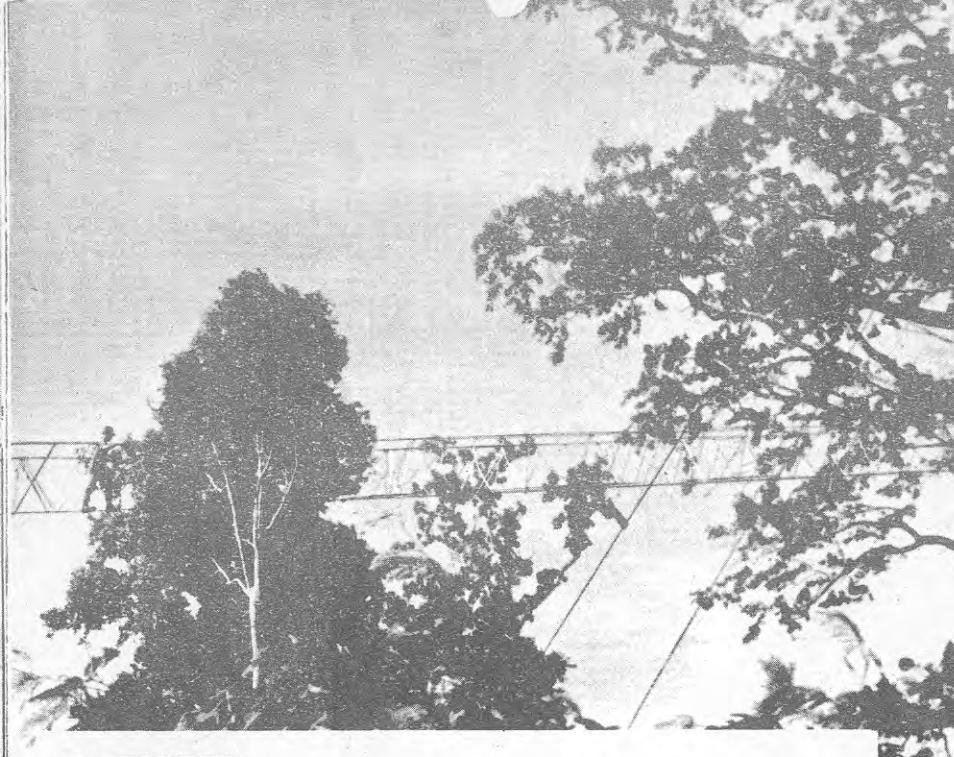


While they literally bridge a jungle chasm, U. S. troops also figuratively bridge gap between the West and Southeast Asia as they assist the Vietnamese people in



The Fight for Freedom In Viet Nam



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ALTHOUGH a half-world removed from continental United States, Viet Nam has become a household word in America as world attention focuses on events shaping the destiny of Southeast Asia.

In Viet Nam a massive effort is being waged to combat Communist insurgents to allow the 14 million people of this young Asian republic to live in freedom and peace.

The Republic of Viet Nam is about the size of the state of Washington. It stretches in a 700-mile land arc, for the most part 50 to 150 miles wide, lying next to Laos and Cambodia and

bordering on the South China Sea. The country has a spine of dense jungle-covered mountains extending from north to south, almost reaching Saigon, its capital. South of the densely populated capital city area, the flat, fertile, canal-laced "Rice Bowl" or Mekong Delta extends to the Gulf of Thailand.

Because of its strategic coastal location, Viet Nam has for centuries been an important factor in Southeast Asian affairs. Today its richness in natural resources, particularly food and rubber, makes South Viet Nam a coveted prize by food-short North Viet Nam



On one of his many trips to battle areas, General Westmoreland is greeted at command post by an honor guard of a Vietnamese Infantry Regiment.

and Communist China. Rice production in the rich Mekong Delta alone has the yet untapped potential of feeding the combined populations of South and North Viet Nam and still having a surplus for export.

The Republic of South Viet Nam today is a vivid manifestation of a nation determined, with assistance from other Free World nations, to check the spread of Communist oppression. In addition to United States aid, assistance is being provided by sixteen countries including the Republics of Korea and China, the Philippines, New Zealand, Thailand and Australia. However, it is South Viet Nam itself that carries the brunt of the anti-communist battle with nearly half a million men and women serving in the armed forces.

Viet Cong Insurgents. Although the Communist movement in South Viet Nam dates from the early 1930's, the present Viet Cong (Vietnamese Communist) structure traces from the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1954 that presumably ended the Indo-

China War. As 80,000 Viet Minh (Communist) troops allegedly withdrew to North Viet Nam following expulsion of French Forces in Indo-China, a cleverly concealed nucleus remained behind to prey on the new Republic of South Viet Nam.

From 1954-1959, the Viet Cong in South Viet Nam concentrated on establishing rural political cadres and on exploitative propaganda.

In 1960, Ho Chi Minh, the Communist leader in Hanoi, realized that political and propaganda actions alone could not subvert the government in Saigon which was already receiving substantial U. S. aid. Plans were made in North Viet Nam to include military operations in the Communist formula by infiltrating large numbers of reinforcements to the underground Viet Cong forces in South Viet Nam during the rainy season of 1961. Thereafter Viet Cong violence broke out almost everywhere, necessitating much greater effort by South Viet Nam with increased support from the United States to contain it.

The current struggle in South Viet

Nam cannot be classified as an internal conflict between dissident guerrillas and a weak government. The magnitude of the conflict is revealed by the fact that Viet Cong main and local force units number more than 30,000 full-time soldiers. Also there are perhaps 80,000 or more irregulars who work as farmers in the fields by day and often undertake guerrilla actions by night. These forces are supplied with leaders, technicians, replacements, modern weapons, logistic support from North Viet Nam. Their obvious intent is the replacement of the South Vietnamese government by a pawn of the Communist regime in North Viet Nam.

Insurgent forces are identified as these types:

- The main force made up of highly trained, full-time regulars having a capability of operating as regimental-size units and employing mortars and recoilless weapons. Main force units are the mobile elements of the Viet Cong military region leader and are used to conduct major attacks or reinforce other units.
- The local or provincial forces, composed also of regular, full-time soldiers, that operate in up to battalion strength within the boundaries of one of the 34 Viet Cong provinces. (Actually, there are 45 provinces in the Republic of Viet Nam but for their own purposes the Viet Cong divide the country into 34.)
- Guerrilla forces, or irregulars, are recruited from hamlets and villages to operate on a part-time basis in their home area. Guerrillas independently go about the task of collecting taxes, gathering intelligence, terrorizing and propagandizing the people but frequently provide reinforcing support for

main or local forces who may enter their village area.

The Viet Cong, though active throughout most of the countryside, have a few regions in which they are particularly strong. These areas, known as secret bases or war zones, are located in remote, difficult terrain and serve as the rear base for Communist activity in South Viet Nam. Five of the strongest Viet Cong bases are: The U. Minh Forest in the Delta; the Plain of Reeds, an inundated area west of Saigon near Cambodia; War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province northwest of Saigon; War Zone D in Phuoc Thanh Province northeast of Saigon; and the Do Xa area in the mountains far north of Saigon.

Nature of the Battle. The large Viet Cong force, supported in varying degrees by perhaps one-quarter of the rural people and established in some areas for more than 20 years, represents a formidable enemy. The military aspects of battle involve separating the VC from their base of popular and logistic support and eliminating the VC themselves as organized military forces responsive to political direction.

The enemy is elusive since, except for his secret bases, he has no territory to defend. He operates mostly during hours of darkness; he withdraws and disperses into the countryside when opposed by superior forces; he attacks without warning when the situation is most favorable; and he stands and fights only when he chooses to do so. The VC are known to plan attacks in meticulous detail, often training for and practicing an operation for weeks or even months using sandtable drills and, at times, full-scale mockups of the target.

The battle is further complicated by the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe since both sides are primarily Vietnamese. The Viet Cong are able to conceal their weapons and



Local villagers build a "new life" hamlet defensive work to guard against attack.

blend easily with the population. As a result, the battlefield has neither front nor rear. This is a war with no conventional battle lines.

Ethnic minorities such as the Chinese, Cambodians, Montagnards (mountain tribesmen) and religious sects such as the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai play important roles in the struggle, thereby emphasizing the political aspects of the counterinsurgency battle.

Activity waxes and wanes as the VC shift areas of emphasis and tactics. Likewise, the government has the ability to concentrate its resources in various regions and on different activities. Recognizing that it is not necessary to kill all the Communists in South Viet Nam in order to establish law and order throughout the country, the government of Viet Nam devotes the bulk of its resources in an effort to pacify the rural countryside.

Simply stated, pacification is the sum total of integrated military-economic-political-psychological-sociological efforts to win the support of the people by providing security and meeting their aspirations for social and economic justice.

The present Pacification Program to restore government control is based upon the "oil spot" concept of extending control by gradual expan-

sion from a secure to a less secure area in the manner of an oil droplet spreading over a surface.

In order to expand the size of an already secure area or base, the region around it is first cleared by destroying or displacing Viet Cong military units and driving the VC political structure out or underground. When the balance in the so-called contested zone has tipped in favor of the government, securing operations can be started to provide protection for the population, to re-institute and strengthen the government structure and to develop a better social and political life in the area.

Once an area is secure and becomes part of the expanded "oil spot," pacification activities can reach out to the next area and repeat the process of clearing and securing. Meanwhile efforts continue inside the "oil spot" to develop the area economically, politically and socially in order to demonstrate that life under government auspices is to be preferred.

The most extensive pacification operation began in September 1964 in the area surrounding Saigon. Called "Hop Tac" which means "cooperation" in Vietnamese, the operation involves the integration of military and civilian elements, both Vietnamese and U. S. The project is supported

In many areas of the war-torn land, air lift is the prime means of bringing in equipment.



and assisted by the major U. S. agencies in Viet Nam with the Military Assistance Command exercising co-ordination responsibility.

Traditionally, wars are fought because of political differences, and the Republic of Viet Nam's battle against Communist inspired insurgency is no exception. The Communists want to rule the country. Their aggression, founded on political grounds, cannot be defeated by military action alone. Economic, political and social measures designed to prove that the government's programs are superior to Communist promises are equally important. This is what pacification

seeks to accomplish.

Vietnamese Armed Forces. Pitted against the Viet Cong are the sizable and capable Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet Nam. Army, Navy and Air Force units, operating under a single high commander, are daily involved in thousands of separate but related actions ranging in size from a squad ambush to a regimental combat team, supported by air and naval units, in an attack against an enemy reinforced battalion. The capabilities of the individual Vietnamese fighting man are highly regarded because of the courage and endurance he con-

stantly displays.

South Viet Nam's Army (ARVN) of over 200,000 men consists of nine divisions and four corps. With modern equipment especially selected for the character of operations it undertakes, the ARVN organization is tailored to the type of terrain and enemy it faces.

In addition to the regular forces, the nation has paramilitary forces also numbering approximately 200,000, divided almost equally between Regional and Popular Forces.

The Regional Forces, assigned to the provinces, augment the regular forces and are particularly active in pacification. Their availability frees more powerfully equipped Army units for operations against major VC units and base areas.

Popular (or People's) Forces, who are natives of the area, provide village level protection to the rural population living in hamlets. These forces are not purely defensive since they must carry out, by day and by night, small unit offensive actions to search out VC guerrillas who seek to interrupt pacification by harassing and terrorizing the people.

The scope of the military effort is indicated by the average of about 2400 monthly incidents of Viet Cong attacks, assassinations, terrorism, kidnappings, and sabotage. More than 550 South Vietnamese soldiers are

killed monthly as a result of insurgent activities, while some 1800 Communists are killed, captured or defect each month.

Objectives of U. S. assistance in Viet Nam are to assist the South Vietnamese government to achieve peace and stability. This requires considerable aid and advice in developing a viable economy, instituting a sound system of social and economic justice, building a stable, popular government, and developing Armed Forces that can provide defense for the country.

Responsible for achieving these objectives is the U. S. Mission to Viet Nam, headed by the U. S. Ambassador. Agencies responsive to the Ambassador, which assist in the various aspects of countering the insurgents and building a nation, are the U. S. Embassy, the U. S. Operations Mission (USOM), the U. S. Information Service (USIS), and the Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam (MACV). The Embassy deals with political and social stabilization; USOM is involved with social and economic development; USIS is concerned with information and psychological operations; and MACV is charged with military security matters.

Role of Military Assistance. The U. S. Armed Forces through the personnel and equipment of the Military



Whether planning a troop movement or taking part as advisers, U. S. troops cooperate closely with Vietnamese units.

Assistance Command, Viet Nam (MACV) are playing a significant role in helping the Republic of Viet Nam maintain a free and independent government. With the mission of advising the Republic of Viet Nam Armed Forces, members of MACV continue to perform their vital task with zeal and skill. By performing their jobs persuasively and skillfully, they are progressively working themselves out of jobs. The nature of the assignment requires the presence of advisory personnel only until the battle is won and a fully capable defense force is developed—no longer.

Professionalism is the cornerstone of advisory activities and associations in Viet Nam. A highly select body of American service personnel are accomplishing their assistance mission in a thoroughly professional manner, despite the myriad challenges of service in a strange land engaged in a life and death encounter with tyranny.

As advisors, MACV personnel have the mission to assist the Vietnamese in achieving results that will swing the campaign against Communism in the government's favor. Americans are helping Vietnamese in a cooperative venture to get things done both systematically and properly. Basic to this advisory effort are measures for developing leadership for Viet Nam.

As MACV and the Armed Forces of Viet Nam continue to work together, the overall operation is beginning to move in a favorable direction.

Activated in February 1962, MACV was reorganized in 1964. In addition to gaining new missions, it absorbed many functions formerly performed by the Military Assistance Advisory Group which was inactivated.

The reorganization was designed to eliminate duplication of functions and to improve the responsiveness of the field elements to the commander. It also reflected the need for a special unified organization tailored to the specific situation in Viet Nam.

To promote coordinated teamwork and to integrate effectively the activities of all U. S. services, the Joint Staff was made responsible for all phases of military operations and for advising counterpart personnel in the Vietnamese High Command.

The Commander of the 2d Air Division now exercises control of U. S. Air Force units in Viet Nam and participates in all policy decisions at MACV. Subordinate to the Commander of the 2d Air Division is the Chief of the Air Force Advisory Group who supervises U. S. Air Force personnel advising the Vietnamese Air Force. The Air Force Advisory Group also is responsible for military



MACV INSIGNIA

The official command shoulder insignia of the U. S. Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam, symbolizes the support rendered to the Republic of Viet Nam in its struggle against Communism.

Army personnel departing Viet Nam and others who have served in Viet Nam after July 1958 for at least 60 days or those who have been medically evacuated before that time are eligible to wear the insignia on the right shoulder sleeve.

The patch also is authorized for wear on the left shoulder by all Army personnel assigned for duty in Viet Nam, except for individuals assigned to units granted specific authority to use other insignia by the Department of the Army.

Military personnel, regardless of service, assigned to MACV headquarters are authorized to wear the insignia on the upper right shirt pocket centered on the pocket midway between the sides and the lower tip of the pocket flap. Measuring three inches long, the insignia is a red shield with a superimposed yellow arched embossed fess and a sword with a yellow hilt and a white blade pointed up within a yellow border.



Swift-striking ARVN units await copters to return their prisoners to Viet Nam base.



Helicopter lands troops who take off through rice paddies to attack a Viet Cong unit.

assistance programming for the Vietnamese Air Force.

The Chief of the Naval Advisory Group exercises direct operational control of the naval advisory detachments while also serving as a member of the MACV staff. He also is responsible for MAP programming for the Vietnamese Navy.

Army field advisory detachments, previously subordinate to the Army Section, MAAG, report directly to the Commander, MACV.

During 1964, MACV increased in strength from about 16,000 to approximately 23,000 U. S. military personnel, making up an integrated team of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen. Most of the 7,000 increase served to augment advisory teams and advisory staffs.

The 45 provinces, or sectors, of South Viet Nam have from one to eleven districts or sub-sectors. A district or sub-sector compares in some ways to a county in the United States. As a result of the buildup, there are today 113 sub-sectors where American advisory teams work daily with Vietnamese counterparts.

U. S. advisory personnel, dispersed at 255 separate locations, assist in training Vietnamese forces. Training in the four ARVN corps areas has progressed in a most satisfactory man-

ner, sometimes under the extremely realistic conditions of actual combat. Added attention has been given to leadership, marksmanship, squad tactics, security, independent missions, night operations, ambush and counter-ambush tactics, physical endurance and survival, civic action, and intelligence collection. Emphasis has recently been placed on the use of confidence courses with excellent results.

During 1964, a shift occurred in training of individual officers and non-commissioned officers, with schooling in Viet Nam replacing off-shore schooling to a great extent. The shift resulted in saving in time and travel expense.

Goals for 1965 are many and varied. Achieving them will require arduous work on the part of all members of MACV. But their attainment will place the Republic of Viet Nam much closer to ultimate victory.

In terms of men and money, the assistance effort has been costly, but obviously necessary to provide more than a measure of hope in the form of tangible support to 14 million free Vietnamese in their long battle to defeat Communism.

Every American on duty with the Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam, knows why the United States is committed to helping the Vietna-

mese in the struggle for freedom. The war is not a jungle war, but a fight against Communism on every front of human activity. The purpose of the mission in Viet Nam is to help the Vietnamese people attain peace and stability. The issue at stake is all of Southeast Asia. With men, money and material, America keeps its word to support free men in the fight to keep their freedom.

The proximity of a live and op-

The fifteen hundred miles of coast line in Republic of Viet Nam, plus about 4,500 miles of waterways in the Mekong Delta, require extensive water-lift capability.



Reprints of this article are available on request to the Editor, Army Information Digest, Cameron Station, Alexandria, Virginia.