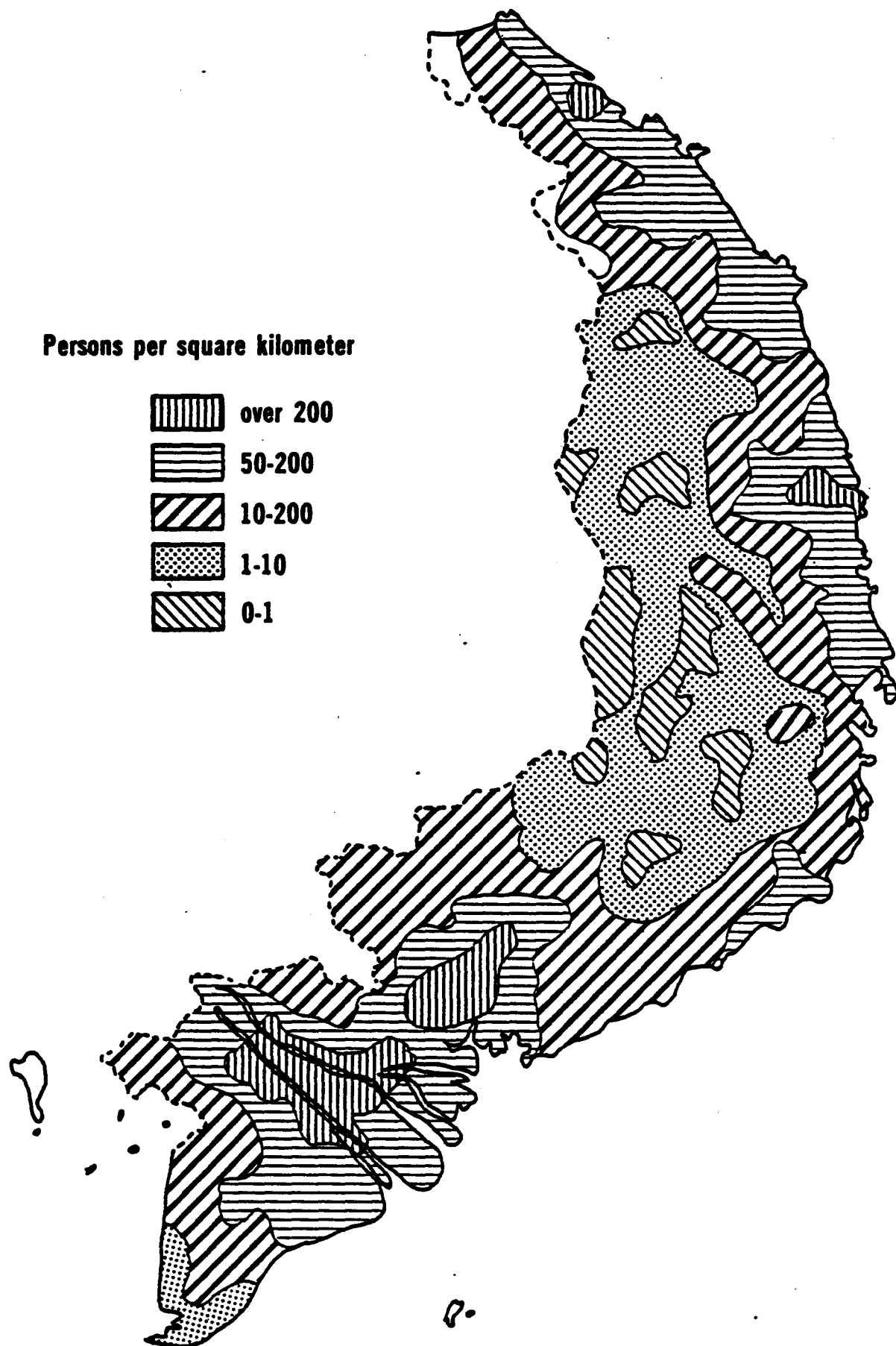
In 1954, the population of South Vietnam was estimated at 14 million; its birth rate was about 2.25% per year. Among the three major geographic areas, the Central Highlands was the most sparsely populated. Most of the South Vietnamese people lived in the plains and lowlands in farming or fishing communities. They were particularly concentrated in areas which favored rice production such as the Mekong Delta and river valleys in the central lowlands. (Map 3)

Vietnamese made up the largest ethnic group living in South Vietnam, about 85% of the total population. Other ethnic minority groups included the Chinese (6%) who played a major economic role, the tribal montagnards (5%) of the Central Highlands, the Khmers of the Mekong Delta and the Chams.

South Vietnam's major religion was Buddhism; about 80% of the population were Buddhists although only a small percentage ritually practiced the religion. Next in importance was Roman Catholicism; about 10% of the population were Catholics. Two local religious sects, the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai, which were founded in the early 20th century, drew a substantial number of followers in the Mekong Delta. Other religious faiths represented in small minorities included Protestantism, Hinduism, Islam, and the Bahai. Competition for influence among the major religions and religious sects sometimes caused tense situations and difficult problems for the government.

The rule of the country was centralized at the national level; all important decisions originated from Saigon, seat of the central government, which also directed major national programs. The President of the Republic was truly the holder of political power as head of government. He was assisted in the development of national policies and programs by a cabinet operating under the direction of the Prime Minister. These programs and policies were executed by the echelons of the civil-military administration which included in descending order the corps tactical zone

Map 3 — South Vietnam, Population Density



(CTZ) the division tactical area (DTA), the province, the district, and the village.

The executive echelon directly below the central government was the corps tactical zone (or military region after 1970). The CTZ or MR commander acted as the government delegate in his area of responsibility. But not all directives from Saigon had to go through the military region and DTA level. Usually, technical and administrative directives originated from various ministries in Saigon went directly to province chiefs for execution. This served to alleviate the administrative burden for military region and division commanders who needed most of their time to look after operational matters.

South Vietnam was administratively divided into 44 provinces and five autonomous municipalities (Saigon, Da Nang, Dalat, Cam Ranh, and Vung Tau). The provinces dated mostly from colonial times but included ten which had been created by the Diem administration. Largely located in areas formerly controlled by the Viet Minh during the First Indochina War (1946-1954), these new provinces included Quang Tin in the I Corps area, Phu Bon and Quang Duc in the II Corps area, Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Phuoc Thanh, and Hau Nghia in the III Corps area, and Kien Tuong, Kien Phong and Chuong Thien in the Mekong Delta.

The next level of administrative organization below the province was the district which in turn was divided into villages. On an average, there were from eight to twelve villages to a district. A village was made up of several hamlets, the hamlet being the basic geographical unit with natural boundaries. Administratively however, the village was a more significant unit since it had a local government responsible for civilian as well as military matters.

Military Organization and Control

Up to 1957, South Vietnam retained its military territorial organization as it had been under French control. There were then only three military regions: MR-1 which comprised the provinces of former Cochinchina and was headquartered at Thu Duc in Gia Dinh Province; MR-2 which encompassed all the provinces of former Central Vietnam and whose

headquarters was located in Hue; MR-4 which was headquartered at Ban Me Thuot and encompassed the Central Highlands.¹ Under the control of military region headquarters, there were sectors, defined by provincial boundaries. During this period, the sector commander served as deputy for security for the province chief who was usually a civilian. Infantry divisions were deployed to military regions as required by defense requirements; they were subordinated to military region headquarters only in matters concerning territorial security.

In late 1958, in keeping with ARVN reorganization trends which saw the activation of field and light infantry divisions, three corps headquarters were created: I Corps at Da Nang; II Corps at Pleiku; and III Corps in Saigon. These corps headquarters were organized with the purpose of controlling infantry divisions assigned to them to fight a hypothetical large-scale invasion by the North Vietnamese Army.

But large-scale or conventional warfare at the division or corps level did not materialize at the outbreak of Communist insurgency. The war began instead at the grassroots level with small VC guerrilla units which, through the use of hit-and-run tactics, gradually gained control in rural areas, especially in former MR-1. To alleviate the territorial-control and combat burdens for MR-1, an area teeming with Communist insurgents who lived either among the popular masses or in the jungle, the government created a new military region, called MR-5, with headquarters in Can Tho.

In 1961, several significant reorganization efforts were made in order to achieve unity of command and place particular emphasis on pacification. South Vietnam was divided into four Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ), each placed under the control of an army corps. Each CTZ was in turn divided into Division Tactical Areas (DTA), for which subordinate infantry divisions were responsible. The 1st CTZ or I Corps area encompassed the five northernmost provinces which made up two DTA's.

¹This division was part of the pre-Geneva territorial organization. The mission MR-3 happened to be North Vietnam minus the provinces of the panhandle. Its headquarters was in Hanoi.

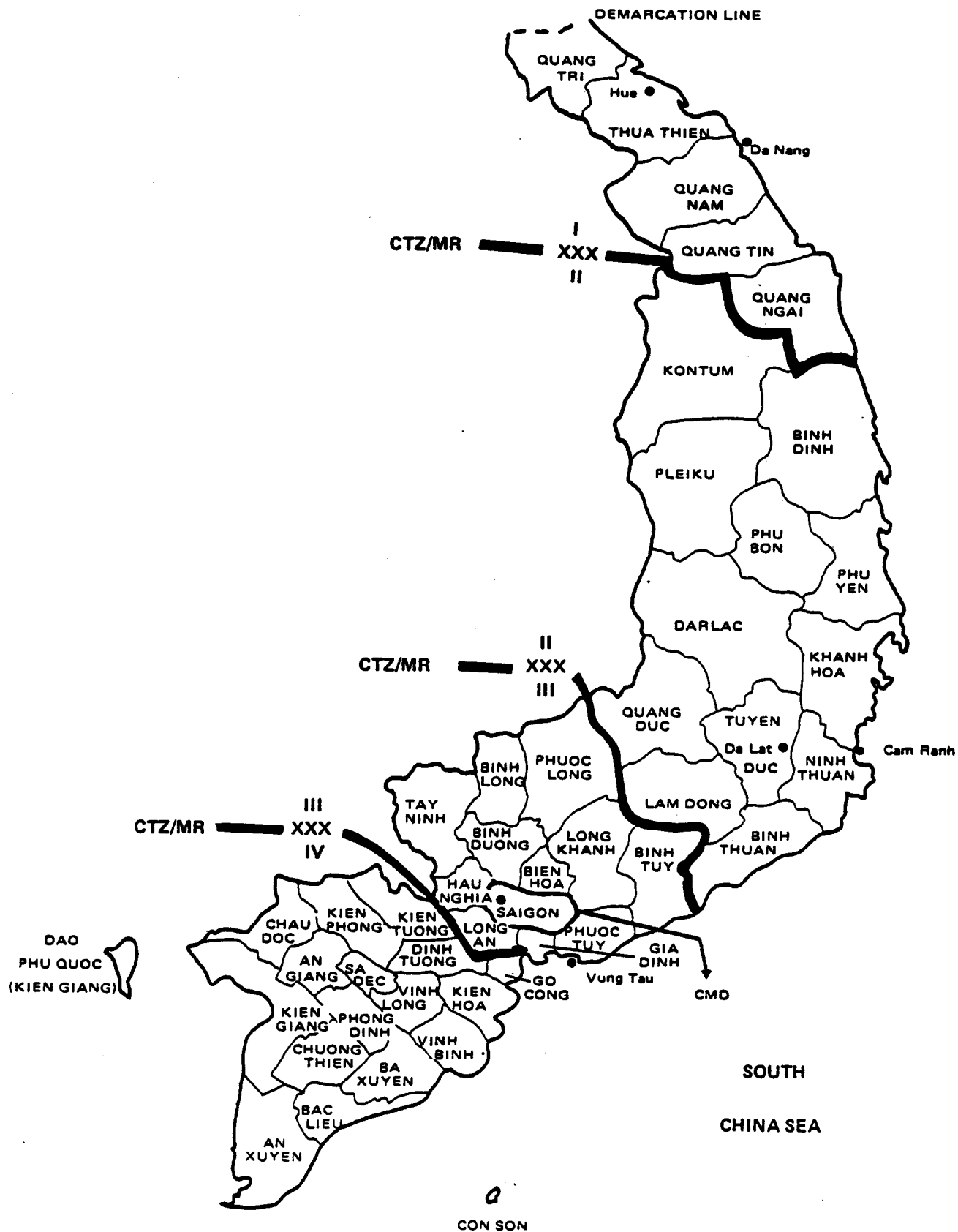
The 2d CTZ or II Corps area included twelve provinces of the central highlands and coastal lowlands which were distributed between two DTA's. The 3d CTZ or III Corps area comprised the ten provinces that surrounded Saigon and the Capital Military District (CMD) which encompassed Saigon City and Gia Dinh Province. The 4th CTZ or IV Corps area was divided into three DTA's and included all sixteen provinces of the Mekong Delta.

To achieve unity of command, the three former military region headquarters were deactivated and a new IV Corps Headquarters was activated at Can Tho. Corps commanders were also CTZ commanders, likewise, division commanders were also DTA commanders. Both the CTZ and DTA were responsible not only for mobile operations but also for territorial security in their zones and areas of responsibility. At the same time, civilian province chiefs were gradually replaced by military officers, especially in those areas where security deteriorated. When a military officer was appointed province chief, he also served as sector commander at the same time. This practice soon became firmly established and eventually all province chiefs were military officers, especially following the overthrow of Mr. Diem.² It was believed that in a country at war, a military province chief was better suited to the task of pacification since he could coordinate military and civilian activities. This practice also applied to district chiefs who served as subsector commanders at the same time. (Map 4)

In 1970, in order to provide more combat forces for mobile operations in replacement of U.S. units, the formal DTA's were disbanded, theoretically freeing infantry divisions from their territorial responsibilities. Divisions were assigned informal areas of tactical responsibility instead, whose configurations depended on the local security situation. South Vietnam was still divided in four corps areas which retained former boundaries but were called military regions in place of CTZ. Corps commanders, as military region commanders, exercised direct control over

²Before the inauguration of the Second Republic in September 1967, a few civilians were still appointed as mayors and province chiefs (Dalat, Da Nang, Quang Nam, etc.) for local politics reasons.

Map 4 - RVN Military Territorial Organization



sectors as far as territorial security was concerned. Sectors remained the same as did subsectors.

This organization was maintained until late 1973. In early 1974, to improve the maintenance of security at the grassroots level and in preparation for a political contest with the Communists, South Vietnam's military territorial organization was extended to the village level through the activation of sub-subsector headquarters. A sub-subsector commander, usually a junior officer, performed the role of assistant village chief for security, responsible for the control and coordination of village security forces, to include Popular Forces, People's Self Defense Forces and the National Police. This was the last effort to improve territorial command and control made by the GVN.

In spite of complexities and shortcomings which inevitably came as a result of several changes in territorial organization and control, the efforts made by the GVN in that direction represented perhaps the best compromise between dictates of the growing politico-military war and available resources. South Vietnam's organization for territorial control was also a compromise between centralization and efforts of decentralization which were made during the later stages of the war.

At the corps/military region level, the most serious shortcoming was undoubtedly the fact that the corps commander and his staff were constantly overburdened by innumerable tasks and responsibilities. The span of control was simply too much for a corps headquarters to handle, such as in the case of MR-2 and MR-3 each of which consisted of more than ten provinces. In the extreme case of MR-4 which encompassed sixteen provinces, obviously every basic principle of command and control was seriously violated. MR-1 was relatively better off with only five provinces but here I Corps had to shoulder heavier combat responsibilities occasioned by large-scale threats and attacks by the majority of NVA divisions.

Some ideas had been proposed during the war in an effort to remedy our shortcomings in organization and control. In general, these ideas advocated realigning South Vietnam's territorial organization into at least six military regions instead of four. This realignment would

surely benefit MR-2, MR-3 and MR-4 in particular by reducing their spans of control. Each military region, the same concept advocated, should have its own headquarters, separate from corps, responsible for the control and administration of territorial forces and the maintenance of territorial security. This would permit corps headquarters, which then should be reduced to three, to exercise better command and control over infantry divisions now entirely devoted to mobile combat operations. Each corps would not be bound to any permanent area of responsibility but would be assigned an area of operation selected by the Joint General Staff depending on the military situation or the primary effort to be conducted.

South Vietnamese military authorities seemed to agree that this arrangement for command and control would make the conduct of the war more efficient and effective. They believed that the most appropriate time for this reorganization was during 1970, after the U.S. had irreversibly decided to disengage from the war. This would have been an excellent way to implement Vietnamization since it would yield more effective combat forces to replace departing U.S. units and better prepare the RVNAF for the increasingly conventional outlook of the war. In retrospect, 1970 was no doubt the time to implement this reorganization since not only was the overall situation improving but the capability of enemy forces had been greatly reduced. In this contemplated realignment, the six military region headquarters would assume the functions of the four corps in fighting the small war at the grassroots level with territorial security and pacification. Then, ARVN corps would be completely free to conduct operations in search of enemy main forces in their base areas and sanctuaries, in other words, fighting the bigger war.

Such an approach for conducting the war appeared sound and logical in principle because it would provide better tactical and territorial control, thus ensuring improved territorial security. But apart from additional personnel and equipment required by the creation of separate military region headquarters which was the biggest problem to solve, there was also the possibility that the existence of such parallel commands

might not be conducive to effective coordination and cooperation. This possibility was fully explored and weighed during the process of reorganizing South Vietnam's defense structure which took place in October 1970. Both alternatives, combining or separating corps and military region headquarters were discussed and debated but the former solution gained more weight because although it placed additional burdens on one commander, it certainly provided unity of command and made it possible to concentrate every effort and resource on territorial security. In any event, the corps commander could always delegate some of his responsibilities to his two deputies, the Deputy for Operations and the Deputy for Territorial Security, thereby reducing the problems caused by the magnitude of his span of control.

The abolition of DTA's, on the other hand, did not bring about any of the desired results. Whether DTA's now became tactical areas of Interest (TAOI), tactical areas of responsibility (TAOR) or areas of operation (AO), the ARVN infantry divisions continued to be bound by territorial responsibilities. The primary reason why they could not be extricated from their territorial security mission was that the military region headquarters could not militarily control the territory for which it was responsible. Besides, the evolving security situation in certain areas did not allow the redeployment of divisional units if security was to be maintained.

When the presidential decree abolishing DTA's went into effect, Mr. John Paul Vann, senior CORDS adviser for MR-4, proposed to me, as IV Corps commander, that four sectors adjacent to corps headquarters, Phong Dinh, An Giang, Sadec, and Vinh Long be placed under direct corps control. After discussing it at length with him and my staff, I found his recommendation impractical. For one thing, as far as security was concerned, the separation of all sixteen sectors of MR-4 from divisional control would be impossible. Placing just a few sectors under direct control would only complicate the chain of command, causing it to lose its unity. But the essential thing was to keep infantry divisions from interfering into or upsetting the sector's pacification plans, which was the one practice that caused concern to CORDS advisers. As IV Corps

commander then, I made sure that this did not happen but it was a different problem.

To be sure, I found it impossible to extricate infantry divisions from territorial missions because they were the primary forces that kept territorial security from deteriorating. Aside from their resources which could be used to effectively support territorial activities, infantry divisions also performed certain critically needed services such as inspecting and supervising fixed installations, the defense of outposts and bridges, especially in outlying areas, services that required highly professional expertise. The role played by infantry divisions therefore became indispensable for the maintenance of territorial security. This indicates why our eleven ARVN infantry divisions were never entirely mobile in a true sense regardless of their efforts. The only exception came during the 1972 Easter Offensive when the 21st and 23d Divisions were temporarily extracted from territorial missions but then it was just a case of force majeure. To be freed from territorial responsibilities in order to conduct mobile operations -- like the Airborne and Marine Divisions -- was a major desire of division commanders. Unfortunately, they were never able to escape the tedious chores demanded by territorial security.

At the province or sector level, the fact that the province chief doubled as a military commander also caused many problems. A province chief usually found himself overburdened by military and civilian duties. As a military commander, he was in charge of a territorial force whose strength might be the equivalent of two divisions, such as in the case of Dinh Tuong and Binh Dinh, two of the largest provinces. In addition, as province chief, he had to direct and supervise his provincial administration, including those activities originated by ministries of the central government. But his role was an integrated one and even though overburdened, he could operate much more effectively than if his responsibilities were divided as during the First Republic. For the task of pacification implied that every effort should be an integration or detailed coordination of military-civilian activities, and this requirement could not be achieved by having a province chief looking after administrative

affairs while a sector commander was solely responsible for military operations. For the purposes of unity of command and pacification, the dual role of the province chief was essential. After all, like the corps commander, he could always delegate authority to his deputy for administration and deputy sector commander.

In general, South Vietnam had gone through several trials and errors in the quest for the best approach to fighting a war which was devoid of conventional frontlines and rear areas. Under such circumstances and given the environment of South Vietnam, it was hard indeed to find any simple solution which would be better than the prevailing arrangement for territorial command and control.

CHAPTER III

The Regional and Popular Forces

Evolution of a Concept

During the first few years of its existence, South Vietnam wanted to maintain a military force composed primarily of volunteers. From the lessons learned during the 1946-1954 war, South Vietnamese military leaders believed that for the defense of their new nation to be effective, this military force should have the capabilities to maintain territorial security and fight a mobile war at the same time. Therefore, in addition to regular forces which were upgraded from mobile groups to infantry divisions in early 1955, they advocated the activation of local force regiments with men recruited locally. This concept was based on the simple logic that these men were intimately familiar with the geographical and social environment of their locality and, attached as they were by tradition to their native villages, they would be more dedicated to fight for their defense if the necessity should arise.

This concept was not shared by U.S. advisers of the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) who maintained that the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) should be a mobile ground force consisting primarily of draftees. They also disapproved of the local recruitment principle, fearing that this would make the ARVN less mobile. Our army, as a result, was reorganized along American conventional guidelines into four field divisions, and, as a measure of compromise, six light divisions, totaling 30 regular infantry regiments after ridding itself of all auxiliary force units. The four 8,600-man field divisions would be employed to confront an invasion from the North, conventional-style. The light divisions, with a strength of 5,245 each, were designed primarily to conduct mobile operations to suppress rebels and guerrillas and to support the field divisions. By 1958, however, the light divisions were

disbanded, for, as the Chief MAAG, Lt. General Samuel T. Williams observed, they were not capable of confronting regular North Vietnamese divisions. At that time, it appeared that South Vietnam's defense was based on the concept that the ARVN needed only to fight a delaying action during the initial stage of an invasion pending eventual intervention by the U.S. and SEATO forces. As a result, our ten divisions were transformed into seven standardized infantry divisions, conventionally organized, trained, and equipped to fight a conventional war. Preoccupied as it was with the task of preparing the ARVN for an eventual showdown with the North Vietnamese Army, MAAG took some interest in the problem of territorial security but in its view, this was a matter that the GVN should and could handle with its own resources.

When fighting finally broke out, it did not take the form of a conventional, Korean-style invasion. It rather began as a brush-fire war fought with subversive activities and guerrilla tactics away from the urban centers. Waged day and night, this small war gradually gained in tempo, nipping away at the secure fabric of rural areas. In the face of growing insurgency, ARVN units found themselves ill-fitted to fight this type of war for which they had not been trained.

In mid-1959, to meet the immediate requirements of beating Communist insurgents in their own game, the GVN activated 65 "special-action" companies, which later became known as Rangers. Acting without MAAG concurrence, the GVN was compelled to take away one company from each 4-company infantry battalion to provide the necessary manpower for the Ranger forces. By June the next year, however, MAAG was sold on the special warfare concept and agreed to support and train the Ranger companies.

To assist South Vietnam in meeting the growing Communist threat, a counter-insurgency plan was prepared for study in September 1960 under the supervision of Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, the new Chief, MAAG. The objective of this plan was to check the expansion of insurgency by increasing South Vietnam's force structure. For the conduct of the war, the plan's basic concept advocated the division of South Vietnam's territory into tactical areas placed under military commands

appropriately structured and sufficiently strong to exercise effective control and supervision. Security in individual areas was to be maintained by ARVN units, Rangers and territorial forces acting in close coordination and cooperation. In February 1961, the completed counter-insurgency plan was approved. It provided basic guidelines for all subsequent planning and actions in the years ahead.

The territorial forces, whose employment figured in this counter-insurgency plan, were military organizations placed under the direct control of sector and subsector commanders to assure territorial security. Two principal components made up the territorial forces: the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps which eventually became the Regional and Popular Forces in 1964. The Regional Forces (RF) were basically organized into rifle companies augmented as required by a number of river boat companies, mechanized platoons, heavy-weapons platoons, reconnaissance units, administration and logistic support companies and elements of command and control. Although normally operating at the company level, the RF were capable of conducting multi-company operations. The Popular Forces, on the other hand, never progressed beyond the platoon, their basic unit or organization, which was conceived for combat in villages and hamlets. These forces were essentially infantry; their equipment and mode of subsistence were more austere than those of the RF.

The rules were thus established: the RF served the province and the PF, the district, but their goals remained essentially the same. There was no standard distribution of RF companies for each province. Their assigned number varied according to the size and population of the individual province and the priority placed on it. The same principle applied to the distribution of PF platoons for individual districts.

Background and Missions

In their role as guardians of territorial security, the RF primary mission was to conduct operations against enemy local forces. The RF supported the PF in maintaining security for villages, and hamlets and protecting axes of communication, governmental installations, and the

economic infrastructure. Placed under the control of the sector commander, the RF occasionally performed operational missions at the multi-company level during relatively long periods of time. In many instances, the RF also served as a provincial reaction force. In addition, the RF were employed in the defense of outposts or combat bases located in relatively insecure areas.

The RF were originally a para-military force, called the Civil Guard (CG), which was activated in April 1955 with elements of the Vietnamese National Army, French Union Forces, and auxiliary forces (Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, UMDC, etc.), disbanded or discharged as a result of a MAAG-imposed force structure ceiling. The Civil Guard eventually absorbed 68,000 of these men and was organized into separate companies assigned to provinces on the basis of two or eight companies per province. In addition, there were eight battalions of 500 men each held in reserve.

The Civil Guard Directorate at the central level was under the Ministry of the Interior, and there were Civil Guard Offices at the province level. Both echelons were charged with administration, finance, personnel, training, and logistic support. All expenses incurred by the maintenance and operation of the Civil Guard were covered by the national budget. To help defray equipment costs, the GVN turned to some allied countries besides the U.S., such as Malaysia and Australia, for assistance. As a result, in addition to a hodgepodge of old weapons left behind by French forces, the Civil Guard was also equipped with vintage Ford Lynx armored vehicles and scout cars provided by Malaysia, and Land Rover trucks and radio equipment donated by Australia.

The Popular Forces were primarily employed as security forces for villages and hamlets to defend against local enemy guerrillas. They were also deployed to guard axes of communication and fixed installations, man outposts, conduct patrols, gather intelligence, and lay ambushes within the boundaries of the district. They were controlled either by the district or the village chief.



RF Soldiers Patrolling a Village



PF Soldiers Awaiting Orders to Move Out

Popular Forces had a background similar to that of the RF. They came primarily from the Self-Defense Corps (SDC), a 48,000-man paramilitary force which was created in 1956 under the Ministry of the Interior. Originally, the Self-Defense Corps was an organization of village militia whose basic unit was a cell or team varying in strength from four to ten men per village having a population in excess of 1,000. The village militia cell or team performed security duties such as guard and patrol under the control of the village or hamlet chief. Militiamen were issued weapons only when taking up guard or patrol duty; these weapons were locked up in the village administrative office. At the end of each shift of duty, they went about their normal business or trade but kept an eye on village activities and reported abnormalities.

As village militiamen, Self-Defense Corps members did not have government-issued uniforms; they went on duty wearing whatever clothes were appropriate for everyday living. By and large, however, black pajamas were the most popular attire since they were traditional for South Vietnamese peasants and cheap and easy to maintain.

Unlike the Civil Guard whose command system stopped at the province level, the Self-Defense Corps organizational structure existed at every administrative echelon down to the village. At the central level, there was the Self-Defense Corps Directorate; at the province level, the SDC office; at the district level, the SDC section; and there was an SDC commissioner for every village. The village SDC cell or team was issued obsolescent rifles and shotguns. To complement this armament, SDC members produced their own booby traps rigged with poisoned spikes or arrows for the defense of the village or hamlet. Their means of communications and alert were primarily drums, tocsins, flag signals, and messengers. All operational expenses for the SDC were funded by the provincial budget. Provinces with limited budgetary resources received assistance from the central government.

Organization and Force Development

From their inception to 1960, both the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps were neither adequately equipped nor organized and controlled to accomplish their missions in a satisfactory manner. This derived in good part from the lack of U.S. support. South Vietnamese and U.S. viewpoints differed greatly as to the role and significance assigned to these forces. It was South Vietnam's desire to turn the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps into strong territorial forces capable of assisting the regular ARVN in defense missions. Therefore, the Civil Guard in particular should be organized into battalions and regimental-size units, sufficiently equipped and armed to defeat enemy local forces. The U.S. saw it differently, however. As expressed through the Civil Guard training program developed by the Michigan State University (MSU) group, the U.S. considered the CG nothing more than a rural police force and neither the CG nor the SDC was supported by the Military Assistance Program (MAP).

Beginning in 1960, however, as insurgent activities became a serious threat for South Vietnam, the U.S. expended significant efforts to develop and increase the combat effectiveness of these forces. To facilitate U.S. support procedures, in December 1960, the GVN promulgated a decree placing the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps under the Ministry of Defense. On this legal ground, MAAG began to provide advisers to work with the Civil Guard Directorate in matters concerning training and equipment. Expenditures for the CG, however, were funded by the U.S. International Cooperation Administration (ICA). In 1961 MAAG funding covered both forces.

To improve command and control, the Self-Defense Corps Directorate and its provincial and district offices were disbanded and fused with the Civil Guard command structure. At the Central level, the Civil Guard Directorate was redesignated Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps General Directorate, and at the province level the same integration process was accomplished; the province CG and SDC office now administered both forces. This was a significant step toward unity of command.

At the same time, the Self-Defense Corps structure was upgraded. Each hamlet was assigned a SDC squad and each village, a SDC platoon. SDC squads and platoons were now issued weapons and became full-time combatants just like the Civil Guard. SDC members were also issued black uniforms and black caps procured locally by the Civil Guard supply system. New recruits for the SDC were assembled into units and sent to provincial training centers which had been installed in 26 provinces across the country. Instead of allowances, SDC troopers now drew regular pay just like their Civil Guard colleagues although at a lower scale.

Despite the fact that the CG and SDC now operated under the Ministry of Defense and benefited from the U.S. Military Assistance Program, they were not part of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). The CG and SDC forces, therefore, received no support from the RVNAF although they performed increasingly difficult missions combating the Viet Cong and suffered the same hardship and dangers as the regular ARVN. As a consequence, they fared very poorly by comparison, especially in training, logistic support, and command and leadership. Still, with MAAG support, the CG and SDC made substantial progress. There were no objective criteria for measuring the improvements in the territorial forces, but regional commanders and other officials noted greater efficiency in the performance of SDC and CG daily activities, and in the discipline and morale of the troops.

In 1964, the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps were integrated into the RVNAF and became the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) under the command of the Joint General Staff. The CG and SDC General Directorate became the RF and PF Command subordinate to the JGS and in charge of administration and support. At the province level, the CG and SDC office was disbanded and absorbed into the sector headquarters as a staff element in charge of the RF and PF. Administration, finance services and logistic support for all RF and PF units in the province were provided by the newly-created Administration and Logistic Support (ALS) company. Each province was assigned one or two such companies depending on the RF-PF strength to be supported. Training for the RF and PF was assumed by the Central Training Command with a

view to unify training policies and make maximum use of training facilities. But this division of responsibilities diluted the total effort designed to improve the RF-PF effectiveness. In October 1964, acting on a MACV recommendation, the JGS turned over training responsibilities to the RF and PF Command to ensure full integration of efforts within its system.

By 1966, the gradual expansion and modernization of the RVNAF, especially the RF and PF, made it imperative that the JGS unify command and standardize support functions for pacification. Besides, the existence of a separate command, although nominally subordinated to the JGS, created problems of command and leadership. As a result, in September 1966, the RF and PF Command was disbanded and its personnel integrated into the JGS organization. An assistant for RF and PF was appointed to assist the chief of the JGS in matters concerning the territorial forces. At the same time, a permanent committee for the improvement of the RF and PF was designated to include members of the JGS staff divisions and functional commands. Its mission was to monitor and coordinate all activities related to the organization, employment, personnel administration, training, inspection, logistic support and indoctrination of the RF and PF.

At the Corps/CTZ level, an Assistant Corps Commander for RF and PF was appointed to monitor and supervise the performance of these forces through the Corps/CTZ staff.¹ A regional committee for the improvement of the RF and PF was also created with functions similar to those of the central committee. With this new arrangement, the RVNAF had a truly unified command structure reaching down to the sector and subsector level. Within this structure, the CTZ and sector commands played the most important role as far as the improvement of the territorial forces was concerned. They monitored and supervised every aspect of it, from

¹ Assistants for RF-PF at the JGS and Corps level also served as territorial force commanders. At the province level, the sector commander was RF-PF commander. When the RF and PF were integrated into the ARVN in October 1970 as part of its infantry forces, the positions of RF-PF commanders were also abolished.

recruiting and tactical employment to administration and logistic support. (*Chart 1*)

By late 1966, the RF organization was standardized at the separate company level, the eight RF battalions had been deactivated, and the Popular Forces were organized into standard platoons. (*Charts 2 and 3*) This standardization and consolidation process was also enforced in other aspects. In each province, there was only a single, consolidated company responsible for all support activities for the RF and PF. The PF black uniform was discarded in favor of the standard olive green and khaki uniforms of the ARVN infantry. Gradually, in their outlook, deportment, and combat performance, the RF and PF troopers shed their para-military origins and increasingly became full-fledged soldiers. (*Chart 4*)

These advances in the status and capabilities of the RF and PF were not without American interest, assistance and support. In fact, in October 1967, General Abrams then Deputy Commander, MACV, directed a MACV staff and U.S. field command study to find ways to improve the combat effectiveness of the territorial forces. In the summer of that year, the advisory responsibility for RF and PF had already been consolidated in the office of the MACV deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). This was a change that greatly improved the coordination of all U.S. efforts in pacification support and had a direct beneficial effect on territorial forces.

As a consequence of the MACV and CORDS interest in the territorials, and a result of General Abrams' study, mobile training teams were organized and by mid-1968 were engaged in training territorials in the field.

With American support, the RF force structure constantly expanded, from 888 companies in 1967 to 1,119 in 1968 and 1,471 in 1969. This expansion, coupled with stepped up combat activities, brought about problems for the sector and subsector headquarters as far as operational control was concerned. To improve this control, RF company-group headquarters were activated beginning in 1969. Each group headquarters was capable of exercising operational control over two to five RF companies in combat missions. (*Chart 5*)

Chart 1 – RVNAF Organization for Territorial Control

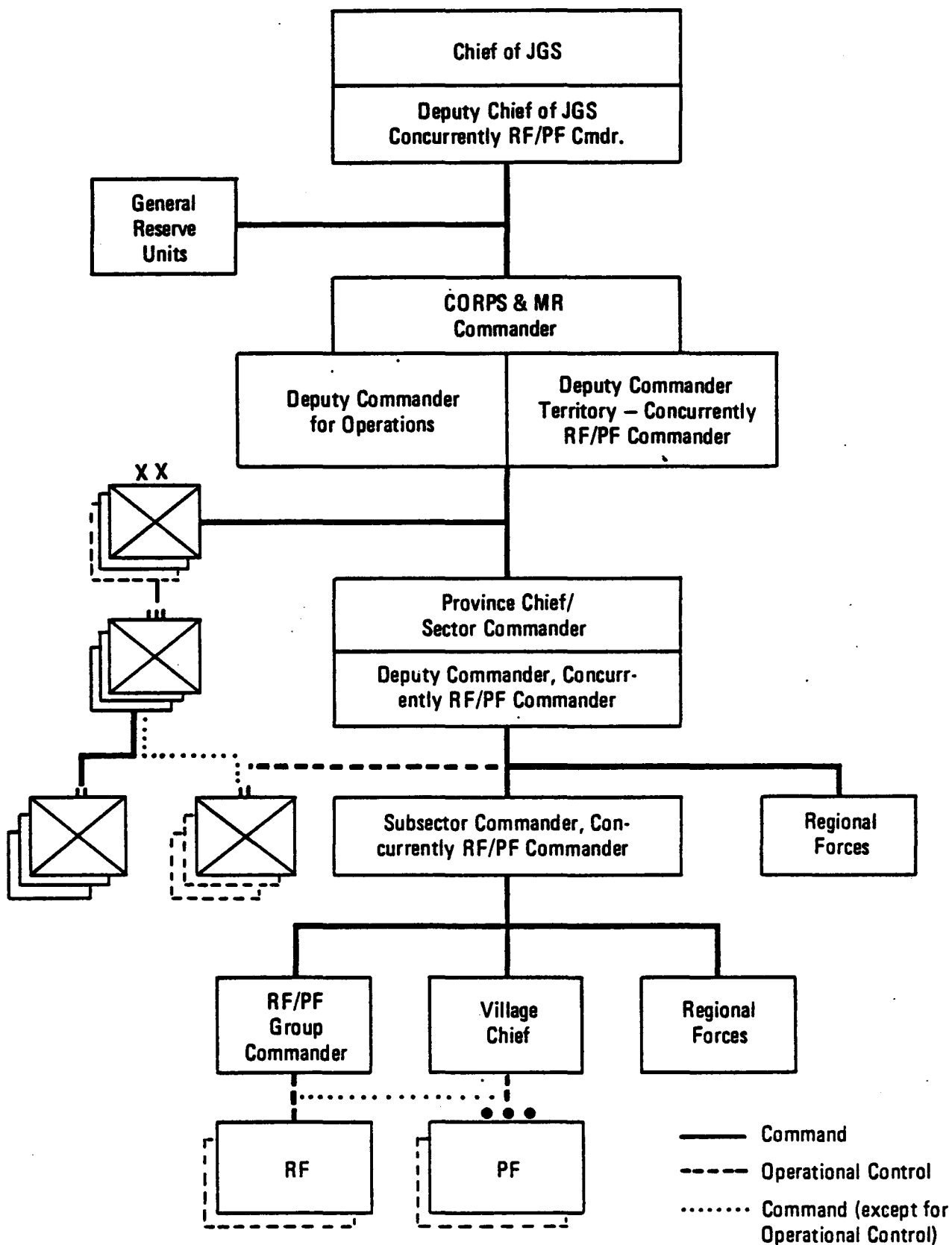


Chart 2 – Organization, RF Company (Separate)

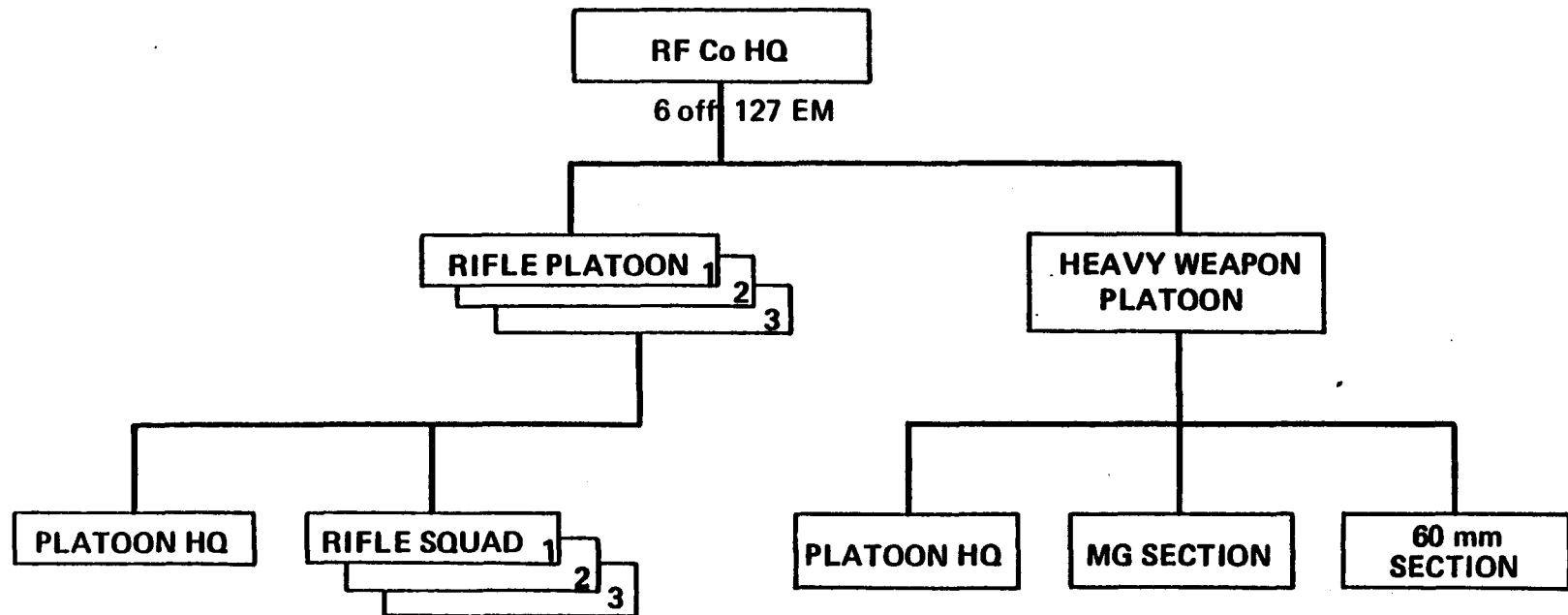


Chart 3 — Organization, PF Platoon

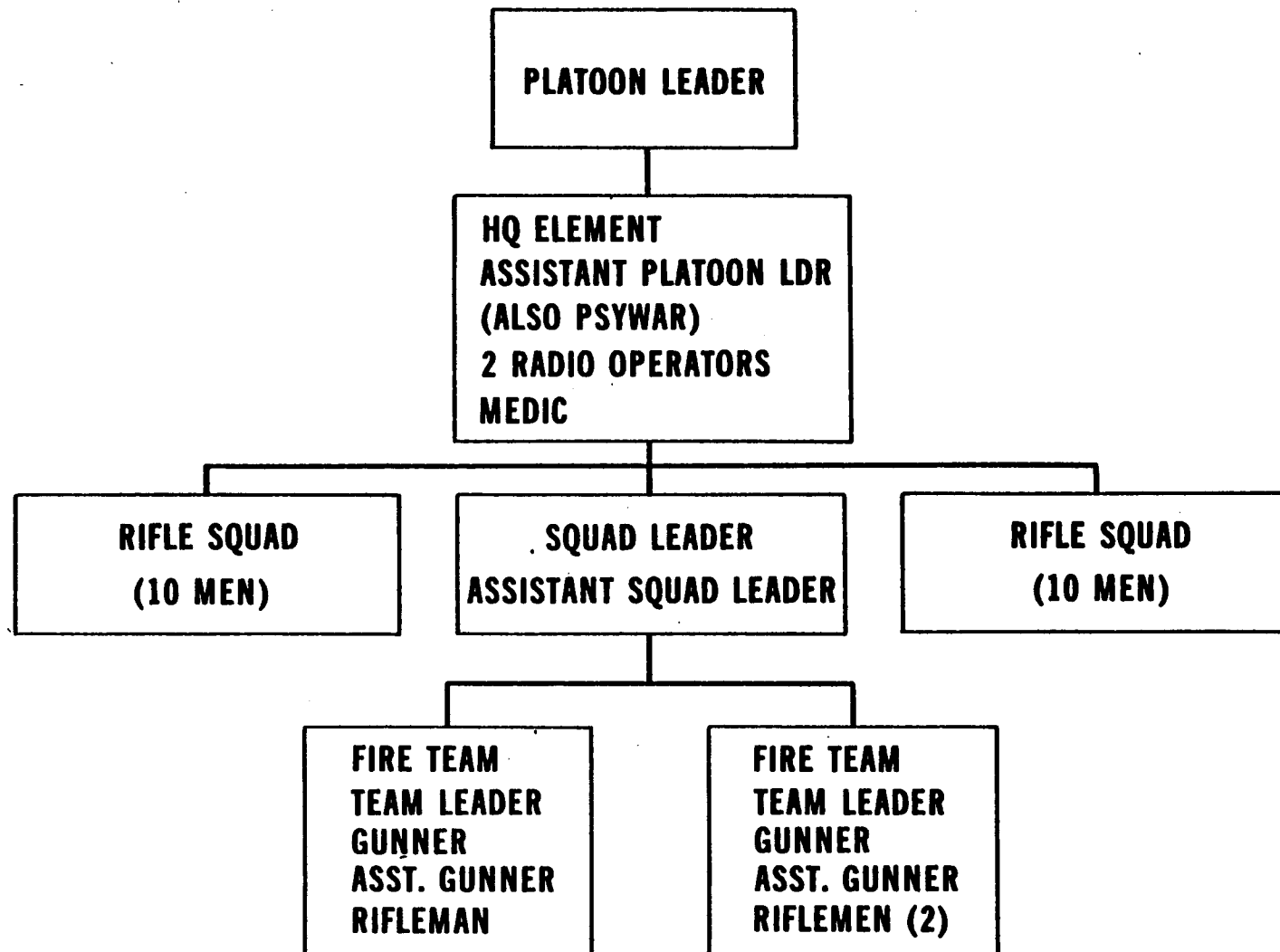
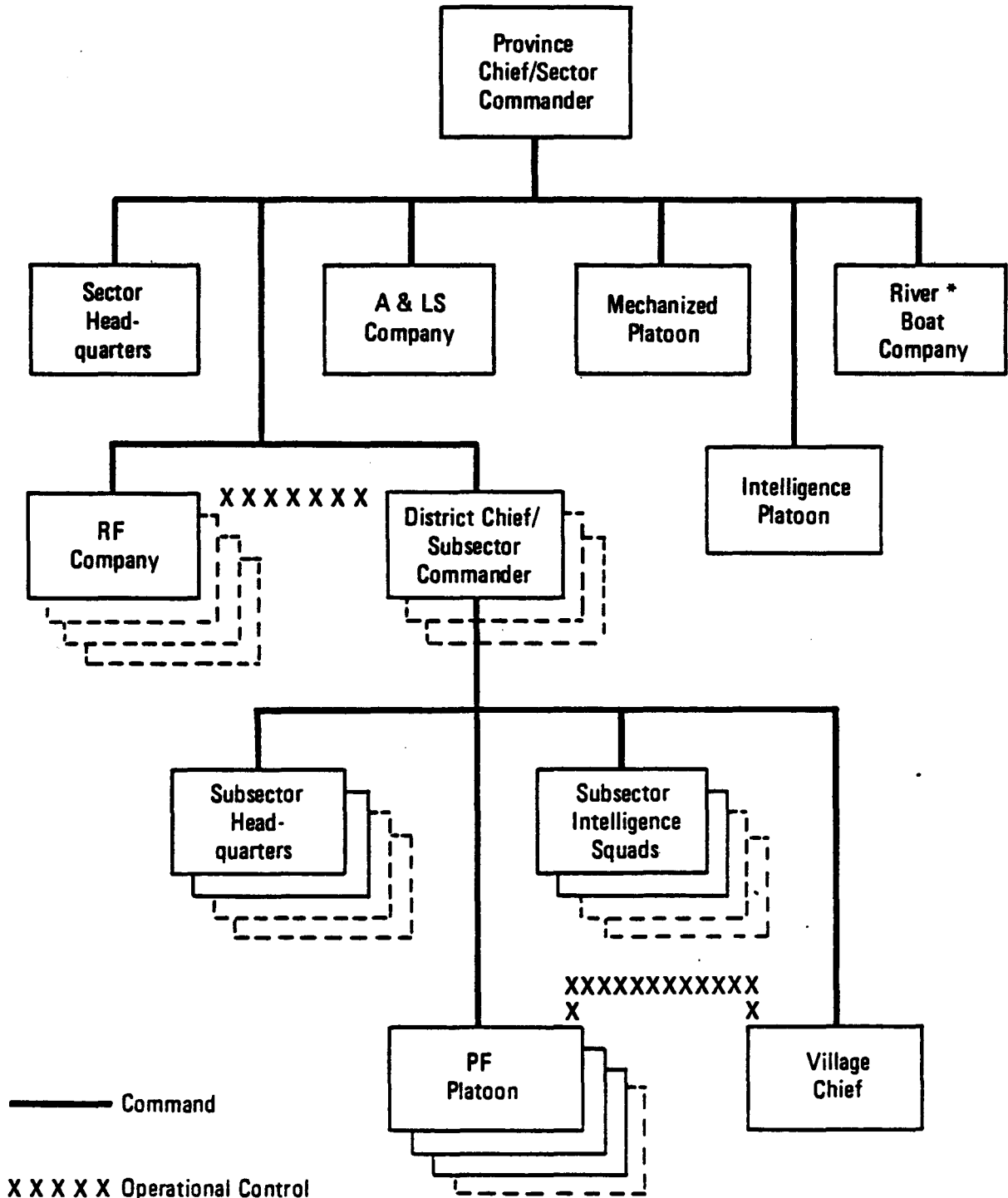
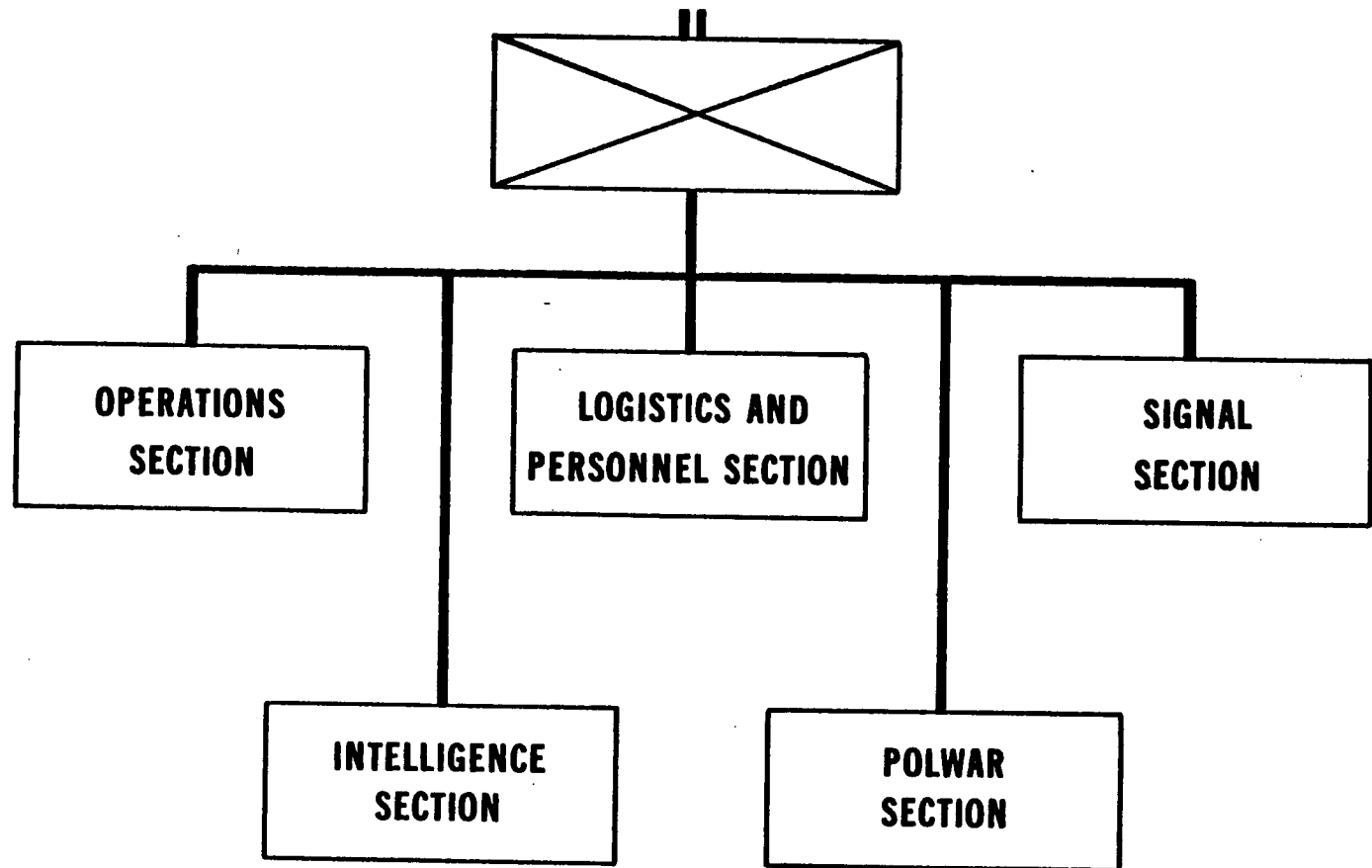


Chart 4 - RF/PF Organization within a Province/Sector



* Not found in all Provinces

Chart 5 — Organization, Headquarters, RF Company Group



During 1969, RF companies were also experimentally grouped into battalions for the purpose of testing their capabilities for mobile operations within a province. This effort was occasioned by the fact that enemy local forces had upgraded their activities to battalion and occasionally, regimental level. By the end of June, 1970, there were a total of 31 RF battalions and 232 RF company groups thus formed.

During the same year, to meet growing support requirements occasioned by the accelerated pacification effort, the sector ALS company was given additional support responsibilities. In addition to supporting the expanding RF and PF, the ALS companies were also to provide supplies and 2d echelon maintenance in weapons, signal equipment, and vehicles for the Revolutionary Development (RD) cadre teams, which totalled 50,000 men in 1970, for the People's Self-Defense Forces with 400,000 individual weapons, for about 84 armed propaganda teams, and for a host of separate ARVN elements on permanent assignment or TDY at the sector level. The magnitude of tasks and services performed and the requirements in support personnel far outgrew the size of a consolidated company. Therefore, the ALS companies were expanded and upgraded into ALS Centers organized into five different configurations to accommodate the varying support needs of different provinces in terms of troop and equipment density. (*Chart 6*)

Encouraged by the performance of RF battalions in mobile combat operations, the JGS gradually transformed company group headquarters into full-fledged battalion headquarters. (*Chart 7*) By 1973, a total of 360 RF battalions had thus been formed and fully employed. The success of this plan and the necessity of freeing ARVN infantry divisions for mobile combat missions in replacement of U.S. major units which by this time had been withdrawn, urged the JGS to take a further step in upgrading the RF. In the JGS's view, if RF battalions could be grouped into regiments or brigades, they would certainly be able to take over the major responsibility of supporting pacification which ARVN infantry divisions now assumed. Strategically, this would make the conduct of the war much more effective since the type of warfare now being fought had become increasingly large-scale and conventional.

The idea was subjected to extensive debates but finally it was deemed unfeasible for two reasons: lack of competent cadre and lack

Chart 6 – Organization, Sector ALS Center

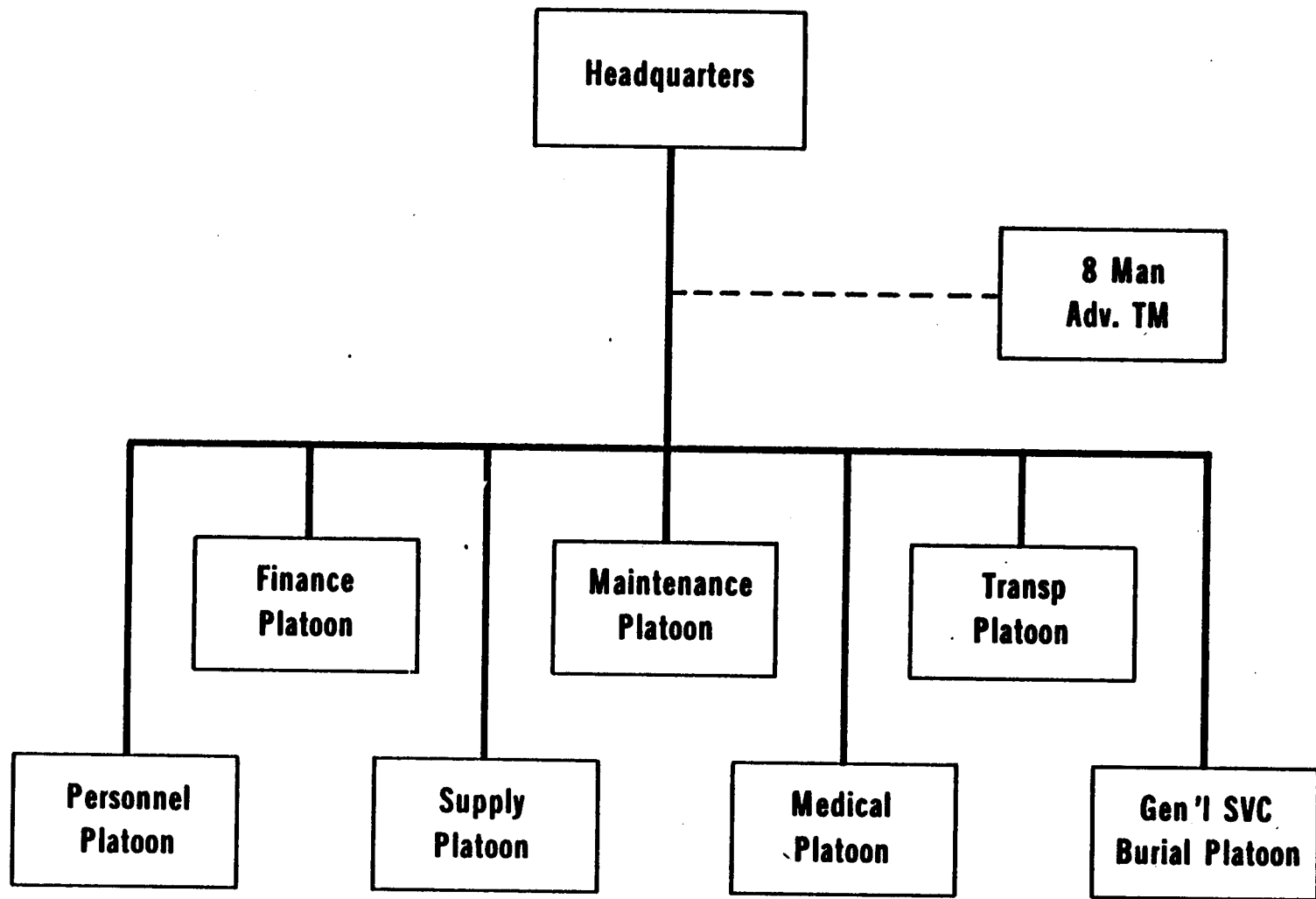
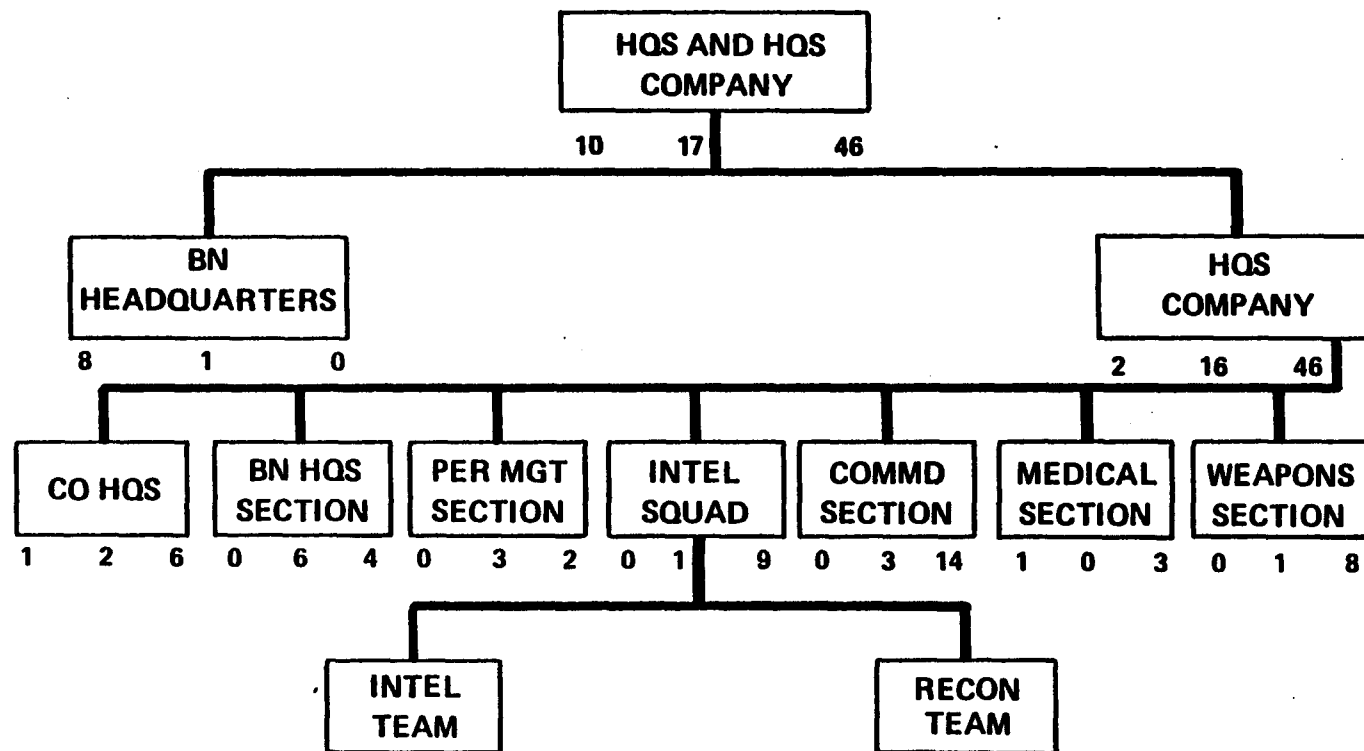


Chart 7 – Organization, Hq and Hq Company, RF Battalion

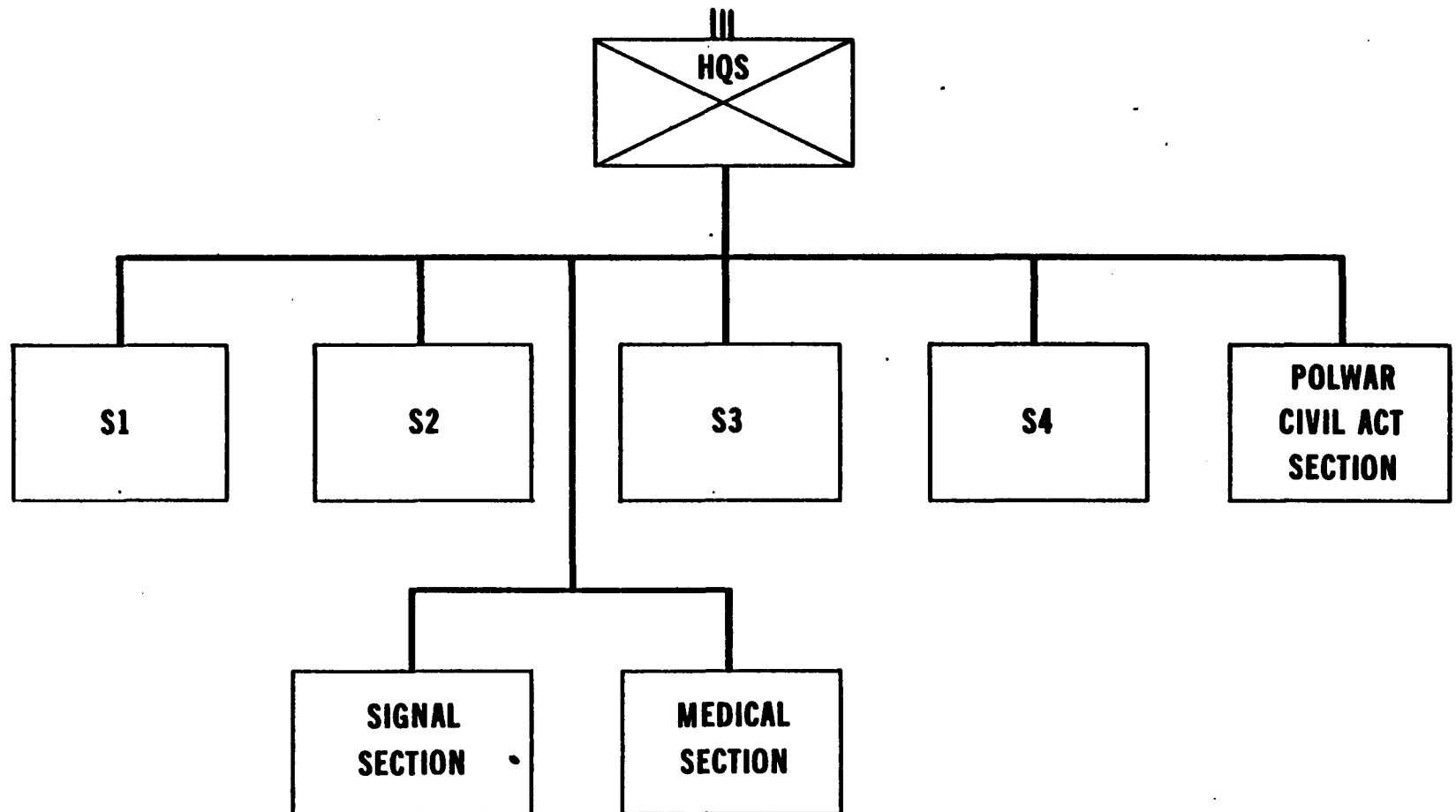


of funds for additional equipment. In the meantime, to improve operational control capabilities for the sector and also to alleviate the combat burdens for its headquarters, the concept of Sector Tactical Headquarters, a more economical approach to the same idea, was implemented. In each sector, in addition to its regular (fixed) headquarters, there was created a tactical headquarters which consisted of a staff and supporting units such as a political warfare and civil action platoon, a signal platoon and a medical platoon. The sector tactical headquarters was capable of controlling from two to five RF battalions in combat, and monitoring all security and pacification activities in the province. (Chart 8) For large provinces with a greater number of RF battalions and where enemy pressure was particularly heavy such as Kien Hoa, Binh Dinh, and Quang Nam, two tactical headquarters had been activated and were fully operational.

By late 1974, stepped up war activities by NVA main force units, especially in MR-1, and the GVN policy dictates of maintaining territorial integrity had edged our ARVN infantry divisions into a situation of overextension for static defense from which they could hardly extricate without replacement forces. The protracted commitment in MR-1 of our only two general reserve divisions made South Vietnam's defense posture look even worse in the face of the constant enemy buildup along the western border. Within each province, there was an urgent need for a strong, mobile strike force to confront enemy local forces because regular reinforcements from MR headquarters were difficult and often impossible to obtain. Each of our ARVN corps, with all of its units committed and overextended, also felt the need for a mobile reserve force which could be used to assist infantry divisions in facing serious tactical situations, and in case of heavy losses, as replacement units.

These requirements led to the activation of RF mobile groups, still a makeshift solution in view of U.S. aid constraints, but responsive enough to warrant their expedient formation. Each RF mobile group was nothing more than a permanent assemblage of the existing sector tactical headquarters and RF battalions plus some organic artillery support. Oddly enough, its composition very nearly matched the old French Groupe Mobile (GM) of the First Indochina War: a tactical headquarters with the same

Chart 8 — Organization, Sector Tactical Headquarters



support units, except for the polwar platoon, three infantry battalions (RF), and a battery of four 105-mm howitzers. The RF mobile group was thus made capable of self-sustained combat operations and since it was not bound by sector boundaries, could be used to reinforce infantry divisions as required within the MR.

The JGS planning called for 27 such RF mobile groups to be activated beginning in January 1975. By 30 April, seven had become operational and employed extensively in MR-3 and MR-4. The process of RF organization and force development ended with this final concept.

From their inception to the very last days of the war, the RF and PF almost always made up more than one half of the total RVNAF strength. Their combined strength naturally exceeded that of all regular infantry forces. At their latest stage of development, the RF numbered about 312,000, distributed among 1,810 rifle companies, 24 river boat companies, 51 mechanized platoons (V-100) and logistic support and staff elements. The PF numbered somewhat less, 220,800 in total, broken down into 7,968 platoons. Over the years, these territorial forces had become the subject of constant study and exchanges between the JGS and MACV.

In terms of unit organizations, the RF progressed from separate companies to company groups, battalions and finally mobile groups. This gradual upgrading into larger units somehow deprived the RF of their local character but it was dictated by South Vietnam's growing force requirements and the changing nature of the war, especially during the later stages.

Almost every military authority, especially South Vietnamese, agreed that these trends in RF organizational and force development responded to the requirements of the war. While agreeing, some thought that the activation of RF regimental-size units came rather belatedly. They believed that this should have been done in 1971, when most U.S. infantry divisions had been withdrawn and the enemy was grouping his local forces into battalions and regiments and preparing for mobile conventional warfare. I agree with this opinion. If we had achieved this at that time, then ARVN infantry divisions would not have found themselves overextended when replacing U.S. units being redeployed. They could have become more mobile and would have constituted a formidable deterrent to invasion.

Then the problem of general reserves and corps reserves would have been solved or at least been less acute. If such had been our military posture, I believe that North Vietnam would have been less inclined to conduct a full-scale invasion as in 1972 and 1975, even without U.S. military presence.

While there was almost total agreement on the RF and PF organization and force development trends, opinions seemed to differ widely as to their command and control. This problem seemed to have no easy solution because it dealt with a gigantic force without a strong backbone. With and precisely because of this flexibility, no single option would be entirely satisfactory.

A school of thought maintained that there should have been a vertical RF-PF command and control system from the central to the district level. At the central level, there should be a RF-PF command, subordinate to the JGS like other service branch or combat arm commands, and responsible to it for all matters concerning the RF and PF. This had been our system during 1964 and 1966. This same line of thought would like to see a RF and PF command at the military region, sector and sub-sector level, subordinated to each related headquarters operationally. All of these RF-PF commands should be responsible for four main areas of activity: combat operations, training, personnel administration, and logistic support.

A similar opinion agreed with this separate RF-PF command and control structure but felt that operational control of the RF and PF should be a responsibility of territorial commands (MR, sector, subsector). Still another idea, while also advocating the same separate command structure, believed that to be more effective, logistic support functions at the central and military region levels should be handled by respective RVNAF logistics commands. In that case, the RF-PF commands would be responsible only for personnel administration and training. A variant of this opinion maintained that training functions, too, should be handled by the Central Training Command, thus reducing RF-PF commands at central and regional levels to simple administrative offices. The one thing that all of these opinions seemed to have in common was that

operational control of the RF and PF should be placed under territorial commands.

Another school of thought believed that there should not be a separate RF-PF command except at the sector level since this was where the territorial forces were employed. This school of thought envisioned that the RF-PF commander would double as deputy or chief of staff for the sector commander.

A final school of thought, which was predicated on the proven principles of unity of command and economy of force, rigorously precluded any separate command and control system for the RF and PF. Its irrefutable argument was that all functions, no matter how trivial or important, were command responsibilities which should not be assumed by anyone other than the territorial commander. There should only be a single, unified staff at each echelon of territorial command to assist the commander. If RF and PF matters were too burdensome or needed special command attention, then the commander could always appoint a deputy or assistant especially in charge of these forces.

Of all these schools of thought, only the last one had special merits; not only did it respect the unity of command principle, it was also more compatible with RVNAF limited resources, especially in command cadre and support assets. This was precisely the approach to command and control that the JGS had used since 1967 to deal with the RF and PF. The system's only shortcomings were those found mostly at the sector level such as abuse of authority, lack of control and supervision, and negligence. Their cause, however, was primarily one of inexperience and bad leadership on the part of the sector commander and his staff. Another reason was the fact that an overburdened province chief, who also doubled as sector commander, could not spare enough time and energy to care for his troops. There were, moreover, too many RF-PF units under his responsibility for effective control. This latter shortcoming was remedied in part by upgrading the RF into bigger units and creating sub-subsector (village) commands, which helped alleviate some of the province chief's command responsibilities as regards personnel administration, training, combat, and support.

Recruitment and Administration

From their inception the RF and PF procured their manpower through recruitment and conscription. This manpower came primarily from two sources: discharged RVNAF servicemen, and civilian youths not falling into the draft age class (20-22 for the period prior to 1964). Those in this age class were obligated to do their military service for a mandatory period of time (usually 2 years) and could volunteer to serve in the RF or PF only after discharge.

Until 1960, recruitment for the RF and PF did not have any significant difficulties. But beginning in 1961, it ran into increasing competition with recruiting efforts of the regular forces which sought to complement their quotas of draftees to meet expansion requirements. The RF and PF lost in this competition; their lower pay and enlistment bonus did not attract enough volunteers. To provide the manpower required by the RF-PF force structure expansion, many province chiefs resorted to recruiting outsiders, people from other provinces. They found that personnel resources were usually abundant in Vinh Binh and Ba Xuyen Provinces with their large Khmer communities or those provinces with large numbers of Hoa Hao and Cao Dai followers (Chau Doc, Long Xuyen, Phong Dinh, Tay Ninh). The recruiting task was usually assigned to teams, each responsible for procuring enough men for a company.

By 1964, the extended draft age (20-25) made it seemingly harder for the RF and PF to recruit. However, their recruitment was assisted by police operations which sought to track down draft evaders and deserters. Volunteers for service in the RF and PF also became more numerous especially among those youths 23, 24, and 25 years of age who made up the standby draft age classes. Their incentive for enlistment came from an ardent desire to stay near their hometowns and families; service in the RF or PF was their only chance. At the same time, draft evaders and deserters, fearful of being convicted if caught or weary of living as fugitives, sought ways to enlist in the RF and PF. They

did this by procuring for themselves new identification papers, legally or illegally.²

Beginning in 1965, RF and PF recruitment became more successful, primarily because of readjusted pay scales and other newly-instituted allowances. The RF soldier now earned about the same as an ARVN soldier, including family allowances. The PF soldier's contractual pay, usually a fixed indemnity, also doubled. In addition, both the RF and PF soldiers enjoyed the privilege of serving in their hometowns or villages. Enlistment in the RF and PF received a further boost, when in September 1966, new recruits were awarded the same enlistment or reenlistment bonus that only ARVN recruits had enjoyed.

From 1965 to 1967 the government of Vietnam was too unstable to attempt a general mobilization -- the opposition to such a move was strong and vocal -- but the government did manage to promulgate several incremental steps to extend the upper limit of draft age to 30. This again benefited the RF and PF as those youths likely to be called up next usually beat the draft by enlisting in the territorial forces.

Following the Communist offensive of Tet 1968, the climate was right for general mobilization. Not only were the Americans pushing for it, but the country's politicians and people were ready for it. President Thieu visited Hue in June of that year, together with prominent members of the national assembly, and signed the proclamation of general mobilization during a public ceremony. The event was greeted with resounding applause by the people of Hue and welcomed by the entire population.

With the promulgation of the General Mobilization Law in June 1968, every male citizen between 18 and 38 became eligible for mandatory service in the RVNAF, including RF and PF troopers. An exception was made,

² Although a criminal act, the changing of personal identification was seldom detectable and inevitable in a country at war. Papers could be lost, destroyed or confiscated by the enemy. Even official records of birth, usually locally kept, were occasionally destroyed by acts of war. As a result, anyone could petition for and obtain a "writ in lieu of birth certificate" from a court of appeals. Counterfeit identification papers were less common.

however, for those between 31 and 38 who volunteered to serve in the RF or PF. It was this measure which helped boost RF and PF recruitment to unprecedented levels. By the end of 1968, total RF strength had exceeded its authorized level by a large margin (219,000 against 185,873). The same was also true of PF strength, although the excess margin was smaller (173,500 against 167,640). As a result, the activation of additional RF companies and PF platoons to meet expanding pacification requirements went smoothly according to plans during the following years.

Still, in some provinces, RF and PF recruitment among the age classes of 17 and from 31 to 38 did not fare as well as in others. It was as though manpower resources in these provinces had dried up. To assist them with manpower problems, beginning in 1970, the JGS approved a special measure allowing these sectors to recruit among the draft age classes (from 18 to 30) within a limited time, based on recommendations from MR headquarters. As a last resort, this measure was reluctantly taken because the JGS was fully aware that by doing so, it tacitly condoned draft evasion and desertion. In fact, experience revealed, that almost all of those recruited in the RF and PF who fell between these draft age limits were either draft evaders, illegal deferments and exempts, or deserters. As such, they should have all been arrested and prosecuted by military tribunals. But somehow they managed to stay free in defiance of the law. Obviously, this was possible only because local authorities had chosen to look the other way. Bribery was apparently one of the causes for this irregularity but, in the final analysis, perhaps local authorities believed it not worthwhile to enforce a law which meted out only a few months of imprisonment for those convicted. After all, convicted or not, they would eventually end up either in the military or in enemy hands. It was much better to accept them in the service and have additional combatants than lose them to the enemy.

This was the rationale for recruiting draft evaders and deserters instead of prosecuting them as criminals. Still, for the whole affair to look legal, the JGS always insisted on their having "legal draft status" as a matter of formality, when it authorized recruitment. As a matter of expediency, sector recruitment offices obliged by giving recruits hints on how to obtain "legal" papers which were readily accepted

for recruitment purposes until the day such papers were detected as illegal. In practice, the illegality of these papers was almost never challenged because local authorities believed that it would serve no useful purpose. Usually, only when claims were filed by inheritors to collect death gratuities did this illegality surface but then, for humanitarian reasons, the Ministry of Defense always authorized a "readjustment" to legal status.

Aside from recruitment, the RF and PF had constant problems with leadership which were no less complicated considering their heterogeneous origins. The Regional Forces, then Civil Guard, were initially made up of veterans of the Vietnamese National Army and French Union Forces who were discharged as a result of the 1955 force structure reduction. Civil Guard cadres then consisted of former career officers and NCOs who were allowed to retain their rank. Although combat experienced, the majority of these cadres had not received any formal training. The problem was compounded by special recruitment procedures during 1961-62 which granted assimilated officer and NCO ranks to teams of recruiters and then used them as cadres for companies they had helped recruit. Almost all of these cadres had no training or combat experience except for a few who had served in French forces as auxiliary troops.

During that same period, the Civil Guard Directorate recruited a small number of youths with a junior high-school educational level, sent them to a platoon leader course at Thu Duc, and graduated them with a second lieutenant commission while the same trainees for the regular ARVN were graduated with the rank of "aspirant" only. But most of these new officers were assigned to staff jobs at the central and provincial level. In addition, the Civil Guard also received on temporary duty a small number of ARVN officers who assumed key command and staff positions in the CG Directorate and provincial offices.

When the Civil Guard was redesignated Regional Forces and became an organic component of the RVNAF in 1965, the first step taken by the JGS was to immediately improve the RF cadre ranks. Refresher officer and NCO courses conducted at Thu Duc and the Quang Trung Training Center became mandatory for all RF cadres of assimilated ranks who had not received any

basic infantry officer or NCO training. Depending on graduating grades, these cadres would be either allowed to retain their ranks or demoted. This measure initially caused some hard feelings but not enough to undermine military discipline and morale. As a matter of fact, almost all RF cadres who attended refresher courses were able to retain their ranks upon graduation. At the same time, those youths who volunteered to serve the RF were encouraged and accepted for training as officers or NCOs if they met educational criteria. Special officer and NCO courses were also conducted for the benefit of combat experienced RF enlisted men who had leadership qualities but not enough formal education to qualify for regular courses.

The RF promotion system, long a stumbling block for the career advancement of RF cadres, was radically changed in 1966 when it instituted annual (regular) and battle (special) promotions which had only been available to our regular forces. Despite this and continued training, RF ranks were unable to produce enough cadres to meet increasing requirements, especially beginning in 1967 when pacification received national emphasis.

There was, therefore, an increasing demand for regular force officers and NCOs to be transferred to the RF on an extended, attached basis, and this trend was growing every year. During 1965, only 878 ARVN officers were attached to the RF; this number increased to 3,376 by 1968. The next two years saw unprecedented numbers of ARVN officers transferred to the RF; the transfer was in effect so extensive that by 1970, they outnumbered RF officers by a large margin (10,800 against 8,592). NCO transfers also increased by leaps and bounds. In 1965, there were only 2,197 ARVN NCOs attached to the RF; by 1969, they had grown to 14,526 serving alongside 26,989 of the original RF. Most of this transferred cadre consisted of reserve officers and NCOs who graduated from Thu Duc and the NCO Academy at Nha Trang respectively and whose origins represented a fair regional balance, to include a substantial percentage of those born in North Vietnam. Part of these transfers was the result of a regular rotation plan and another small part consisted of those who expressly applied for duty near their places of origin.

The local character of the RF, who were always considered "hometown soldiers," therefore, gradually disappeared at the officer and NCO level. It was retained only among the rank and file and those of Montagnard origins. By inclination, most of the transferred officers and NCOs preferred duty in the ARVN if given a free choice. They regarded duty in the RF as lowly and degrading, unbecoming of their regular force status. This feeling arose partly from a long prejudice which viewed the RF as a "poor cousin" and partly from the fact that opportunities for self-achievement in the usually neglected RF, particularly in terms of promotion and awards, were not as good as in the ARVN.

The Popular Forces, by contrast, did not have a rank system like the RF or the ARVN. There were only cadre functions: team leader, assistant squad leader, squad leader, assistant platoon leader, and platoon leader, which was the highest position in the PF. Consequently, a PF cadre was promoted to the next higher position only when there was a vacancy.

PF cadres were usually selected from among volunteer youths who had a smattering of military training or combat experience, especially those who had fought alongside or against French forces. Their appointments were recommended by the village chief, endorsed by the district chief, then approved and made official by the province chief's decision.

Up to 1964, there were practically no awards of medals and citations for meritorious service or combat exploits in the PF. But when the PF became part of the RVNAF, more attention was devoted to them in this respect. Still, medals and citations did not have as much attraction to the PF as to the ARVN and RF. The reason was that medals and citations did not count as merit points for promotion; they served, therefore, no practical purposes aside from being a source of temporary pride. Beginning in 1970, however, new pay and allowance regulations in the RVNAF instituted pay raise for the PF on the basis of medals or citations awarded. Normally, a PF trooper earned a fixed starting monthly salary which was raised to the next higher pay echelon only every two years.³

³ Each echelon of PF pay raise was VN \$100 which in 1970 was worth about US 50 cents. This represented 4% of the PF starting base pay (VN \$2,500.00).

Now he could shorten this period by six months every time he was awarded a Gallantry Cross.

To provide senior and experienced PF cadres with more opportunities for self-advancement and enhance service incentives, the JGS also authorized their unlimited transfer to the Regional Forces with the rank of sergeant for platoon leaders and corporal for squad leaders. But this measure failed to attract most PF cadres, even though such a transfer meant a doubling of salary. They would rather forego material retributions for the chance to stay in their native villages, care for their dependents and tend ancestral tombs. It was primarily this deep attachment which motivated the village youth to volunteer for PF duty in the first place, not the attraction of a small sum of money.

Training

From the day the territorial forces came into being up to 1960, formal training was almost non-existent. During that period, they operated in a hodge-podge manner almost like posses of volunteers. Those with some combat experience, by virtue of their former service in French forces, informally trained and guided the green troopers.

Not until 1961, when they benefited directly from the U.S. military assistance and advisory program, did the territorial forces begin to receive formal training under the auspices of MAAG advisers. Supervised by the General Directorate of Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, training was then focused on the unit level. Each CG company went through a 12-week unit training program while each SDC platoon or squad was trained only for six weeks. Initially, this training was conducted in the field by mobile MAAG advisory training teams which rotated among units. Subsequently, it was taken over by training centers as these facilities were constructed and became available on the basis of one SDC (PF) training center for each province and one CG (RF) training center per military region.

Up to 1964, however, basic individual training of recruits for the replacement pipeline was not available on a systematic basis. Training

provided either by U.S. mobile training teams or training centers was primarily of the unit type designed to improve poorly-performing units or to initiate the newly-activated ones.

Beginning in 1965, as the RF and PF began to operate as components of the RVNAF and training responsibilities were taken over by the Central Training Command, JGS, training for the RF and PF became more comprehensive and systematic, including both basic and refresher for individuals as well as for units. A standardized program of basic and refresher individual training was enforced for both the regular and territorial forces. Unit training programs, however, differed slightly in view of the specific roles and missions assigned to each force.

The selection and training of RF cadres were based on the same criteria as those applied to the ARVN with the exception of educational requirements which were lowered by one level in order to admit Montagnards. Trainees for PF platoon and squad leadership were subjected to a 14-week special program conducted by national training centers located in the region.

The initial establishment of provincial PF training centers responded to training needs and eased problems of transportation for individuals as well as for units. In time, however, they developed serious shortcomings which lowered training efficiency and productivity. For one thing, the existence of too many facilities tended to dilute experienced instructors and disperse limited training assets, causing shortages in both. This multiplicity also made training control and supervision difficult and caused divergences which affected training standards.

To remedy these shortcomings, in 1965 the JGS embarked on an improvement and consolidation program which, with MACV funding assistance, sought to develop and modernize the training base by consolidating a limited number of training centers conveniently located throughout South Vietnam. The first step consisted of minimizing the number of provincial PF training centers which were reduced from 26 to 12 by 1968. These twelve facilities were transformed into consolidated inter-provincial training centers which provided reasonable material well-being for students and better training facilities, especially comfortable billets and a modern



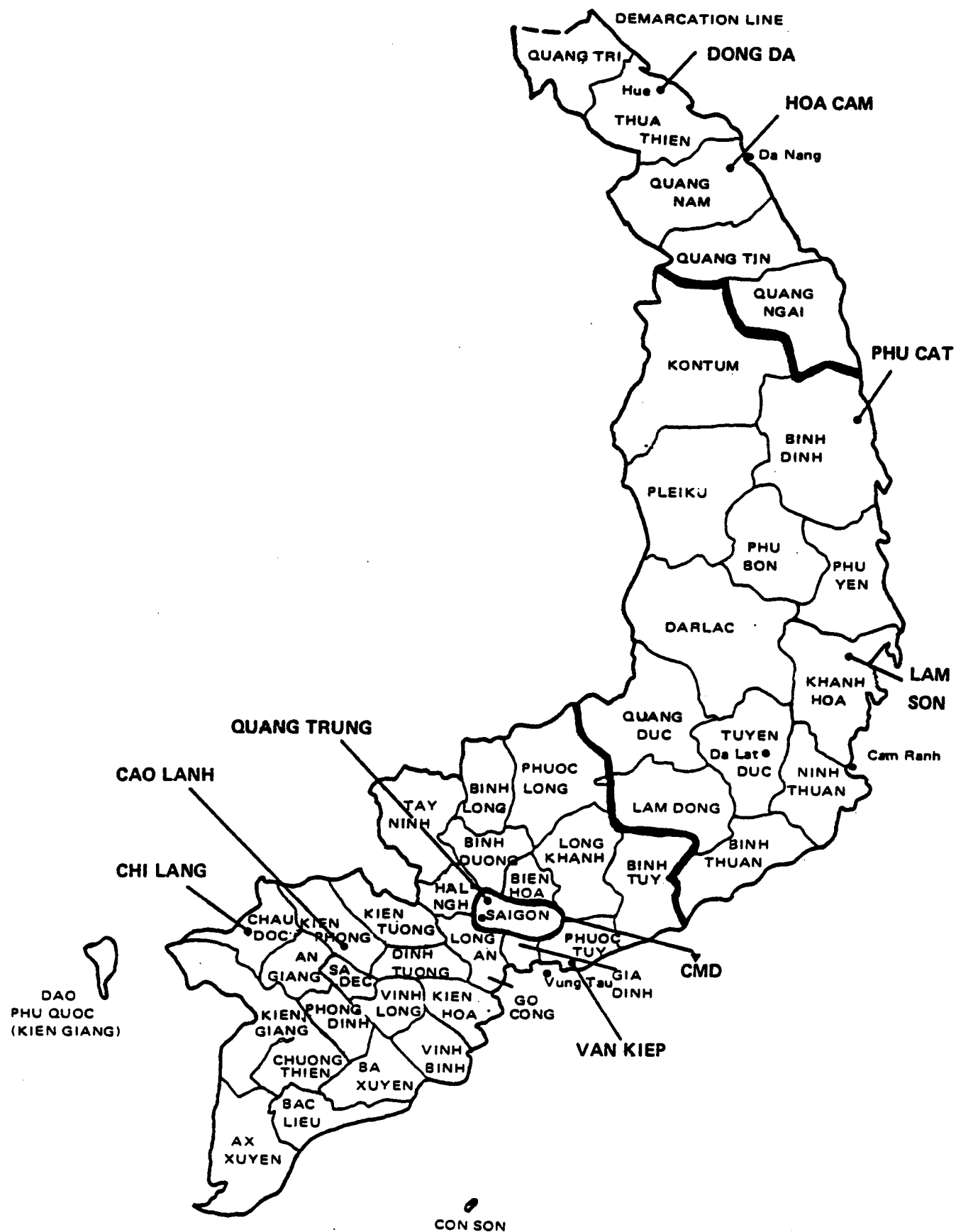
RF Soldiers Practiced Crossing a Log "Monkey" Bridge
During Training

firing range. To accommodate increasing numbers of PF recruits and newly-activated platoons, two RF Training Centers, one at Cao Lanh (IV Corps area), and the other at Phu Cat (II Corps area) were made available for their training. As these two RF training centers were rehabilitated and expanded to an ultimate capacity of 4,000-6,000 students each, the 12 inter-provincial PF training centers were gradually deactivated. By 1971, there remained only five such facilities (Hoa Cam, in Quang Nam Province; Pleiku and Ninh Thuan in MR-2; Dinh Tuong and Vinh Long in MR-4). Eventually, they were all deactivated by mid-1972 with the exception of Hoa Cam, which, along with the Phu Cat and Cao Lanh RF facilities, were transformed into national training centers like five others (Dong Da in MR-1, Lam Son in MR-2; Quang Trung and Van Kiep in MR-3; and Chi Lang in MR-4). These consolidated facilities provided all individual and unit training for the RF and PF across the country. (Map 5)

The consolidation of individual and unit training facilities into eight large conveniently located centers effectively improved training productivity and standards, and greatly facilitated logistic support because it made an efficient and economical use of available resources. On the other hand, since only two such training facilities were available for a military region, this meant extended trips for new recruits and training units, and additional transportation burdens for the provinces. Recruits and trainees also had to incur additional expenses while undergoing training; so did their dependents and relatives when they wanted to make visits. Because of these additional outlays which were hard on their meager family budgets at a time of growing inflation, most servicemen, to include ARVN regulars, were discouraged and deeply worried at the prospect of having to undergo training, although they fully understood how this training was vital for their daily performance and future advancement.

To the sector headquarters, sending recruits and units to school was becoming a more burdensome responsibility because of limited transportation assets and the risk of en-route desertion. Sector commanders were also reluctant to release units, especially for refresher training, which they sorely needed in times of unexpected emergency. As a result,

Map 5 — Location of National Training Centers, Mid-1972



training quotas scheduled for each province for unit refresher and PF cadre training were seldom completely filled.

In order to encourage and require sector commanders to send PF cadre for training, the JGS adopted special measures allowing free food for PF cadres undergoing training and requiring sector commanders to appoint PF squad and platoon leaders only from those personnel who had completed training.

As for unit refresher training, it had become an established practice for sector commanders to request postponement on the pretext of combat operations or critical situations. Training schedules, therefore, were usually upset. Left to themselves, units rarely conducted any training between operations, primarily because of the lack of interest on the part of unit commanders. They spent most of their idle time for rest and recuperation. Finally, sector and subsector commanders seldom made serious efforts to enforce unit training among the RF and PF, knowing that this would tax these units to the limit of their endurance.

CHAPTER IV

The Para-Military Forces

While the role of the RF and PF was a primordial one in the maintenance of territorial security, other forces of a para-military nature also participated in it and their role was no less significant. These were the Rural Development (RD) Cadres, the People's Self-Defense Corps, and the National Police, which all operated in permanence in villages and hamlets.

As far as village and hamlet security was concerned, these para-military forces had a direct working relationship with the RF and PF, and together, they formed a mutually-supporting defense system. In general, the territorial forces made up the outer protective shield; their role was to prevent VC forces from penetrating the village or hamlet perimeter. Internal security, law, and order were maintained by para-military forces who guarded against VC intruders, detected and neutralized VCI elements and supporters.

This division of tasks was deemed important for the pacification process because even though enemy main or local force units were kept at bay, village and hamlet security might still be jeopardized by enemy elements living undetected among the population. The Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI), the underground political and supporting arm of Communist insurgency, was pervasive, invisible, and resilient. As long as its political, economic, and intelligence cells were alive, the threat of insurgency still persisted either through subversive activities or the resurrection of armed rebels. (Appendix B, The Viet Cong Infrastructure.)

In a certain sense, therefore, para-military forces were unique organizations conceived solely for the purpose of fighting Communist

insurgency in South Vietnam. Important as they were, these forces came into being only during the middle stages of the war, for their requirements arose with experience gained in combating insurgency and during pacification efforts. The National Police existed long before the advent of insurgency but their commitment to a rural role began only with pacification. And, as was the case with the RF and PF, the initial concept on para-military forces also evolved through arduous debates and controversy.

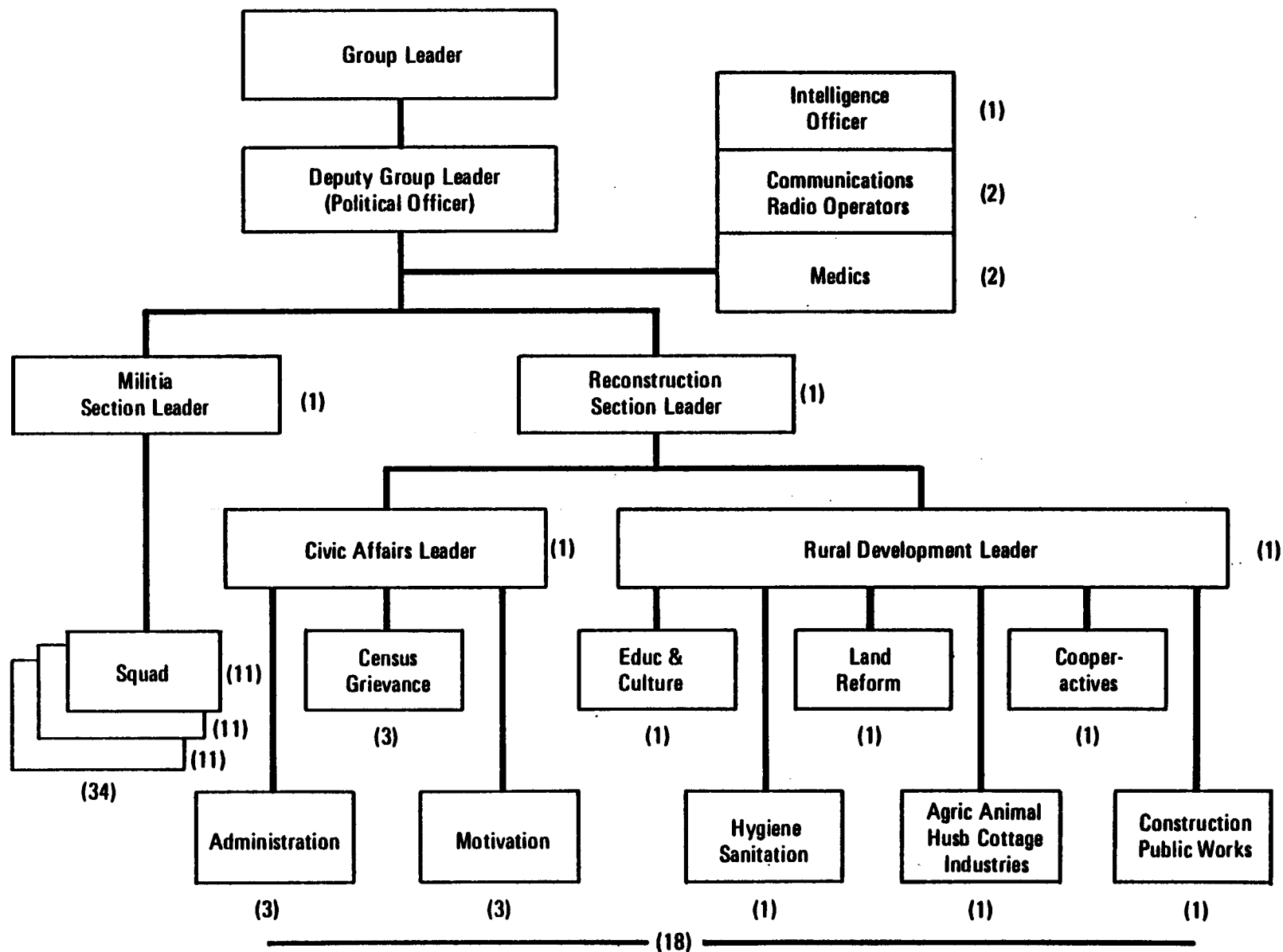
Rural Development Cadres

An offspring of pacification, the Rural Development (or Revolutionary Development) Cadres were activated in early 1966 under the control of the Ministry of Rural Development. The concept of the cadre itself was borrowed from basic communist ideology. The cadre was the ideological representative of the regime and served as a direct link between the regime and the people. To implement the rural pacification and development program, the GVN initiated the concept of the RD cadre which was inspired from the Viet Cong "Action Militia." RD cadres were initially organized into 59-man groups whose members were locally recruited to serve two years.¹ After completion of a formal training course at Vung Tau, RD cadre groups were assigned to work in hamlets selected for pacification and development. The "oil stain" concept prevailing at the time required that these hamlets be relatively secure.

Each RD cadre group consisted of a command element, a security section, and a development section. Group members were issued individual weapons, usually M-1 carbines, M-1 Garand rifles, submachine guns and pistols. Each group was also provided with low-powered HT-1 radio sets to communicate internally and with the village headquarters. (Chart 9)

¹A montagnard version of the RD concept was also implemented in the Central Highlands under the form of 70-man teams, called the Truong Son cadre teams.

Chart 9 – Organization, 59-Man RD Cadre Group



RD cadres worked and lived in permanence in hamlets undergoing pacification until such time the process was deemed completed. With their primary role of enhancing the GVN presence at the grassroots level, RD cadres were responsible for implementing the objectives of pacification and development in the political, economic, social, and security areas. Among the tasks performed to achieve these objectives, two were directly related to the maintenance of local security: detecting the VCI and organizing People's Self-Defense Forces. But the tactical employment of RD cadre groups as local security forces was limited; the role they played in maintaining local security was a secondary one.

To detect the local VCI, each RD cadre group studied its organization in the target hamlet, established a list of underground VCI members and those sympathizers who worked for the Communists on a permanent basis, and made a survey of hamlet households. If requirements arose, the RD group chief planted census-grievance cadres among households to detect VCI activities.²

The task of organizing a people's self-defense force for a hamlet was facilitated by systematically dividing the hamlet into five-household groups and appointing group leaders. RD cadres then stimulated the participation of household members in group activities, and screened those who volunteered to serve as PSDF members. They organized them by household groups, provided basic military training and guidance in the construction of defense barriers for hamlet defense. RD cadre members also held monthly meetings among PSDF members, conducted alert exercises and helped organize a communications and liaison system. Where terrain and resources permitted, a defense barrier was always constructed along the hamlet perimeter and heavy bushes cleared to permit better observation and fields of fire.

In addition to their normal activities, RD cadre groups frequently participated in the defense and protection of villages and hamlets as a separate security force. They conducted patrols or ambushes in

²Census-grievances teams were U.S. initiated and sponsored organizations intended to survey the people's aspirations and grievances in rural areas. Their cover assignment was to collect intelligence on the VCI.

coordination with the PF or RF but were not allowed to venture more than 300 meters beyond the hamlet defense perimeter. Usually, they took up positions inside or along the defense perimeter in cooperation with PSDF members whom they sponsored and assisted.

During daytime, RD cadre groups devoted their efforts to assisting local governments in daily operations, training the PSDF and collecting information on the VCI in cooperation with the police. Whenever required, they also helped in organizing local elections. But they acted primarily as military and political instructors, teaching the PSDF in the use of weapons and basic defense tactics and conducting indoctrination sessions to inculcate a sense of duty and esprit de corps among the PSDF for better protection of their families and communities.

With U.S. guidance and assistance, the GVN made tremendous efforts to train RD cadre groups and prepare them for their assignments. A large national RD training center was established at Vung Tau for this purpose. In May 1966, the first RD cadre class graduated with 4,500 members. By late 1967, 30,000 RD cadres had been trained and two years later, when the RD Ministry was deactivated, a total of 50,000 RD cadres were operating across the country.

As pacification and development gained in tempo and extensiveness, there was a need to improve RD activities and the deployment of groups to keep up with requirements. In 1969, therefore, the 59-man group was reduced to 30 in order to form more groups. Because security had improved considerably and local governments established through elections, RD cadre groups were placed under the control of village chiefs for better activity coordination between them and village security forces. This realignment of RD cadre groups allowed the GVN to assign them to approximately 1,400 villages still under contest where efforts were concentrated on achieving the objectives of pacification and development.

In the village where they were assigned as a group, RD cadres were deployed as teams to individual hamlets. With the exception of insecure areas, each RD group was usually divided into three teams, each with about eight members working for the benefit of a single hamlet. The RD team chief acted as adviser to the local PSDF chief, assisted him in coordinating

activities with other security forces, and helped him train PSDF members and organize patrols and ambushes. In hamlets where security was marginal, RD cadre teams also participated in their defense as a separate security force.

Through their comprehensive training and effective organization, the RD cadre groups were in a good position to contribute much to the security and development of villages and hamlets. In principle, RD cadres were carefully selected to train as model workers devoted to the people's service and the reconstruction of rural areas. This idea was promoted and emphasized during their formative years by Major General Nguyen Duc Thang, then Minister of Rural Construction, who never ceased to eulogize the role played by his "black pajama combatants."

But this much extolled role when contrasted with actual performance gave rise to controversial debates, especially during the initial stage of RD activities. To many observers, who saw in RD operations nothing but a stage show, these cadres appeared to be not very helpful to hamlet people whom they were frequently accused of harassing or annoying. Although armed with individual weapons, RD cadre groups had only limited capabilities for the protection of hamlet people or even for self-defense. In areas where security was low, local governments also had the extra burden of providing protection for them. Some local authorities solved this problem by allowing them to retire to the nearest district town or city for the night. This was the most expedient way to avoid reprimands or questions which surely came their way from General Thang whenever RD cadre groups suffered casualties or losses. His solicitous attitude toward RD cadres, whom he protected with the jealousy of a mother hen, earned them the pejorative title, "Con Ông, cháu cha" (literally, grandfather's sons and father's grandsons; figuratively, spoiled children of the wealthy and influential.) However, beginning in 1969 when overall security became better and enemy pressure on rural areas was reduced to a minimum as a result of U.S. and ARVN conducted search-and-destroy operations, the performance of RD cadres improved significantly in many areas throughout South Vietnam.

But at a time when the contributions of these RD cadre groups became more responsive to rural pacification requirements, a consolidation of U.S. aid programs no longer made funds available for their support. As a direct result, RD cadre activities steadily declined beginning in 1970.

Faced with the serious absence of qualified and devoted cadres who had become indispensable for the pacification process, President Thieu and his Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Cao Van Than, sought ways to revive this organization, but without funds, they found it impossible. Finally, in 1971, RD cadres were disbanded as a separate organization and absorbed into individual ministries to serve as civil servants, each according to his trained capabilities. A great number of key cadres, including the RD Ministry staff and group leaders, were assigned to the newly-created General Commission of Public Service. With this, a valuable concept came to an end, a concept which, if given the chance to develop might well have proven to be an effective antithesis to Communist insurgency.

People's Self-Defense Forces

The People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) were formally institutionalized by the General Mobilization Law of June 1968 in the wake of the Communist Tet Offensive against South Vietnam's cities. In the protracted Vietnam war, this concept of organizing and arming the people to protect themselves had been implemented under several successive governments although under different names and with varying degrees of success. None of the predecessors, however, ever matched the PSDF in magnitude and in success.

As decreed by law, the PSDF concept required that every able-bodied citizen should be mobilized to protect himself, his family and his community. The law made it mandatory for all male citizens ages 16 to 17, and 39 to 50 to participate in the PSDF program with the exception of those who volunteered to serve in the military and those in the draft age range (18-38) who were exempted from service for reasons other than poor health. In addition, elders (over 50), disabled veterans, women, and

teenagers under 16 were also encouraged, on a voluntary basis, to join the PSDF in a supporting role. All similar organizations that had existed before 1968 such as Combat Youth, Rural Combatants, Civil Defense were disbanded and their members became PSDF. The GVN's objective was to enlist the widest popular participation possible in order to isolate the Viet Cong and hopefully, to secure the people's support as well.

In general, these GVN efforts sought to organize, train and arm the PSDF to an extent that they would be capable of maintaining security within their hamlets or city blocks and defending against small-unit enemy attacks. In relatively secure areas, the PSDF could be employed to assist the national police in maintaining law and order, defending against enemy sabotage and terrorist actions, and interdicting enemy penetrations. Where security was less certain, the PSDF were organized only in those hamlets protected by territorial forces. As soon as an insecure area became free of enemy infestation, the PSDF gradually took over the security role in the place of RF and PF units which would be redeployed to other areas still under contest. However, when this occurred the RF and PF would usually leave behind a small reaction force. In this way, the PSDF gained in strength and stature as governmental control expanded.

As a people's organization, the PSDF structure existed at every level of national endeavor, except military region, under the form of committees. These committees were chaired, in descending order, by the Prime Minister, city mayors or province chiefs, and district, village, and hamlet chiefs or their urban counterparts. To assist the central committees in operating, controlling and supporting the nation-wide, PSDF organization, the GVN created a PSDF Directorate under the Ministry of the Interior whose responsibilities were to plan, program, manage, and provide support. In Saigon and other cities and provinces, there were PSDF executive offices which implemented plans and coordinated activities under the guidance of the PSDF Directorate. These offices also determined criteria for the formation, equipping, training, and supporting of PSDF groups and sections, and then monitored and controlled their activities. At the district and village level, similar offices

were also created to manage and control PSDF affairs. As determined by law, all the deputies for administration for city mayors, province, and district chiefs served as PSDF leaders in their respective administrative areas.

The PSDF force structure consisted of two components: combat and support. The basic building block of the combat PSDF was the eleven-man team made up of a team leader, a deputy, and three three-man cells. Three such teams formed a section of 35 men under a section leader and a deputy. If a locality had more than one section, then two or three sections could be assembled into a group which was the biggest PSDF combat unit led by a group leader and a deputy. All team, section, and group leaders and deputies were elected by PSDF members on the basis of their leadership qualities.

Support elements were all volunteers. They were also organized into teams, sections, and groups but separated into different categories: elders, women, and teenagers, as dictated by traditional Vietnamese culture. These supporting elements provided such services as first-aid, education, social welfare, and entertainment. Able-bodied young women could join the combat PSDF if they so desired, on a voluntary basis. In rural areas, many peasant girls volunteered as combat members and were organized into separate cells.

Combat PSDF groups were issued rifles, carbines, submachine guns, and shotguns. Some groups even received automatic rifles in limited numbers during the later stages of the war. There was considerable debate among the Americans as well as the Vietnamese leadership concerning the wisdom of arming civilians in the rural communities. Could they really be trusted with weapons, or would they become a ready source of weapons for the enemy? Could they be trained to use weapons effectively? What were the chances that large numbers would defect with their weapons to the enemy or assist the enemy in controlling the countryside? The government of Vietnam obviously believed the people could be trusted and furthermore, that the greatest benefit to be derived by arming the PSDF would be psychological. By demonstrating its trust in the people, the government would receive their greater support. This would enhance the

stability of the government, improve its prestige as a popular government, and degrade the status of the Viet Cong.

Like minutemen of the American Revolution, they had no distinctive uniforms or insignia. Each member was usually required to take up night guard duties once every three days; he could use a substitute if his absence was justifiable. Some lazy people, especially rich ones, regularly hired substitutes; this was quite common in urban areas. PSDF members did not receive any salary; only group leaders received a small allowance.

PSDF duties consisted in general of maintaining security within the hamlet or the city bloc. They mounted guard, conducted patrols, and supported the police or military forces by gathering intelligence, providing first-aid, assisting in medical evacuation, constructing defense barriers, installing simple booby traps, and acting as messengers. Depending on their abilities, they also participated in community development activities in the hamlet.

The PSDF employed guerrilla tactics; they did not take up fixed defense positions but moved to alert positions only at night in cells of three. They rarely confronted the enemy directly unless his force was small and easy to destroy. Their capabilities were usually limited to warning the hamlet people and the nearest friendly force, and taking up concealed positions along the path of the enemy's approach, harassing and sniping at him. Whenever confronted by a superior enemy force, PSDF members hid their weapons and acted as ordinary people.

As a rule, the PSDF never ventured outside the hamlet defense perimeter but they might join the PF in night ambushes on approaches to the hamlet, or participate in PF patrols outside the hamlet, usually under PF leadership. When warranted by the situation, they could also temporarily man a PF outpost while the PF laid ambushes or conducted partols outside of the hamlet. This arrangement augmented the PF capabilities and enhanced the security of the hamlet. The PSDF usually cooperated well with the PF, contrary to reports of animosity or jealousy between them. In many cases of enemy penetrations, the hardy and more experienced PSDF members even violated the rule by joining the PF to fight back as a reaction force. However, their most significant contribution in cases of

enemy penetration of the hamlet was to organize the people into passive resistance and non-cooperation, effectively isolating the enemy and making him feel insecure and unable to move about freely.

To ensure that the PSDF could perform their role effectively, a relatively comprehensive training program was devised. A four-week formal training course was conducted at national training centers for team and section leaders. Although shorter in duration, these courses were comprehensive enough and compared favorably with PF platoon and squad leader basic courses. Training for PSDF members was conducted by mobile training teams provided by sector headquarters. These teams normally consisted of a RF officer, a PF platoon leader, a policeman, two or three experienced RF enlisted men and RD cadres. The training was performed in the hamlet for a few hours during the day and so arranged to avoid disrupting normal activities of PSDF members. It was practical and designed to be useful during periods of combat and peace. Supporting PSDF members also progressed through a similar training program but it was more technically and politically oriented.

The PSDF program picked up momentum at a time considered politically and psychologically favorable for South Vietnam. It developed rapidly and by 1972, the PSDF had become a considerable force with over one million combat members; about half of them were armed with individual weapons, and most had been trained for combat. The PSDF support component was even larger with 2.5 million members. That the program exceeded expectations was unmistakably an indication of the South Vietnamese people's attitude toward the communist insurgency. It could not be logically viewed otherwise for although the PSDF program was not entirely voluntary, it's volunteers numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, the fact that South Vietnam armed 500,000 of it's civilian villagers to defend their homes, and these citizens chose to do that rather than assist the Communists or rise up against the government, was concrete evidence of their loyalty and devotion. Awareness of the need to protect themselves and a sense of responsibility toward their home communities were the elements that motivated the PSDF members and helped foster their esprit de corps. More significantly, their enthusiastic response to the program

provided the GVN a popular mandate so vital for the achievement of desired national goals.

The achievements of the PSDF, as any human enterprise of that scale, were not uniform and varied from one locality to another. By and large, however, where the program was well executed, a marked improvement in local security always followed. The achievements of the Hai Yen Catholic diocese in the Ca Mau Peninsula, of the Tra Long in Chuong Thien Province, and of the Hoa Hao areas of An Giang and Chau Doc Provinces were outstanding examples of PSDF effectiveness in providing local security. It just wasn't healthy for the VC to operate in these regions. The success of these communities derived from several factors that were not present in the same degree in other parts of the country. They had a long tradition of anti-Communism; they each had strong religious identification with their communities; they each had strong regional and family ties in their villages; and they enjoyed strong leadership and organization at the local level.

One had to see the PSDF in action in the hamlets to believe in it. From what I personally observed I can report that hamlet people responded to the program and participated in the defense of their communities with genuine enthusiasm and effectiveness. I recall my own skepticism at the time Communists attacked Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive and controlled most of it. As commander of the 1st Infantry Division, I was hard pressed by the high combat attrition of my forces and I clearly needed a helping hand. Some local civic and political leaders came to me and offered their services. They asked me to arm their men and use them to assist my forces in clearing the enemy or holding whatever remained of the city. Despite my predicament and their insistence, I firmly refused because I simply did not believe they would be able to do what I later had the opportunity to see and appreciate.

To counter the people's war of the Communists, the concept of turning the people against him in armed defense is valid. In the case of the PSDF, it's effectiveness was obvious. Their role was unquestionably a useful one but their success, like those of other para-military forces, depended on the support of territorial forces from the outside or the

secure environment of adjacent areas.

The National Police

Prior to 1962, the police in general consisted of separate organizations, but not all of them were subordinate to the Director of National Police, who was responsible for maintaining law, order and security in Saigon and other cities under the administrative control of the Ministry of the Interior.

As the threat of Communist insurgency became serious, in 1962, President Ngo Dinh Diem promulgated a decree integrating all police and security agencies into a unique national police organization. At the same time, he directed that every effort should be expended to improve and develop the national police in order to meet increasing requirements in the maintenance of law and order. Since that date, the national police constantly developed in size and effectiveness. From 17,000 men, it eventually grew into a 120,000-man force consisting of several branches: uniformed police, field police, special police and marine police.

During the first few years, the national police (NP) organization stopped at the district level. Law and order at the village and hamlet level were the responsibility of the Self-Defense Corps (Popular Forces). Beginning in 1969, police were deployed to villages on the basis of six men for each village with a population under 5,000, twelve men for each village with a population between 5,000 and 10,000, and eighteen men for villages with a population above 10,000. Each village police squad included a police chief and an intelligence specialist; it operated from a station located at or near the village administrative office. Governmental law enforcement authority was thus established at every level of the administration.

The National Police organizational and control system consisted of a national command at the central echelon and a regional command for each of the four military regions. Each regional police command controlled provincial NP offices, which in turn, controlled district NP branches and village NP sub-branches.

The principal mission of the national police was to maintain law

and order in secure and consolidated areas. In cooperation with the RF, PF and the PSDF, police forces also participated in the maintenance of local security in villages, hamlets, and populated areas. In those areas where the threat of insurgency was subversive in nature and consisted solely of small-scale terrorist, sabotage, or propaganda activities, the primary responsibility of countering this threat rested with the police assisted by our intelligence organizations. Military support and protection were required, however, when subversive activities were supported by enemy guerrilla or local forces. In those areas, military intervention was necessary to drive away or destroy the Communist insurgents.

In villages where security was good, certain security functions normally assumed by the PF were gradually turned over to the NP. This transfer of responsibility made it possible for the PF to replace the RF in secure areas, which in turn released more RF units for mobile operations.

Among our efforts to improve and develop the national police to meet counter-insurgency requirements, the most significant was the creation of police field forces (PFF). The PFF were basically organized into companies which were lightly equipped to facilitate quick intervention where needed. A field police trooper received basic training just like any other policemen but he was also trained in military tactics to combat insurgency. PFF units were deployed to provinces on the basis of one or two companies per province depending on the security situation. Only the province chief had the authority to decide whether to attach the PFF by separate platoons to districts or occasionally to villages when such a requirement arose.

The PFF performed functions similar to those of the uniformed police but their efforts were concentrated on eliminating the VCI and assisting local governments in establishing control over contested areas just cleared by military forces. When the VCI had been eliminated in a certain locality, the primary responsibility of the PFF was to prevent its return or resumption of subversive activities and ensure that police presence was maintained and consolidated. Police field force methods of operation consisted of conducting patrols and ambushes, seeking constantly to detect, flush out and eliminate VCI members and assisting in maintaining law and order. During operations conducted in coordination

with military forces, the PFF role was a supporting one. It consisted of detecting and detaining VC elements, looking for secret caches or shelters, taking temporary custody of enemy prisoners, searching objectives in the assigned area of operation, and screening and protecting refugees.

In spite of their constant growth and development, NP forces always seemed to be inadequate. One of their major weaknesses was the shortage of competent cadre personnel. When a pressing requirement arose in 1969 to deploy police forces to about 2,400 villages country-wide, a great number of ARVN officers and enlisted men, RF and PF cadres and personnel from other para-military forces such as RD cadres, PRU, etc. were hastily assigned to the National Police. In principle, these transferred personnel should have met certain criteria for effective service in police work, but those who did were few. Actually, there were many servicemen who would perform this type of job well but they were either retained by their units or simply refused to serve in the NP for obvious reasons of prejudice. They, like the public at large, still regarded policemen with little respect or trust and certainly without affection.

Although the NP duties were to enforce law, maintain order, and eliminate the VCI, many policemen, who had been selected and trained to perform these duties, were in reality employed to guard governmental installations or as bodyguards. This was basically an error in employment on the part of responsible authorities. However, this was also a practice welcomed by most policemen detailed to such duties who seemed to prefer safe assignments in urban centers to hardship and hazards in rural areas.

Even though our national police were devoted and committed to their duties, the police organization could never be expected to achieve success alone. It depended very heavily on military strength in rural areas where force still prevailed over reason and law.

CHAPTER V

RF-PF Employment and Performance

Role and Responsibilities

The employment of territorial forces in South Vietnam evolved with time and the changing war situation. During the initial stage, RF companies were primarily deployed to man the country-wide outpost system which was designed to provide security for rural areas, populated centers and strategically important places. From these outposts, which served as their operational bases, the RF conducted small-scale operations, usually reconnaissance and patrols, to interdict the penetration of enemy guerrilla or local force units into areas under their protection. RF units were also employed for the defense of critical points along strategic lines of communication such as important bridges and ferries. Confined to a province, the main realm of RF activity was the district.

The PF, which were made up of rural youths, were initially used to protect their home villages and hamlets against underground VCI elements living illegally among the population and from guerrillas intruding from the outside. The most usual forms of PF activity were to man a squad or half-squad size outpost at the village headquarters and watchtowers on road and waterway accesses to the village, conduct patrols and reconnaissance in the near vicinity of the village, and to employ night ambushes on village approaches. In addition, the PF also searched households for suspects and inspected properties, performing these police functions because there were usually no police stationed in the village. Occasionally, platoons might be assembled into a company-size strike force to assist outposts under enemy attack.

Beginning in 1965, when the GVN initiated the policy of pacification and rural development, and after U.S. combat forces took charge of the main-force war, regular ARVN units took the primary responsibility

of supporting pacification. As a result, about 60 percent of ARVN infantry battalions were placed under the sectors' operational control to provide direct support to the pacification program, assisting and augmenting the RF and PF in the maintenance of territorial security. During that period, the role of the RF and PF was an obscure one; their equipment was rudimentary, and their combat capabilities, marginal.

The RF and PF played this secondary role for four years, supporting ARVN, until 1969. Then, as ARVN forces again became involved in the main-force war, the territorials took over as the primary pacification forces. By that time, the RF and PF had expanded and improved in several aspects. With more modern equipment and systematic training, they had become increasingly combat effective. In secure areas, the PF took over the responsibilities normally assigned to the RF; the RF now freed from static missions, increased their mobile operations. In secure villages and hamlets the PF missions were turned over to the PSDF and National Police.

In 1970, selected RF battalions were committed to missions outside their home provinces. This deployment took place at first in MR-4 and was soon repeated in other military regions. Some RF units now became mobile forces which could be deployed in any province within a military region. The PF were also affected by this trend toward mobility and flexibility. In several instances, PF responsibilities were extended into adjacent areas. RF or PF units were increasingly employed attached to regular ARVN units in search-and-destroy operations or in combat missions such as destroying guerrilla bases and mopping up.

By 1972, after the majority of U.S. and FWMAF combat units had been redeployed from South Vietnam, the RF and PF found their roles expanded even more. For, in addition to their normal duties of territorial security and pacification support, RF and PF units were also deployed, in conjunction with infantry divisions, to defend important combat bases, including several in the DMZ area such as A2, A1, Anne and Barbara, replacing withdrawn U.S. units. Although they were not prepared by training or experience for this assignment, territorial forces did

their best to accomplish it. When NVA units invaded South Vietnam in force in early 1972, many RF-PF made significant contributions in repelling NVA units on the frontlines. Ever since that experience, military region commanders regularly assigned territorial security and mobile combat operational missions to the RF.

Created primarily to maintain local security and defend their home villages and hamlets against Communist insurgents, the RF and PF were organized, equipped, trained, and supported for this purpose. When called upon to accomplish other missions or be redeployed from their home villages or provinces, they naturally became less effective because they lost their primary advantage, familiarity with the local environment. Another disadvantage was that when assigned to fight as regular forces in a conventional manner, they did not have the organic firepower and mobility that the regular ARVN enjoyed. Their performance, therefore, was contingent to a great extent on the support given them by the regular ARVN forces.

Deployment of Forces

Because of their responsibilities for territorial security, RF and PF units were deployed all over South Vietnam. From cities to the most remote rural areas, the RF and PF were as ubiquitous as the outposts and watchtowers they manned: one company here, one platoon there, sometimes just a few men. The total number of these fixed positions was approximately 9,000, over half of which were in the Mekong Delta. This dispersion of forces created numerous difficulties for the territorial commanders who commanded and controlled them. One of the most challenging problems was how to deploy and use them effectively to meet security requirements.

The deployment of the RF and PF was largely predicated on the local security situation. As a rule, when security improved and governmental control was stabilized in an area, the territorial forces assigned there would be redeployed to a less secure area. This was the working principle of the oil stain which kept spreading as the situation



PF Watchtower in Duc Hue District (Hau Nghia Province)

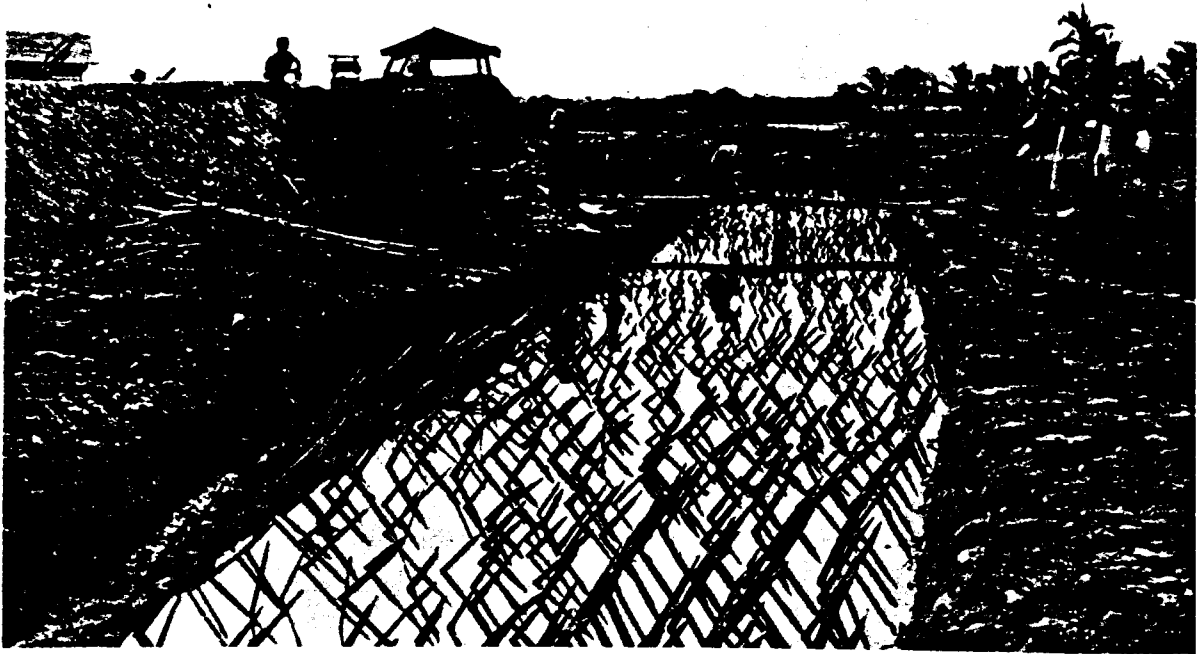
permitted. Guided by this principle, territorial commanders could, depending on the local situation and local manpower, redistribute their forces for the purpose of expanding security by redeployment. They could move a unit from one tactical position to another or from one assigned area to another; they could also transfer responsibilities among forces by turning over secure areas to para-military forces and redeploying RF and PF units to areas where security needed to be consolidated.

In spite of principles which had been established for the effective deployment and employment of the RF and PF, many units were permanently rooted in static duties, performing routine chores in urban areas with which they had become familiar, such as guarding governmental buildings and escorting VIP's, while elsewhere the expanding pacification process in rural areas was short of required forces. The reasons for this inefficient employment of territorials could be traced to inefficient local leadership and the inability of the central authority, the JGS, to make its influence felt at the local level. The district of Mo Cay was a case in point which testified to the negligence or lack of control on the part of the district chief. Several units were completely isolated as a result of being deployed in small, remote posts in insecure areas. With only limited capabilities, they usually confined their activities within the ramparts of their outposts day and night, giving the enemy complete freedom of action on the outside and the option to attack at will. While pacification progress required the expansion of territorial control, local commanders usually could not muster enough territorial forces to create a mutually-supporting system of posts which was essential to cover the territory they were responsible for. Of the many examples of erroneous employment of territorial forces, over-extension was the most common mistake committed by sector chiefs, especially in provinces permanently under heavy enemy pressure such as Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Kien Hoa, and Chuong Thien. In some areas of Chuong Thien Province, PF outposts were even surrounded by enemy flags and propaganda posters. The PF troops inside these outposts never dared venture outside.

Effective employment of territorial forces was the subject of constant concern for territorial commanders at all levels, from military region to district. Despite their efforts, few succeeded in managing and employing effectively such a large and widely dispersed force. As of June 1970, for example, there were as many as 1,640 RF companies and 6,969 PF platoons deployed. Even during the period when U.S. helilift assets were still abundant and available for their use on a priority basis, many sector and district commanders were unable to visit all of their units. Several outposts, therefore, spent a whole year without being visited by the sector or the district commander. When helicopters were few and priority for their use given to tactical missions, inspection and supervision of RF and PF units were even more curtailed. The use of roads or waterways for inspection purposes was not only a time-consuming process but also required escort and itinerary security for visiting parties. As a result, territorial commanders usually monitored the activities of their RF and PF units through reports. Whether these units performed as effectively as reported depended almost entirely on the leadership of RF company commanders and PF platoon and squad leaders. The upgrading of RF companies into groups and battalions in 1970 and the establishment of sector tactical commands in 1972 proved useful in controlling the employment of such a large and widely-dispersed force.

Outposts and Strongpoints

To safeguard territorial security, RF and PF units were mostly used to man the extensive system of outposts and strongpoints along axes of communication and in the rural areas. Each outpost or strongpoint usually consisted of combat bunkers connected by earth parapets or communication trenches. The outer perimeter of the outpost was protected by a moat planted with spikes or layers of barbed wire, usually rigged with anti-personnel mines and booby traps. An outpost was usually large enough to accommodate the entire unit which manned it; occasionally it even provided quarters for dependents.



A Typical Outpost With Protective Moat

The general configuration of the outpost system provided a good indication as to which areas were under GVN control and which were not. The concept of constructing outposts for the defense of villages and hamlets dated far back in time. Most recently, during the First Indochina War, the French also adopted this concept and constructed some large-scale outpost systems such as the famous "De Lattre Line" in North Vietnam. The basic idea was to control rural areas through these outposts and to prevent enemy penetrations into populous centers. The concept of the outpost was, therefore, deeply ingrained not only in military minds but also in the daily life of our citizens. To the population, the outpost was the symbol of governmental authority, an indication of the government's determination to stay with them and provide protection. As a result, the construction of new outposts, or the loss of outposts to the enemy, or even their evacuation for military purposes, affected the morale and life of the local population. Territorial commanders were, therefore, frequently caught between military requirements and the need to maintain the people's morale. The enemy was undoubtedly aware of this psychological factor and he consequently devoted his efforts to attacking or isolating outposts.

The outpost system by itself had several shortcomings. In the first place, it absorbed a large military force in static defense. Secondly, its construction required not only large budgetary outlays but also contributions in labor. Such a system also naturally dispersed combat and combat support assets. Therefore, as pacification expanded, our forces and their resources became more diluted, providing good targets for enemy attacks. Another inevitable shortcoming inherent in the system was that when a unit remained long rooted in one place, its activities turned into predictable routines and all initiative became blunted with time. It was hard under those circumstances to avoid negligence of duties. In many instances, the unit tended to be passive and preferred to remain inside the outpost after dark. This gave the enemy freedom to move about, collecting taxes and food, making propaganda, recruiting, or simply terrorizing the villagers. By being passive or inactive, the unit which manned the outpost not only became a good target for enemy

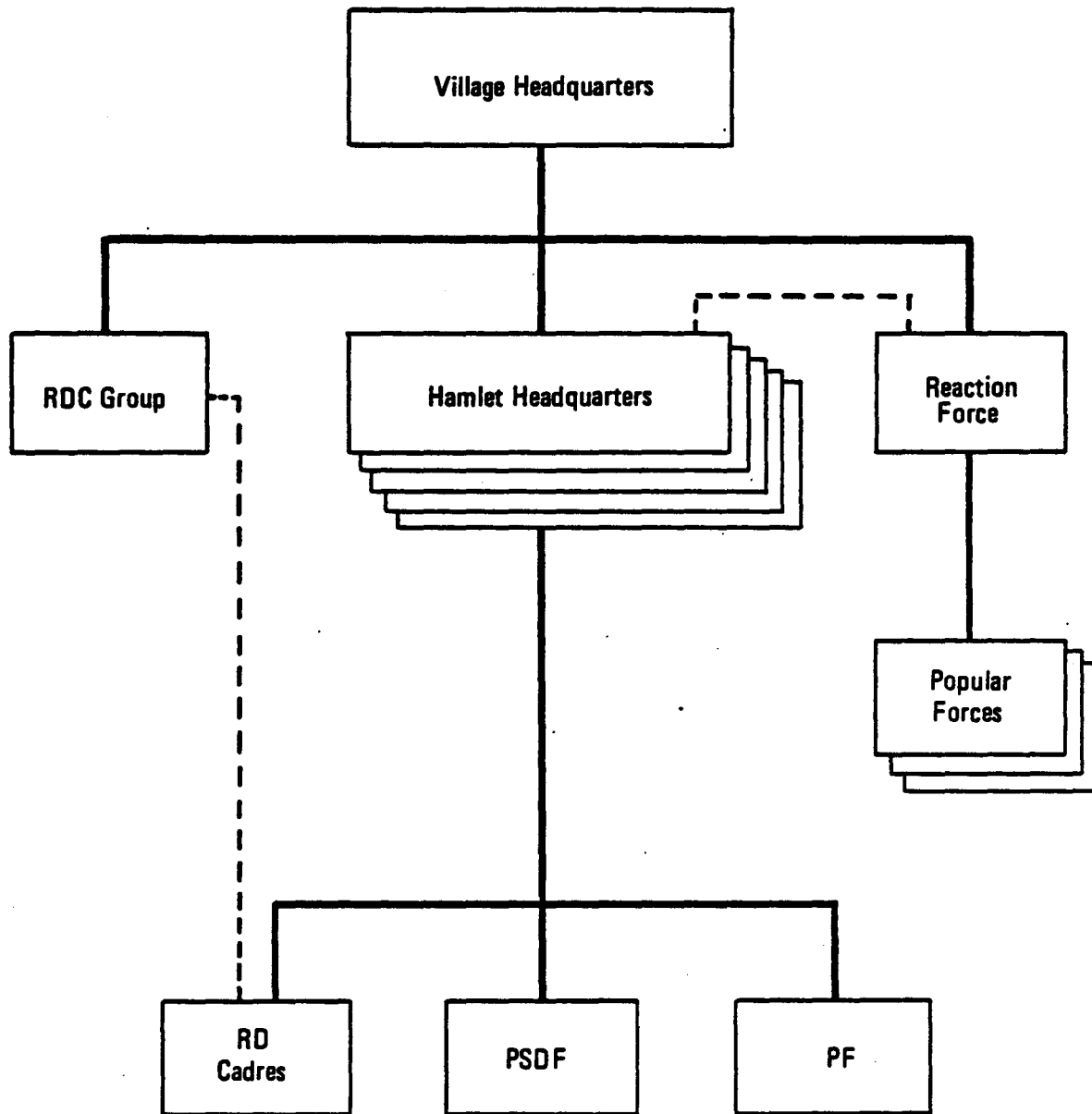
attack at any time but also, when such an attack occurred, wrought upon itself sure destruction and heavy losses. Over the years, the losses and casualties suffered by the RF and PF resulted more from enemy attacks against outposts than from their activities on the outside.

In spite of these shortcomings, South Vietnamese military authorities were never able to dispense with the outpost system, nor could they develop a satisfactory alternative. In 1964, the province of Long An experimented with the concept of mobile defense, employing RF and PF units in mobile activities instead of in outposts for the defense of villages. After a month of activity, provincial authorities realized that the RF and PF units still required a point of support, a place to rest. The outpost system, therefore, proved indispensable. But many of its weaknesses were subsequently overcome by strong support from the outside in terms of firepower or reinforcements, whenever required, and by increased inspections conducted by territorial commanders.

Village and Hamlet Defense

There were several types of forces available for the defense of villages and hamlets: RF, PF, PSDF, RD cadres and the NP. In principle, each of these elements was assigned a specific role to perform in the defense plan. The RF were usually responsible for maintaining security outside of and between villages and preventing penetrations by enemy main or local force units. Occasionally, they were also employed as an intervention force in case a village came under heavy enemy attack. The PF were assigned similar responsibilities but were confined to the vicinity of populated areas. Their role was to maintain security around hamlets and prevent the penetration of small enemy elements. The PSDF, in coordination and cooperation with the PF, were responsible for maintaining security inside hamlets, especially at night while the NP focused its attention on eliminating VCI activities. With their armed elements, the RD cadres also participated in the defense of the hamlet. All of these forces, with the exception of the RF, were placed under the operational control of the village chief. (Chart 10)

Chart 10 – Village Organization for Defense



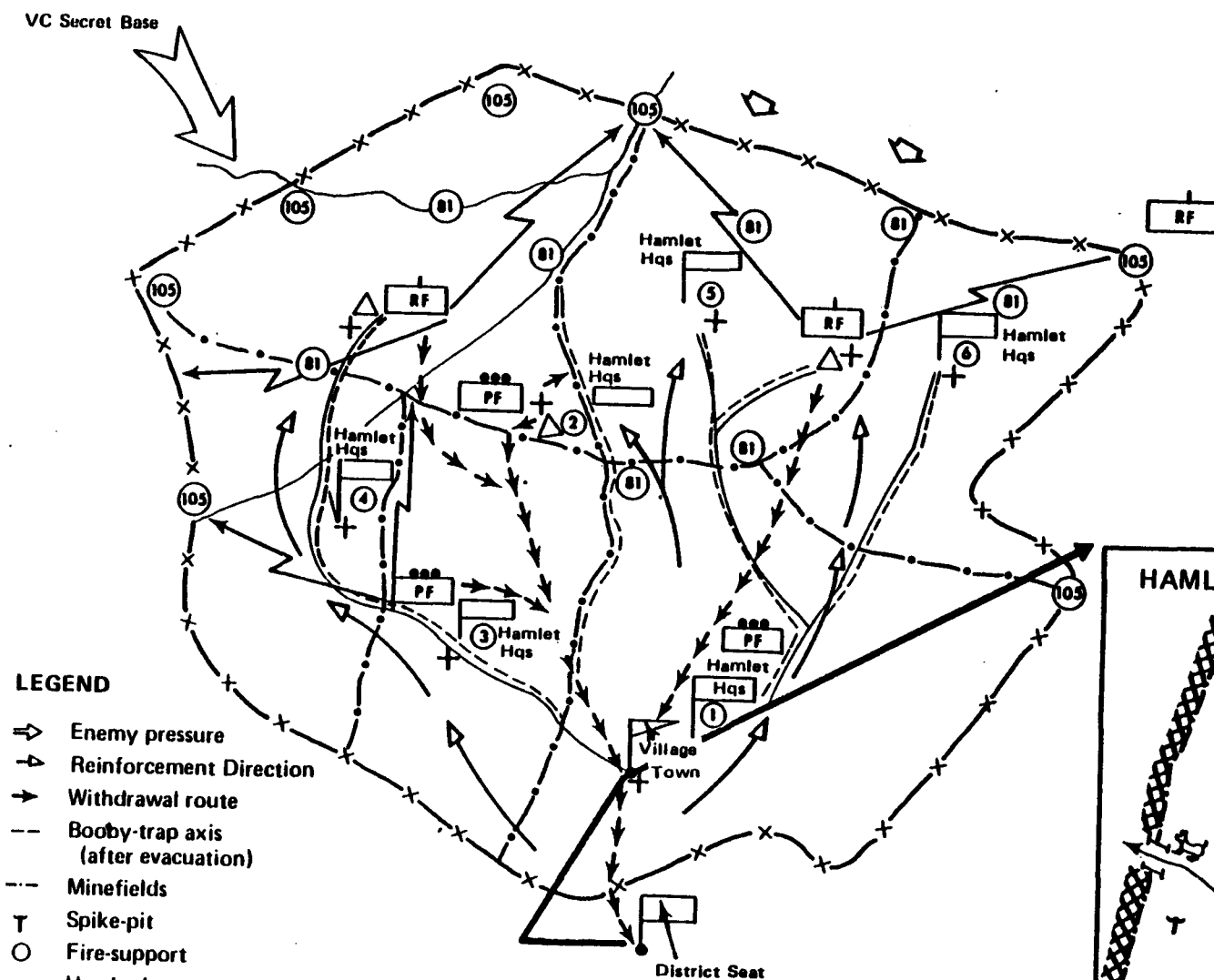
————— Command
----- Coordination

Depending on the specific local situation (terrain, security, forces available) the village chief prepared a defense plan for his village with the assistance of the village military commissioner and, occasionally, the chief of the mobile advisory team. Through this plan, he assigned responsibilities for each of the force elements under his control. A village defense plan was usually based on pre-established procedures and anticipated requirements. It was detailed enough to compare favorably with a combined arms operation plan. After the plan was completed, the village chief conducted alert exercises under the supervision of the district or province chief; guidance for improving the plan was usually provided at such times. (Map 6)

A first glance at the forces committed and the organization for defense in villages and hamlets generally conveyed the impression that no matter how strong an enemy force, it could not penetrate the defenses of a village without suffering heavy losses. From plan to execution, however, there was always a sizeable gap, and this gap was more pronounced at the village and hamlet level. Despite the fact that each village had a sizeable security force averaging approximately 100 armed men, the performance of this force in reality was not as impressive as its strength. For one thing, this force was loosely assembled and lacked strong command and control. The village chief was assigned this command and control responsibility. In practice, however very few village chiefs fully assumed this responsibility. Being civilians, they were not well versed in military affairs and their orders were seldom welcomed by PF platoon leaders. Because of the precarious security situation, certain village chiefs simply wanted to maintain their civilian role and preferred administrative duties to military responsibilities. Their contributions to village defense were therefore marginal. Even during police operations, many village chiefs chose not to be involved, concerned that their presence would affect the elective status of their position. Even if a village chief was dedicated enough to assume full responsibilities for defense, the task of coordinating and integrating all military and para-military elements into a cohesive combat force was not an easy one for any commander, much less a village chief. Despite their

Map 6 – Overlay, Typical Village Defense Plan

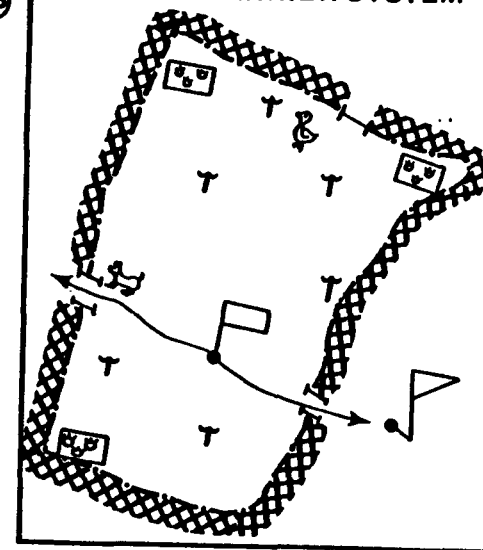
VC Secret Base



LEGEND

- ⇒ Enemy pressure
- Reinforcement Direction
- Withdrawal route
- Booby-trap axis (after evacuation)
- Minefields
- T Spike-pit
- Fire-support
- Hamlet lane
- ➔ Province route
- ~ Stream
- + First Aid Team

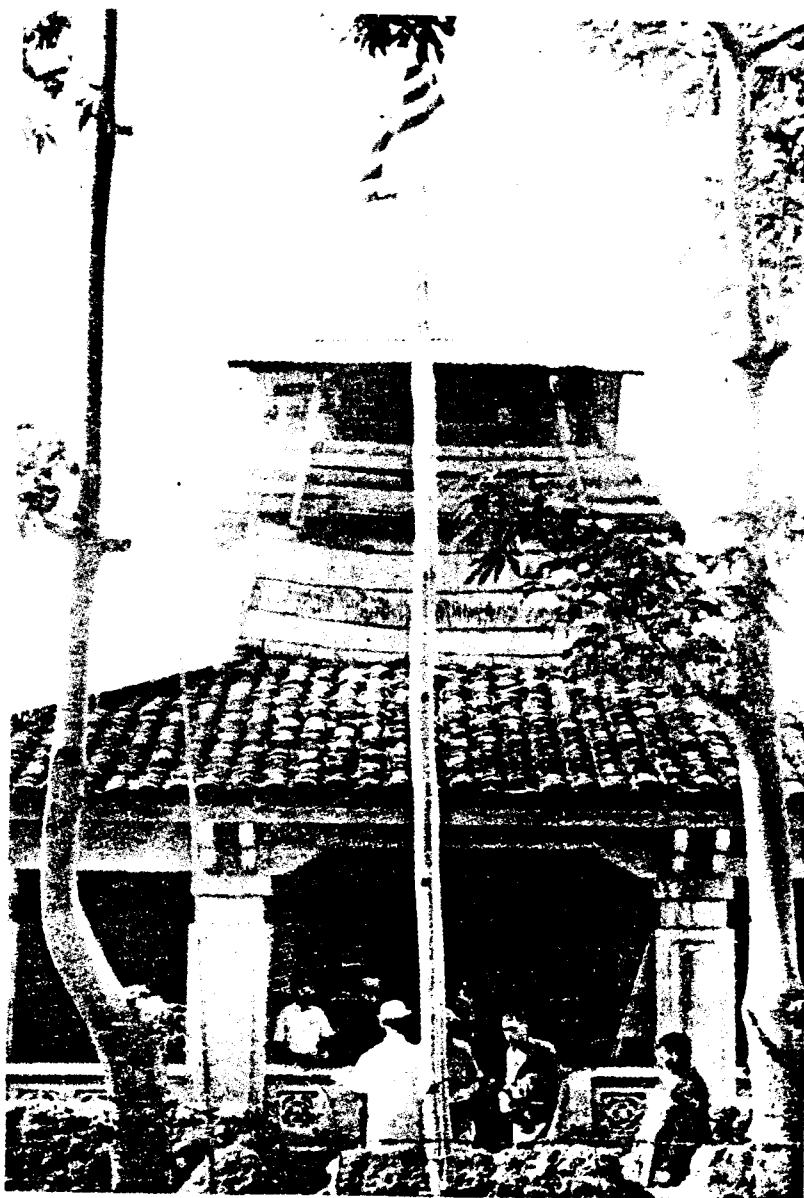
HAMLET BARRIER SYSTEM



legal authority, few village chiefs succeeded in imposing it on the separate elements under their control, and erasing bad habits and jealousies among them in order to bring about harmony and dedication. If we looked at the problems which commonly arose when units of the regular ARVN were attached outside of their parent organization, we could understand how difficult a village chief's job could be even under normal circumstances.

In addition to problems of command and coordination, the village chief was required to execute a defense plan which was usually far removed from realities. Instead of making the most out of the inherent advantages enjoyed by local troops and militiamen, his plan often emphasized the coordination of maneuver and firepower, which required the village chief to have received military training; it also required support in firepower and troop reinforcements which would likely be not available.

I had the opportunity to observe a night alert exercise conducted by the village of My An in Vinh Long Province. From what I saw and heard, I had the impression that this was an ARVN company on a field maneuver. The village chief seemed to display his best as a military commander. From his TOC, he radioed orders to his troops in defense positions, maneuvered reinforcements, called for artillery support, and personally gave fire coordinates, just like a company commander in combat. Somehow, despite his exertion, his gestures seemed to be uneasy and he was not sure of himself. I took him aside and asked if he would do exactly the same thing when the VC attacked. Apparently embarrassed, he replied that he had done just what advisers had taught him, but in the case of a real attack, he would have to play it by ear, use only his own resources and do things his own way. I came away convinced that the average village chief could not execute his ready-made defense plan effectively without the assistance of U.S. advisers.



A Typical Village Headquarters in Kien Hoa Province

Pacification

Operating inside the screen provided by ARVN and U.S. forces, the territorial forces provided security for the pacification program. Their essential task was to keep the territory free from attacks by enemy forces in insecure areas and to prevent enemy disruptive activities from undermining progress in economic, political and social development in secure areas.

Even though ARVN units were also employed for this task in great numbers, such as during 1967-1968, and augmented by U.S. forces in many instances, the primary responsibility for territorial security and pacification support remained with the RF and PF. The ARVN forces were naturally stronger, their combat assets more abundant, and they had more firepower and mobility, but the security problem involved in the pacification process was not just a tactical mission that a combat unit could carry out successfully under normal circumstances. Territorial security required the ability to recognize and identify the enemy among the masses, a familiarity with all accesses, hiding places in the hamlets, a working relationship and close touch with the population and, above all, the people's cooperation and support. All of these requirements could hardly be met with satisfaction by regular ARVN units whose strengths were conventional in nature and whose primary target was the enemy's main force, not his local or guerrilla units.

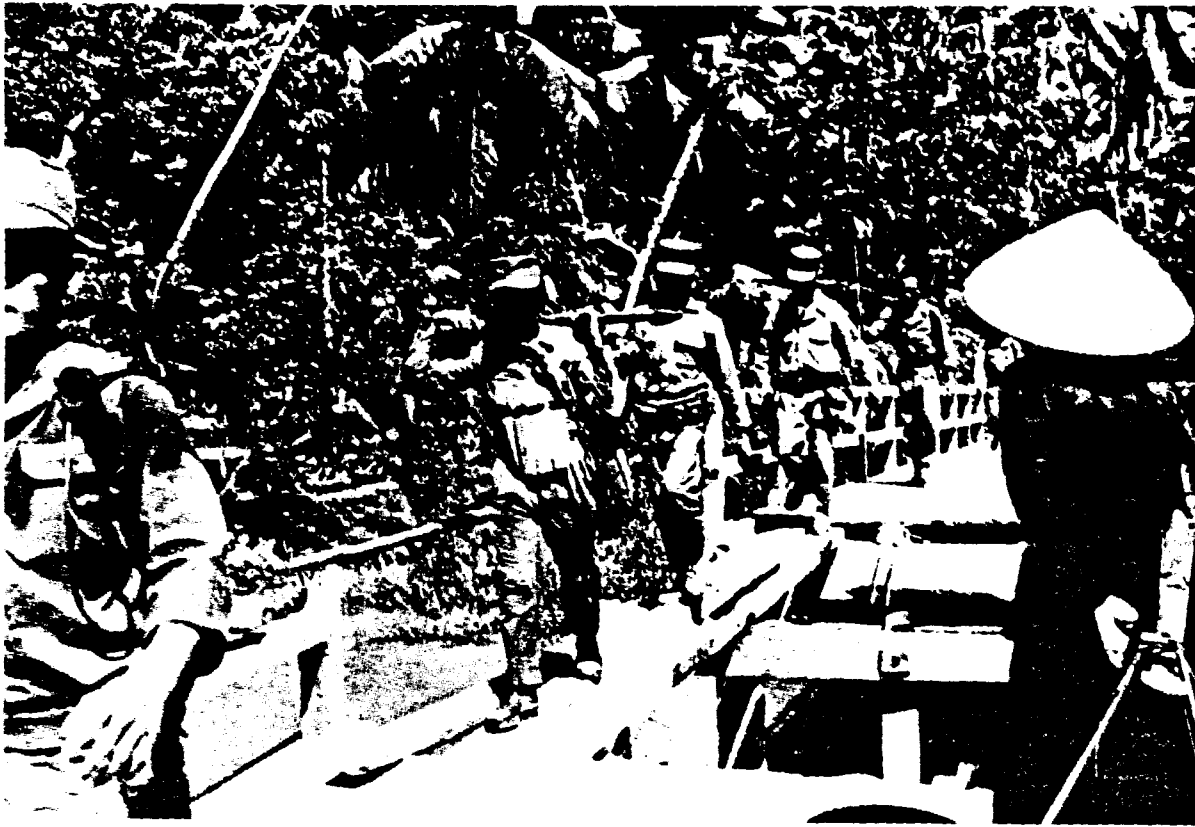
Pacification forces were, therefore, local, hometown forces. They operated in and out of the hamlets at night, preventing the local guerrillas, the propagandists, the tax collectors and other repressive elements, from penetrating their communities, and during the daytime, they lived among the population. The local population was close to them. If they were not locally-born themselves, at least they were combatants who were well known by the local people.

They usually operated at the small-unit level, squad, platoon or company. Their normal tactics were ambushes, patrols, guerrilla-type raids, and small-scale cordon-and-search operations. Unlike the typical cordon-and-search operations conducted by regular ARVN forces, theirs

were of low profile and characterized by the absence or minimum use of large-caliber firepower. This was intended to prevent human losses and property damage. During the search, they also progressed slowly and methodically, taking time and pains to flush out the suspects from their hideouts. The sector commander or sub-sector commander had several types of units available to employ in a cordon-and-search operation and the most experienced and successful commanders would form a task-force that optimized the capabilities of each. The RF, often in coordination with a regular ARVN unit, would provide the cordon and establish positions outside the hamlet or village being searched. These defensive positions, often ambush sites, would protect the task-force in the event of an enemy reaction in the form of a mobile unit dispatched to relieve the target village. They were also sited to prevent the escape of VC units or cadre from the cordoned village. PF platoons would be employed inside the hamlets or villages and would participate, along with National Police Field Forces, in the search and apprehension of suspects. RD cadre, PSDF, and, if available, PRU personnel would also participate in the search and security process within the village.

The performance and effectiveness of the RF and PF depended on the specific tactical area of responsibility they were assigned. If they were required to conduct operations or patrols in an area which usually harbored large enemy forces, naturally they showed some reluctance. Their effectiveness was, therefore, limited and this fear of being overwhelmed by large enemy forces tended to make them less audacious. However, in areas where they knew for certain that the enemy strength was insignificant or within their capabilities to destroy, their audacity became remarkable. Experience furthermore indicated that when the shield or screen provided by ARVN and U.S. units on the outside was solid and reliable, allowing no chance for enemy main force units to penetrate, then the RF and PF were most effective.

An example that fully demonstrated this point was the performance of the RF and PF in Quang Tri and Thua Thien, the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. Prior to 1968, the RF and PF in these two



RF Soldiers on Patrol in a Strategic Hamlet

provinces rarely conducted any significant activities. Their passivity allowed the Viet Cong to gradually gain footholds in the population centers. However, as ARVN and U.S. forces were brought in to clear out enemy base areas along the foothills and after they created an effective shield for the protection of the lowland coastal area, the RF and PF suddenly recovered from their stupor. Along with ARVN and U.S. forces, and riding on the crest of successive victories, they helped clear the Viet Cong from the coastal area which was between Route QL-1 and the coastline. There was no enemy stronghold, large or small, in the area including the famous "Street Without Joy" that escaped their search, despite limitations in mobility and firepower. This constant pressure by the RF and PF soon drove enemy local forces away since they no longer had access to a safe haven. At the same time the VCI was also gradually wiped out. As a result, the coastal lowlands of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, the site of some of the fiercest battles of the war, gradually regained vitality and as of mid-1969, the local population began to enjoy life peacefully under the protection of the territorial forces and behind the shield provided by regular forces. (Map 7)

This example amply proved that no other forces were more adapted to the task of maintaining local security in support of pacification than the RF and PF, provided that they were shielded from enemy main-force units. This was, after all, the basic concept of force employment which had been developed for pacification purposes but seldom enforced with success throughout South Vietnam. Unfortunately, such solid shields were not always possible given the vast territory, the terrain configuration, and our limitations in regular forces. Despite this, the statistical results obtained through the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), which recorded and reported the status of hamlet security and population control across the country, fully testified to the performance and effectiveness of the RF and PF in their role of pacification support. A sample of this achievement is provided in Table 1 below which covers the crucial period of 1968-1969. (Table 1)

Map 7 — Protective Shield for RF/PF, Northern MR -1

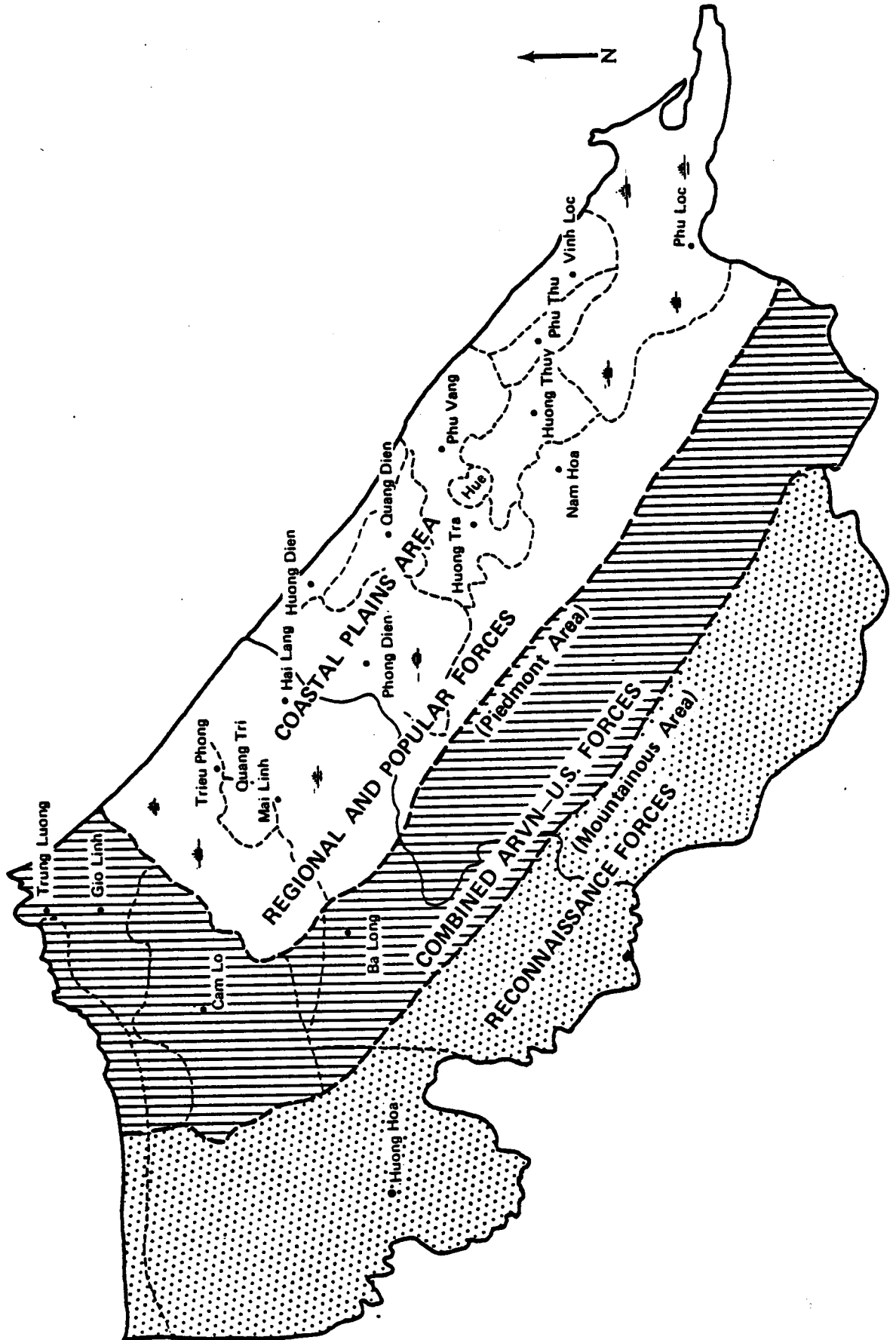


Table 1 - Pacification Results, 1968-1969¹

	Percent of Population Control		
	A,B,C Hamlets "within GVN security"	D&E Hamlets "contested"	VC "controlled"
January 1968	67.2	16.3	16.4
March 1968	61.0	20.7	18.3
October 1968	69.8	14.9	15.3
January 1969	79.2	9.4	11.4
June 1969	85.6	7.5	6.9
October 1969	92.0	4.8	3.2
December 1969	92.7	4.5	2.8

Dong Khoi Operations

One of the most effective techniques for the employment of our forces, in support of security and pacification, was to launch several cordon-and-search operations concurrently throughout a military region. These Dong Khoi or "synchronized" operations (another translation would be "spontaneous uprising") were periodically conducted by MR-4 beginning in 1970, their concept being based on a successful series of operations called "Hiep Dong" (Joining Forces) initiated earlier by the province of Quang Tin. They were remarkably effective and employed only Vietnamese forces, no Americans.

The concept of synchronous operations consisted essentially of employing territorial forces in coordination with local para-military forces to conduct uninterrupted short-duration operations (three to five

¹The reports from the field on which the HES results were based covered a large number of factors considered relevant to the security situation in the hamlets. Not all of these factors related directly to RF/PF performance. Nevertheless, because the RF/PF were crucial to the level of security enjoyed by the hamlets, the HES index was a valid indication, if not an accurate measure, of RF/PF effectiveness in a particular locality and across the country in general.

days) simultaneously over the entire area of the military region. The objective of these operations was to discover, eliminate or neutralize all enemy local force and guerrilla units and the VCI. To achieve this, friendly forces endeavored to destroy all enemy organizations and facilities in the area of operations, to include lines of communication and mini- (guerrilla) bases, by thoroughly coordinating combat efforts with intelligence activities and by exploiting instantaneously all intelligence data gathered on the spot, especially those provided by ralliers. Offensive in nature, these operations also sought to preempt all enemy actions, whether known or pre-planned, at the very beginning of their preparations. Finally, our objective was to eliminate all enemy pressure in the target area, improve security and to foster the people's trust in the government.

Operation plans for this concerted effort were based on a synthesis of all information made available by units and intelligence agencies. The targets of this effort consisted of enemy local force units, guerrilla units, VCI members, and all bases that were being used to support enemy activities. As soon as these targets had been determined, each district headquarters developed a plan to neutralize them, utilizing all available organic resources and reinforcements required in order to attack and destroy several different targets at the same time, isolate the enemy, and prevent his forces from mutually supporting or reinforcing one another.

The results achieved through each surge of synchronous operations usually exceeded those obtained by daily activities by a large margin. The total number of enemy personnel killed and detained throughout the military region often reached an average of several hundreds for each surge, while friendly losses were usually minimal. A major element of this success was the fact that all territorial and para-military forces and intelligence units were required to commit at least 75 percent of their combat strength and they usually participated at full strength. Planning and coordination were centralized and all participating forces were placed under the operational control of the sector and subsector commanders. Coordination and cooperation between operational forces

and local authorities were good and continuous. Security measures were strictly enforced to safeguard secrecy for these operations from the moment of planning to the time of execution. All of these elements accounted for the success invariably achieved during synchronous operations.

But the key to this success lay primarily in effective cooperation and coordination. For the requirements of territorial security and population control in pacification had created several different kinds of forces over the years and the performance of each depended on the cooperation received from and coordination with others. In daily activities such cooperation and coordination rarely existed and for years activity at the grassroots level had been undermined by this lack of harmony. In spite of the fact that these forces were assigned to the same area, each tended to operate separately under its own command system and only obeyed orders issued by its own commander. It appeared that personal loyalty was partly responsible for this and as a result, the activities of each force tended to be self-serving rather than serving the common good.

In addition to providing integration of forces and unity of action, the technique of synchronous operations also proved to be an excellent way to mobilize the huge masses of armed men, to include the People's Self-Defense Forces, into action, giving them initiative and developing a pervasive spirit of teamwork and emulation among the elements that had never previously existed.

Combat Support

From their inception to 1961, the period when the RF and PF had not yet benefited from the U.S. military assistance program, our territorial forces were equipped only with obsolescent weapons of different makes, some dating back to World War I. They were short of ammunition, and much of what they had was long outdated. When participating in any operation, therefore, they were uneasy and unsure of themselves, fearful that having engaged the enemy, their ammunition might not be

replenished. However, as soon as the U.S. military assistance program was extended to territorial forces, the RF and PF began to receive infantry weapons identical to those of ARVN units, such as the M-1 Garand, the M-1 carbine, sub-machine guns, the BAR, and the 60-mm mortar, all of World War II vintage. This improvement in armament enhanced the RF and PF self-assurance and partly increased their combat effectiveness.

By 1964, however, when VC units began to receive modern weapons supplied by the Communist bloc such as the AK-47, the RPG-7, and especially B-40 and B-41 grenade launchers, the firepower of the RF and PF became inadequate and much inferior to the enemy's. This created an adverse psychological effect, which greatly undermined self-assurance among the RF and PF ranks. Several collective desertions occurred as a result, such as the case of PF Platoon No. 002 at outpost No. 161 in Vinh Long Province, which came under prolonged enemy pressure and was attacked nightly with strong firepower. This PF platoon's only weapons for defense had been M-1 rifles and carbines, and a supply of grenades which was depleted after a short time.

During the 1968 Tet Offensive, the RF and PF were clearly outgunned and overwhelmed by the fierce firepower of enemy local force units, all equipped with AK-47's and B-40's. As many as 477 outposts were forced to evacuate under enemy pressure during the first month of the offensive. To overcome this weakness in firepower, beginning in 1969 the RF and PF gradually received, under the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, such modern U.S. weapons as the M-16 rifle, the M-60 machine gun, the M-79 grenade launcher, and the LAW rocket launcher, in replacement of all obsolescent World War II items. In addition to modern armament, the RF and PF were also equipped with improved field radios, such as the AN/PRC-25 which replaced the obsolescent SCR-300 or the trouble-ridden AN/PRC-10. As a result of improved firepower and communications, the morale of the RF and PF received a remarkable boost, and this substantially enhanced their enthusiasm as well as their capabilities for defense.

In terms of combat support, RF and PF units depended primarily on resources provided either by ARVN or U.S. forces, since they had very

scanty self-supporting capabilities. Their mobility was also seriously limited by the shortage of organic transportation. Except when participating in combined operations with U.S. forces, the RF and PF rarely had airlift. For the support of all RF and PF units within any province, there was only one platoon of 2½-ton trucks, which was usually not enough to meet daily requirements. Troop movements occasioned by tactical dictates were usually very slow; moving a RF battalion, for example, might take one or two days since it involved several shuttles. In many instances, therefore, provincial authorities had to requisition civilian buses or motorboats for operational purposes. Under those circumstances, it was hard to keep an operational plan secure or execute it with effectiveness.

For close fire support, RF and PF units usually depended on ARVN artillery sections of two pieces each which were permanently deployed in a number of districts. The data contained in the table below for the period from October 1966 to March 1967, provides indication of the low level of combat support provided by the RVNAF for RF and PF operations in MR-3. In nearly all of the 234 friendly initiated actions, some kind of external combat support was requested. The table indicates that in nearly 200 cases, no support was provided.

This inadequacy of fire support received by the RF and PF during combat naturally affected their performance and partly accounted for their high losses. As the RF and PF expanded and improved, however, there was a critical need to provide them with adequate fire support and this could be achieved only when they had their own artillery. In late 1970, therefore, a total of 176 territorial artillery sections were created to provide direct support for the RF and PF throughout the country. Placed under the operational control of sector headquarters, these artillery units offered territorial commanders much more flexibility in providing fire support for the RF and PF during combat operations; this was especially true when outposts came under enemy attacks or during "high points" of enemy activity.

Table 2 - Combat Support for RF/PF, MR-3

Period: Oct 1966 to Mar 1977	Ambush		Firefight		Total
	Day	Night	Day	Night	
Total Friendly-Initiated Actions	22	64	95	53	234
Number of Actions Reinforced	2	8	16	14	40*
Reinforced by:					
Artillery	2	5	11	13	31
Ground Force	0	3	3	1	7
Light Fire Team	0	0	2	1	3
AC-47	0	0	0	0	0
O-1	0	0	4	0	4
Air Strike	0	0	0	0	0

*The total shown is smaller than the sum of the various reinforcements because some actions were reinforced with more than one type of combat support.

Among all the resources used to support RF and PF activities, perhaps the most popular was the bulldozer. Each military region, except for MR-4 was provided with a bulldozer company of 35 machines each. Bulldozers were truly the most valuable and effective instrument to improve territorial security. A scaled-down version of U.S. Rome Plows, these bulldozers were used to clear bushes and heavy vegetation along axes of communication, enlarge fields of fire around important military bases, and most particularly, to level the enemy's mini-bases near populated areas.

Over the years, the enemy stubbornly defended his mini-bases, without which he could hardly survive. The security of adjacent villages and hamlets, therefore, was nearly impossible as long as these bases remained intact. Several mini-bases, such as Arizona and Barrier Island in Quang Nam Province, for example, resisted destruction and continued to operate even through ARVN and U.S. forces conducted several operations to eliminate them. When bulldozers were used,

however, no mini-base could be saved from complete destruction. These clearing operations seriously affected the morale and even the survival of local enemy forces and guerrillas. A few enemy cadres, in fact, confessed that once a mini-base was cleared and leveled by bulldozers, not only did they lose a safe haven but their most effective activities were neutralized because of terrain disfiguration. As a result, the enemy reacted forcefully to such clearing operations. In the Mekong Delta, where the use of bulldozers was not always practicable because of the flooding, the RF and PF had to clear mini-bases in their area of responsibility using machetes and other home-made devices. Patience and perserverence eventually paid off quite handsomely, but in the process, the RF and PF also suffered high losses, chiefly from mines and booby traps.

CHAPTER VI

Efforts to Improve RF and PF Combat Effectiveness

In addition to the normal process of expanding and improving the territorial forces in terms of organization, force structure, training, equipment, command and control, as discussed in previous chapters, South Vietnamese and American authorities also made determined efforts to improve their combat effectiveness. These efforts, which ranged from bettering the lot of the common soldier to motivating and training him for actual combat, were undertaken as circumstances and resources permitted, and as required by the specific situation of each period.

The problem of improving combat effectiveness was much more difficult with the RF and PF than with the ARVN for the simple reason that they consisted primarily of small units which operated separately and were deployed to almost every corner of South Vietnam. However, the various approaches and techniques used to meet this challenge were responsive enough to make the entire undertaking a worthwhile effort.

Morale and Welfare

Above everything else, morale and welfare are the two key factors that influence the combat effectiveness of every soldier; these were especially important for the RF and PF soldier, long regarded in the RVNAF family as a poor cousin.

The Joint General Staff was acutely aware of the requirements to enhance the morale and improve the welfare of RF and PF soldiers as soon as they became part of the RVNAF. As a result, several measures were immediately taken to fill the gap between regular and territorial forces.

The first and most important among these measures was readjusting the salary and other allowances for the RF and PF in order to eliminate pay disparities between them and the ARVN. Instead of a fixed, lower salary which had been in force for several years, the RF soldier, beginning on 1 July 1964, enjoyed the same compensation as his ARVN counterpart which consisted of basic pay plus family and cost-of-living allowances payable not only to himself but also to his eligible dependents. Other special compensations, such as functional and clothing allowances and missing-in-action and death gratuities, were also made available to the RF and PF, some for the first time.

Although this adjustment brought the RF on a par with the ARVN, the PF basic pay and allowances still remained slightly lower by comparison. Family allowances for the PF, for example, amounted to only one half of those enjoyed by the RF and ARVN. As a result, even with a compensating functional allowance, a PF platoon leader drew much less pay than a RF or ARVN private of the same marital status.¹ Despite this disparity, the new pay system was as a source of great stimulation and encouragement for the RF and PF.

Subsequent adjustments in the RVNAF pay system also benefited the RF and PF as well. The RF and PF soldier received the same rice allowance of VN \$200 per individual in 1967 or 21 kilos in 1969. In late 1971, RF soldiers serving in combat units also benefited from the same VN \$2,000 hazard allowance payable to their ARVN counterparts. The only drawback that neutralized the effect of these successive pay increases was our inflation which always kept wages and salaries lagging far behind the skyrocketing cost of living. This economic plight affected both the territorial and regular forces, bringing increasing privations and hardships to the soldier and his dependents.

¹A PF platoon leader, married with one child, drew VN \$9,300 while a RF or ARVN private of the same marital status drew as much as VN \$14,450.

In 1967, special regulations concerning promotions and awards were promulgated for the benefit of territorial forces. The same criteria for promotions and awards, to include U.S. awards, thus far applicable only to the ARVN, were implemented for the RF and PF.²

When commissary and exchange services were instituted to help alleviate the economic hardship of the ARVN soldier, the RF and PF also became beneficiaries. Each RF and PF soldier received the same monthly allocation of sugar, condensed milk, canned food, tobacco, and other basic commodities which they purchased at low prices from commissary retail stores. The commissary system was expanded to the provincial and district level through the establishment of retail outlets which provided direct service to the RF and PF servicemen and their dependents, bypassing the unit distribution system. However, due to the wide scattering of RF and PF units, which created significant transportation problems, the distribution of commissary goods soon reverted to the unit supply system in most areas, involving the intermediary of unit commanders and supply NCO's. To procure these goods, each unit compiled a list of authorized recipients along with their commissary cards, then sent the supply NCO with the list to the sector or district retail outlet to obtain the goods for subsequent resale to individual servicemen.

While this centralized procurement system eased the transportation burden, on individual servicemen, it also created opportunities for misappropriation and graft which benefited a small number of greedy supply NCO's, operating in collusion with their unit commanders, or by taking advantage of a lack of control by the officer concerned. Such practices as misappropriating the allocations of servicemen on leave or transferred, reducing allocations by a certain percentage or delaying the resale to the end of the pay period when almost every serviceman ran short of money to make purchases, were hard to detect and difficult to control. Efforts

²Since that time, awards for the RF and PF made up from 30 to 40 percent of the RVNAF total.

to stop these irregularities among the RF and PF proved not as successful as in the ARVN for the simple reason that inspection teams were few, transportation facilities were not always available and RF and PF units were much too widely scattered.

In terms of dependent housing facilities, the RF received a low priority, first because resources were limited and second, the RF dependent housing problem was not as serious as was the case with ARVN combat units. For the most part, RF dependents rarely cohabited with their servicemen. They usually stayed in their home villages, tending rice-fields or vegetable gardens to eke out a living for their own or supplement the meager income of their husbands and fathers. For those dependents who, for special reasons, were compelled to live with their servicemen, rudimentary facilities were usually erected on a temporary basis within the premises of the outpost. But then, these dependents also resigned themselves to the same war hazards as the RF troopers.

In addition to material benefits, the RF and PF also received special attention in the area of morale and motivation. It was realized that these soldiers would become usually dedicated combatants if they were fully aware of the reasons why they had to fight and the importance of their mission. Being simple peasants with rural origins, most RF and PF soldiers were easy to influence. The problem was they lived far removed from central authority and were seldom conscious of the national cause. Much of the time they were exposed to attractive inducements of enemy propagandists preaching national liberation and playing on their natural xenophobic tendency. In those areas under GVN control, these peasants enlisted in the PF, being law-abiding citizens or induced by local authorities. They took up arms but having only a vague understanding of the cause they were serving, they often fought without conviction or dedication.

In the face of this problem and in order to stimulate the combat spirit of the PF, in June 1965, a program of "moral armament" was initiated by the Political Indoctrination Division of the RF and PF Command. Conceived as part of RF and PF improvement efforts, this program prescribed a 12-day indoctrination course for PF platoons, to be conducted by sector

and subsector political indoctrination cadres. Each course consisted of ten days of classroom lectures and seminars followed by two days of field action during which the PF students put into practice, within the local environment of their areas of responsibility, what they had been taught.

The PF indoctrination program consisted of three parts. The first part was devoted to arousing national consciousness with lectures on such subjects as "For Whom Do We Fight?," the origins and history of the Vietnamese people, national traditions of heroic struggles against foreign invasions, the liberation of Vietnam from Chinese domination and French colonialism, and the continued fight against communism for freedom and national independence. The second part of the program was devoted to political warfare techniques as they related to self-indoctrination and winning over the enemy and the people. Students were lectured on such subjects as why the U.S. presence was necessary in South Vietnam, why and how to win the hearts and minds of the people, and what propaganda tricks the Communists used to undermine our morale. The third part of the program was devoted to unit activities designed to build esprit de corps, the will to fight and put theoretical teachings into practice.

After two years of active implementation, by late 1967, over 50 percent of our PF units had undergone indoctrination under this program. To encourage participation, a special daily food allowance was authorized each student. According to reports, the will to fight and ability to win over popular support among PF units increased remarkably as a result of this indoctrination program.

During 1967 and until June 1968, subjects on pacification and rural development were added to the PF indoctrination program which was also revised to offer two new courses: a twelve day basic course for newly-activated PF units and a seven day refresher course. In late 1968, both courses were taught on a trial basis at the Van Kiep and Cao Lanh Training Centers, but subsequently combined into a single course. Encouraged by excellent results obtained among the PF, the JGS ordered the inclusion of this indoctrination course in RF training programs, whether conducted in training centers or by units.

Indoctrination courses conducted in units proved to be less successful than those given in training centers. This was in part caused by the rapid expansion of the RF and PF, their daily preoccupation with security activities and the lack of political indoctrination cadres. Usually, very few units ever had the chance to rest long enough to progress through the entire course. Also, there were not enough training teams to stay with each unit long enough to complete training requirements since interruptions were too frequent. As a result, indoctrination responsibilities were subsequently assigned to deputy company commanders and assistant platoon leaders who also served as political warfare assistants. However, these cadres did not have adequate education and political warfare training to become effective indoctrination instructors. Consequently, indoctrination efforts at the unit level suffered a serious setback and sometimes were suspended altogether. Only when a unit underwent refresher training at a training center, did it have the opportunity to be thoroughly indoctrinated. This shortcoming was inevitable as long as the RF and PF kept expanding and remained widely scattered across the country.

In spite of this apparent lack of adequate indoctrination, the RF and PF continued to fight valiantly and without remiss until the final days of the drawn-out war. This was because their lack of formal indoctrination was more than compensated for by natural motivation. As local combatants, they fought to protect their home villages where they were born and where their ancestors were buried. Naturally, they were adverse to anyone who disturbed the comfort of their natural surroundings. They fought not for any political philosophy but for the practical reason that they did not want anyone to harm their wives, their children, their parents, or violate the properties that they had helped build over the years.

Besides efforts to arm the RF and PF morally through indoctrination, other measures were also adopted to stimulate their enthusiasm and dedication. Competitions, for example, were periodically initiated to give the RF and PF the opportunity to vie with each other and with regular forces in terms of combat exploits and achievements. They competed for

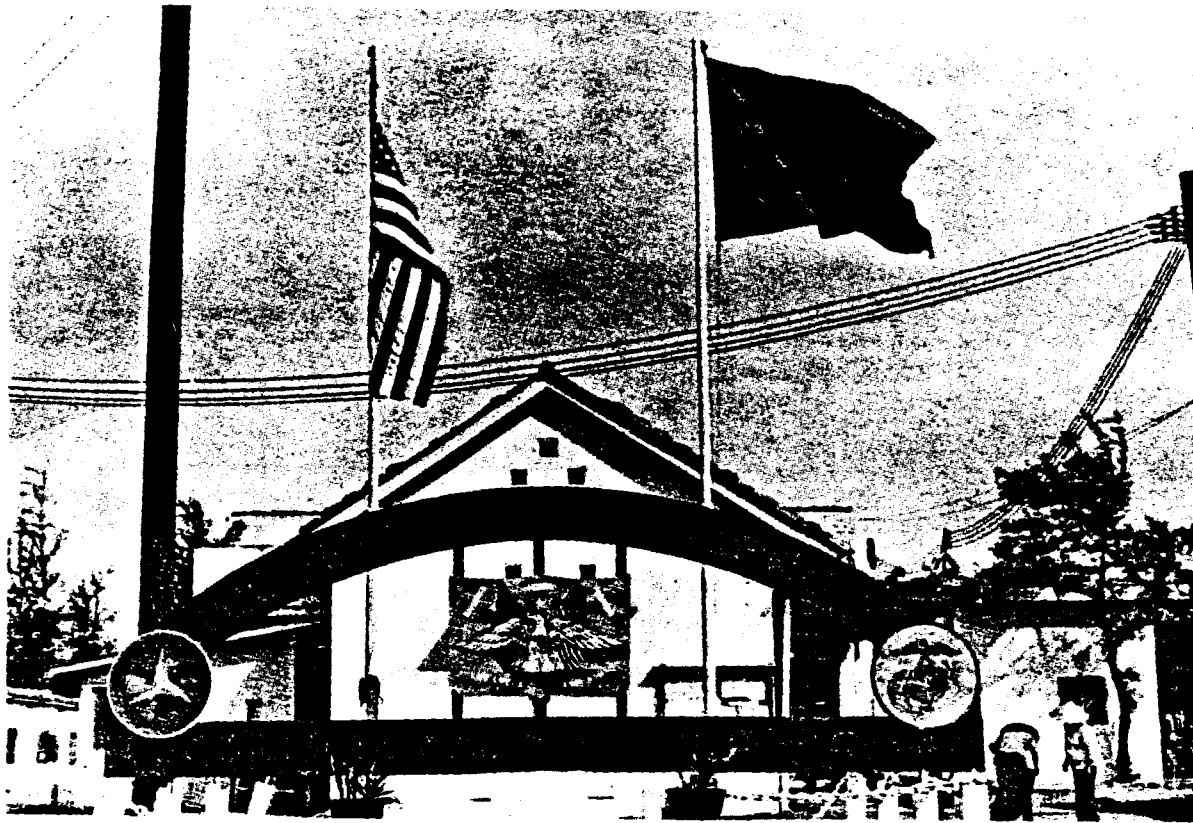
cash rewards and valuable prizes which were earned through a merit point system based on the number of enemy personnel killed or captured and enemy weapons seized over a particular period. National leaders, high-ranking GVN authorities and civilian associations offered prizes in cash or in kind to keep this competition alive at all times. Other special programs, such as the selection of meritorious servicemen for special treatment, unit sponsorships, were also undertaken, especially during the last few years, and all produced excellent results in improving the morale and combat effectiveness of the RF and PF.

On-The-Spot-Training

Another significant effort to improve the combat effectiveness of territorial forces was on-the-spot training. These special training programs were conducted by U.S. units to assist RF and PF units within their areas of operation. The objective of these programs was to improve the combat effectiveness of territorial forces through refresher training, both individual combat and small-unit tactics, and above all, to inculcate self-assurance.

The first of such programs was the Combined Action Program (CAP), conducted by U.S. Marine units in I Corps area. This was quite an extensive program which began in August 1965 with a CAP company consisting of three to twelve CAP platoons, all operating in the vicinity of Hue City. Encouraged by significant results achieved in pacification and territorial security through this program, the U.S. Marine command gradually increased the CAP force structure which eventually reached 14 companies with 79 platoons in 1967. By November 1969, a total of 20 CAP companies, consisting of 114 platoons, were deployed throughout populated areas of I CTZ's five provinces.

The CAP program was implemented through the deployment of U.S. Marine squads to local hamlets where they lived and worked with PF platoons during a period of several months until these PF platoons became fully capable of defending their hamlets by themselves. During daytime, U.S. Marines trained the PF and at night, together, they



Combined Action Program Headquarters at Da Nang

conducted patrols and laid ambushes. This was a special type of practical training that no school or training center could duplicate.

Each U.S. Marine squad assigned to CAP duties consisted of 15 men: a squad leader, a grenadier, a corpsman and three combat teams of 4 men each. Selected from among volunteers, CAP Marines underwent a two-week training program at Hoi An (Quang Nam Province) before joining units. Many among them subsequently took an accelerated course in Vietnamese at the same training center. This kind of preparation not only facilitated the Marines' task of training and motivating the PF but also inspired the hamlet people's trust in the CAP program and CAP members.

In addition to the Marines' Combined Action Program in I Corps area, in 1967, U.S. Field Forces elsewhere also initiated training programs for the RF and PF by employing mobile training teams. Composed of from three to ten members, each mobile training team was assigned an area where it visited RF and PF units in rotation to conduct training. Despite the common approach, several different names were used for these mobile training teams: Combined Mobile Training Teams, Combined Mobile Improvement Teams, "Red Catchers" and "Impact" Teams, and RF Company Training Teams. Their duties ranged from conducting single-day training sessions for PF platoons to five-week unit refresher courses for RF companies.

Mobile training programs were flexibly tailored to match unit capabilities and the amount of training previously received. Training subjects were also oriented toward specific missions that RF and PF units were required to perform. Usually, a mobile training team stayed with the unit for the length of the program. Conducting training during the daytime, team members also participated in the night security activities of the unit during which they observed and monitored progress being made in the field. When training was completed, the team moved to another unit where the training process started all over again.

The concept of mobile training had one advantage in that a small number of teams was able to support a large number of RF and PF units. However, the time they spent with each unit was also limited. The achievements of the program, moreover, depended on individual parent units, the U.S. brigades and battalions in the area, each with its own

schedule and initiative. As a result, there was some lack of uniformity in this type of effort to improve the territorial forces.

In mid-1967, to maintain the improvement momentum, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam experimented with the Regional Forces Company Training Team concept on a country-wide basis. This concept was essentially based on the Marine Combined Action Program being conducted in I Corps area. Each team, which consisted of three officers and three NCOs, was assigned to a RF company undergoing training at a training center. During this time, it provided assistance in the completion of the training program. When the unit left the training center, the team accompanied it to the home province where it continued to provide on-the-spot training and assist the unit in combat activities until the unit developed a full capability for independent operations. This usually took from six to nine months.

RF company training teams played a more assertive role than advisory duties usually required, but they did not enjoy command prerogatives which remained with the RF company commanders. Because of the extended time involved and close cooperation, however, both the RF company commander and the U.S. training team chief usually had a good, harmonious working relationship based on mutual respect and understanding. Most RF companies that took this training displayed significant progress as demonstrated by better performance in combat operations, improved security conditions, and higher morale. There was also discernible enthusiasm on the part of RF company commanders and their subordinates who all appreciated the effort being expended for their benefit. They usually regretted the day when the U.S. training team left the unit. Although the achievement of RF company training teams were not the same in every area where they were assigned, this concept proved an excellent approach to improving territorial forces.

In conjunction with U.S. efforts, Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) in some areas also contributed significantly to the improvement of RF and PF units. In II Corps area, for example, South Korean units conducted several successive on-the-spot training programs for territorial forces units located in their areas of operation. These programs brought about excellent results, not only in terms of improved

combat effectiveness for RF and PF units, but also in terms of good cooperation and coordination between the two national forces operating in the same area.

In the Mekong Delta, Australian advisory teams also conducted short-duration training programs specifically designed for PF command cadres in several provinces such as Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa, Vinh Binh, and Vinh Long. The training skills and experience of Australian instructors enabled them to train competent PF cadres needed for the maintenance of village and hamlet security. But their achievements remained on a small scale, because of the small number of instructors available.

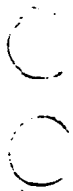
Mobile Advisory Teams

Drawing from the experience gained through various training efforts, MACV initiated in late 1967 a large-scale improvement program, based on the mobile advisory concept used by U.S. II Field Force with success in III Corps area. The program was designed to improve not only combat effectiveness but also administrative and logistic support for territorial forces through the employment of mobile advisory teams (MAT) and mobile advisory logistic teams (MALT).³

Prior to that time, the RF and PF did not have advisers. MACV believed that such support would require too many personnel. Assistance and support for RF and PF units were provided by CORDS advisers down to the district level. Despite dedication and extra efforts, CORDS advisers, especially those at the district level, were unable to assist every RF and PF unit because the force structure kept expanding. (Chart 11)

The mobile advisory program was launched in early 1968, with 353 teams deployed to all four corps areas. Before their deployment, team members attended a training course of one or two months at the U.S. Army Advisory School at Di An. Each team consisted of two officers (team chief and his deputy), three enlisted men (one light weapon adviser, one heavy weapon adviser, one medic), and one Vietnamese interpreter.

³For a thorough discussion of the U.S. adviser see the monograph of that title in this series, written by the Vietnamese Control Group, May 31, 1977.



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Whenever the situation permitted, mobile advisory teams usually lived and worked with RF and PF units, assisting in unit training and accompanying them in combat operations. Training emphasis was placed on leadership, the conduct of operations, night operations, marksmanship, the use of mines and booby traps, and the planning and control of fire-power support. The duration of training was usually about 30 days. After the training objectives had been achieved and the unit under tutelage had demonstrated self-assurance, initiative and effectiveness, the advisory team moved to another unit where the same training cycle began anew. Occasionally, an advisory team would return after a certain time, first to assess the progress achieved by the unit and also to provide additional assistance as required to prevent retrogression. In some instances, an advisory team assigned to a RF company might also work with PF platoons nearby.

In 1969, mobile advisory efforts were also intended to develop command and control capabilities for company group headquarters. By 1970, when most group headquarters and RF companies had received adequate training, mobile advisory teams were deployed to those areas where local security needed improvement and governmental control was to be consolidated. Their new responsibilities consisted of improving the PF, training and deploying the PSDF, and coordinating the activities of RD cadres and the national police in the village. Mobile advisory teams also assisted local governments in expanding territorial control, building outposts in areas previously controlled by the enemy, planning and improving village defense systems, and coordinating the use of firepower. When the situation and time permitted, advisory teams also assisted and advised village chiefs in managing village affairs. All these additional duties practically turned mobile advisory teams into extensions of provincial and district advisory systems.

In spite of heavy burdens and the complexities of the work involved, mobile advisory teams in general managed to adapt themselves to the local situation, displayed a capacity for initiative and accomplished their mission with excellent results. Their success could be directly measured by the significant increase in RF and PF operations beginning in 1968



Refresher Training Class Conducted by MAT Instructor

and the remarkable performance that these forces frequently displayed during operations conducted separately with minimum support. Indirectly, therefore, mobile advisory teams contributed a great deal to the progress achieved in pacification.

As a complementary effort, mobile advisory logistic teams (MALT) were activated at the same time to help improve administrative and logistic support for the RF and PF. Seven such teams were deployed to the five logistic areas on the basis of one or two teams per area. The duties of these teams consisted of training and assisting the personnel of sector administrative and logistic support centers (ALSC) in supply and logistic support activities as well as improving the operation of RF and PF direct support units. Mobile advisory logistic teams proved to be an effective instrument to improve administrative and logistic support operations which had always been a serious problem for the territorial forces.

In retrospect, the employment of mobile advisory teams proved very effective in improving the combat effectiveness of the RF and PF. To a significant extent, this program filled the gaps caused in the formal training process by the reluctance of sectors to rotate RF and PF units into the refresher training cycle in the face of tactical requirements and by the uninterrupted involvement of RF and PF units in the pacification program. Mobile advisory teams not only succeeded in developing a close rapport with RF and PF units they came to assist, but also inspired sympathy and confidence among the rural population during the time they carried out their duties in villages and hamlets. More than a civic action effort, U.S. advisory teams conveyed to the majority of the rural people the true meaning and significance of the American presence in South Vietnam and by their action and behavior effectively disproved all enemy propaganda claims of American aggression.

Beginning in 1970, mobile advisory teams were reduced in keeping with U.S. troop redeployment plans. In order to keep the program alive, the RVNAF organized similar mobile training teams and assigned them permanently to the sector. Each team consisted of one officer, two NCOs and two enlisted men who were all selected by sector headquarters from

among those servicemen having the most combat experience and training abilities. To achieve uniformity of thought and action, these mobile training teams received a four-week special training course at designated national training centers; they learned to conduct the new refresher training programs which had been developed by the Central Training Command expressly for RF companies and PF platoons.

These mobile training teams were dispatched by sector headquarters to work with RF companies which had been rated poor by inspection reports. They were also deployed to villages, recommended by district chiefs, to help train PF platoons. Usually, a training team spent their first three days with a unit studying its area of responsibility and observing its daily activities in order to detect weaknesses other than those specified in inspection reports and modify the standard training program accordingly. Classroom training then began at the same time as field practice. After the program was completed, the training team remained with the unit from two to four weeks, to assist the unit commander in improving his unit's activities. In the light of reports filed by inspection teams, those units which had been assisted by mobile training teams all achieved marked progress in terms of combat effectiveness and leadership.

Combined Operations

Perhaps the most successful technique for improving the combat effectiveness of territorial forces was to commit them in operations with U.S. units. This concept of combined operations was initiated by MACV soon after U.S. combat units arrived to participate in the war. It was intended primarily as an effort to improve the combat effectiveness of both regular and territorial forces. Although the basic concept never changed, it was implemented under different programs.

The first large-scale effort to integrate U.S. and South Vietnamese forces in combat activities was Operation FAIRFAX which was conducted in three key districts of Gia Dinh Province bordering on Saigon; it lasted from late 1966 to late 1967. Participating forces consisted of three

U.S. and three ARVN battalions and local RF and PF units. The objectives for this operation were to restore security in the immediate vicinity of Saigon and to improve the combat effectiveness of regular and territorial forces responsible for the defense of the Capital Military District (CMD).

The techniques of force integration employed during this operation involved cross-attaching and the pairing-off of U.S. and South Vietnamese units at various levels and in all forms of activities, including patrols, screening, ambushes, helicopter landings, and cordon and search. Each U.S. battalion was co-located with a counterpart ARVN battalion and both were responsible for the same area of operation (district). Elements of both battalions were paired-off down to the squad level. This integration was nearly total and offered South Vietnamese personnel good opportunities to observe and learn combat and leadership techniques employed by U.S. units during daily activities. This live experience proved more effective than formal training and tremendously benefited ARVN and territorial force cadres and troops.

During the same time period, in addition to Operation FAIRFAX, U.S. forces also conducted similar efforts in other parts of the country. The 25th Infantry Division in Hau Nghia Province, the 1st Infantry Division in Tay Ninh Province, and the 1st Air Cavalry Division in the Central Highlands all endeavored to involve ARVN and territorial forces in combined operations. Like Operation FAIRFAX, all of these efforts produced some beneficial effect on ARVN units, but the operations often lacked continuity and systematic organization due to the fact that U.S. units were frequently rotated or redeployed for search-and-destroy purposes. Besides, these combined operations placed more emphasis on improving the ARVN rather than the RF and PF units.

Encouraged by the results achieved, MACV made it a policy to promote combined operations which, by 1968 had become common practice in all corps areas, both in search-and-destroy operations and in pacification support. In addition to large-scale combined operations with the ARVN, undertaken to improve the combat capabilities of the ARVN divisions,

MACV also encouraged U.S. units to operate with the territorial forces. By the end of 1968, the need to improve the effectiveness of RF and PF units had become critical; they were to assume the major responsibility of pacification support replacing ARVN divisions which were taking over combat responsibilities from redeploying U.S. units.

In response to this need, most U.S. units conducted combined activities with RF and PF units in their areas of tactical interest. During these operations, both forces co-located their command posts and U.S. units also posted liaison teams in permanence at each sector and sub-sector headquarters for the purpose of coordinating operational activities with territorial forces. Subsequently, combat activities all became combined operations regardless of scale and the extent of RF and PF participation.

Experience indicated that the most successful operations were invariably those combined efforts in which both U.S. and the territorial forces participated with enthusiasm and dedicated cooperation. Conducted in this manner, these operations successfully combined the unique assets of each national force, enhancing their strengths while also reducing their weaknesses. As a result of these combined activities, which saw U.S. and territorial forces working hand in hand in helicopter assaults, cordon-and-search operations, patrols and ambushes, RF and PF units developed their capabilities to the point of being able to assume the primary role in maintaining security in those areas where pacification had succeeded. The combined campaign conducted during 1968 by the U.S. 1/502 Airborne Battalion in cooperation with RF and PF units of the Quang Dien District (Thua Thien Province) provided a typical example of that success. From my personal observations, I believe that it was one of the most remarkable achievements ever produced by any combined action program involving a U.S. unit and the RF and PF.

The Quang Dien District was not very far from Hue City. It was a fertile rice-producing area bordering on the coastline which came under

Communist control in the aftermath of the 1968 Tet Offensive. The security situation in Quang Dien District was so bad that district forces were able to maintain only three isolated outposts and control perhaps less than 5 percent of the district territory. In April 1968, the 1/502 Battalion of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division was deployed to Quang Dien with the mission of clearing enemy forces in full cooperation with the local RF and PF.

Following an established practice in combined operations, the 1/502 Battalion set up its CP at the district headquarters and its area of operation also coincided with the district boundaries. The battalion commander, Lt. Colonel Leslie D. Carter, Jr. and the district chief, Major Tran Tien Dao, worked hand in hand in every matter, from planning to controlling combat operations. The same spirit of dedicated cooperation prevailed between the battalion and the district staffs and among subordinate units. Cooperation was in effect so close that both staffs worked as a team and all subordinate units, U.S., RF and PF, were practically fused into a single force. The remarkable thing about this operation was that the task assigned to each element was designed to conform best to its ability to perform regardless of nationality.

Operations conducted by this combined U.S.-RF/PF force in Quang Dien employed various tactics in keeping with the changing situation in the area. Initially, when enemy resistance was fierce, RF and PF elements made a link-up with U.S. units early in the morning of each day; usually one RF or PF platoon joined forces with a U.S. company. The link-up was carried out in a secure area, and by prearrangement, the RF and PF would move on foot to a rendezvous point. They would then be guided to the U.S. company area or the RF and PF could be directly heli-lifted to that area. Only after the link-up had been successfully accomplished did the combined force begin to proceed with its mission.

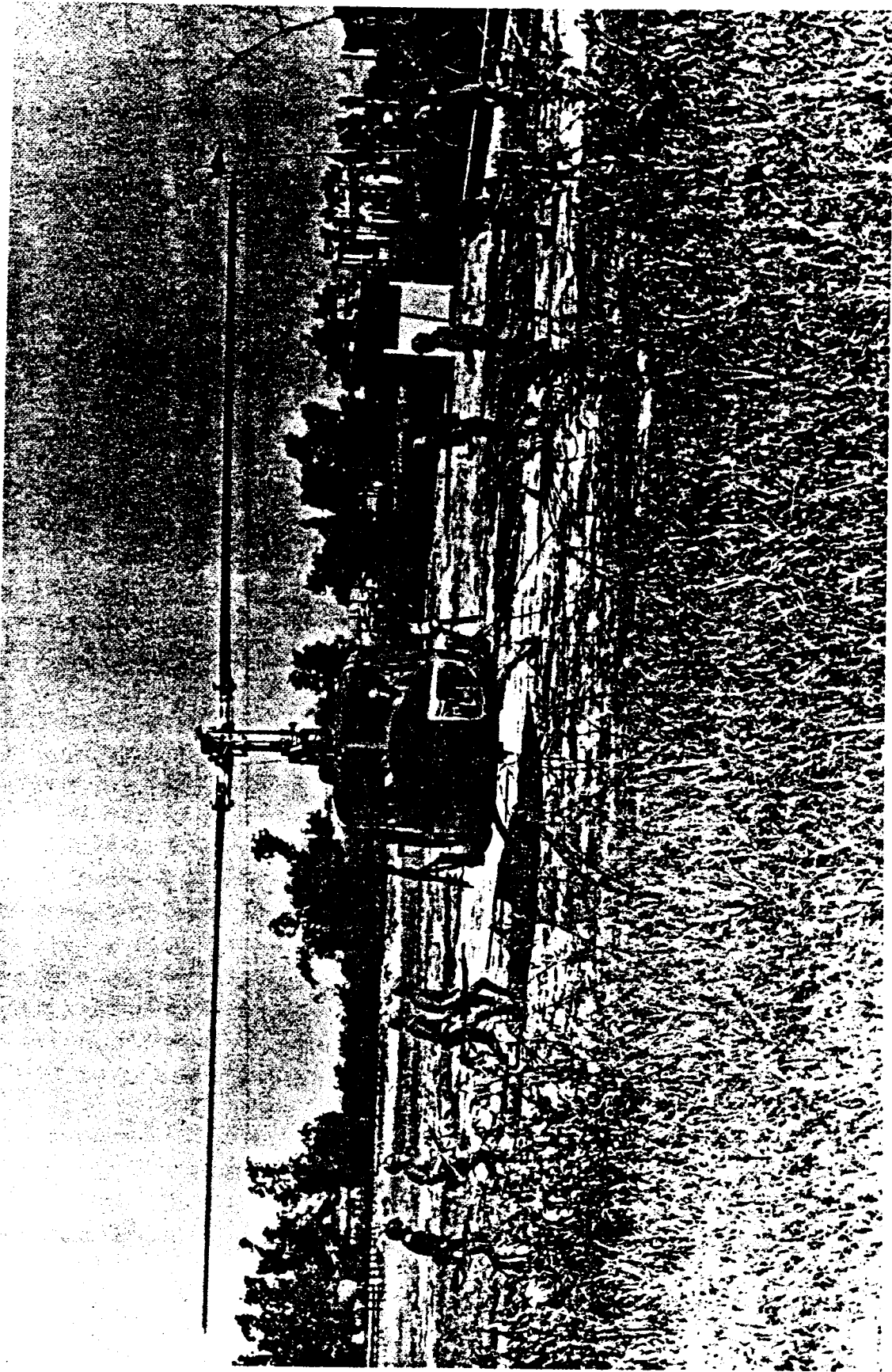
RF and PF elements participating in this operation were selected by the district chief from among those located near the area of operation. They usually accompanied U.S. troops in the lead element, operating in areas where their familiarity with the local terrain and people, and their special ability to detect mines, booby traps and secret hideouts

could be best employed. U.S. troops, meanwhile, constituted the main strike elements whose mission was to counter enemy resistance. During the operation, RF and PF troops enjoyed the same support provided to U.S. troops, including rations, hot food, medical treatment or evacuation, fire support and ammunition. For the initial stage, although U.S. troops remained constantly in field bivouac, RF and PF troops were returned to their bases at the end of each day. This was necessary because they had to look after the defense of their assigned villages or installations at night. But they could come back to participate in combat operations the next morning as long as the combined campaign continued.

As RF and PF elements gained more experience in combined operations with U.S. units, they were employed more frequently in tactical maneuvers designed to destroy enemy forces. Helilift assaults with various combinations of U.S., RF and PF troops took place everyday. During these assaults, RF and PF elements were helilifted to the landing zone from where they maneuvered in the direction of the screening forces made up of U.S. troops. As the operations progressed, more RF and PF troops were employed in combat assaults because they weighed less than U.S. troops and more of them could be crowded into the helicopters, and because they were more adept in search activities.

During this time, the RF and PF of Quang Dien District were thoroughly acquainted with heliborne operations. Before each assault, participating units were given a short course in embarking and debarking techniques by U.S. instructors. In time, they became as qualified as U.S. troops in heliborne operations and refresher training was required only occasionally as a matter of routine. Soon, as their capabilities and self-assurance reached a high level, the RF and PF were able to conduct separate operations, requiring U.S. forces to provide only helilift support.

A technique of heliborne assault frequently used by the RF and PF, rather unusual but highly effective, was the "mini-flight" or "mini-lift". This required the employment of a small RF and PF force transported on one or two helicopters readily made available by the 1/502 Battalion. Using this technique, the district chief was able to quickly conduct search operations on several objectives scattered over a large area with a relatively small number of troops.



Quang Dien PF loading at 1/502 pad for a one-slick mini-lift

Thus, as enemy forces and infrastructure in Quang Dien District weakened as a result of sustained friendly activities, the concept of combined operations was also modified to involve a greater commitment of RF and PF troops. The campaign had started with a combination of small RF and PF elements with larger U.S. units. As their capabilities developed, the RF and PF increased their commitment to a platoon, then company size, and eventually, these operations were completely RF and PF with U.S. forces providing only helilift support. This trend accelerated during the last stage of the campaign when the security situation had significantly improved throughout the district.

This disproportionate change in force commitment did not imply lesser cooperation; it rather reflected a situation in which the RF and PF gained in combat effectiveness while the enemy strength gradually declined. Although combined initiatives, such as those described above, continued until October, the deterioration of enemy forces was such that the RF and PF were able to launch separate operations throughout the district with small elements. In this way, available friendly forces were able to cover more areas during a single day.

By mid-October, the primary operational forces in Quang Dien were the RF and PF and the 1/502 Battalion deployed most of its units to another area outside the district, retaining in Quang Dien only a token platoon-size force or company at the most. During the month of October, there were even instances when Quang Dien was completely devoid of U.S. troops. The ultimate objective of the combined campaign in Quang Dien had thus been attained. The U.S. 1/502 Battalion still remained in the vicinity and its support was available whenever required, but the primary responsibility of ensuring security throughout the district rested with the RF and PF. The local population could depend on these troops who would stay with them forever and not be redeployed to another area.

The effectiveness of the RF and PF during the combined campaign in Quang Dien could be quantitatively measured by the results they achieved. During a five month period, from 1 June to 1 November, they killed 215 enemy troops, took 102 VC prisoners in addition to receiving 167 ralliers. To achieve this remarkable feat — a total of 484 enemy troops put out of action — the RF and PF lost only four men. All of this was accomplished without any participation by the regular ARVN forces.

The key factor contributing to this success at Quang Dien was not merely cooperation. It was more exactly the ability of the 1/502 Battalion to fully grasp the special qualifications and capabilities of the RF and PF and its sympathetic dedication to the ultimate cause underlying the concept of combined operations. This U.S. unit was driven by a desire not only to help the RF and PF assume additional responsibilities within their capabilities, but also to assist them in training and developing their total potential. As a result, the RF and PF troops of Quang Dien became more effective and more audacious in combat, and their morale and self-assurance were greatly enhanced. By the time the combined operation ended, they had become thoroughly efficient in all combat activities, from heliborne assault to reconnaissance in force and the ambush. They had proved eminently capable of ensuring internal security for the district which they continued to keep free of enemy activity until the very last days of the RVN.

In retrospect, combined operations were unquestionably the best approach to improve the combat effectiveness of territorial forces, since that required less time and was truly efficient. This was demonstrated by subsequent applications of the same concept by the U.S. 1/501 ABN Battalion in the Phu Thu District nearby and by the U.S. 3/187 ABN Battalion in an area west of Quang Dien. Although both areas were long-established VC strongholds dating back to the First Indochina War, the results achieved there were similar to those already attained in Quang Dien. The remarkable progress in pacification and the improved performance by the RF and PF in Thua Thien Province, the happy results of well planned and conducted combined operations, drew special attention from other provinces. Several high-ranking U.S. and South Vietnamese commanders from II and III Corps areas paid visits to the districts in question to study the causes for success and feasibility of conducting similar undertakings in their areas of responsibility.

Combined operations of U.S. and RF and PF units consequently became standard practice in most areas where U.S. forces were located during 1969 and 1970. They eventually included armored units as well, such as

the U.S. 1/4 Armored Cavalry Squadron, in their areas of tactical interest south of Binh Duong and Bien Hoa Provinces. Although the favorable conditions for successful cooperation, such as those in Quang Dien District, were not always available elsewhere, the techniques which had proved effective there could still be employed with success in many parts of South Vietnam.

CHAPTER VII

Observations and Conclusions

The Importance of Territorial Security

In spite of their low profile and the absence of front-page press reports, activities designed to maintain territorial security proved no less important than the large-scale search-and-destroy operations conducted during the Vietnam war. These activities contributed significantly to the joint RVN-U.S. war effort.

From hindsight, to counter the kind of warfare purported by the enemy to be a "people's war", the conventional search-and-destroy approach was not enough to ensure durable success and to solve the problems of insurgency. The dual nature of the Vietnam conflict which combined subversive activities with outright aggression apparently required that territorial security be established and maintained as a primordial condition for stabilization and national viability. To achieve this, it was essential that we suppress terrorism, sabotage, and other disruptive activities that enemy guerrillas and infrastructure elements waged at the grassroots level, the village and hamlet.

The Communist approach to warfare sought first and foremost to cripple our ability to resist, by inflicting damage and losses to the people living under our control and destroying our national resources. Their method of "liberating" the rural areas, one of the major goals of Communist strategy, was to sabotage our lines of communication and wreck our bridges, interdicting our access and denying our control. Then they gained control by dissolving our social and administrative

structure, using violence and terror to reduce our people to silence and submission. They turned villages and hamlets thus subdued into fortifications and constantly strived to expand control into populated areas by the same process. To regain control, we were forced to employ military strength which further wrought havoc to civilian properties and local resources, and thus played into the enemy's scheme.

Against this putrefying process, it was obvious that South Vietnam should have had a strong organization for territorial security and control from the very beginning. Even though this organization might not have been able to eradicate insurgency, at least it could have limited its expansion and devastating effect. The sad fact was that once their houses, gardens and ricefields, most of which had been inherited through generations of hard toil, had been destroyed, there was absolutely nothing that could attract or attach the people to a new village, much less to cause them to defend it. The GVN did make significant efforts to rebuild or rehabilitate the villages ravaged by war, but somehow the lost faith was hard to restore. In the process, our country also incurred heavy expenditures, not to mention the great sacrifice in human lives and lost time.

From the onset of insurgency in 1959 until 1966-67 when the American force build-up helped regain some measure of stability, about half of South Vietnam's rural areas were severely devastated. During that time, countless prosperous villages and fertile lands were turned into guerrilla bases which nurtured and sheltered the enemy, making security and pacification difficult and sometimes almost hopeless.

A strong, effective, territorial control system, therefore, would have served a double purpose: it would have protected the population against subversion and provided support for military activities. To a significant degree, the performance of our tactical units depended on the efficiency of that support. Without local intelligence, guides, traffic security, etc., it would be difficult for combat units to

achieve success in the accomplishment of their missions. While regular units - the division, regiments, battalions - could always rest and recuperate during periods of relative lull, the territorial forces could not afford that luxury. They were perennially engaged in the small war with round-the-clock search operations, security patrols and the task of protecting urban centers and lines of communication within their areas of responsibility.

As counter-insurgency grew into total, all-out war beginning in 1968 and pacification efforts gained in momentum, our territorial security system played an even more important role. It was this system that provided the means for the effective use and coordination of national resources for the implementation of military, political, economic, and social programs designed to fight the total war. Throughout the major periods of the Vietnam conflict, therefore, the territorial system always performed a primordial role and was aptly regarded as the mainstay of the war machinery.

The RF and PF Soldier

The forces that constituted the backbone of this territorial security system were the RF and PF, both locally recruited and employed although differently organized, trained, and equipped. The men who made up these forces were, for the most part, rural peasants accustomed to hard manual labor, enduring and resilient to hardship, pragmatic, and possessing an extensive knowledge about life and work in nature.

As individuals, the RF and PF soldiers were basically good-natured, decent, kind and well-disposed toward other people. In a deterministic sense, they accepted war as their fate and were resigned to hardship and even death which they faced with unequalled impassivity. They fought the war with patience and perseverance, meeting each challenge and facing the enemy with self-control. As a result, during the

war years, they always suffered considerably more losses than the regular forces, even during the periods when ARVN conducted large-scale operations such as the cross-border campaigns of 1970 and 1971. During 1970, for example, the RF and PF incurred 15,783 losses compared to the ARVN's 5,602; during 1971, RF and PF losses reached 17,750 against 4,232 for the ARVN. For the period of most intense fighting, 1968-1972, the aggregate total of RF and PF losses was 69,291 or about twice the ARVN total of 36,932.

In spite of these terrible losses, the RF and PF still accounted for the largest number of volunteers serving in the RVNAF during the entire war. Within their ranks many were senior citizens, one, PF trooper Nguyen Van Moi of Duc Long District, in Chuong Thien Province, reaching the incredible age of 70. In 1971, Mr. Moi was awarded two medals, one was American, for gallantry in combat action. He was cited as one of MR-4's outstanding combatants for that year.

Because of their scattered deployment to remote rural areas, the RF and PF soldiers were always in a position to be poisoned by enemy propaganda. In fact, the VC proved particularly adept at proselyting South Vietnamese servicemen, which was one of their three major strategic efforts. This effort was generally directed against the RF and PF but the enemy did not succeed in subverting these forces. The single instance of unit disintegration ever reported among the RF and PF occurred in Hoai An District of Binh Dinh Province - a long-established Communist stronghold - during the 1972 Easter Invasion, but it was an unconfirmed report since this area was never retaken afterwards. However, individual cases of desertion or defection did occur, sometimes involving two or three or even five in one unit at the same time. RF and PF deserters amounted to only one-fifth of the ARVN total and most of them rejoined their families rather than enemy ranks, for obvious reasons of deep attachment or economic demands.

The enemy had only one way to subvert the RF and PF. He constantly tried to plant his own agents by infiltration through recruitment channels.

Working inside a RF or PF unit, these agents sought to destroy the organization, combining their actions with an attack from the outside. They would furnish intelligence information to the VC before the attack; they might also prepare the way by killing sentries and would often throw explosives or grenades into the command and weapons bunkers during the attack. They rarely succeeded in proselyting their fellow-troopers or making them turncoats through persuasion alone. Fifth-columnist actions worked for sometime, especially among isolated outposts of the Mekong Delta, but they became rare after a new ID card system was instituted for all citizens of South Vietnam, military and civilian alike.

In a war situation in which agents of the enemy infrastructure lived mixed with the people, identification was a difficult problem, especially for members of regular units which did not stay in the same geographical area very long. The presence of the RF and PF soldier in rural areas, therefore, became a necessity. Recruited and trained to serve in his hometown or home village, he was naturally entirely familiar with the local environment. His detailed knowledge of the local terrain and people was even better than that of a VC agent operating in the area. The RF or PF soldier knew in detail all the back alleys of the hamlet, every household living in it, even individual members of each household, and the pattern of their lives. He knew who lived in each house, who owned the ricefields, how much rice each household consumed and which household had a relative working for the VC. He also knew who among the villagers to ask for information and what kind of information to be expected from each. What would have passed unnoticed by a regular soldier could be of particular interest to the RF or PF soldier. He could even instinctively open fire on an enemy or group of enemy passing by who would otherwise not appear much different from other people. A regular soldier might have let them pass out of indifference or, if the strangers were suspicious enough to warrant an identity check, would have noticed nothing peculiar to confirm them as enemy. Such insights were the hallmark of the RF and PF soldier. Living in close proximity to nature, he was extremely sensitive to minute changes in the environment, changes that only he knew to have occurred because they upset the natural order. As a

consequence, well concealed mines, booby traps, or enemy hideouts usually could not escape the sharp eye of the RF and PF soldier.

The general evaluation of RF and PF effectiveness was usually good. This was the consensus among U.S. units which had the opportunity to associate with both regular and territorial forces. Usually, U.S. commanders much preferred to work with RF and PF units whose virtues and special abilities they also extolled. In terms of missions, command structure, training, and equipment, there was a marked disparity between the regular and territorial forces, a disparity caused by priorities. Yet, in terms of performance and achievements, the underdog RF and PF seemed to fare much better. The major advantage enjoyed by the RF and PF, an advantage that more than compensated for their inferiority in training and armament, was their undisputed knowledge of the local environment and local people. The ARVN units which were unattached to any particular area, did not have that knowledge. More importantly, motivation was what contributed most to the effectiveness of the RF and PF and accounted for their high achievements. This motivation was not artificial; it was a matter of life or death for someone who had to defend his own family and his own village.

The local character of the territorial forces made them particularly fit for the maintenance of security and pacification tasks. Their methods of operation also suited the purposes of local governments. In those villages and hamlets whose security and control needed to be restored, no local authorities would want fierce battles fought with artillery and air support. Not only were these actions generally inefficient against local enemy guerrillas, the use of firepower was also a major cause of concern for the villagers. When a conventional approach was used against bands of enemy guerrillas, it tended to multiply their numbers rather than eliminate them effectively; this of course made the pacification task even more difficult. From my experience, I believe that most province or district chiefs would rather have a few additional RF companies than an ARVN battalion for this type of operation.

To fight an insurgency war, it is essential for any government to win the people's support and to enlist their cooperation. Whether this can be achieved depends a great deal on the popular attitude toward the governmental troops who protect the population against insurgents. Therefore, rapport with the people was an important yardstick to measure not only the GVN's success but also the popularity and effectiveness of the RF and PF. If this rapport was good, cooperation would increase, local authorities would benefit from additional intelligence sources, and the villagers would also be reluctant to give the enemy support. Over the years, the attitude of the South Vietnamese people and of local spiritual and political leaders was in general favorable toward the RF and PF. For one thing, in addition to a good rapport with locals, the RF and PF, unlike some unruly ARVN units that occasionally swept through the locality, rarely committed mischievous acts against their own friends and relatives.

Terrain and the people are two decisive factors in an anti-guerrilla or counter-insurgency war. In South Vietnam, the terrain was highly diverse; it was made up of well-defined areas, each with its own geographical features. There were mountainous and jungle-covered plateau, vast alluvial plains, and inundated swamps, each inhabited by different ethnic groups with different customs and manners. All of these people were bound by the same attachment to their own habitats. The Communists took advantage of this terrain diversity to establish numerous mini-bases, dependent on the local people for survival and growth. Under such circumstances, it was not easy for any regular army unit to detect and identify the enemy. Therefore, the concept of employing a military force made up of local people who were intimately familiar with the local environment and local population proved to be a truly appropriate response to Communist insurgency.

Evolving Problems

In spite of the importance of territorial security throughout

the war, South Vietnamese and American authorities never seemed to place enough emphasis on it. Territorial security was almost neglected during the initial stage. From 1955 to 1960, all efforts and resources were devoted to the build-up of anti-invasion capabilities with only token concern about security matters. A long and valuable time was thus irretrievably lost in the effort to consolidate territorial security, especially at the infrastructure level, the village and hamlet. During this period, subversion and insurgency were yet to be recognized as a serious threat in the eyes of South Vietnam's political and military leaders and U.S. authorities.

Not until 1961 did they realize that the effective defense of South Vietnam required not only anti-aggression but also anti-insurgency capabilities. And not until then, as a result, was the military assistance program extended to the territorial forces. And even then, these forces were placed far below regular forces in the order of priorities; they were regarded as auxiliary and less expensive troops. As a matter of fact, the cost of maintaining one regular soldier was two or three times greater than one RF soldier and four times greater than a PF soldier.

By 1967, U.S. forces had made significant gains in driving VC/NVA forces deep into the remote jungles and into their sanctuaries across the border. Regular ARVN units assumed the pacification mission in the cleared areas and the territorials still were relegated to minor security and supporting roles. It was not until the U.S. interest in advising and supporting the territorials began to have an effect in late 1968 that definite improvements in RF/PF performance could be seen.

The RF and PF received more interest in 1968 and 1969 and as U.S. units began to stand down and redeploy. This was in fact dictated by the need to free ARVN forces from their static role so that they could assume the primary combat responsibility in the place of U.S. forces. As the ARVN gradually took over search-and-destroy operations, the role of the RF and PF was also upgraded to that of pacification support, a role just relinquished by the ARVN. At this time the RF and PF began to expand in force structure with a rather high priority but still second in terms of manpower and logistic support. Concurrently, more advisory

effort was devoted to improving territorial force units. Still, U.S. advisers assigned to work with the territorial system accounted for only 11% of the total advisory strength.

The development of the RF and PF was never based on any clear-cut, long range concept. Except for the PF which remained essentially platoon-based, the RF underwent several organizational changes, progressing by hesitant steps from company to company group, then to battalion, and finally tactical group. Because there was no coherent long range plan, each of these steps was a creature of the moment, of the particular phase and character of the conflict at the time. As the leadership, American and Vietnamese alike, perceived new or modified requirements for territorial forces, decisions were made to change organizations and strengths to cope with these requirements. The commanders and staffs responsible for implementing the changes did their best to repond, but the results were often disappointing because sufficient time for recruiting, equipping, and training had not been available. As a consequence, the RF appeared to be constantly in a state of organizational confusion which made command and control very difficult.

A major structural weakness, the RF and PF command and control system was a loose assemblage of unconnected parts which never functioned cohesively. Their logistic support system also suffered from the same structural problem. Even after consolidation and improvement, sector administrative and logistic support centers were cumbersome, inefficient; their responsibilities were never clearly defined. Rarely, if ever, was a RF or PF soldier or even an officer able to fully understand his own system.

To an army unit, in addition to duty and dedication to the national cause, tradition and uniforms were also significant elements of motivation. Because of their heterogeneous nature, the RF and PF never had a tradition or distinctive uniform which made them look and feel proud like the airborne, marine or infantry soldiers. Their virtues were seldom extolled and their accomplishments usually slighted. This evaluative misconception seemed to derive basically from prejudice coupled with a nearsighted tendency to measure results only by body count and weapons captured. Most Vietnamese citizens, especially the city-dwellers were unable to realize

that such achievements as hamlets pacified, the number of people living under GVN control, or the trafficability on key lines of communication were possible largely due to the unsung feats of the RF and PF.

Compared to search-and destroy operation, territorial security activities were immensely more complex. ARVN regular units had a clear-cut mission: to destroy the enemy. The RF and PF, by contrast, were employed to perform a multitude of different tasks, depending on local requirements. These requirements were truly burdensome, and often demanded too much of the RF and PF. Routinely, the RF and PF were required to look after security for the village and hamlet, the district, the province, military installations, industrial areas, and for lines of communication. They were also sometimes tasked to conduct search-and-destroy operations, to serve as quick reaction strike forces against enemy-initiated actions, and to participate in civic-action activities. In addition to these tasks, they had to carry out countless chores related to official (and private) business at the discretion and upon orders of local authorities, civilian or military. In brief, the RF and PF were an instrument that the government used to meet every imaginable kind of requirement, from combat to incidental details. Obviously, the overworked RF and PF units became weary and less vigilant no matter how enduring they might be. And since demands always seemed to surpass the number of units available, the RF and PF rarely had the chance to rest, recuperate, or undergo refresher training.

In addition to shortcomings caused by an unsound structure and erroneous employment, the territorial forces also had inherent weaknesses. The RF and PF soldier, being locally born, possessed certain innate qualities and a knowledge of local environment that few other soldiers could duplicate. But he was less resourceful and less audacious when faced with the unexpected. Subservient by nature, he submitted himself completely to his superiors. Conditioned by local habits and the local way of life, he was oriented toward rigid "formality", or "procedures" more than expediency or results. The average RF and PF soldier had only a vague notion of emergency to which he attached neither value nor importance. To him, it hardly mattered whether a task should be performed in 12 instead of 24 hours or whether it should be done today

or tomorrow. When he was tired, rest was the only thing that mattered; what remained to be done could always wait. Three months at a training center did little to change this inherent easy-going manner.

Command and control of the RF and PF were also heavily influenced by local politics. Because of the need to enlist popular support, local governments usually showed obsequious deference to influential religious and political leaders in their areas. In certain provinces of the Mekong Delta's eastern and western zones, the GVN usually appointed province and district chiefs from among the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai followers in order to obtain the support and cooperation of these religious sects. These appointments had to be approved by their leaders. The same practice occurred in those areas of MR-1 where the Dai Viet and VNQDD were influential. It followed that many RF and PF cadres had been promoted or reassigned in this way.

Despite political expediency, this practice degraded the authority of local governments and adversely affected the discipline of RF and PF units. In several instances, it was also at the source of corruption and crimes. Such debilitating vices as "ghost", or "ornamental" soldiers, and crimes as harboring deserters or draft evaders, etc. occurred more frequently because of protection available.¹ The law required severe punishment for these vices and crimes but was rarely enforced appropriately. Local authorities found myriad ways to bypass the law, or just looked the other way, anxious not to offend the influential personalities who protected the culprits.

During the period I served as MR-4 commander (1970-1972), I found that the RF and PF were very effective and they played a primordial role in the maintenance of security and pacification within this region. To appropriately exploit the valuable potential of these forces, I was

¹"ghost" soldiers were those whose names appeared on the unit's pay ledger and were paid each month but did not really exist. In general, they were all deserters or deceased. "Ornamental" soldiers were those who did nothing useful for the unit. Most were recommended by local personalities to serve as office boys or house servants for high ranking officers in cities, to avoid combat duties. Coming mostly from wealthy families, they did not care who took their monthly pay.

determined to keep them well-disciplined in addition to providing special care, because I firmly believed that discipline made the strength of any army. As a matter of priority, therefore, I launched successive campaigns to eradicate the vices of "ghost" and "ornamental" soldiers, and to track down deserters and draft evaders. All these efforts were made with determination, without regard to frictions or fear of offending anyone. Unfortunately, while these campaigns were making excellent progress, a directive from the office of the Prime Minister told me to suspend them at once, including the tracking down of deserters. The only explanation offered to me was that, in the view of local personalities, such activities would adversely affect the next rice harvest (and possibly the next presidential election as well).

I have presented some of the typical problems that plagued the territorial system and the forces which constituted its backbone. These problems indicate that as long as there were too many exceptions and irregularities, the government could not effectively rule by law, and military discipline and control could not be maintained. This was precisely what lay at the root of the weaknesses in our territorial forces.

Conclusions

Although they were besieged by complex problems, the RF and PF did succeed in the performance of their role. Territorial security and pacification constantly improved and the RF and PF themselves, also made remarkable progress. During the last few years of the war, the territorial forces proved particularly strong despite repeated Communist military and proselyting assaults. They became, eventually, the redoubtable nemesis of enemy local guerrillas and infrastructure cadre.

To the problem of insurgency in South Vietnam, however, the RF and PF alone were not the solution. Given their organization and mission, RF and PF performance depended primarily on the effectiveness

of the regular units which provided the protective shield against invading forces. When this shield was solid, the RF and PF could easily defeat adversaries of the same size. But when enemy main force units succeeded in penetrating this shield in large numbers, there was no way the RF and PF, with their limited capabilities, could defend themselves. Unfortunately, this happened often in South Vietnam because geographical configuration and terrain were not conducive to effective defense against infiltration.

The people's organization for self-defense also had a direct bearing on RF and PF performance. In villages and hamlets where the people were well organized and para-military forces functioned effectively, the task of territorial forces was much easier. However, competent authorities at the grassroots level were few and the majority of village chiefs did not have strong leadership to coordinate the para-military forces and rally the people for the support of local security.

During the war years, MACV and the Vietnamese leadership both made constant efforts to make the RF and PF more effective and efficient. Many ideas were suggested and many approaches were tested. The consolidation and simplification of the command structure within the RVNAF, and the centralization of advisory and support activities at CORDS were both important, beneficial changes. As the war became more and more one of large regular formations opposing each other, the increases in RF/PF strength and the formation of larger RF units were called for. Unfortunately, although the many problems perennially facing the RF and PF soldier were recognized by most American and Vietnamese military authorities, little could be done to correct them.

In general, the RF and PF soldiers were excellent combatants; they were very effective in the counter-insurgency war. As individuals, they could measure up to any of their regular counterparts. But the problems and influences that surrounded the RF and PF weakened their posture and the intensity of the war often overshadowed their role. Their responsibilities were truly complex and burdensome. Too much was demanded of the RF and PF and too little was given them in return.

However, I am sure that no other force in South Vietnam, operating under the same conditions and priorities, could have contributed more than our Regional and Popular Forces to the total war effort.

APPENDIX A

INSIGNIAS OF TERRITORIAL AND PARA-MILITARY FORCES

REGIONAL FORCES



COLORS:

Black on yellow background

MEANINGS:

YELLOW BACKGROUND:

Symbol of racial complexion and basic color of the national flag.

BLACK:

Symbolizes the iron-like resolution of the RF soldier.

WARRIOR BUST;

Symbol of bravery, fearless of danger and hardship.

SWORD AND CANNON:

Symbolize the development of the RF and their determination to win the final victory.

RICE SHEAF:

Symbol of the people's prosperity and welfare, the goals for which the RF fight.

POPULAR FORCES



COLORS:

Yellow background with three-pointed, half-blue, half-white star and three red arrows pointing to the center of the star.

MEANINGS:

YELLOW:	Symbolic of the racial complexion and the basic color of the national flag.
THREE-POINTED STAR:	Represents the "Triangular warfare" of the PF in intelligence, psychological and guerrilla warfare.
RED ARROWS:	Represent the enemy's "three-front attack" strategy = military, political, and psychological (proselyting) warfare.
BLUE POINT:	Symbolizes the offensiveness of the PF.
WHITE POINT:	Symbolizes the wholesomeness, simplicity and high spirit of service of the PF soldier.
RICE WREATH	Symbolic of the popular base of the PF.

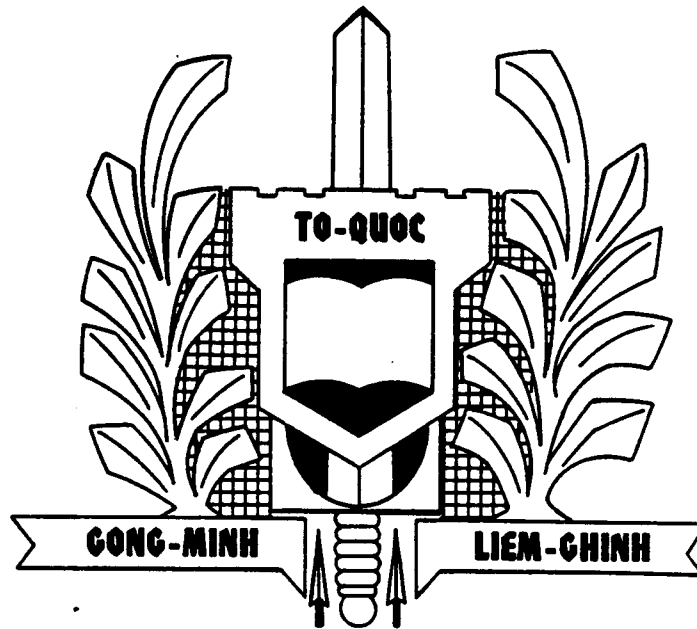
PEOPLE'S SELF-DEFENSE FORCES



RURAL DEVELOPMENT CADRE



NATIONAL POLICE



APPENDIX B

THE VIET CONG INFRASTRUCTURE

Basic Organization

"Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never command the Party."

Mao Tse Tung

The above quotation from Mao typifies the prevailing doctrine for the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam. The armed forces of the Viet Cong are only the military aspect of a much broader political-insurgent effort. Unless the political force guiding and supporting the armed forces is also destroyed, the village will continue to be threatened either through internal subversion or the continuous regeneration of the VC armed forces.

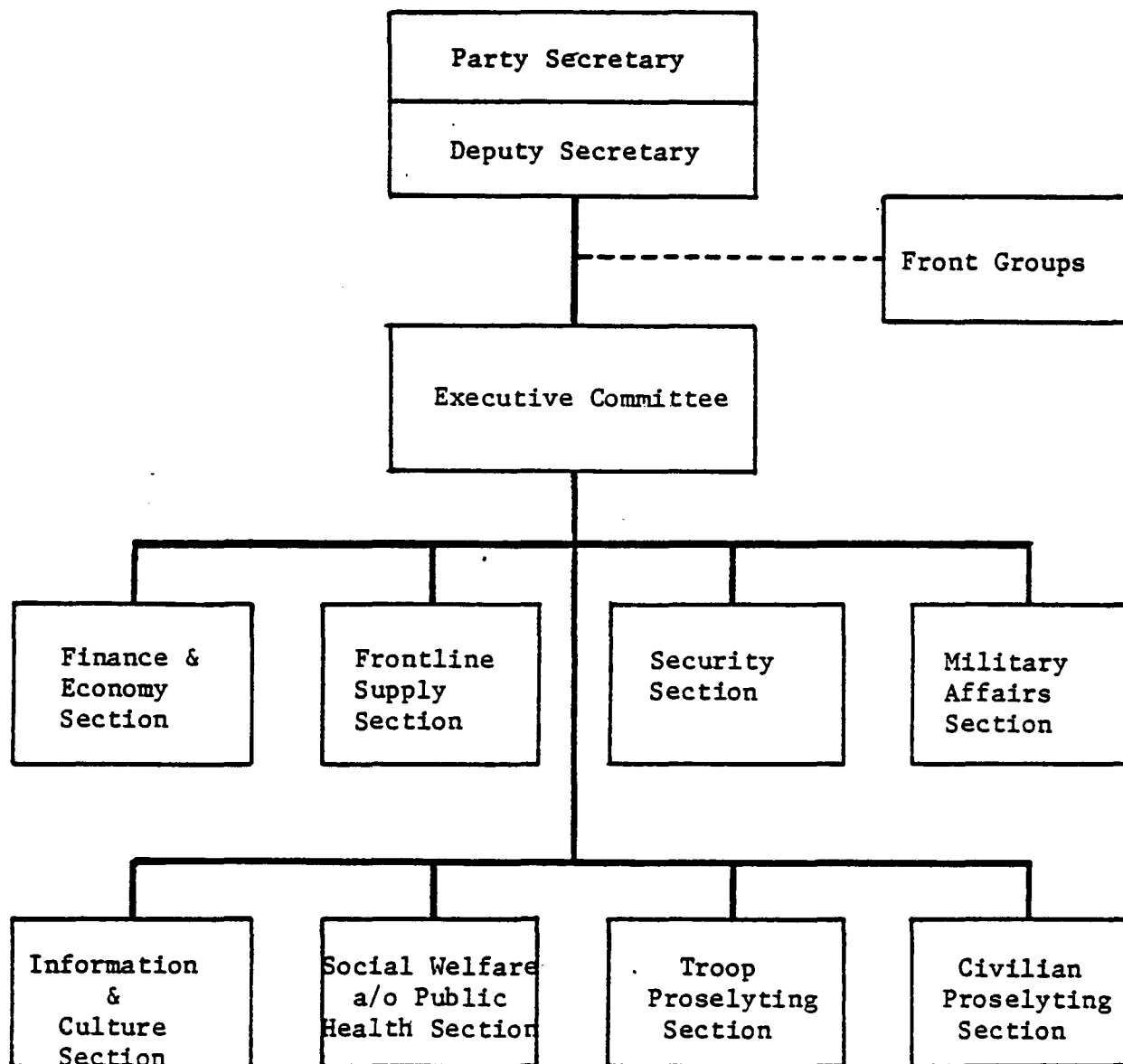
This political organization is referred to as the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI). The members of the VCI provide party guidance and direction to the overall Viet Cong insurgency, collect money and supplies and provide commo-liaison.

The basic organization of the insurgency in South Vietnam is the Peoples' Revolutionary Party (PRP), a branch of the Communist Party of North Vietnam. The PRP has joined with certain non-Communist insurgent groups to create the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, but the PRP has remained the dominant force in this and other front groups such as the Liberation Committees and the Peoples' Alliance of Democratic and Peaceloving Forces.

Party directives issued in mid-1969 instructed PRP chapters to establish Peoples' Revolutionary Committees and Councils (PRCs) and to drop all reference to the PRP. This action apparently came from a desire to upgrade the PRP from merely a dissident, externally-controlled party contending for authority to that of an established, legitimate rival to the GVN. In most cases, the change merely involved a switch in titles, but sometimes non-Party members were added to present a broader base of appeal. The PRP still controls all key positions and directs the activities of the PRCs.

The current estimate is that there are about 430 PRCs at village level (out of 726 villages) and 610 at hamlet level (out of 4,212 hamlets) throughout the Delta. Just over half of the village PRCs were chosen through some form of election (closely controlled by the PRP and not generally representing popular participation) and the rest were appointed

by Party chapters at higher echelons. In VC areas, these PRCs are in effect, the local government. In GVN or contested areas they are less effective, operating either from nearby base areas or from clandestine cover within a village. In many cases, the organizations appear to exist on paper only. Village Party chapters have been retitled as PRCs and the secretary is usually called "Chairman" (equivalent to GVN village chief) but the basic outline remains the same. A village Party chapter usually takes the forms of the following diagram:



Not all village Party chapters follow this organization exactly. In larger villages with strong VC control, the Party organization is more elaborate and each of the sections has a number of cadre. In smaller villages or in GVN villages with weak PRP chapters, one person may act as the head of several of the above sections. The Executive Committee is made up of the chiefs of key sections. It usually has the chiefs of the Military Affairs, Security and Finance and Economy Sections and occasionally other sections as well. The village Party chapter is controlled by the district Party committee, but the technical sections also received district guidance and direction from technical sections at the district level.

At the hamlet level, the organization is usually more simple. Military Affairs and Frontline Supply usually are combined, as are the Information and Culture and Proselyting Sections.

There are separate front groups (usually called Liberation Associations) for farmers, women and youth. In some areas there are also front groups for ethnic minorities such as Cambodian and/or Chinese. In areas where there is a concentration of Hoa Hao residents or members of other religious groups, there may be a Religious Liberation Association designed to rally these groups to the Communist cause.

At village level and below, the working cadre of the various sections are generally categorized as VC supporters rather than significant VCI cadre. They are important as sources of intelligence, but usually can be replaced by the PRP with relative ease. The ten cadre listed below, together with some of their deputies, are the hard-core members of the group and their elimination generally will achieve the dismantling of the village Party chapter.

Functions of Specific VCI Cadre:

1. The Party Secretary - The village Party Secretary is responsible to the District Party Secretary for the implementation of higher echelon orders in his village. He is in charge of all village activities and controls all village cadre through his section chiefs and all hamlet Party Secretaries in his area. He exercises final authority on the use of village guerrillas and usually attends Military Affairs Section meetings. He is the most important PRP representative in the village and in some cases is known by all adult residents of the village. He moves about constantly, meeting with his section in the most secure (that is, VC controlled) hamlet in the village or sometimes completely outside the village. In the village, he usually has three or more houses out of which he operates for brief periods. He maintains all the village records and documents. He travels periodically to meet with the district Party Secretary and other district level cadre. He is vulnerable due to his relative notoriety and his need to be in constant contact with district and his section chiefs, but he is usually accompanied by armed bodyguards.

2. The Deputy Party Secretary - The Deputy Secretary is the number two man and must be prepared to take over if the Party Secretary is removed from the scene. He functions as the Secretary's assistant and often is assigned to oversee the activities of two or more related sections of the Committee. His activities are similar to those of the Secretary.

3. Finance and Economy Section Chief - The F&E Chief at village level collects the taxes from the villagers and hamlet level sections according to directions from district level. He may also maintain tax lists, census data and production figures. He works with the Frontline Supply Section and Rear Services Support of the Military Affairs Section to support the village guerrillas. He has usually worked out arrangements with local or roving merchants to sell foodstuffs collected as in-kind taxes. The F&E Chief at village level does not usually keep large sums of money, transmitting it at frequent intervals to district level through the Party Secretary. He is vulnerable because he is engaged in an unpopular effort and has to move about a great deal.

4. Frontline Supply Section Chief - The FLSS Chief may actually be a sub-section chief under Military Affairs. He is responsible for mobilizing material resources and manpower to support VC armed units in the area. In VC-controlled areas, he may be responsible for general production control over the villagers. He works closely with Military Affairs, Security, Finance and Economy and Proselyting Sections.

5. Security Section Chief - The Security Chief is responsible for both counter-intelligence and intelligence collection activities. In areas which the VC control, the Security Chief is also responsible for regular police and judicial operations and maintains the jail. The Security Section also controls VC reconnaissance and sapper squads. The Security Chief provides necessary bodyguards to protect other important Party officials. He may be used in an enforcement role to help the Finance Economy Chief collect taxes. He is responsible for the security of documents and records and, in the lower Delta, controls the commo-liaison system (in the upper Delta this is apparently part of the VC military postal system). He usually controls a network of secret informants within the village and hamlets to maintain surveillance over the people and a network of agents who have penetrated GVN agencies and units.

6. The Military Affairs Section Chief - The MAS Chief is usually one of the village guerrilla squad leaders who has been promoted to the job and given additional training and indoctrination. He serves as the commander and/or the political officer of the village guerrillas. He uses these guerrillas to provide sentries and protection to the VC areas, to participate in combined inter-village military operations and, when strong-arm methods are needed to enforce attendance at meetings, tax collections, etc. The village MAS Chief is often also in charge of the Frontline Supply Section and coordinates the visit to his village of forces from higher echelons for operations or for re-supply. He is always in close contact with the village Secretary and the MAS Chief of the district Committee.

7. Information and Culture Chief - This cadre is sometimes referred to as the Propaganda, Culture and Indoctrination Chief which is a more accurate description of his duties. He is responsible for disseminating VC propaganda to the villagers and for the VC cultural and entertainment teams. He is also responsible for maintaining the ideological purity and drive of PRP members in the village, leading criticism and self-criticism or re-education sessions, when necessary. He is generally regarded as a key cadre because of his role in maintaining Party morale and ideological purity. He is usually better educated and indoctrinated.

8. Social Welfare and/or Public Health Section Chief - He is normally not present except in VC areas where he is responsible for organizing the populace into social action groups. A key responsibility is to organize care for wounded veterans and the families of VC troops.

9. Troop Proselyting Chief - The Troop Proselyting Chief works usually through friends and relatives of ARVN members to turn GVN soldiers in place as sources of intelligence or possible betrayal. If this is not possible, he tries to encourage desertion. He is often the organizer of the "face-to-face" struggles of village women against GVN or allied officials and policies.

10. Civilian Proselyting Chief - The Civilian Proselyting Chief is responsible for developing the appeal of the VC and organizing support from the general populace. He works closely with the Propaganda Chief, but is really responsible for slightly different function—the organization of supporting front groups. He is responsible for most direct Party recruiting at the village level. He often is the most educated, articulate, and highly indoctrinated PRP member at the village level. He is vulnerable because of his public role and his need to move around to contact various front groups.

(Source: Village Security Planning Guide for District and Mobile Advisory Teams; Delta Military Assistance Command, 1970.)

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPLES OF TERRITORIAL SECURITY (Excerpt from Combined Campaign Plan 1972, AB 147)

1. GENERAL: The NVN Communists and the VC attempt to demonstrate that the GVN is not capable of governing the country or of providing credible security to the people. The most effective way of assuring security for the Vietnamese people is to keep enemy forces away from them and by neutralizing the VC infrastructure. Without the VCI, enemy main forces cannot obtain intelligence, manpower, and food, nor will they be able to prepare the battlefield or move. Providing security to the Vietnamese people is the major objective of RVNAF/FWMAF. The security principles and their application are based upon lessons learned in the past and provide specific techniques for providing the desired level of security.

2. CONCEPT: A national security program must include basic principles to insure effective security of individuals and groups at all levels, from the local household to an entire geographical/political subdivision, against both internal and external threats.

3. AREA SECURITY PRINCIPLES:

a. A sound security system requires clear-cut authority within each national force and must be fully coordinated with all other commanders and forces concerned.

b. A security system should include the following:

- (1) Adequate forces
- (2) Responsive command and control
- (3) Internal and external intelligence, to include long range surveillance
- (4) Effective communications
- (5) Tactical control measures, such as boundaries, barriers, warning systems, etc.
- (6) Coordination of military/civilian effort toward common goals

c. To be effective, security must be continuous. Manning outposts and patrolling during the day, but retiring to static defense positions at night will not achieve effective security and often produces undesired results. The enemy, who moves mostly under cover of darkness, will enter the village to carry out retaliation against the people, after the security forces depart.

d. The provision of security throughout the RVN requires the accomplishment of five interrelated tasks:

- (1) Maintaining continuous and permanent security for people living in secure areas
- (2) Extending security to people outside of the secure areas
- (3) Neutralizing local force, guerrilla and VCI units or individuals found among the people
- (4) Forcing the withdrawal of NVA forces to North Vietnam, by both military and political actions
- (5) Developing a security system that is not dependent on the continued presence of FWMAF

e. Delineation of areas for friendly forces to concentrate their efforts on:

- (1) Focus upon securing the population (Secure Areas and Consolidation Zones)
- (2) Focus against enemy main forces in Clearing Zones
- (3) Focus against enemy intrusions and infiltration in Border Surveillance Zones.

4. APPLICATION:

a. Secure Areas. The principal task is to maintain and improve existing security. Operations will concentrate on protecting the resident population.

(1) The secure area is the hub from which expansion of security radiates. Local government is functioning and the GVN is improving services and supporting the self-help programs

(2) National Police operations will concentrate on maintaining law and order, neutralizing the VCI and controlling terrorism

(3) The NP assisted by the PF and PSDF and under the control of the village chief or subsector commander will maintain security, law and order in the secure areas with the support of the RF if required

(4) As NP and PSDF increase in size and proficiency, PF elements are released until a minimum reaction level is reached. Released PF replace RF by assuming RF missions wherever possible in the more secure areas. RF are then redeployed to less secure areas. RF and PF are assigned zones of reaction responsibility to reinforce units threatened by enemy forces.

(5) NP and PSDF will not normally be utilized beyond the boundary of their assigned village

(6) Friendly military forces, resident in the secure area, protect their own installations. They may assist in protecting vital non-military installations, if the local police forces are not adequate. However, protection of non-military installations should be assumed by the police or civilian self-defense units, as soon as possible.

(7) Security of areas contiguous to the secure area will be improved through saturation patrolling, ambush, and offensive operations by territorial forces

(8) The secure area does not expand from within. Rather, as security conditions within a portion of the consolidation zone reach the required level, that portion is assimilated into and becomes part of the secure area

b. Consolidation Zones. The principal tasks to be accomplished within this zone are to provide an outer belt of protection for the secure area and to raise the level of security to that which exists within the secure area.

(1) The purpose of the outer belt of protection is to detect and engage enemy forces at a distance from the secure area. This is best accomplished by conducting continuous around-the-clock, intensive patrol and ambush operations, and maintaining strong, highly mobile reaction forces. RF, supported by PF, NP, FP and Infantry divisions, as necessary, are employed in this outer belt.

(2) Within the zone, operations are employed to raise the level of security. Police and territorial forces assisted by regular forces as required, provide hamlet and village security. They also conduct intensive small unit patrol and ambush operations to detect and engage enemy units which may have penetrated the outer belt of protection. In addition, they seek out and neutralize the VCI, uncover weapon and ammunition caches, and mortar and rocket emplacements.

(3) Resources denial and population control are conducted by the National Police assisted by territorial forces. Personnel and designated commodities are under strict control and are subjected to continuous check.

(4) Assimilation of portions of the consolidation zone into the secure area will occur when the level of security within that portion is determined by province officials to fall within the prescribed definition for designation as a secure area.

c. Clearing Zones. Operations in these zones concentrate on VC/NVA main and local forces to prevent their intruding into consolidation zones. Rules of engagement for the clearing zone must emphasize that civilians are not unnecessarily exposed to friendly fires. The objective is to separate the enemy from the population in order to facilitate establishment of effective security.

(1) RVN regular forces, assisted by FWMAF, operate within this zone to engage or drive out the enemy and to prevent enemy forces from entering the consolidation zones.

(2) Neutralization of enemy base areas will be conducted in accordance with the priorities contained in Annex J (Neutralization of VC/NVA Base-Areas) to AB-147. Isolated bases, located in areas of low population density, can best be controlled by conducting operations to prevent enemy egress or reinforcement. Continuous surveillance, patrolling and ambushes, and air and artillery strikes will be employed to keep the enemy confined in his base area.

(3) Enemy base areas located closer to major population areas constitute a different type of threat. Friendly operations will concentrate on effectively neutralizing these base areas or forcing the enemy to abandon them, and thus increase the distance between the enemy and the population.

(4) As the enemy threat is reduced or neutralized, and base areas are abandoned or isolated, the newly cleared area will be added to the consolidation zone. The province chief must have adequate

resources to insure that he can hold and govern the newly cleared zone. Refugees and original inhabitants of the area should be encouraged to return and resettle. Coordination for transfer of the newly cleared area to the consolidation zone from Infantry division responsibility to Province will be made under the authority of the RVNAF Corps and Military Region Commander.

d. Border Surveillance Zone. This zone is contiguous to the national borders of RVN. MR commanders are responsible for this zone. The primary task here is to detect, engage and deter enemy forces attempting to infiltrate the RVN. Operations conducted herein will be closely coordinated with border camp forces.

5. COMMAND AND CONTROL: The commander charged with responsibility for a specific area must be provided adequate resources and authority commensurate with that responsibility. Assignment of primary responsibility will be as follows. The RVNAF Corps and Military Region Commander is responsible for assuring that adequate resources are assigned in each case.

a. Secure Area and Consolidation Zones. Province Chief/Sector commander.

b. Clearing Zone. Infantry division commanders or special sector commander as designated by the RVNAF Corps and Military Region Commander.

c. Border Surveillance Zone. MR commander (Border Defense Force).

Glossary

ABN	Airborne
ALSC	Administrative and Logistical Support Company or Center
AO	Area of Operation
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
CG	Civil Guard (RF)
CMD	Capital Military District
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam (Politbureau)
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone. The geographical area of responsibility of a Corps
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DTA	Division tactical area. The geographical area of responsibility of a division (prior to 1970)
FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Forces
GVN	Government of South Vietnam
HES	Hamlet Evaluation System
ID	Identification
JGS	Joint General Staff (RVNAF)
LAW	Light Anti-Tank Weapon
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MALT	Mobile Assistance Logistic Team
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MR	Military Region
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NLF	National Liberation Front (Viet Cong)

NP	National Police
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PF	Popular Forces
PFF	Police Field Forces
PRC	People's Revolutionary Committee (VC)
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit
PSDF	People's Self-Defense Forces
QL	Quoc Lo (National Route)
RD	Revolutionary (or Rural) Development
RF	Regional Forces
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. Refers to all three services
SDC	Self-Defense Corps (PF)
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organization
TAOI	Tactical Area of Interest
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
TOC	Tactical Operations Center
UMDC	Unités Mobiles pour la Défense de la Chrétienté
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
VNQDD	Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party)